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THE MODUS OPERANDI OF THE CORPORATE PSYCHOPATH: ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The scarcity of research on corporate psychopaths in Brazil aroused the interest of the present study. The main objective was to analyze and explain the *modus operandi* adopted by psychopaths in companies, based on the specialized literature. For this, the research, of an exploratory nature, used the bibliographic review as a methodology, consulting books, scientific articles and websites. The results revealed that most authors agree on the characteristics of the corporate psychopath, such as the search for power and control, the manipulation of colleagues, and the exploitation of dysfunctional organizational cultures. However, there are disagreements about the definition, nomenclature, origin and classification of psychopathy. The study concludes that corporate psychopathy is a real problem and that more research is needed to understand and combat it. Identifying and addressing this profile is crucial to protect victims and organizations from the negative impacts of corporate psychopathy.

Keywords: Corporate psychopathy, Corporate psychopath, *Modus operandi*, Handling.

[1] http://lattes.cnpq.br/8144230637187129
[2] http://lattes.cnpq.br/7175179582176570

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the term "psychopath" dates back to the Greek, where "psyche" means mind and "pathos" disease. The definition of psychopathic personality is the object of study of several currents of thought, with numerous concepts and definitions. Some strands emphasize the influence of the environment on the formation of the psychopathic individual, while others consider it a pathological profile, or even a congenital defect.

Clarke (2011) states that in any organizational environment, regardless of the position held, it is possible to find a variety of personalities and behaviors. The author highlights the existence of individuals who intentionally humiliate and ridicule co-workers, as well as impulsive, superficial employees or those who do not show empathy. In addition, it mentions those who use seduction to impress leaders and customers, and those who blame others for unsuccessful projects, even when they are solely responsible.

It is undeniable that corporate psychopaths exist in various work environments, from small companies to large multinational and transnational corporations. These "professionals" use a variety of manipulation tactics to move up in their careers, leaving a trail of negative consequences for colleagues and even superiors. Both men and women with this profile can turn the work environment into a real torment. (Clarke, 2011).

The identification of individuals who discreetly coexist in organizations is essential, precisely because of the need to prevent employees from becoming victims of the manipulation of corporate psychopaths. Knowledge of the characteristics of these individuals, who aim for power above all else and have no conscience, makes it possible to protect against their nefarious methods and the consequences of their actions. (Sina, 2017).

The research was based on a bibliographic review of the specialized literature, consulting books, websites and scientific articles. The material was selected through a search in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and Google Scholar databases, using the descriptors: psychopath; psychopathy; corporate psychopath; organization. The data analysis was carried out through descriptive and qualitative approaches, based on the theoretical information available on the topic of corporate psychopath.

The literature review revealed that the topic of "psychopath" has been controversial and has been the subject of study for years, with a vast bibliographic production in the areas of psychiatry and psychology. However, in management science, research is scarce

and focuses on the concept of the "corporate psychopath." The existing literature presents both complementary and divergent views on the subject.

The specialized literature converges on the understanding that individuals with psychopathic traits tend to generate considerable disturbances in the organizational environment, especially affecting colleagues who interact directly with them. Consequently, this dynamic exerts a negative influence on the organizational climate.

This study was structured into five main sections. Initially, this introduction situated the object of study, outlining the research problem and establishing the objectives of the investigation. In the second section, a review of the pertinent literature was carried out, seeking to analyze and explain the *modus operandi* that the psychopath adopts within an organization. Next, the third section detailed the methodology used in the research, while the fourth section presented the results obtained, including the analysis and discussion of the data collected. Finally, the fifth section encompassed the final considerations and recommendations arising from the research.

The first author selected the theme "corporate psychopath" for the elaboration of the article for two reasons. The former is personal in nature, while the latter is based on academic motivations.

The scarcity of academic research on the investigated topic aroused the interest of the main author, making it attractive for the development of the study. After all, it is a subject little explored and widespread in the Brazilian school context.

The second foundation was based on the practical experiences of the first author in the labor market through paid internships during graduation. He has interned in eight organizations of different sectors, sizes and segments, such as retail, basic and manufacturing industry, banking and education.

Throughout his professional career, the main author has accumulated extensive experience in people management, interacting with several employees and different leadership styles. This experience provided contact with various situations, including some negative experiences, such as lack of professionalism and unethical attitudes on the part of former co-workers.

