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The Dark Side of Time Management: Exploring the Link Between the Dark Tetrad and Time Theft Among Employees in Kyrgyzstan

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ABSTRACT – This study examines the factors associated with time theft in Kyrgyzstan, an understudied region in this context. The proposed model investigates Dark Tetrad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism), situational variables (loneliness, workplace boredom, social media addiction, and pay satisfaction), and demographic factors as potential influences on time theft. Data were collected online from 236 white-collar employees in Kyrgyzstan. The findings indicated that narcissism significantly affected all three dimensions of time theft (classical, technological, and social). Among the situational variables, workplace boredom was identified as the strongest predictor for all three dimensions of time theft. Significant effects were also observed for social media addiction and pay satisfaction. Males showed higher involvement across all three dimensions of time theft. The study suggests directions for future research and practical applications. Employers are advised to monitor Dark Tetrad traits more closely. There is a need to provide engaging, challenging tasks to reduce time theft.

Keywords:
Dark Tetrad traits; Time theft; Kyrgyzstan; Workplace boredom; Social media addiction

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Introduction

Time theft, the act of engaging in non-work-related activities during paid hours, represents a pervasive yet understudied form of counterproductive and unethical behavior (Xu et al., 2025). Time theft, a common practice, poses a significant challenge for companies as

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employees divert valuable working hours to personal matters during daily organizational management (Xu, Yao & Xiong, 2023; Halleck et al., 2025). Statistics underscore the gravity of this issue, revealing that, on average, employees misappropriate approximately 4.5 hours per week, and that over 75% of companies suffer financial losses from practices such as buddy punching each year. Approximately 20% of all U.S. dollars companies earn is lost to employee time theft, amounting to an estimated annual cost of $400 billion. Alarmingly, one in four workers confesses to exaggerating their work hours by at least 75% of the time (Petrovic, 2020). The American Payroll Association estimates that hourly employees engage in approximately 4 hours of time theft per week, resulting in businesses losing nearly 7% of their annual payroll. Consequently, 75% of U.S. businesses grapple with the consequences of time theft, prompting over 60% of them to invest in time-monitoring software (Harold, Hu & Koopman, 2022).

Furthermore, a survey by Rebootonline.com reveals that U.K. employees dedicate only 3.7 out of every five workdays to actual office tasks. This results in an average annual cost of £ 8,851.14 per employee due to time wastage. Similar trends are observed in the Eastern context, where Chinese government employees reportedly spend their workdays on non-work activities such as playing computer games, sleeping, and shopping online (Xu et al., 2023).

Time theft, beyond its economic impact, is unethical and violates social and organizational norms (Xu et al., 2023). It creates burdens within the workplace: supervisors must manage disciplinary actions and rescheduling, while co-workers face increased workloads. This can lower morale, motivation, and productivity, and strain relationships with colleagues and supervisors. In team settings, one employee's time theft can negatively affect the whole team (Henle, Reeve & Pitts, 2010).

Time theft significantly impacts organizational resources and goals, yet there is a notable lack of research addressing its causes and effects (Brock, Martin & Buckley, 2013; Harold et al., 2022; Liu & Berry, 2013; Ding et al., 2018). This paper investigates the factors associated with time theft in Kyrgyzstan, a culture infrequently studied in management and industrial psychology. The proposed model examines Dark Tetrad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism) along with situational variables (loneliness, workplace boredom, social media addiction, and pay satisfaction) as potential influences on time theft. Additionally, the model includes demographic variables (gender, age, and marital status). As Kyrgyzstan represents a traditional collectivist culture, the findings can help determine if theories and results from Western cultures apply to more traditional societies.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Time theft encompasses various unproductive behaviors during work hours, including early or late departures, extended breaks, and daydreaming instead of working (Li & Lin, 2023). The term "time theft" was first coined by Martin et al. (2010, p. 27), who defined it as employees' propensity to engage in unsanctioned non-work-related activities during work hours, encompassing off-task behavior and arriving late. This behavior aligns with the concept of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Brock et al., 2013). Another perspective defines time theft as the intentional failure to accurately record and allocate one's obligated and compensated work hours within an organization (Harold et al., 2022). Such activities include tardiness, early departure, extended breaks, and daydreaming on the job (Henle et al., 2010).

