

Reducing dark leadership in the public sector: A grounded theory study from Bangladesh

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Abstract

Dark leadership, the exercise of leadership in ways that produce negative outcomes for followers, teams, and organisations, has received growing scholarly attention, but research remains limited in public sector contexts of the Global South, particularly Bangladesh. This study investigates the causes of dark leadership and examines how internal and external forces shape its context, process, and outcomes within Bangladesh's public sector. Using a grounded theory approach, data were collected through in depth interviews, field notes, and documents from 42 public sector respondents. Analysis identified four causal conditions (political intervention, cultural and social factors, leadership style, and personality), three contextual conditions rooted in dark personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy), and two contextual factors (internal and external forces) that shape how dark leadership emerges and is sustained. The study further identifies a five stage process, spanning situational assessment, resource integration, system development, governance implementation, and monitoring, through which organisations can reduce the emergence of dark leadership, producing five categories of positive outcomes. These findings are integrated into a context specific conceptual framework and substantive theory linking leadership practice to the Sustainable Development Goals. The study offers public sector practitioners and policymakers in Bangladesh, and comparable developing country contexts, a holistic, empirically grounded approach for recognising and mitigating dark leadership, while contributing a Global South perspective to a literature that has been dominated by Western, trait based accounts of destructive leadership.

Keywords: Dark Leadership, Grounded Theory, Public Sector, Bangladesh, Sustainable Development Goals, Destructive Leadership, Organisational Culture

JEL Classification: M12, H83, O15

1. Introduction

Public sectors are increasingly recognised as key to enhance economic, social and environmental growth in the south context, particularly in Bangladesh, conducting research within the context essentially imperative due to economic, social and environment, and they are embedded in institutional environments that influence policies and practices aimed at achieving sustainable development goal (SDGs) (Toheeb & Marde 2025). Public sectors are keen to integrate best practices to maintain social growth and well-being, raising environmental awareness and enhancing economic growth of the country. This could be gained by incorporating a good leadership practice in the public sectors (Borins, 2000). Existing research found that dark leadership trait brings problem for the organisations to gain sustainability (Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017). Many scholars have failed to develop a sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership which is a government plan for making SDGs, particularly in Bangladesh, and focusing on economic development, protecting the environmental and social aspects across the public sectors' functions, policies and regulations (Farooq & Ibrahim, 2017). The purpose of reducing dark leadership is to enhance a positive impact on economic, social, and supporting SDGs. A sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership is an emerging concept (Alvesson, 2020). Limited research addressed dark leadership in public sectors, focusing on social and economic growth (Higgs, 2009). However, there is no established literature on dark leadership within public sectors in Bangladesh.

There are number of leadership theories have been developed over the years, though it is clearly indicated from the existing literature that there are as many as leadership theories as many as leaders (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Nevertheless, the existing literatures mainly overwhelmingly focused on good side of leadership (Alvesson, 2020) and ignored dark side of leadership (Higgs, 2009). It is arguable that promoting a heroic bias in scholars understanding of how leadership functions (Higgs, 2009; Tourish, 2013). Similarly, research focus on ethical perspectives and relatively a little attention to the dark side of leadership (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Numerous corporate unethical issues and bank crisis 2008 brought a great attention to leadership approach and its consequences (Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann, 2017). Though good leadership approach is considered as a strategic imperative on leadership agenda (Alvesson, 2020), there is limited literature that explored how and why a leader become a detractor and how to handle leaders' behaviour to reduce their dark side of leadership approaches. There is no established theory within the context of public sector in Bangladesh; therefore, this context is significant to the study.