In this way, the reading on subjects such as moral harassment; *corporate bullying*; sabotage ("rug pulling"); the relationship between competition and cooperation in the workplace; and protection mechanisms against colleagues of bad nature, seeking to understand the motivations behind such unethical attitudes and the functioning of these individuals. In this context, the first author found the term "corporate psychopath", a theme present in scientific production.

In the literature on Administration, there is a lack of research on the subject, especially in the Brazilian context. Consequently, the theme is little explored in the field of organizational studies (Campelo; Sousa, 2016).

Campelo and Sousa (2016) observed that the topic of the corporate psychopath is not often addressed by organizational managers, as some characteristics of this profile are seen as potentially beneficial for the company's success.

The performance of corporate psychopaths in the workplace causes significant harm to both individuals and organizations. Babiak and Hare (2006) estimate that 1% of the population fits the profile of corporate psychopathy, while 10% exhibit similar traits. These individuals, in their search for professional advancement, act with coldness and disregard for colleagues, harming not only the work environment, but also the organization itself, through fraud and violation of rules.

The analysis of the harmful impact of the behaviors of corporate psychopaths on socio-professional relations and, consequently, on the company's productivity, justifies the need to deepen the study on the subject. Currently, the subject is little addressed by business managers.

The literature on psychopathy in the business context is still scarce, especially in Brazilian studies. In view of this gap, the present research seeks to answer the following question: how does scientific production on the subject contribute to the understanding of the *modus operandi* of psychopaths in companies? The objectives of the article are: to analyze and explain, based on the specialized literature, the modus *operandi* that the psychopath adopts within an organization.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Corporate psychopaths are described as shrewd players in the business world, adept at manipulating and using strategies and tactics in a three-phase process (Babiak; Hare, 2006). This process, often more automatic than planned, is a consequence of the psychopathic personality. The first phase, according to the authors, consists of assessing the value of individuals in relation to their own needs, identifying their psychological strengths and weaknesses.

Second, corporate psychopaths manipulate their co-workers (now turned into potential victims) through carefully crafted messages. At the same time, they use the reactions of these colleagues to build and maintain control over them. This second step in the *modus operandi* of corporate psychopaths is an effective strategy for dealing with their future prey, allowing them to circumvent threats and difficulties quickly and efficiently when

confronted or threatened by other employees of the organization. In the third and final stage, according to the researchers, psychopaths abandon their victims, leaving them exhausted and disoriented, so they are no longer useful for their professional advancement. Chart 1 illustrates the stages of the corporate psychopath's performance.

Frame 1. Phases of the *modus operandi* of the Corporate Psychopath

Level	Description
First phase	Evaluation
Second phase	Handling
Third phase	Abandonment

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

Babiak and Hare (2006) state that the desire to deceive and manipulate others drives the corporate psychopath, whose search for control and power in the organization is incessant. To achieve his personal goals, the psychopath uses his informal power within the company.

In the second stage of their *modus operandi*, after identifying potentially useful individuals in the company, corporate psychopaths employ charm, lies, and deceit to manipulate their colleagues. Their initial goal is to gain the trust of others through false gratifications, such as exaggerated praise for potential victims, and various personal image management techniques. Lying is one of the most effective tools used by the corporate psychopath to gain the trust of their co-workers. He can build a fictional character, a mask, for the sole purpose of manipulating the people around him. The absence of empathy, guilt and remorse, a characteristic that allows the psychopath to identify his prey in the evaluation phase, also enables him to deceive and manipulate his colleagues. The almost pathological ability to lie contributes significantly to the psychopath's success in gaining the trust of his victims (Babiak; Hare, 2006).

The corporate psychopath uses the propagation of false information as a strategy to be seen positively by leaders, at the same time that their colleagues are harmed by this gossip and rumors (Silva, 2008). He sows discord among employees, pitting them against each other, and pretends to be friends, sharing negative information about other employees with colleagues (Silva, 2008). The corporate psychopath prefers individual contact with people, avoiding situations in which he needs to take sides in front of the entire team (Silva, 2008). This discreet posture allows him to continue his climb to power without being detected (Silva, 2008).

When the victim is no longer instrumental to the corporate psychopath's goals, the corporate psychopath discards him and looks for a new target to explore and suck his energies. The withdrawal is usually abrupt, with the psychopath simply disappearing, and

the victim may not notice the abandonment and replacement by someone else. While most people experience guilt or regret and seek to redeem themselves for their actions against co-workers, corporate psychopaths have only a vague notion of these concepts, considering them weaknesses. They do not care about the possible harmful consequences of their attitudes for themselves and, especially, for the other members of the organization (Silva, 2008).