Harold et al. (2022) distinguish time theft from other deviant constructs within organizational deviance, such as work withdrawal, property theft, cheating, and procrastination. They view time theft as a unique form of deviance targeting the organization specifically, with detrimental financial consequences. Unlike other deviant behaviors, time theft does not directly harm individuals or other organizations and lacks negative motivations. However, despite being more covert, less risky, and less dangerous compared to other deviant behaviors, time theft has evident detrimental effects on organizations (Li & Lin, 2023; Martin et al., 2010).

The Dark Tetrad and Time Theft

The Dark Tetrad comprises four distinct yet interrelated personality traits, each contributing independently to various aspects of individuals' behavior (Cohen, 2018, 2024). These traits include narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and sadism.

Narcissism

Narcissism is characterized by an individual's constant need for admiration, lack of empathy, grandiosity, self-centeredness, and a sense of entitlement, leading them to exploit others (VandenBos, 2007, APA Psychology Dictionary). Individuals high in narcissism tend to engage in self-enhancement behaviors, display low empathy, and seek attention, making them more prone to workplace deviance (Shujaul et al., 2021). The grandiose perception of their abilities may lead narcissistic individuals to believe they can deceive and engage in undesirable behaviors if they think they can escape detection, contributing to their involvement in time theft (Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2017; Cohen, 2018). Accordingly, narcissism has been linked to a variety of unethical and illegal behaviors (Harrison & Summers, 2026).

Psychopathy

Psychopathy is manifested through a lack of guilt or remorse for actions causing harm to others (Harrison, Summers & Mennecke, 2018). Self-centered impulsivity and fearless dominance are key traits of psychopathy, contributing to a personality characterized by an indifference to deadlines and responsibilities (VandenBos, 2007, APA Psychology Dictionary). People with high psychopathy often ignore both social and legal rules, as well as the needs of others (Harrison & Summers, 2026). Psychopathic individuals' activities can create hostility among employees and lead to lobbying within the workplace, contributing to counterproductive work behaviors, including time theft (Cohen, 2018).

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism involves a calculating attitude towards human relationships, where the ends justify the means, even if ruthless. Machiavellians view others as objects to be manipulated for personal gain, often resorting to deliberate deception (VandenBos, 2007, APA Psychology Dictionary). Individuals high in Machiavellianism are known for their manipulative tendencies, for ignoring moral norms, and for exploiting others' weaknesses for self-serving purposes. This disposition has been linked to counterproductive work behaviors (Shah, Shahjehan & Afsar, 2022), making those high in Machiavellianism more likely to engage in time theft to achieve personal goals.

Self-presentation theory suggests that Machiavellian individuals manage impressions in social settings, often exploiting networks to preserve a positive image. They may falsify work hours or manipulate their workload to appear more committed, reflecting both their self-serving tendencies and ability to morally disengage from organizational ethics (Liao et al., 2025).

Sadism

Sadistic individuals derive pleasure from inflicting physical or emotional pain on others (Chabrol et al., 2009). Although the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) no longer includes sadistic personality disorder, recent research suggests that sadism should be considered as part of the Dark Tetrad (Johnson, Plouffe & Saklofske, 2019; Cohen, 2024). Sadists seek opportunities to watch others suffer and actively enjoy inflicting pain, which may extend to organizational settings. The relationship between sadism and counterproductive work behaviors, including time theft, remains an area of exploration, but preliminary evidence suggests a positive association (Fernández-del-Río, Castro & Ramos-Villagrasa, 2022; Cohen, 2018).

Further research is needed to explore the nuanced relationships between each Dark Tetrad trait and specific dimensions of time theft. The first hypothesis posits that individuals exhibiting traits of narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and sadism within the Dark Tetrad will display a positive association with engaging in time theft behaviors. The inclination toward self-enhancement, lack of empathy, manipulative tendencies, and pleasure-seeking through causing harm are expected to increase the likelihood that these individuals will engage in time theft in the workplace.

Hypothesis 1: Dark Tetrad personalities will be positively related to time theft.