The aim is to assess the existing theories of dark leadership, identifying causes, contexts, contextual factors and processes that manages the dark leadership to reduce its negative effects, and subsequently develop a new conceptual framework based on the context which led to the development of a new theory for using within the research context. The study adopted an inductive qualitative approach, and grounded theory methodology was used. Data were collected in-depth

interviews, using various documents and field notes. The study found 4 causes, 3 contexts, 2 contextual factors, 5 processes and 5 consequences; then integrates these findings to develop a conceptual framework of reducing the emergence of dark leadership. The study critically reviewed existing literature and it addresses gap in the existing literatures. That in turn underpinned and justified the development of a context specific conceptual model. The findings deepen the current understanding about the effects of contextual factors on dark leadership and its associate processes. The study conceptualised a new holistic approach to reduce dark leadership, which has never been addressed within the research context; consequently, this study contributes to the existing literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dark Leadership and Traits Of Dark Leadership

Many leadership definitions have emerged, often asserts good leadership, bad leadership resulting in glaring contradictions and inadequacies. Dark leadership in literature generally referred to a broad term used to explain leadership behaviour that causes harm to followers, employees, organisation, and society (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Leaders with dark personalities are notorious for exercise their power negatively to influence followers (Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017). Dark leadership is often practised by Machiavellian and Psychopathic leaders (Boddy, 2017), Narcissistic (Higgs, 2009), Hubristic (Sadler-Smith, 2018). Despite the negative aspect of dark leadership, sometimes dark leaders may foster creativity and innovation (Mackey et al., 2020; Mehraein, Visintin & Pittino, 2023).

The 3 personality traits of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy are known as dark personality traits due to destructive and negative outcomes (Paulhus and Williams 2002; Paulhus 2014). The 3 personality traits have several common characters of selfishness, emotional coldness, manipulation, duplicity and aggressiveness (Paulhus, 2014). Narcissism refers to an individual difference characterised by self-love, grandiosity, inflated self-views, self-obsession, egocentric self-image, and self-exhibition (Higgs, 2009), self-promoters who exhibit an excessive ego and marked by selfish behaviour (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014), seeking of attention and a feeling of superiority and deserve all the credit for their success (Kowalski et al., 2018). Machiavellianism leaders' intention to maximise individual benefits, opportunism and achieve personal goals by using people as a tool (Bereczkei, 2017), and they strive for gaining and maintaining power, particularly they are keen to gain control (Paulhus, 2014). Machiavellians are coercive controllers, tactical, and they trust in interpersonal manipulation for a success (Furtner, Maran & Rauthmann, 2017) and their prime motive is to obtain wealth, power and status (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). The strive for power differs Machiavellian from Narcissist, who more likely strives for admiration, attention, and self-enhancement, though Narcissist also strive for power, they seek power to impress others rather than holding power itself (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Psychopathy is related to high impulsivity, thrill seeking, uncontrolled aggression, callousness,

low empathy and interpersonal manipulation (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Psychopathy is associated with proactive aggression and dysfunctional impulsivity (Cima & Raine, 2009). In contrast, Narcissism is related to functional impulsivity (Paulhus, 2014).

2.2 Public Sectors and Leadership

Bangladesh as a south context embraced cultural diversity with nearly 50 sub-nations maintaining their own traditions, religious, culture and social practices (National Report, 2012). Public sectors in Bangladesh adopted policies to achieve SDGs focusing on three pillars of sustainability including economic, social and environmental, and the greatest progress over recent decades (National Report, 2012; UNDP, 2018). The public sectors in Bangladesh sought to promote SDGs anchored on three pillars of sustainability and aware of the challenges of doing business in response to environmental, economic and global climate changes in business negotiation processes (National Report, 2012). Within the south context, public sectors played a significant role in economic growth, poverty reduction, social transformation and achieving significant progress across all three pillars of sustainable development (SAFTA, 2018).

Because of the centralisation of power, the bureaucracy in public sectors play a vital role in national progress compared to western (Salahuddin, Khan, & Akram, 2008). In Bangladesh, leadership and public affairs have generally been dominated by the government and political parties (Haque, 2007). The bureaucratic systems of hierarchical structure, centralised process and leadership approach are potentially backbone of the public sectors' operations to enhance government efficiency, fairness and predictability; however, these characteristics may lead to slow response to adapt technology, social change and ignore citizens' needs. In a high-power distance with centralised authority, employees depend on those holding power (Abdullah, Boyle & Johan, 2011), senior executives are taskmasters rather than facilitators, juniors live in fear and work is regarded as boring (Zhangwen & Hoque, 2017). Though senior executives motivate followers to work effectively, they execute their power to gain their self-interest. Therefore, public sectors are facing potential threats and challenges to make the government sector profitable, consequence effects on the society (Anisuzzaman, 1985). The unique political history has shaped bureaucracy and corruption in leadership behaviour. Over the last decades, research has started to generate knowledge of dark leadership in public sectors, which is still emergence concept. Limited attention is paid addressing dark leadership in public sectors focussing on SDGs in sustainability (Farooq & Ibrahim, 2017). Thus, it is a significant research context.