This phenomenon is due, in part, to the lesser importance that the past and future have for corporate psychopaths, compared to the present. They see colleagues as mere instruments or pawns, to be manipulated to achieve their selfish goals. A person's value lies only in what they can offer. Once the psychopath's needs are met, the employee is discarded, perpetuating the cycle: another individual is chosen to be used and subsequently abandoned (Babiak; Hare, 2006).

Based on the ideas of Silva (2008), aligned with the perspective of Babiak and Hare (2006), corporate psychopaths tend to discard co-workers who, although previously flattered, fail to serve their goals of professional advancement. Silva (2008) highlights humiliation as a tactic used by these individuals to silence their victims, which results in a scenario where those who suffer intense moral harassment are the least likely to share their experiences. The author also points out that, after instigating conflicts among employees, especially among managers, the corporate psychopath often assumes the position of his immediate superior, who is usually fired or demoted in the company's hierarchy.

Thus, the corporate psychopath reaches prominent positions in the organization, fulfilling his initial objectives. The absence of awareness and fear, as Silva (2008) points out, makes these individuals potentially Machiavellian and dangerous. The author emphasizes that, for them, transgressing rules and manifesting their destructive and predatory desires without any principle or guilt are normal behaviors, consequently, devoid of self-criticism (Silva, 2008).

The organizational structure of some corporations can favor the rise of self-centered and dishonest individuals to leadership positions. The accelerated growth of certain companies, which leads to constant changes in personnel and positions, creates an environment conducive to psychopaths disguising their intrigues and cheating for long periods. In many companies, the unbridled pursuit of growth at any cost, under the premise that the ends justify the means, weakens their values and principles, corrupting their foundations. Organizations with sick structures tend to attract and retain employees who fit this profile, perpetuating unscrupulous behavior in the corporate environment (Silva, 2008).

Silva (2008) points out that economic globalization can intensify competitiveness between companies, triggering crises in various sectors. In such scenarios, the ability to adapt quickly is crucial. The author argues that companies with a solid structure and a medium and long-term strategic vision tend to invest in their employees, seeking innovative solutions to overcome challenges and resume sustainable growth, without compromising their core values.

On the other hand, according to Silva (2008), institutions with a weakened administrative and philosophical structure tend, in times of crisis, to overvalue quick and superficial solutions, trusting in professionals who assume the role of "saviors of the homeland". In these organizations, employees who demonstrate strength, power of persuasion and emotional control quickly stand out, as their characteristics are initially interpreted as competitive advantages in the business world. According to the researcher, a psychopath can naturally simulate these attributes and, by using them in a seductive and manipulative way, build a long and successful career in companies with material, ideological and/or ethical deficiencies.

Silva (2008) highlights the importance of critically and thoroughly analyzing the curriculum of candidates in selection processes, questioning the reasons behind an impeccable professional history. The author emphasizes that the presence of qualified psychologists in companies can be crucial to identify corporate psychopaths, since those responsible for hiring do not always have the necessary knowledge to deal with the manipulation and persuasion skills of these individuals. Chart 2 presents some tips for organizations to prevent themselves during the selection process, in order to avoid hiring corporate psychopaths.

Frame 2. Tips for Organizations Not to Hire a Psychopath

Tips for Organizations Not to Hire a Psychopath
Be wary of an overly ostentatious resume;
Notice if the candidate has numerous changes in position in short periods of time;
Ask the Human Resources sector to contact the candidate's last employer;
In the interview with the candidate, elaborate skillful questions that can assess the veracity of the information contained in the resume.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The *modus operandi* of the corporate psychopath, as described by Clarke (2011), involves the manipulation of both the company and its employees, corroborating the characterizations made by Babiak and Hare (2006) and Silva (2008). This action unfolds in two main strands, as summarized in Chart 3, which lists the factors involved in this process.

Frame 3. Aspects of the *modus operandi* of the Corporate Psychopath

Manipulating Companies	Manipulating People
How the psychopath chooses his employer;	Corporate recognition and peer evaluation;
How the company chooses the corporate psychopath;	Divide and conquer;
Applying for the job and interviewing – entering the company;	Cultivate networks of power and influence;
Office Politics and the Corporate Psychopath;	The mechanics of manipulation (five stages);
The corporate police;	Secrecy
Psychopathic corporations?	

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The corporate psychopath is an expert in manipulation, a skill he uses at all stages of his career, from applying for a job to rising through the company's hierarchy. Eventually, when his manipulation is discovered, the corporate psychopath already occupies a prominent position, making the situation difficult to confront. This results in large financial losses for the company and can be devastating for colleagues who work with or for him (Clarke, 2011).