The relationship between pay satisfaction and time theft is multifaceted, with various scholarly perspectives offering distinct interpretations of how compensation influences employee deviance. Traditional academic research often analyzes this link through the lens of expectancy theory, which posits that individuals are guided by previous experiences and engage in specific behaviors when they anticipate valued outcomes (Montalvo-Arroyo et al., 2026). Following this logic, Harold et al. (2022) suggest that pay dissatisfaction arises from a perceived discrepancy between effort and reward, leading employees to use time theft as a mechanism to restore equity and "compensate" for unworked hours. However, this study proposes an alternative perspective grounded in the work of Ketchen et al. (2008), who contend that poorly designed reward systems can inadvertently incentivize undesirable conduct. When organizations distribute uniform rewards regardless of individual performance, productive and unproductive employees are rewarded equally. This indiscriminate approach fails to penalize time theft, potentially reinforcing it within the organizational culture.

Drawing from this logic, we suggest that in the specific context of Kyrgyz culture, pay satisfaction may be positively related to time theft. Kyrgyzstan's highly traditional and collectivist societal structure often prioritizes social harmony and group stability over rigid, high-performance incentive structures typical of Westernized cultures. In such environments, reward systems are frequently decoupled from individual output, leading to a situation where

employees may be highly satisfied with their pay precisely because it is stable and unaffected by their level of effort or "time-thieving" behaviors. In this cultural framework, high pay satisfaction does not necessarily signal a reward for hard work, but rather the absence of pressure to perform, thereby reducing the inclination to invest additional effort and increasing the likelihood of time theft. Given that this positive relationship contradicts the prevailing Western-centric literature, we frame this hypothesis as exploratory.

Hypothesis 2: Pay satisfaction will be positively related to time theft.

Boredom at Work

Job boredom, characterized by repetitive tasks and low skill requirements, is recognized as a significant job property inducing boredom in individuals (Bruursema, Kessler & Spector, 2011). Schaufeli and Salanova (2014, p.298) define boredom at work as "an unpleasant state of relatively low arousal and dissatisfaction, which is attributed to an inadequately stimulating work situation." This cognitive-motivational state, stemming from an understimulating work environment, aligns with various definitions in the literature (Metin, Taris & Peeters, 2016; Loukidou et al., 2009; Reijseger et al., 2013).

The anticipated relationship between boredom at work and time theft draws parallels from the connection between boredom and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Employees experiencing boredom may engage in counterproductive behaviors to introduce change, reassert personal freedom, and inject excitement into their routines (Bruursema et al., 2011). Alternatively, job characteristics that lead to boredom can be viewed as stressors, prompting employees to cope with monotony through CWB (Bruursema et al., 2011).

The link between boredom and cyberloafing further substantiates this relationship. Cyberloafing can constitute a boredom-coping activity, as it restructures the boring work situation to include more interesting (albeit personal) components. Cyberloafing falls under disengagement or distraction coping, though this behavior is probably less harmful to the organization than other forms of disengaged coping or other types of CWB (Game, 2007; Mael & Jex, 2015; Pindek, Krajcevska & Spector, 2018).

Boredom proneness, when coupled with job repetition, heightens the likelihood of engaging in counterproductive work behaviors, particularly among individuals predisposed to boredom (Fisher, 2018). While ostensibly working, bored employees may redirect their focus to more interesting non-work tasks, such as cyberloafing and other forms of time theft. Andreassen, Torsheim, and Pallesen (2014) emphasize the negative relationship between positive work challenges and the inclination to use social network sites at work for personal purposes, suggesting that engaging in work tasks counteracts cyberloafing.

According to Harold et al. (2022), boredom at work signifies low arousal resulting from uninteresting tasks or an unstimulating work environment. Higher levels of reported job boredom are associated with more frequent engagement in various deviant work behaviors, suggesting a positive relationship between boredom and time theft. Employees combating boredom may resort to engaging in non-work tasks, socializing beyond permitted limits, or taking frequent breaks to inject excitement into their workday.

Further empirical exploration is warranted to comprehensively understand the intricacies of this relationship within diverse organizational contexts. In light of these considerations, we propose Hypothesis 3. This hypothesis posits that individuals experiencing higher levels of

boredom at work are more likely to engage in time theft activities, seeking alternative sources of stimulation to cope with the monotony of uninteresting tasks or an unstimulating work environment.