2.3 Contextual Factors

People within each culture developed their own understanding and perceptions about how they behave and fitted into that context. The 4 dimensions of culture including individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity (Hofstede, 2001). Individual from different cultures had different social interaction, different negotiation practices and power distance preferences (Brett, 2017). Leadership and culture are linked to organisational performance in the public sectors

(Berman & Prasajo, 2018). Bangladeshi unique cultural values, geopolitical factors influence excellence leadership behaviour and practice (Ahmed, 2011), and failure to understand culture and geopolitical may lead to negative outcome. A variety of factors, including political ideology, economic forces, social trends may influence changes in administrative policy and leadership practices. The use of digital technologies in public services has the potential to improve accountability and data-driven decision-making. Building robust bureaucracies in democratic leadership is challenging because of political instability (Hartwell & Devinney, 2021). Effective bureaucracy in south context like Bangladesh facilitate coordination and prioritises efficiency, transparency and accountability (Ehsan, Hossain & Eldridge, 2022). The different contextual factors affect leadership approaches remains unclear and it is largely ignored. It is imperative to provide a comprehensive overview of the different contextual factors and how they affect leadership norms and practices.

It is clear from the exiting literature that dark leadership has been explored through various overlapping and differing conceptualisations, including Toxic leadership (Paulhus, 2014), Narcissistic leadership (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014; Bernerth, 2022), Exploitative leadership (Schmid, Pircher & Peus, 2019), Destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2018), Psychopathic leadership (Boddy, 2017), however, these conceptualisations may differ in different contexts and theoretical perspectives. No established literature focuses on dark leadership in public sector and because of its comprehensiveness, further empirical evidence is required to facilitate a better understanding. The specific research questions were developed to guide the study are;

RQ1. What are the causes that determine contexts of dark leadership?

RQ2. What are the key contexts do the conceptualisations of dark leadership?

RQ3. How are the factors identified in RQ 2 could be handled to reduce the emergence of dark leadership?

RQ4. What and how did the contextual factors influence the dark leadership contexts and processes?

RQ5. Based on the answer to the RQs 1, 2, 3 and 4, what would be the consequences of dark leadership?

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling Method

A grounded theory methodology was applied to explore the qualitative research questions and specifically developed knowledge and understanding based on the inductive approach and identified the insight into the dark leadership and its causes, contexts, processes and outcomes (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). A pilot study was conducted, focussing on identifying the most appropriate methods for the primary research. The study used purposive sampling for a single

unique case as an example of public sectors' senior executives were participated in the research. Participants were chosen based on their knowledge and practical experiences about the research questions, and those who were the best providing significant insights about dark leadership and its' relevant issues in the given situations, and those who wanted to participate in the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The interview continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. 42 respondents were interviewed from 21 different public sectors in Bangladesh; they were aged 30-60. 2 respondents were selected from each public sector, 21 males and 21 females. The interviews begun on 15 June 2024 and finished on 15 September 2024. The interview sessions typically lasted 60 and 90 minutes. Initial contact with the participants was made via email to arrange an interview schedule. The names of public sectors were replaced with code numbers (P1-P21), and the participants' names were replaced with code numbers (C1-C42).