Corporate psychopaths are attracted to companies in the midst of transformation, restructuring, or accelerated expansion. These unstable corporate environments make it easy for the psychopath to remain unnoticed for long periods, camouflaging himself in the chaos of the company. In certain cases, the psychopath may even seem like an up-and-coming employee, as he appropriates ideas from colleagues and presents them to management as his own (Clarke, 2011).

Clarke (2011) argues that the traditional, usually standardized, selection process may inadvertently favor corporate psychopaths. The author describes the typical selection process: posting the job, screening resumes, interviewing promising candidates, checking references, and offering a job to the ideal candidate. However, Clarke points out that corporate psychopaths are skilled at manipulating this process, falsifying resumes and lying to fit the desired profile. The author goes so far as to state that some job descriptions may unintentionally highlight common characteristics in corporate psychopaths.

> You need to be innovative, with something special to offer. Undoubtedly, you will need to have leadership and the ability to influence and be able to dazzle a skeptical selection group. We want someone who can see the big picture and make a profound impact. Your training can be in... Anything, you must be someone special. Salary: more than $150,000 per year (Clarke, 2011, p.30).

> You need to have a great desire to accomplish things, the ability to persuade and influence others, excellent communication skills... You want to work with the best. You enjoy competing as much as you like winning. You believe in high rewards for great levels of performance. Salary $85,000 per year (Clarke, 2011, p.30).

The advertisements analyzed (Clarke, 2011) demonstrate that characteristics such as mutability, superficial charm, absence of remorse or guilt, and tendency to boredom, although not explicitly sought by companies, can attract both corporate and non-psychopathic psychopaths.

Contrary to popular belief, the corporate psychopath finds it easy to insert himself into various organizations. Recruitment and selection processes, often outsourced or conducted in-house, are largely based on reviewing resumes, communication skills, leadership's impressions, and occasionally checking references. The evaluation of performance in previous positions, when carried out, is usually restricted to quantitative indicators such as sales volume or account value, without delving into the qualitative analysis of the activities performed (Clarke, 2011).

The information on professional performance, often presented in the curriculum by the candidate, is susceptible to fraud, given that previous employers would hardly disclose sensitive data about their business (Clarke, 2011). In the subsequent stage, the interview, the corporate psychopath stands out, using his charm and eloquence to present himself as the ideal candidate (Clarke, 2011).

Clarke (2011) notes that the range and type of strategies that a corporate psychopath employs to move up the corporate hierarchy are fluid and adaptable. This malleability stems from the manipulative, intelligent, and charming nature of the corporate psychopath, who molds himself to each situation in a unique way. The author identifies three common objectives in the initial manipulative strategies of the corporate psychopath's career, aligning with the perspectives of Babiak and Hare (2006) and Silva (2008):

> The first goal is to create disharmony among co-workers. In this confusion, the psychopath is able to play people against each other without them realizing what is happening. Simultaneously, the corporate psychopath is able to make himself attractive in the eyes of management, solving seemingly impossible situations. He demonstrates his leadership skills at the expense of his supervisor, who does not seem to be able to solve the situation created by the psychopath (Clarke, 2011, p.33).
>
> The second objective is to spread misinformation about rivals within the company. These rivals include co-workers on the same level as the psychopath and also people in higher positions than him. Generally, this misinformation is spread through third parties within the company. […] He can also sabotage someone else's work, pass on to co-workers, through cheating, impossible tasks to be performed so that failure is inevitable, hide problems from the supervisor until the last minute so that he does not present the production that is expected of him and criticize the boss directly to the management, ignoring the chain of command (Clarke, 2011, p.33).
>
> The third goal of the psychopath's manipulative strategies is to impress management – to show himself in the best possible light. This is achieved by taking credit for others' work (or even stealing the work), creating crises, and then "saving the day" quite noticeably by exaggerating their achievements,

> going through the chain of command to impress directors directly, getting others to spread positive rumors about them, volunteering for extra projects without ever completing them, seeking to present projects that will guarantee him high exposure within the company, cutting costs and overloading employees in the short term to ensure a promotion without considering the bad side for the company (Clarke, 2011, p.33-34).

Despite this, it is important to note that the corporate psychopath does not treat all employees uniformly. He interacts with employees and co-workers selectively, based on the usefulness that each one may have for him. It is in this context that the importance of the manipulation strategy elaborated by the psychopath is manifested. The level of sophistication of this strategy varies from one psychopath to another, resulting in different levels of success when analyzing specific corporate psychopaths (Clarke, 2011).

