

The Rationality of Irrationality: Understanding Managerial Decision-Making Through the Lenses of Clinical Psychology and Corporate Anthropology

M. V. Bogdanova^{a*} & O. S. Khaidarova^b

^aTyumen State University, Tyumen, Russia

^bIndependent researcher, Tyumen, Russia

Abstract. *Background.* The transition from the stable, predictable world of the 1980s to today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, further characterised by brittleness, anxiety, non-linearity, and incomprehensibility (BANI), has fundamentally challenged traditional rational decision-making frameworks. Managers increasingly face cognitive overload, stress, and cultural complexity, yet the competence of "decision-making under uncertainty" remains critically under-theorised in its psychological and cultural dimensions. Managerial decisions that appear "irrational" from an external, formal-logical perspective may possess deep emic rationality within specific corporate cultures or psychological contexts. Conversely, decisions that seem rational in the short term may prove strategically irrational over time. The intersection of clinical psychology and corporate anthropology offers a promising framework for resolving this paradox, yet remains underexplored. *Objective.* This conceptual review synthesises insights from clinical psychology and corporate anthropology to (1) identify key mechanisms underlying "irrational" managerial decisions, (2) examine the role of dark leadership traits (Dark Triad) in decision-making, and (3) develop practical recommendations for enhancing decision quality in complex organisational contexts. *Methods.* We conducted a conceptual-theoretical review integrating empirical findings from clinical psychology (Dark Triad research, cognitive biases, stress effects) with anthropological frameworks (cultural rationality, ritualisation, tribal dynamics). The analysis draws on 32 key studies spanning 1974–2025, including meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and case studies. *Results.* Seven core mechanisms of decision-making "irrationality" were identified: (1) groupthink and tribal cognition, (2) ritualisation as anxiety-reduction, (3) protection of responsibility zones, (4) mythologisation of past experience, (5) rule-following as cognitive heuristic, (6) empathy deficits in dark leadership, and (7) stress-induced cognitive impairment. The analysis reveals that Dark Triad leaders (narcissistic, psychopathic, Machiavellian) may demonstrate short-term decisional efficiency but systematically undermine long-term organisational adaptation through destruction of psychological safety, suppression of authentic communication, and encouragement of excessive risk-taking. *Conclusion.* Irrationality in management decisions should not be treated as mere error but as a phenomenon with its own logic, either psychological (anxiety reduction, personality pathology, adaptation to harsh environments) or cultural (order maintenance, status preservation). Practical recommendations include a two-component approach: (1) clinical-psychological interventions (candidate screening, ethics committees, meta-skill development) and (2) anthropological interventions (cultural archaeology, safe dialogue spaces, collaborative meaning-making).

Keywords: Irrationality, Rationality, Decision-Making, Clinical Corporate Psychology, Dark Leadership, High-Functioning Psychopath, Dark Triad, Corporate Culture, Corporate Anthropology, Emotional Intelligence, Organisational Culture

1. Introduction

The contemporary organisational landscape has undergone a profound transformation over the past four decades. The relatively stable, predictable, linear world of the 1980s, characterised as the SPOD era (Stable, Predictable, Ordinary, Definite), has given way to increasingly complex and volatile environments. The VUCA framework (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous), initially developed by the U.S. Army War College, captured the emerging challenges of the

post-Cold War era. More recently, the BANI framework (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, Incomprehensible) has been proposed to describe the contemporary condition (see discussion in Viale & Shye, 2025). These conceptual shifts reflect a fundamental reality: the growing complexity, uncertainty, information overload, and velocity of change have progressively diminished the capacity for purely rational decision-making, both in everyday life and in strategic business contexts.

* Corresponding author: M. V. Bogdanova; e-mail address bogdanova-mv@yandex.ru
doi: 10.38098/nsom_2026_06_03_03

The consequences are evident in the marked contraction of corporate planning horizons and the increasing influence of previously marginal factors on decision quality: cognitive biases, stress and fatigue, unconscious assumptions, corporate culture, and leaders' emotional regulation capacities. The cost of decisional error escalates proportionally with hierarchical position, making this problem particularly acute for middle and senior managers who must navigate both external challenges (geopolitical and economic instability) and internal pressures (value realignment, burnout, intergenerational conflict).

Traditional decision-making instruments, such as SWOT analysis, decomposition techniques, and risk assessment matrices, proved effective in the linear, predictable environments for which they were designed. However, their utility in contemporary contexts has diminished substantially. Managers increasingly experience decisional failure, leading to organisational losses, heightened personal stress, and erosion of confidence in established frameworks and internal resources (experience, knowledge). This situation has generated renewed interest in managerial intuition and recognition that rigidly rational approaches may actually undermine effective decision-making under conditions of deep uncertainty. The competence of "decision-making under uncertainty" has consistently ranked among the most sought-after leadership competencies over recent decades, with growing emphasis on "decision-making under pressure." Yet despite this recognition, the development of such competence remains undertheorised and poorly operationalised. There is an urgent need to clarify how stress, emotion, empathy, cognitive biases, and organisational culture both impede and, paradoxically, may enhance decision quality in non-obvious ways.