3.2 Data Collection

Primary data were obtained to explore multiple realities of dark leadership, providing evidence that facilitated more in-depth insight and validated the research data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). This research strictly adheres to ethical guidelines for primary data collection. The in-depth interview was used, comprising a mix of open-ended and semi-structured questions to draw out participants' views on dark leadership (Charmaz, 2024) and it facilitated the exploration of meaningful insights and answers to the research questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Interview questions were open-ended at the beginning, but as each interview progressed, they shifted from general questions to more specific and directive (semi-structured). The starting question was how do you perceive leaders' behaviour at workplace? As interview progressed, interview then followed the response of participants. Semi-structured interviews used to uncover rich and descriptive data (Saunders et al., 2015). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed so that the researcher could use them to analyse, interpret and validate data. Several documents were applied to better understand the category, sub-category and core category regarding dark leadership to support and validate primary data, which enriched the data analysis process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Company annual reports, appropriate database, financial reports, performance appraisal, company plan and policies were used where available as rigorous data sources. Field notes were taken throughout the data collection period as the primary data capture record and field note were used for the identification of code, category, sub-category throughout the research process (Saunders et al., 2015). Field notes facilitated a starting point for early analysis and interpretation, identifying significant multiple codes and categories (Charmaz, 2024).

3.3 Data Analysis

An iterative process of Straussian grounded theory was used to explore patterns across the entire dataset, involving data collection, the identification of codes, categorising, making constant comparisons, analytic memo, and concept map was created (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Data analysis was guided by the research question: what are the causes that determine contexts of dark

leadership? The study applied an inductive approach to elicit respondents' views and develop concept on dark leadership within the research contexts. Data were repeatedly read from the field notes and transcript to familiarise with data and the data were grouped, sorted, synthesised, and organised (Charmaz, 2024). After each interview, the iterative data analysis process involved data transcription, the identification of codes, sub-categories, categories and core category through the coding process including open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Codes emerged from the open coding process as 'initial code, in vivo code, process code, and descriptive code' but later during the axial coding stage those became categories. The core category emerged from selective coding process that allowed the development of the emergent theory by systematically relating the core category to all other categories. Codes, categories and sub-categories emerged from the coding process using field notes, transcripts analytic memos, conditional relationship guide, reflective coding matrix, coding paradigm and making the constant comparison, reviewing all categories, and the findings were re-analysed (Charmaz, 2024). The categories and sub-categories emerged related to causes, context, intervening, processes and consequences of dark leadership and comparing with the existing literature.

4. Results and Discussion

Total 480 codes primarily emerged during the open coding stage. This study identified 14 categories and 57 sub-categories during the axial coding stage. The 14 categories were further analysed during the selective coding stage to find a core category which encapsulated the research phenomenon, and the study identified 5 consequences through data analysis. The results supported by existing literature allowed the aim and objectives are achieved.

4.1 Category: Dark Leadership Causal Conditions

The causal condition of dark leadership consists of 4 categories emerged from coding process, including political intervention, cultural and social, leadership styles and personality.

Category 1: Political intervention: The 4 sub-categories of political intervention, including government regulation and policy, government interest, political power and interest, global interdependency are the causal conditions that lead to the emergence of dark leadership. Participant C7 stated that: *I know the executive officer of telecommunication department who exhibits political power being a son of telecommunication minister; he influences and directs the action and taking financial advantages through it.*

Category 2: Cultural and social: The 5 sub-categories of cultural and social, including mal cultural practice, professional norms and belief, exercise own identity and culture, discrimination and favouritism, and pressure from family, all of which are the causal conditions that lead to the occurrence of dark leadership.

Culture and social emerged from participants' responses; for example, participant C4 made the following observation in the interview, Table 1.

Table 1. Illustration of an interview statement, identified open codes, jotted down and category

Case ID and quote	Open codes and Jotted down note	Category
Participant C4, Negative professional norms and belief may harm for a positive leadership approach, mal cultural practice causes bad social interaction among group of teams that influence a leader to be a detector.	Negative professional norms, Positive leadership approach, Mal cultural practice causes bad social interaction, Influence a leader to be a detector	Cultural and social

Codes were attached to almost every line in the interview transcripts to capture what was said (Table 2). For example, participant C2, C4, C7 and C12 made the following observation.