Auditors, human resources and quality control professionals, as they have the function of inspecting other workers, are the ones who naturally oppose the corporate psychopath and identify his true nature (Clarke, 2011). It is difficult to manipulate or deceive them, as they rely on hard data to analyze the present, rather than believing in the psychopath's future promises. However, when they express their concerns, they are often ignored by the leaders, as the psychopath strives to protect their position (Clarke, 2011).

An intriguing aspect lies in the similarities between corporate principles and beliefs and psychopathy. When analyzing the characteristics of psychopaths, many aspects of corporate behavior can be classified as psychopathic. However, an organization is not an individual and therefore cannot be diagnosed with psychopathy. This discussion aims to raise awareness about how corporate culture can reflect values equivalent to psychopathy. Today, companies are often driven by competition, a "win at any cost" mentality, and competitive behavior, characteristics similar to those of psychopaths. To deepen this reflection, it is worth considering the characteristics presented in Chart 4 (Clarke, 2011).

Frame 4. Characteristics of Psychopathic Corporations

Characteristics of Psychopathic Corporations
Misleading and superficial;
Egocentric and grandiose;
lack of remorse or guilt;
Misleading and manipulative;
Parasite.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

In Clarke (2011, p. 36), the author criticizes the practice of companies that, with the help of consultants, construct superficial images, using "attractive" language and empty terminology. This strategy, according to the author, aims to present only the positive aspects of products and services, hiding relevant information for the consumer. Clarke (2011) also

argues that many companies, in their incessant search for growth and market leadership, demonstrate arrogance and pretension.

"Companies do not experience remorse or guilt when a competitor collapses or 'dies" because of its actions" (Clarke, 2011, p. 36). In Clarke's (2011) view, the corporation interprets this event as the elimination of a competitor, which makes it possible to increase its market share and, consequently, maximize its participation in the sector. The author argues that the bankruptcy of another company is seen as an opportunity for expansion for the company with psychopathic characteristics. Some corporations, in fact, aim for the financial collapse of their competitors, employing every possible means to bankrupt them.

Clarke (2011) argues that corporations are dishonest in several situations. He notes that in some large companies investigated by government regulators, the culture of deception and manipulation of shareholders and consumers has become institutionalized. The author concludes by questioning how many companies cheat shareholders and customers to make a profit.

Clarke (2011, p. 37) argues that the practice of large multinationals establishing factories in Third World countries, where they benefit from cheap labor to produce goods at low cost and then sell them at high profit margins around the world, can be interpreted as a form of parasitism or living at the expense of the unhappiness of others. This exploitation of vulnerable workers raises ethical questions about corporate social responsibility and justice in global economic relations.

Clarke (2011) argues that public opinion has made the direct exploitation of labor in underdeveloped countries less attractive for companies' public relations. In response, some multinational organizations, although they have stopped operating factories in these countries, continue to purchase products from the same local industries through subcontracts. This strategy allows them to deny exploitation, but in the scientist's view, such behavior can be interpreted as manipulative and deceptive, motivated by the company's profit or self-gratification.

According to Clarke (2011), there is a contradiction between individuals and corporate objectives with regard to coexistence and altruistic behavior. Companies are encouraged to compete with each other and win at any cost, while people are encouraged to work together on social networks for the smooth functioning of society. Companies are driven to be guided by self-interest, which contrasts with the expected collaboration of people.

Individuals are encouraged to prioritize the common good and to subordinate their ambitions to the goals of society. Clarke (2011, p. 37) argues that harmony is essential for

the survival of humanity, questioning: "Would it be possible for the human race to survive if all people on Earth had the same values and attitudes as corporations towards other corporations and consumers?".

Often, the corporate psychopath is perceived by new acquaintances as someone reliable, intelligent, influential, and eloquent. The view of some co-workers remains unchanged, as the corporate psychopath prevents them from seeing beyond the mask he (or she) presents to the world. Other employees, however, feel fear and anger at the thought of their psychopathic colleague. To deal with these divergent perceptions, the corporate psychopath employs a complex set of tactics and strategies, facilitating their entry and ascension in the company in which they work (Clarke, 2011).

According to Clarke (2011), when joining a company, the corporate psychopath evaluates both the individuals with whom he will interact and the business systems that govern his working conditions. Importantly, this initial analysis is common to any new employee, psychopath or not, as it is natural to examine the new environment and colleagues.