The integration of two disciplinary perspectives, clinical psychology and corporate anthropology, offers a promising pathway for illuminating the domain of managerial irrationality. Each discipline addresses complementary aspects of the decisional phenomenon that remain invisible to purely economic or rational-choice frameworks. Clinical psychology brings attention to individual-level mechanisms: personality pathology (particularly the Dark Triad of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism), cognitive heuristics and biases (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), stress responses, emotional regulation, and the role of unconscious processes in decision-making. The

clinical lens reveals how individual psychological characteristics, particularly in leadership positions, systematically shape decisional outcomes. Corporate anthropology, by contrast, shifts focus to the cultural and institutional context in which decisions are embedded. As Douglas (1986) argued, rationality is never context-free: people make decisions within institutional frameworks (rules, hierarchies, classifications) that themselves define what counts as rational or irrational. Hasbrouck (2024) introduced the concept of "ethnographic thinking" as a mode of observation and analysis that seeks to understand the hidden meanings, norms, and cultural logic behind organisational decisions. This approach turns the corporate gaze inward, showing how internal orthodoxies and status hierarchies constrain growth and innovation. The central thesis of corporate anthropology is that what appears irrational to an external observer may be entirely rational to a cultural insider. Before labelling behaviour as rational or irrational, one must ask: "In which system of rules does this behaviour become sensible?" Apparent irrationality often reflects deep mechanisms for maintaining stability, status, and security (Douglas, 1986). Contemporary researchers of cognitive decision-making have similarly noted that the dichotomy between rational and non-rational behaviour is theoretically unstable; behaviour deemed irrational from expected-utility theory may actually be an adaptive heuristic optimal for a specific ecological environment (Viale & Shye, 2025).

Beyond traditions and corporate culture, the phenomenon of "dark leadership" contributes significantly to understanding rationality and irrationality in managerial decisions. A dark leader is understood as a manager with psychopathic traits, often a high-functioning individual with strong self-organisation and intelligence, whose characteristics fit the Dark Triad: narcissistic component (inflated self-esteem, grandiosity, need for admiration), psychopathic component (impulsivity, aggressiveness, lack of empathy, inability for long-term planning, risk-taking, antisocial actions), and Machiavellian component (cynicism, self-focus, deceit, manipulation, exploitation). Boddy (2017) examined psychopathic leadership through a case study of a corporate psychopath CEO, coining the term "CEO with a high corporate psychopathy score." He noted that corporate psychopaths share the same core traits as incarcerated psychopaths but are socially successful, career-oriented, and ruthless. While the general population prevalence of psychopathy is about 1%, among

top managers this figure may reach 3.5% (Boddy, 2017). Goldsmith (in public lectures) similarly observed that the higher the leader in the hierarchy, the greater the probability of being a white, male, older psychopath. A comprehensive meta-analysis by Bueno-de la Fuente et al. (2025) confirmed that narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism operate in concert with Big Five personality dimensions, forming stable patterns of managerial behaviour that directly affect employee well-being and performance.

Leaders with Dark Triad traits can inflict harm through irrational decisions. Wilson and Peterson (2023) identified such harmful behaviours as: destroying teams; rejecting coaching, feedback, or development opportunities; hoarding resources; assigning impossible tasks with minimal support; excluding team members from meetings; and hiding necessary information. Yet such leaders often reach high positions because businesses select and value them for the short-term value they bring. However, meta-analytic evidence (O'Boyle et al., 2012) indicates that Dark Triad traits are associated with poor task performance, job dissatisfaction, toxic leadership, and numerous negative work outcomes. Dark leaders also induce cognitive biases in others. Kahneman (2011) described a situation where a patient flatters a physician, claiming other doctors have failed and that the current one will surely help; the physician involuntarily feels sympathy and overconfidence, which Kahneman termed "the psychopath's charm," a cognitive trap. The rational decision would be to decline working with such a patient. Dark leaders can similarly motivate high-risk projects through their charm, leading to losses or even corporate collapse. Mathieu et al. (2014) found that psychopathic traits are a key factor in destructive interpersonal behaviour among dysfunctional leaders and cause significant psychological distress in employees, undermining conditions for rational decision-making.