Table 2. Example of the development of codes, sub-categories and category from participants quotes

Case ID and Quote	Codes	Sub-category	Category
C2, Senior exhibits professional norms and negatively influence through actions.	Exhibits professional norms, Negative influence through actions	Professional norms and belief	Cultural and Social dimension
C4, Negative professional norm harms for positive leadership approach, causes bad social interaction among group.	Negative professional norms, Positive leadership approach, Causes bad social interaction	Professional norms and belief	
C7, Senior is not threat for others, but he executes his leadership power to get maximum self-interest and self-benefits.	Executes leadership power, Self-interest and self-benefits	Mal cultural practice	Cultural and Social dimension
C12, I know communication secretary who supported illegal activity and thereby taken bribe for this.	Supported illegal activity, Taken bribe for this	Mal cultural practice	

Category 3: Leadership styles: The 2 sub-categories of leadership styles, including autocratic leadership and destructive leadership are the causal conditions that lead to the development dark

leadership. Participants C2 reported that: *Certain leaders are very autocrats who exercise power and over controller is a reason for to be a bad leader.*

Category 4: Personality: The 5 sub-categories of personality, including aggressive, manipulative, self-interest, dominant, ethical shortcoming, all of which are the causal conditions that lead to the emergence of dark leadership. Respondent C12 stated that: *Some leaders characterised by manipulative who looking for gaining self-promotion and power.*

4.2 Category: Dark Leadership Contextual Conditions

The 3 categories of contextual conditions of dark leadership emerged from coding process: Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopath.

Category 1: Machiavellianism: Machiavellianism consists of 3 sub-categories, including gained personal power, manipulative and coercive controllers. Respondent C18 reported that: *Our leaders manipulate others for their own interest. They are task oriented and over controller to hold power and obtain money.*

Category 2: Narcissism: Narcissism consists of 4 sub-categories, including self-love, self-absorbed, excessive ego and self-view. Participant C13 stated that: *Sometimes leaders are egoistic, doing everything for themselves which is harmful for followers.*

Category 3: Psychopath: Psychopath consists of 4 sub-categories, including thrill-seeking, low empathy, callousness and low resilience. Respondent C19 reported that: *Business functions are based on digital technology, but we are still suffering for leaders' with low empathy.*

4.3 Category: Dark Leadership Contextual Factors

The 2 categories of contextual factors emerged from coding process, including internal forces and external forces.

Category 1: Internal forces: It consists of 5 sub-categories, including individual differences, high power distances, organisational culture, executive support, digital technology, all of which significantly influence the context of dark leadership, and it facilitates or constraints the strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Participant C16 stated that: *Executive facilitated to the sustainable operation or business process. High power distance made a leader over controller and holding centralise power to be a detector.*

Category 2: External forces: It consists of 4 sub-categories, including Geo-politics, economic downturn, socio culture and political factors, all of which significantly influence the contexts of dark leadership, and it facilitates or constraints the strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Participant C34 reported that: *The rapid changes of geopolitics, particularly; between Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, and financial crises may potentially influence leaders to control their negative behaviour.*

4.4 Category: Process to Control the Dark Leadership

The process to control dark leadership consists of 5 categories emerged from coding: identify and assess the current situation, identify and integrate resources, develop system and sub-system, develop and execute good governance practice, monitoring and controlling to reduce dark leadership.

Category 1: Identify and assess the current situation: It consists of 4 sub-categories, including core cultural values and norms, ethical issues, management practices and leadership practice are significant strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Participant C16 stated that: *Director should identify the ethical issues to stop bribe practice and assessing leadership practice to manage corruption and power.*

Category 2: Identify and integrate resources: It consists of 2 sub-categories, including identify and assembling the internal and external resources are significant strategies to reduce dark leadership. Participant C22 stated that: *We should identify to integrate all resources, particularly internal and external resources to reform corporate governance so that we could minimise power distance to control upon followers and avoiding manipulate relationship.*

Category 3: Develop system and sub-system in the process: It consists of 8 sub-categories, including, restructuring and staffing, remuneration, develop transparency and accountability, creating culture and work climate, cross functional team, democratic management, transformational leadership and digital leadership are significant to reduce dark leadership. Participant C16 stated that: *Senior executives accountable for their responsibilities, they should develop system, restructuring and re-designing management approach for refreshing culture, initiating digital leadership which may build relationship between leaders and follower.*