However, the corporate psychopath seeks to quickly identify the usefulness of certain employees and the flaws in the institutional system that will allow him to act freely, without being prevented by those responsible for supervising the rules of the organization. In addition, it detects weaknesses and insecurities exposed by employees, which can be exploited in the future, if necessary (Clarke, 2011).

Clarke (2011) notes that it is common for there to be different perceptions of the same corporate psychopath among management, the human resources department, supervisors, and co-workers. This divergence, according to the author, occurs because the corporate psychopath identifies the usefulness of each individual and builds a specific image for those he considers "usable". The evaluation criterion used by the psychopath, according to Clarke, is the level of power and influence that an employee holds in the company. Directors, who generally do not interact with the corporate psychopath on a daily basis, often become enamored with this type of individual, seeing him or her as a talent to be retained. The author also points out that the corporate psychopath usually chooses a specific target among the directors, seeking closeness and even friendship through joint activities.

Clarke (2011) describes the corporate psychopath's strategy of gaining the trust of the director's personal assistant by securing direct access and insider information. The assistant, in turn, becomes an unwitting advocate for the psychopath, influencing the perception of the principal and other leaders about his performance. Directors, often seen

as infallible, are reluctant to admit errors in judgment, especially toward employees they believed they knew. This dynamic allows the corporate psychopath to manipulate the situation for a considerable amount of time. Only after the repeated occurrence of problematic incidents can the principal begin to question his initial assessment and investigate the issue further (Clarke, 2011).

Colleagues who occupy the same hierarchical level as the corporate psychopath usually receive good treatment during the individual's adaptation period to the company. They report that the person was charming, lively, intelligent, and collaborative. The psychopath simulates friendship with all employees, but in fact, he prepares them to be harmed with the goal of eliminating competition when the time comes for promotions. Victims perceive the "frying process" and the "rug pull" when they complain about the psychopath or when they do not receive the promotion they deserve, being informed that the psychopath has already made numerous complaints about them. It is at this moment that the psychopath's colleagues realize the true nature of their "ally", but it is already too late to reverse the situation, as the psychopath already occupies a hierarchical position higher than theirs and, therefore, their protests are seen as evil. Other employees in a lower hierarchical position than the psychopath are treated in the same way (Clarke, 2011).

Clarke (2011) identifies five stages of interpersonal manipulation used by the corporate psychopath. Although intuitive for the psychopath, these stages are not necessarily conscious. However, according to the author, they are powerful psychological strategies that exploit the weaknesses of colleagues to achieve the manipulator's goals. Chart 5 details the five stages and their descriptions.

Frame 5. The Stages of Manipulation Adopted by the Corporate Psychopath

Level	Description
Stage 01	Finding the target
Stage 02	Establishing harmony
Stage 03	Identify victims' needs
Stage 04	Create emotional pain
Stage 05	Reverse psychology

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The corporate psychopath presents himself and burdens his victims with an excessive amount of information, making it impossible for them to analyze it critically. Faced with the inability to process so much data, victims become more likely to believe the psychopath. This process is facilitated by the adulation and flattery that the psychopath directs at the victims, creating a sense of comfort and well-being. Consequently, victims come to appreciate the presence of the psychopath, as they feel valued and recognized,

something that can be uncommon in their lives. In this phase, the psychopath is friendly and solicitous, seeming to be willing to do anything to satisfy his victims (Clarke, 2011).

The corporate psychopath stays close to his victims, depriving them of the opportunity to discuss their actions with other colleagues who are not emotionally involved in the situation. He maintains this control by participating in conversations and activities that interest the victims, ensuring that their false perception of him is internalized (Clarke, 2011).

The corporate psychopath shrewdly identifies the needs of victims in order to manipulate them effectively. To this end, it exploits their emotional fragilities, constructing lies that suggest or promise the satisfaction of these needs, thus ensuring continuous trust in the manipulator (Clarke, 2011).

When victims begin to question and doubt the corporate psychopath's promises, the corporate psychopath's behavior transforms. Instead of continuing to feed their self-esteem, he starts to exploit their emotional weaknesses, attacking them. The psychopath may intimidate them or insinuate that, because they have low self-esteem, they are foolish for not believing in him or for questioning the impact that the loss of imminent promotion will have on their family members (Clarke, 2011).

Psychopaths emphasize how victims will feel if the promised goals do not materialize. For the victims, the realization of having been deceived is even more painful, as they were encouraged to believe in their dreams and in the proximity of their fulfillment, only to see them destroyed. This martyrdom is compounded by the suffering of realizing that they have been manipulated and then despised (Clarke, 2011).