Hypothesis 3: Boredom at work will be positively related to time theft.

Social Media Addiction

The pervasive issue of social media addiction affects individuals across diverse backgrounds, manifesting psychological, physical, and social repercussions in their lives. Symptoms of social media addiction parallel those observed in other forms of addiction, including salience, conflict, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and mood modification (Ünal-Aydın et al., 2020). While modern technologies facilitate easy time-stealing through social media, the functional use of these platforms has expanded corporate communication, albeit with potentially adverse consequences. For instance, granting broad employee access to social media may adversely impact job performance (Landers & Callan, 2014).

Social media use patterns established in personal contexts can seamlessly extend to organizational settings and vice versa. These habits, triggered automatically by various stimuli and cognitive associations, reveal the interconnected nature of social media use across contexts. The fear of missing out in the workplace drives employees to seek information by habitually checking social media applications. This behavior becomes ingrained to the point where employees may unconsciously spend substantial time on personal social media, inadvertently exposing themselves to a mix of work-related and personal information. Consequently, the habitual use of personal social media can escalate into excessive use during work hours (Yu et al., 2023).

The rise of mobile devices and ubiquitous internet access has heightened concerns about time-stealing, especially as social media and online activities have become integral parts of daily life (Landers & Callan, 2014; Ullah, Anis & Kamal, 2022). Hancock's research (2016) underscores the emergence of social media and online shopping as potential platforms for time theft, with social media posing particular concern due to its broader user base and higher usage among respondents. The adverse outcomes of social media addiction are evident when employees divert their attention from work or utilize company time for social media engagement, often triggered by alerts about topics of personal interest. Based on these considerations, we propose Hypothesis 4. This hypothesis suggests that individuals with higher levels of social media addiction are more likely to engage in time theft, diverting their focus from work responsibilities to indulge in social media activities during designated work hours.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a positive relationship between social media addiction and time theft.

General Loneliness and Time Theft

General loneliness, defined as the distressing experience stemming from deficiencies in an individual's social relations, encompasses both quantitative and qualitative aspects of social connection (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). As a subjective phenomenon, loneliness is not synonymous with objective isolation; individuals can be alone without necessarily

experiencing loneliness. This definition highlights loneliness's unpleasant and distressing nature, especially within the normal ranges observed in the general public.

Contrary to loneliness, the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, places, and experiences is considered a fundamental human need, predicting a myriad of outcomes across mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioral domains (Allen et al., 2021). Belonging, arising from opportunities to connect with groups, individuals, and spaces, becomes crucial in fostering a sense of connection. The perception of general loneliness may drive individuals to actively seek opportunities for friendship at work, investing time in building relationships to alleviate their loneliness.

Empirical evidence suggests that lonely individuals often compensate for their loneliness through online activities, such as internet surfing, communication preferences, and enjoying the anonymity provided by online interactions (Yang et al., 2023; Ranaeiy, Taghavi & Goodarzi, 2016). This compensatory behavior in the virtual realm may extend to the workplace, where lonely individuals may not only resort to internet surfing but also engage in socializing during working hours.

Therefore, we propose Hypothesis 5. This hypothesis suggests that individuals who perceive higher levels of general loneliness are more likely to engage in time theft and seek social connections at work to mitigate their feelings of loneliness.

Hypothesis 5: General loneliness will be positively related to time theft.

Following Harold et al. (2022) and Brock, McKee, and Buckley (2017), this study incorporates controls for age and gender. Their research has indicated that younger and male employees are more prone to workplace deviance. Specifically, Hu, Harold, and Kim (2023) identified a significant negative correlation between age and time theft, underscoring the importance of controlling for age. In addition to age and gender, Ullah et al. (2022) expanded the control variables by incorporating marital status in their study on theft. These controls are essential for mitigating potential confounding effects.