Category 4: Develop and execute governance practice: It consists of 4 sub-categories, including develop rules, policy, process and practice are significant strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Participant C31 stated that: *Policy maker develop good governance practice, for example, develop rules and policy to control corruption.*

Category 5: Monitoring and Controlling: It consists of 3 sub-categories, including audit and internal control, ombudsman and stakeholder disclosure are significant to reduce the emergence dark leadership. Participant C33 stated that: *It is important stakeholder engagement disclosure for a government body, ensuring transparency to enhance reliability and legitimacy. Different disclosures such as report could be transparent for the public.*

4.5 The Integration of the Sub-categories to the Categories to Develop Theory

The Struassian grounded theory data analysis process was applied to link category and sub-category in a set of causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, relationships that explained the sustainable process to reduce the emergence of dark leadership (figure 1). A

conditional relationship guide used to identify and validate the relationships between categories, between categories and sub-categories based on the conditions, processes and consequences. The core category was used to develop the emergent theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and this originally emerged as code through open coding but during axial coding (based on the coding paradigm) and selective coding (based on the reflective coding matrix) it was verified as a core category. The links between all the categories and the core category were confirmed through the reflective coding matrix and compared with the existing literature to develop the substantial theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

4.6 Discussions

The discussion focused on developing a new conceptual framework of sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership and compared with the existing literature to develop the substantial theory of sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership (figure 1). Focusing on the research questions, the findings presented an in-depth understanding of the causes, contexts, intervening conditions, processes and consequences of dark leadership within the research context, thereby minimising the research gap.

Focusing on RQ1, the results indicated that political intervention, cultural and social, leadership styles and personality are potentially significant causes to determine the level of dark leadership which are different results from the literature of (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014; Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017; Kowalski et al., 2018; Chowdhury et al., 2026) (figure 1). These factors are potential causes for the dark leadership in public sectors to gain maximum self-interest and self-benefits. Political intervention of government regulation and policy, government interest, political power and interest and global interdependency, the findings yield slightly different results from the destructive leadership literature of (Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017; Kowalski et al. 2018). The study found certain leaders become dark due to the cultural and social issues for example; multicultural practice, professional norms and belief, exercise own identity and culture, discrimination and favouritism, pressure from family. Some leaders characterised by autocratic or destructive who looking for gaining success, power, prestige and status, and they gain illegal wealth by involved in corrupted activities, the findings are similar to the existing literature of Higgs (2009) who argued that abusing power may be a vital element to take into account while examining the causes and outcomes of the dark leadership. The causal conditions of personality such as aggressive, manipulative, self-interest, dominant, ethical shortcoming that led to the emergence of dark leadership, the findings are similar to those of (Paulhus, 2014).

Focusing on the RQ2, the study identified 3 level of dark trait personality of leadership that include Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopath, the finding are consistent with the literature of (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014; Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017). Machiavellianism leaders are characterised by gained personal power, manipulative, coercive controllers who manipulate others for their own interest and benefits. They are task oriented and over controller to

hold power, prestige, status and obtain money, the findings are similar to those of (Paulhus, 2014; Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017). Narcissism is characterised by self-love, self-absorbed, excessive ego, self-view, the findings are similar to those of (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014). Psychopaths are characterised by thrill-seeking, low empathy, callousness, low resilience, the findings are consistent with the literature of (Cima & Raine 2009) who argued that psychopathy is associated with a highly impulsive, aggressive behaviour, thrill-seeking, callousness and uncontrolled.