In the present context, the corporate psychopath insinuates that victims possibly do not deserve to achieve their goals, as they lack the courage or persistence necessary to achieve them without their help. The victims, who have trusted and often still trust the psychopath, comply with his demands as proof of loyalty. The psychopath, in turn, pretends that the victims' efforts are insufficient to regain their trust. In general, when they realize the betrayal, the victims' self-esteem is shaken. They begin to doubt their ability to make decisions, as they recognize that trusting the psychopath was the biggest mistake of their lives (Clarke, 2011).

In his work, Clarke (2011) argues that secrecy plays a key role in maintaining the power of corporate psychopaths. The impossibility of communication between the victims prevents the pattern of manipulation and deception from being discovered, as the dialogue between them would reveal the fraudulent nature of the psychopath's behavior. The author points out that the corporate psychopath engages in a continuous cycle of lies and

manipulations, using social networks as a tool to disseminate disinformation and thus ensure that his subordinates do not realize the true extent of his deception.

The precise and intentional manipulation of social networks is the characteristic that differentiates the corporate psychopath from those who engage in power games within organizations. When it comes to building and maintaining networks of influence based on lies, the corporate psychopath is unrivaled. That's one of the reasons why it's so hard to deal with. You never know who within the company has been the target of misinformation, and the psychopath ensures that employees are too busy fighting for their own survival to worry about other potential victims. Therefore, knowledge and a cohesive, close-knit team are the best defenses against the corporate psychopath (Clarke, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out between December 2017 and March 2018, adopting a bibliographic review of the specialized literature. The search for books, websites and scientific articles was carried out through the descriptors "psychopath", "psychopathy", "corporate psychopath" and "organization" in the SciELO and Google Scholar databases. This methodology, according to Santos and Candeloro (2006, p. 43), is defined as "a part of a research project, which explicitly reveals the universe of scientific contributions of authors on a specific theme".

The data were analyzed through an approach that combined descriptive and qualitative elements, in the light of existing theoretical information on the subject of the corporate psychopath. Descriptive research, according to Gil (2008), aims to delineate the characteristics of populations or phenomena, using standardized data collection techniques, such as questionnaires and systematic observation. Qualitative research, also according to Gil (2008), seeks to understand the subjective and qualitative aspects of a problem, considering the individual perspective of those involved.

The initial phase of the research covered the investigation of the theme through bibliographic survey and reading of the selected materials, preparation of files, in addition to the analysis and analytical synthesis of the chosen works. Thus, an exploratory study was carried out about the *modus operandi* that the psychopath adopts within an organization.

In the second phase of the research, the material selected about the object of study was submitted to a process of reading, comprehension, analysis, interpretation and synthesis. The objective was to build the work from the analytical understanding resulting from the reading of the texts related to the objectives of the article. In this stage, the

components of the literature review were elaborated, which includes the elements that support the proposed study.

In the phase of organization and formatting of the work, Chart 06 proved to be an effective tool to systematize the research, highlighting the most relevant authors and their respective contributions to the study.

Frame 6. About the Corporate Psychopath: Main Authors and Approaches

Authors	Works	Approaches
Cleckley (1988) *apud* Henriques (2009, p.288-292); Cleckley (1955) *apud* Hidalgo and Serafim (2016, p.19).	From H. Cleckley to DSM IV-TR: the evolution of the concept of psychopathy towards the medicalization of delinquency; Psychopathy: what people really know about this concept.	Definition and characteristics of the psychopath.
Hare (2003);	*Sin Conciencia – The disturbing world of psychopaths that surround us;*	Definition and characteristics of the psychopath.
Babiac A Hare (2006)	*Snakes in Suits – When psychopaths go to work*.	The presence of psychopaths at work.
Silva (2008)	Dangerous Minds – The psychopath lives next door.	Definition and characteristics of the psychopath.
Clarke (2011)	Working with Monsters – How to identify psychopaths in your work and how to protect yourself from them.	The presence of psychopaths at work.
Sina (2017)	Corporate Psychopath – Identify him and deal with him.	The presence of psychopaths at work.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The present study was based on a diverse set of materials, including five nationally and internationally published reference books (one in English and one in Spanish), as well as an extensive review of relevant scientific articles and reports. The central theme that permeates all the research material is the corporate psychopath. Based on the detailed analysis of the data collected, information tables were prepared, presented in section 2, which summarize and organize the main findings of the research, enabling a deeper understanding of the theme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The literature review revealed that 1% of the population fits the profile of corporate psychopath and 10% exhibit similar traits. This profile, whose characteristics are detailed by several authors, has a negative impact on socio-professional relationships and organizational productivity.