The Setting

Because of the uniqueness of the Kyrgyzstan culture, we decided to describe some of its main characteristics. The Kyrgyz Republic, commonly known as Kyrgyzstan, is a landlocked country in Central Asia, bordered by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. Despite its mountainous terrain, Kyrgyzstan is historically significant to the Silk Road. The nation currently ranks 118th on the Human Development Index, classifying it as a developing country and the second poorest in Central Asia.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan declared independence in 1991, becoming a sovereign nation. The country boasts two official languages, Russian and Kyrgyz, with a commendable literacy rate of 99%. At the time of independence, the population distribution was approximately 50% Kyrgyz, 25% Russian, and 15% Uzbek, alongside smaller communities of Tatars, Chinese, Germans, and Turks. The demographics have shifted, with 70% Kyrgyz, 8% Russian, and 14% Uzbek populations. Ethnic conflicts, economic challenges, transitional governments, and political upheavals contributed to the Russian population's decline to 8% after the Tulip Revolution.

The traditions of its nomadic past deeply influence Kyrgyzstan's social structure, permeating various aspects of contemporary life. Despite rapid modernization after independence, the country maintains a traditional social fabric, particularly in rural areas, where nomadic lifestyles persist. The society exhibits a conservative character, firmly anchored in its traditions and beliefs, with the family occupying a central position. The family structure is characterized by a strong hierarchy and a patriarchal system, delineating clear lines of authority. Core values, such as family, kinship, loyalty to tribal traditions, love for the country, and life experiences, are meticulously passed down through generations (Temirkulov, 2011).

Two significant institutionalized values are crucial in reinforcing the Kyrgyz's identity and preserving traditions in contemporary society. The "Manas epic" forms a powerful link to the past, fostering a sense of attachment to the founding ancestors. The "Aksakals," symbolic representatives of age and accumulated experience, exemplify tradition's symbolic power in maintaining social order in today's modern Kyrgyz society (Temirkulov, 2011). Historical influences and contemporary changes shape Kyrgyzstan's unique cultural landscape, contributing to a complex and dynamic societal structure.

Method

Data Collection

Online data were gathered from white-collar employees across different sectors in Kyrgyzstan. Of the 360 surveys distributed, 236 valid responses were received, yielding a 65% response rate. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author. Most participants were female (63%), and 54.3% were married. The average age was 34.8 years. A significant majority worked full-time (84.6%), with 41.2% holding managerial positions. On average, they had 7.5 years of experience in their organization and 9.7 years in their occupation. Additionally, 90.5% held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Instruments

Time Theft. Time theft was measured using the three-dimensional scale developed by Brock et al. (2013). The first and the strongest was termed the 'classic' bandit behavior. It contains 18 items that describe general time theft behaviors, such as taking excessively long or frequent breaks, leaving early, pretending to be sick, and arriving late to work. The second seven-item factor is termed the 'technological' factor. This factor represents computer abuse or the technology factor. It focuses on behaviors such as sending and receiving unrelated personal emails and surfing the Internet. The third six-item factor is the 'social' factor. It covers behaviors such as lengthy water cooler conversations and personal phone calls at work. In Brock et al.'s (2013) study, the social factor was the weakest one. In this study, we omitted one item from the technology factor and one from the social factor to have acceptable reliabilities. The two items we omitted might have been misunderstood in the Kyrgyzstan culture.

Personality Measures. Seven items from the Paulhus et al. (2021) scales measured each Dark Tetrad personality trait (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and sadism). The four subscales demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties in the Paulhus

et al. study and in other studies, including cross-cultural studies (Neumann, Jones & Paulhus, 2022; Pechorro et al., 2023; Fino et al., 2023).

Situational Variables. Loneliness was assessed using the eight-item scale developed by Hays and DiMatteo (1987). Pay satisfaction was measured with the 18-item scale developed by Heneman and Schwab (1985). Boredom at work was evaluated using the eight-item scale developed by Reijseger et al. (2013). Social networking addiction was measured by the six-item scale developed by Andreassen et al. (2014), using the term "social media" instead of Facebook. All items were rated on a 1-5 scale. All the scales for this study were translated and back-translated.

Control Variables. Three control variables were included: age (ratio variable), gender (1 = male; 2 = female), and marital status (0 = not married; 1 = married).