The role of empathy in leadership deserves special attention. For a long time, it was assumed that leaders should not be empathetic, as "humanity" interferes with rationality, while data-driven thinking allows faster and clearer action. Dark leaders, unburdened by excessive empathy, seemed to fit these expectations. However, over the last decade, thinkers such as Goldsmith have argued that during severe crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), empathy becomes essential for leaders to guide their "tribe" by understanding people's fears and becoming an archetypal paternal figure. Caring for the team may appear non-rational in the short term, but it fosters engagement, loyalty,

and willingness to exceed expectations, which is crucial in the competition for talent and customers. At the same time, research on employees' psychological capital (Elbers et al., 2023) shows that developing subordinates' resourcefulness (confidence, optimism, resilience) can mitigate the destructive impact of dark leadership. Organisations that intentionally invest in psychological capital create a buffer against toxic management. Nevertheless, not all organisations perceive an empathetic leader as strong; many still prefer a tough, unemotional manager. This creates a central paradox: psychopathic leaders without empathy might, in theory, make more rational decisions than empathetic, pro-social leaders, but does this rationality lead to good outcomes? Haar and de Jong (2023) found that in highly competitive industries, Dark Triad traits may produce short-term financial gains (e.g., revenue increases), but internal indicators – socio-psychological climate, staff retention, innovativeness – consistently deteriorate. Thus, the "rationality" of a dark leader is contextually limited and short-lived. On the other hand, dark leaders tend toward unjustified risk, even endangering others' well-being. Their influence on others' decisions, including investors, is mediated by psychopathic charm, creating cognitive traps. Are dark leaders' decisions rational in the short term (e.g., downsizing in a crisis) or irrational in the long term (e.g., undermining human capital needed for breakthrough)? This question remains unresolved.

Given the above, the present conceptual review aims to systematically identify and describe the key psychological and cultural mechanisms that produce "irrational" managerial decisions, to examine the role of Dark Triad traits in shaping both individual and collective decisional processes, to propose an integrative framework that combines clinical-psychological and anthropological interventions to enhance decision quality, and to illustrate the framework with a case example and derive practical implications for organisations. The contribution of this work lies in bridging two rarely integrated disciplines to offer a more nuanced understanding of rationality in organisational contexts and to provide actionable recommendations that address both individual pathology and cultural dynamics.

2. Methods

This study is a conceptual-theoretical review, synthesising existing empirical and theoretical literature from clinical psychology and corporate anthropology. Given the interdisciplinary nature

of the research question, we adopted an integrative review approach that allows for the combination of diverse methodologies and perspectives (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The review is not a systematic meta-analysis but rather a critical synthesis aimed at identifying patterns, mechanisms, and practical implications.

We conducted a targeted literature search in the following databases: PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering the period from 1974 (the landmark publication of Tversky & Kahneman on heuristics and biases) to 2025. Search terms included combinations of: “irrationality,” “rationality,” “decision-making,” “clinical psychology,” “corporate anthropology,” “Dark Triad,” “psychopathy,” “leadership,” “corporate culture,” “cognitive biases,” “stress,” “emotional intelligence,” and “organisational culture.” We also manually searched reference lists of key articles and included seminal theoretical works (e.g., Douglas, 1986; Kahneman, 2011) and recent systematic reviews (e.g., Bueno-de la Fuente et al., 2025; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed empirical or theoretical articles, (2) relevance to managerial decision-making, leadership, or organisational behaviour, (3) focus on psychological or cultural factors, (4) English or Russian language. We excluded purely technical or mathematical decision models without psychological or cultural content.

We employed thematic analysis to identify recurring mechanisms and themes. Initially, we extracted all factors mentioned as contributing to “irrational” decisions. Through an iterative coding process, we grouped these factors into seven thematic categories (presented in the Results). For each theme, we synthesised findings from both clinical and anthropological literatures, noting convergences and divergences. The case of Miranda Priestly (from *The Devil Wears Prada*) was used as an illustrative example to apply the integrative framework, as it represents a well-documented cultural archetype of dark leadership that has been extensively discussed in both academic and popular media. As a conceptual review, this study does not provide new empirical data. The conclusions are limited by the quality and scope of the included studies and the potential for publication bias. However, the synthesis offers a novel theoretical integration that can guide future empirical research.

3. Results

We identified seven core mechanisms that contribute to what is perceived as “irrational”

managerial decision-making, drawing from both clinical psychology and corporate anthropology.