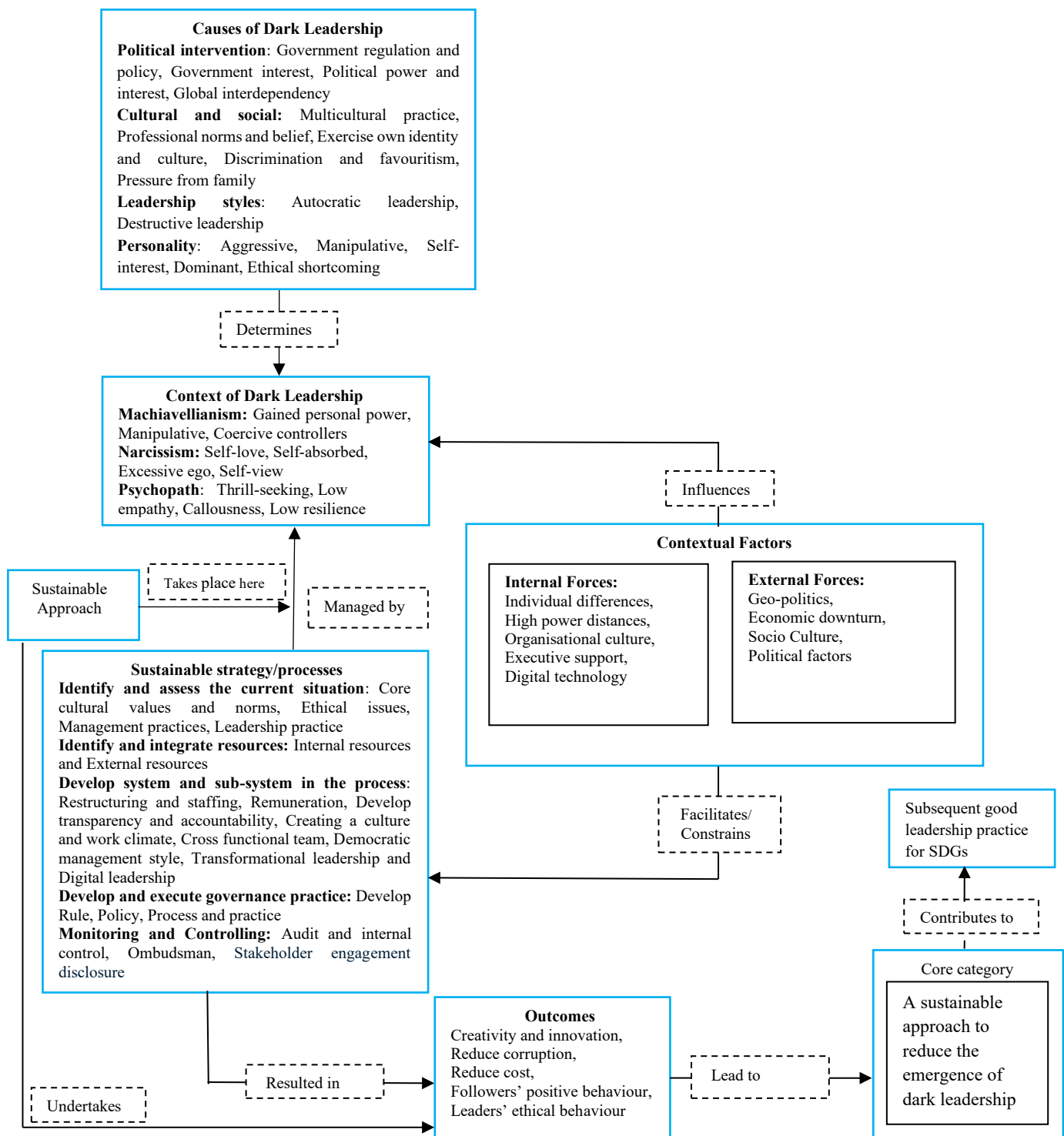
Focusing on the RQ3, the study identified 5 steps of processes to reduce the emergence of dark leadership practice, including identify and assess the current situation, identify and integrate resources, develop system and sub-system, develop and execute governance practice, and monitoring and controlling. The findings differ slightly from the existing literature. Firstly, this study suggested identifying and assessing the current situation consists of core cultural values and norms, ethical issues, management practices and leadership practice are significant to reduce the emergence of dark leadership result in minimising corruption, the findings were not reflected in the existing literature. However, only the finding core cultural values and norms similar to study of (Lubit, 2004). Secondly, identifying and integrating resources is associated with identify and assembling the internal and external resources are significant to reduce the occurrence of dark leadership as a result improve creativity and innovation, these were not reflected in the existing literature. Thirdly, developing system and sub-system is associated with restructuring and staffing, remuneration, develop transparency and accountability, creating a culture and work climate, cross functional team, democratic management, transformational leadership and digital leadership are significant steps to reduce the emergence of dark leadership result in leaders' ethical behaviour, the findings were not reflected in the existing literature. Fourthly, developing and executing governance practice is associated with develop rules, policy, process and practice are significant to control leaders' behaviour as a result reduce cost. Finally, monitoring and controlling consists of audit and internal control, ombudsman and stakeholder engagement disclosure are significant to control leadership approach as a result followers behaviour change positively. The findings yield slightly different results from the literature of (Bereczkei, 2017; Mackey et al., 2020; Mehraein, Visintin & Pittino, 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2026), thereby minimising the research gap.