Results

Firstly, we assessed discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion, a method recommended by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015). Discriminant validity issues arise when HTMT values are high (Henseler et al., 2015). In our study, HTMT ratios for all pairs, except one, were below 0.85, meeting the HTMT criterion for discriminant validity (see Table 1). The exception was noted in the relationship between time theft social and time theft technology, where the HTMT value was .90. It is important to emphasize that as these two variables are both dependent variables, any impact on them should not influence the independent variables in the regression equations.

Table 2 presents the psychometric properties of the research variables and their intercorrelations. The correlations among the independent variables are generally not high. It is noteworthy that, aside from the correlation between time theft classic and boredom at work (r = .71), all other correlations are at or below .60, with one exception. The results from the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) analysis, coupled with the intercorrelations, support the discriminant validity among the research variables.

Table 3 presents the regression analysis results (standardized coefficients) of the demographic, personal, and situational variables on the three dimensions of time theft. Hypothesis 1 posited a positive relationship between Dark Tetrad traits and time theft. The data provided partial support for the hypothesis, as narcissism and sadism were positively related to time theft classic in step 2. However, only narcissism remained statistically significant in its relationship with time theft classic in step 3 (refer to Table 3). Narcissism showed significant relationships with time theft technology and time theft social in step 2, but none of the Dark Tetrad traits were related to time theft technology and time theft social in step 3.

Hypothesis 2 anticipated a positive relationship between pay satisfaction and time theft. The data partly supported this hypothesis, with pay satisfaction being positively and significantly related to time theft classic (see Table 3, step 3). However, it was not associated with time theft, technology, or social issues. Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between boredom at work and time theft, and this was strongly supported by the data, indicating a robust positive relationship with high standardized coefficients across all three dimensions of time theft.

Hypothesis 4 expected a positive relationship between social media addiction and time theft. The findings provided partial support for this hypothesis, revealing a significant and

positive relationship between social media addiction and both time theft technology and time theft social. However, no such relationship was observed with the time theft classic. The data rejected Hypothesis 5, which anticipated a positive relationship between general loneliness and time theft, as no significant relationship was found between general loneliness and any of the three dimensions of time theft.

Table 1: Results of HTMT

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Machiavellianism										
2. Narcissism	0.64									
3. Psychopathy	0.75	0.60								
4. Sadism	0.66	0.82	0.57							
5. Pay satisfaction	0.04	-0.03	0.17	0.03						
6. Social media addiction	0.47	0.53	0.48	0.48	0.16					
7. Time theft classic	0.46	0.68	0.36	0.63	-0.04	0.55				
8. Time theft technology	0.32	0.49	0.37	0.42	0.02	0.47	0.81			
9. Time theft social	0.33	0.57	0.39	0.51	0.03	0.52	0.83	0.90		
10. Boredom at work	0.31	0.45	0.23	0.43	-0.25	0.51	0.83	0.61	0.59	
11. Loneliness	0.17	0.20	-0.02	0.16	-0.24	0.43	0.38	0.21	0.12	0.54

Note: $N = 236$

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha reliabilities (in parentheses), and intercorrelations among research variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender	1.63	0.48														
2. Age	34.79	9.98	-.07													
3. Marital status	0.54	0.50	-.18**	.50***												
4. Machiavellianism	2.99	0.75	-.24***	-.07	-.10	(.70)										
5. Narcissism	2.17	0.63	-.28***	-.09	-.07	.47***	(.70)									
6. Psychopathy	2.90	0.77	-.11	-.19**	-.19**	.55***	.46***	(.78)								
7. Sadism	1.90	0.73	-.38***	-.15*	-.10	.50***	.59***	.45***	(.73)							
8. Loneliness	2.11	0.78	.08	-.16*	-.12	.13*	.15*	-.01	.13*	(.82)						
9. Boredom at work	2.17	0.79	-.08	-.26***	-.21***	.24***	.35***	.19**	.35***	.45***	(.84)					
10. SMA	2.38	0.88	.01	-.34***	-.24***	.36***	.40***	.38***	.37***	.35***	.42***	(.80)				
11. Pay satisfaction	3.07	0.83	.13*	-.01	-.01	.02	-.03	.14***	.02	-.21***	-.23***	.13*	(.95)			
12. TT classic	2.14	0.57	-.25***	-.19**	-.16*	.37***	.51***	.30***	.50***	.32***	.71***	.46***	-.04	(.83)		
13. TT technology	2.48	0.71	-.22***	-.16*	-.04	.22***	.33***	.27***	.28***	.16*	.45***	.34***	.01	.55***	(.64)	
14. TT social	2.43	0.72	-.29***	-.14*	-.10	.22***	.38***	.28***	.35***	.09	.43***	.36***	.02	.60***	.58***	(.64)