Psychopathy is a complex and multifaceted personality disorder, characterized by a set of symptoms that manifest themselves in interpersonal and emotional deficits, such as the inability to feel empathy or remorse, and in a lifestyle that deviates from social norms.

Despite not having a formal medical definition in the WHO or the APA, psychopathy is often associated with Dissocial Personality Disorder (ICD-10) and Antisocial Personality Disorder (DSM-V).

The absence of consciousness is the most striking characteristic of the psychopath, preventing him from establishing a relationship between reason and emotion. Despite this lack of empathy and remorse, the psychopath is fully aware of his actions and their consequences for the victims.

There are disagreements among researchers about the definition, nomenclature, origin and classification of psychopathy as a non-pathological disease or disorder. Sina (2017) is the only author to associate psychopathy with schizophrenia. Silva (2008) attributes the divergences to the difficulties in conducting medical studies, since the samples depend on the reports of the psychopaths themselves, who do not usually collaborate.

In Brazil, psychopathy is framed in semi-imputability, due to the lack of medical consensus on its definition. Trindade (2015) argues that psychopathy should not be seen as a mental illness, but as a condition of moral character, which would allow psychopaths to be held accountable for their actions.

In the corporate environment, the psychopath seeks power and control to climb the career ladder and obtain financial rewards. He manipulates colleagues and takes advantage of dysfunctional, profit-driven organizational cultures to achieve his goals.

The organizational structure of some companies, characterized by fierce competition and the search for success at any cost, resembles psychopathic traits, which leads to the denomination of "psychopathic corporations".

The *modus operandi* of the corporate psychopath, detailed by Clarke (2011), Babiak and Hare (2006), and Silva (2008), involves the manipulation of colleagues and the organization in a three-phase process: evaluation of people's usefulness, manipulation by charm, lies and deception, and abandonment of the victim when he or she is no longer useful.

Victims of the corporate psychopath suffer various damages, such as loss of control over their lives, impaired value judgment, difficulty relating to colleagues, depression, and loss of confidence in themselves and others. It is essential that they seek professional help and count on the support of friends and family.

In short, the research reveals the complexity of psychopathy and its negative impacts on the work environment. Deepening the study on the topic is crucial to clarify the divergences among researchers, improve the diagnosis and develop prevention and

intervention strategies to protect victims and organizations from the harmful effects of corporate psychopathy.

CONCLUSION

The present research explored the *modus operandi* of the corporate psychopath, revealing an insidious pattern of manipulation and deception that unfolds in three distinct phases: evaluation, manipulation, and abandonment. These steps, often performed automatically and unplanned, are a reflection of the psychopathic personality, which incessantly seeks power and control within the corporate environment.

The study highlighted the complexity of the topic, highlighting the scarcity of research in the area of administration, especially in the Brazilian context. The existing literature, while limited, offers valuable insights into the tactics and strategies used by these individuals to achieve their selfish goals, often at the expense of the well-being of colleagues and the organization itself.

However, the survey also revealed the need to deepen knowledge on the subject. The divergence among authors on the definition, nomenclature, origin and classification of psychopathy as a non-pathological disease or disorder highlights the need for further studies and in-depth discussions. The difficulty in conducting medical research due to the lack of collaboration of the psychopaths themselves also represents a challenge to be overcome.

Another crucial point to be explored in future research is the relationship between the organizational structure of some companies and psychopathy. The relentless pursuit of profit, fierce competition, and lack of ethics can create an environment conducive to the development and rise of corporate psychopaths. It is critical to investigate how these dysfunctional organizational cultures can be transformed to promote a healthier and more ethical work environment.

I believe that this study, despite its limitations, contributes significantly to the understanding of the *modus operandi* of the corporate psychopath. By shedding light on the tactics and strategies used by these individuals, the survey offers valuable tools for managers and human resources professionals to identify and deal with this profile more effectively.

However, it is important to emphasize that the survey does not exhaust the topic. Corporate psychopathy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which requires a multidisciplinary approach and a continuous effort of research and investigation.

In short, this study represents an important step in understanding the *modus operandi* of the corporate psychopath, but also a starting point for new research and reflections on the subject. By deepening our knowledge of corporate psychopathy, we can develop more effective strategies to prevent and combat this problem, promoting a healthier, more ethical, and more productive work environment for all.

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