The RQ4 results indicated 2 different contextual factors, including internal forces and external forces influence the level of dark leadership, and facilitate or constrain the processes or strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Internal forces, including individual differences, high power distances, organisational culture, executive support, digital technology may affect dark leadership, and facilitates or constraints the strategies to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. Similarly, external forces, including geopolitical crises, economic downturn, socio culture, political factors influence leaders' behaviour, and facilitated or constrained the strategies to reduce the negative behaviour. Higher authority should focus on those factors to control the corruption of a leader. The finding individual differences slightly similar to the literature of (Begum 2020;

Chowdhury et al., 2026). However, the other findings were not reflected in the existing literature, thereby the research bridges the gap.

The RQ5 focuses on developing a building block model to reduce the emergence of dark leadership result in positive consequence of creativity and innovation, reduce corruption and cost, followers' positive behaviour, Leaders' ethical behaviour, subsequent good leadership practice for SDGs. Figure 1 demonstrated the conceptual model which explained a new approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership within the public sector in Bangladesh in terms of 5 stages: the causal condition, the contextual condition, the intervening condition, process of dark leadership and consequences, subsequently, led to the development of a new conceptual framework. That in turn allowed the development of a systematic building block process of the context specific theory and model within the research context. In the model, the causal conditions causes contexts of dark leadership. The contextual factors influence the level of dark leadership, and the factors constraint or facilitate the process. The 5 steps could be undertaken to handle and manage the dark leadership. The newly developed conceptual model and its associated findings emerged, which compared with the current dark leadership literature, leading to the development of a new emergent substantive theory.

Figure 1. A sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership



Source: author's work

5. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

This research focussed on the issues of dark leadership where research-based knowledge is limited. The sustainable approach to reduce dark leadership of conceptual model is developed and offered a new theory within the research context. The categories and sub-categories emerged through grounded theory analysis. The main 5 categories are: causes, contexts, contextual factors, processes and consequences are added to a new developed conceptual model, consequence, the research aim, objectives and questions are achieved. The study findings cannot claim the generalisability which needs to be empirically tested. The findings are not representative of all locations, cultures, industries or organisations; however, generalisability is not a requirement of qualitative research. The new conceptual framework was developed in the particular research setting. Therefore, this theory will be applicable within the research context, however, to validate and generalise the theory in another context further research is needed with larger sample. The study is suggesting further future research a deeper knowledge of dark leadership within the context of digital leadership.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Implications

The study defined and conceptualised the sustainable approach to reduce the emergence of dark leadership and its consequence from the interdisciplinary perspective within the research which have never been addressed. Apparently, the identification and conceptual definition of additional constructs were added to the new conceptual framework that explained why and how dark leadership emerged, what are the contextual factors potentially influence leadership contexts and processes that added new abstracts to the extent theories. The study provided new insights into dark leadership and developed a new context specific theory and model. The study developed 5 stage processes to reduce the emergence of dark leadership. The research incorporated internal and external forces as contextual factors which added new addition to the existing theory and practice. The proposed conceptual model provided guidelines to the government, public sectors leader and practitioner about why dark leadership and how to manage it and what's its consequences from different lens and perspectives. Bangladesh can overcome economic, environmental and social challenges and build long-term sustainability by embedding sustainable good leadership approach into its SDGs agenda. The research provided companies and practitioners in that context with a unique model which offered practical benefits. This bridges the gap and makes a significant theoretical and practical contribution.

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