Note(s): $N = 236$. *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; marital status: 0 = not married, 1 = married. SMA = Social Media Addiction; TT = Time Theft.

Table 3: *Regression analysis (standardized coefficients) of demographic variables, Dark Tetrad, and situational variables on Time theft*

	Dependent Variables								
Independent variables	Time Theft Classical			Time Theft Technology			Time Theft Social		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Constant	3.013***	1.398***	.488*	3.492***	2.257***	1.464***	3.560***	2.249***	1.660***
Demographic variables									
Gender (female)	-.282***	-.072	-.135**	-.231***	-.136*	-.195**	-.314***	-.200**	-.262***
Age	-.137	-.090	.044	-.183*	-.150*	-.045	-.116	-.076	.029
Marital status (married)	-.146*	-.089	-.034	.006	.046	.083	-.095	-.054	-.023
Dark Tetrad									
Machiavellianism		.102	.043		-.008	-.053		-.059	-.100
Narcissism		.321***	.174**		.211**	.100		.233**	.124
Psychopathy		-.051	-.023		.121	.119		.113	.085
Sadism		.228**	.089		.038	-.067		.101	-.001
Situational Variables									
Loneliness			.018			-.031			-.116
Boredom at work			.572***			.391***			.350***
Social media addiction			.105			.151*			.230**
Pay satisfaction			.103*			.092			.071
R^2 (adjusted)	.119	.351	.627	.080	.164	.305	.116	.218	.349
	(.108)	(.331)	(.608)	(.068)	(.138)	(.270)	(.104)	(.193)	(.316)
F for R^2	10.350***	17.370***	33.766***	6.665***	6.299***	8.797***	10.020***	8.937***	10.749***
ΔR^2		.231	.276		.084	.141		.102	.131
F for ΔR^2		20.052***	40.897***		5.621***	11.175***		7.298***	11.110***

Note(s): $N = 236$; *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; marital status: 0= not married, 1 = married.

Demographic Variables and Time Theft

Although the study did not propose a specific hypothesis concerning the connection between demographic variables and time theft, the analysis revealed a noteworthy pattern. The results consistently indicated a strong relationship between gender and time theft, with males exhibiting a higher tendency to engage in time theft compared to females. This finding aligns with previous research by Lv et al. (2025), who observed a similar effect in China, which is also considered a traditional society.

Finally, to ensure the reliability of the regression analyses conducted in this study, multicollinearity was carefully evaluated. The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were calculated for all predictor variables included in the models. Results indicated that all VIF values were well below the threshold of 2.00. This finding demonstrates that multicollinearity was not present among the independent variables in the regression equations, thereby confirming the robustness and validity of the statistical models used in the research.

Discussion

Time theft is a behavior that has high costs for organizations. Surprisingly, relative to other adverse outcomes in the organization, there is relatively little research on time theft. Two explanations can be advanced as to why this concept is overlooked. First, many scholars prefer to use the general concept of CWB, as some of its items cover aspects of time theft. Given the information on the overwhelming costs of time theft, this alone justifies research into the behavior. Another explanation is that the focus now is on cyberloafing. According to this contention, this is how employees misuse time in the modern organization. This is only partly correct. Employees in almost any organization do not spend all their time at the screen, whether or not they surf the Internet for personal reasons. This contradicts the nature of human beings. In almost all organizations, employees leave their offices or workstations for numerous reasons. This is enough to provide the opportunity for time theft. Whether or not they waste time on reasons unrelated to their job, this is what time theft is about.

This study examines correlates of time theft in a culture that is rarely examined in this regard. Therefore, the advanced hypotheses and findings are exploratory. The findings here can be generalized to what we expect to find in a traditional collectivist culture. Culture substantially influences the behavioral expression of some maladaptive and subclinical personality traits. One widespread contention in such cultures is that dark personalities may be less expressed in collectivistic cultures characterized by strong social control (Aluja et al., 2022).

The findings here provide some support for the above-mentioned contention. Dark Tetrad personalities are related to time theft. However, the effect is modest and supports the contention that in collectivist cultures, the control mechanisms of these societies suppress the expression of Dark Tetrad traits. Psychopathy and Machiavellianism were unrelated to the time theft dimensions in the regression equations. Sadism was positively related to time theft classic in step 2. This is an interesting finding. Sadists in a collectivist society spend time outside their office or workstation collecting information about others who suffer or watching others' pain (Paulhus, 2014; Thibault & Kelloway, 2020). This type of behavior, in which they are quite passive and enjoy seeing others suffer, has a low likelihood of exposure and, therefore, suits them quite well.

Narcissism emerged as a dark personality trait that has a substantial and consistent effect on time theft. It was related to the time theft classic in step 2 of the regression and in step 3, where situational variables were added to the regression equation. Narcissists probably spend time at work for self-endorsement and self-enhancement (Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2017). Even in a traditional collectivist society that does not encourage such behaviors, this need is strong enough to make narcissists to take the risk of exposure and the adverse consequences that might result from being exposed. As seen in Table 3, narcissism was also related to time theft technology and time theft social in step 2 of the equations. This finding strengthens the conclusion that narcissists will not miss any opportunity for self-enhancement that might assist them in getting ahead in their workplace. Future research should further explore the findings of this study regarding the Dark Tetrad to strengthen their generalizability.

While Dark Tetrad traits have a modest effect on time theft, some of the situational variables examined in this study have a substantial effect. Boredom at work has the greatest impact on all dimensions of time theft. Harold et al.'s (2022) findings support the strong effect of boredom at work. This result provides clear direction regarding efforts that may reduce the frequency of time theft among employees. This direction is supported by Andreassen et al. (2014), who found that positive work challenges were negatively associated with attitudes towards and use of social network sites for personal purposes. This indicates that having something stimulating and challenging to do at work can counteract time theft. Individuals could be trained to use more constructive boredom-coping techniques, regardless of their susceptibility to boredom (Game, 2007).

Social media addiction was related to time theft technology and time theft social, but not to time theft classic, the primary and dominant factor of the construct. This finding is similar to those of Hancock (2016). The findings indicate some spillover effects. Those who spend excessive time surfing social media at home need additional work-related stimulation. On the other hand, pay satisfaction was positively related to time theft classic, a finding opposite to that of Harold et al. (2022). Harold et al. contended that dissatisfaction with pay will lead to time theft as a form of retaliation. In this paper, we raised the possibility that time bandits who receive the same raise as non-time bandits will be motivated to continue this behavior. The contradictory findings may be due to cultural differences. Harold et al. (2022) collected data from a Westernized culture, and this data was collected from a very traditional collectivist culture. Future research is needed to clarify the differences in the findings. As for the demographic variables, one cannot ignore the strong effect of gender on the three dimensions of time theft. The fact that males were more involved in time theft than females can be attributed to the participants' traditional culture.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the model proposed in this study exhibited a robust relationship with the time theft classic, with substantial explained variance (R^2 adjusted = .608). Considering that time theft classic is the most influential factor among the three, this finding supports the model. The explained variance is also considerable for time theft technology (R^2 adjusted = .305) and time theft social (R^2 adjusted = .349). While acknowledging the potential for greater predictive power with additional variables, the advanced model provides a strong foundational framework for further refinement.

This study has certain limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and data collected from a single source increase the risk of common-method bias. The sample

represents a specific, unique culture, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other settings and cultures.

In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding an overlooked behavior. More research is needed on this costly misconduct. The model presented here provided some insight into the causes of time theft. The findings have practical implications for organizations aiming to reduce time theft and enhance productivity. Employers should find ways to have better control over Dark Tetrad personalities. Employers must address workplace boredom to mitigate time theft. Future research should further explore the role of dark personality and situational factors in understanding time theft.

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