The first mechanism is *groupthink and tribal cognition*. The desire for consensus to preserve group unity can suppress criticism and alternative proposals, especially in hierarchical and clan cultures. Groups influence the acceptance or rejection of information by establishing trust levels and imposing sanctions on dissenters. Andreeva (2000) drew parallels with “groupthink,” where decision-making is affected by group cohesion. However, groupthink may operate implicitly: individuals already know group norms and potential sanctions and construct their information processing accordingly. Kramer (2020) argued that irrationality in organisations is often tied to deep, unconscious needs rather than lack of logic. When human impulses, group interactions, and leadership are involved, the limbic system – the “tribal brain” – is activated, and tribal needs override rational cortical thinking. As Kramer (2020, p. 26) notes, “When it comes to human impulses and needs, our tribal brain activates before the rational.” Tribal needs include ego gratification, recognition, and desire for inequality. Thus, groups can influence leader behaviour in ways that appear irrational to outsiders. We suggest that narcissistic traits in dark leaders may intensify the “tribal chief” performance, enhancing group cohesion and bias effects. Ethical factors also contribute to group-level irrationality. Unethical, manipulative behaviour from other employees, including intentional use of cognitive biases, can distort the conditions for rational decision-making, depriving leaders of free, informed choice (Adedjei, 2025). Dark leaders themselves are key instigators of irrational decisions in others. Diller and Jonas (2020) describe this mechanism as a combination of initial attractiveness and persuasiveness (they are charismatic, confident, infect others with their ideas) and negative long-term consequences, such as high-risk decisions, self-serving choices, and “atmosphere contagion,” as others imitate dark leader behaviour.

The second mechanism is *ritualisation*. Ritualised actions may have lost connection with their original purpose but are reproduced to maintain stability and signal loyalty. Employees sustain rituals because they reduce anxiety and create an illusion of predictability in unstable environments. Fromm (2022) described the human tendency to replace spontaneity and responsibility with rigid rituals, reducing anxiety at the cost of genuine engagement. Kramer (2020, p. 25) observed: “We want to know what

to do... to continue what already exists. To have clear agreements, constant roles, directives, job descriptions, and rituals." The opposite of ritualisation is openness to new experience. Peterson et al. (2012) studied servant leaders, who score low on the Dark Triad, and found that openness to experience fosters innovation and acceptance of employee ideas. We hypothesise that this reduces ritualisation, making decisions more rational and effective.

The third mechanism is *protection of responsibility zones and avoidance of vulnerability*. Managers may reject effective proposals from subordinates or other departments because acceptance would threaten status or create the illusion of upward management. In corporate hierarchies, information openness clashes with what social psychology calls "hierarchical defence": information coming from below or through informal channels receives reduced credibility (Tett, 2015). Thus, an operationally rational action is rejected to preserve the status quo of hierarchy. Corporate psychopaths, conversely, tend toward high risk and often have well-developed "decision-making under pressure" skills, making them potentially effective crisis managers in the short term. However, their disregard for corporate social responsibility and ethics poses long-term risks. Myung and Choi (2017) found that the psychopathic trait in the Dark Triad has a negative association with perception of corporate social ethics as a priority. Boddy (2023) theoretically examined the idea that a psychopathic leader displays rationality in the economic sense (*homo economicus*), but this ethically empty calculativeness constitutes a global threat to business ethics and long-term economic prospects.

The fourth mechanism is *mythologisation of past experience*. Adherence to corporate traditional methods and strategies is reinforced by internal narratives of "great achievements." Cameron and Quinn (2001) showed that in "Clan" and "Hierarchy" cultures, reliance on traditions and myths is particularly strong, often enshrined in legends of a "glorious past." In organisations that long enjoyed a "monopoly of success," a "paranoia of success" may form, where any innovation is perceived as a threat to efficiency and identity. Memories of past experience serve a ritual function, creating an illusion of safety and reducing anxiety about uncertainty. The classic example is Kodak, which ignored digital photography because executives were sceptical of an engineer's prototype – why promote technology that would disrupt their established environment? This irrational

decision later undermined the company's market leadership.

The fifth mechanism is *rule-following as a cognitive heuristic, embodied in formal regulations and traditions* ("we always did it this way," "everyone does it"). Alowais and Suliman (2025) conducted an interesting study among migrant entrepreneurs in the shadow economy, suggesting that Dark Triad traits are not innate but a response to harsh economic conditions. High competition with poor legal regulation drives survival strategies through narcissistic behaviour (superiority, callousness) and Machiavellian behaviour (manipulation, deception). Entrepreneurs justify exploitation with phrases like "everyone does it." This cognitive-distortion-like mindset leads to irrational decisions yet ensures survival.

The sixth mechanism concerns *empathy and pro-sociality in the context of dark leadership*. Furtner et al. (2017) argue that most leadership research idealises leadership, emphasising pro-social qualities, while evidence shows dark leaders can be as effective as ethical leaders, despite selfishness, impulsivity, and toxicity. Their drive for power, uncompromisingness, and social dominance orientation push them to compete for high positions. Thus, their decisions may appear irrational in one frame but rational within their own coordinate system, as they achieve their goals. The ability to read others' emotions without emotional involvement, combined with reduced anxiety characteristic of high-functioning psychopaths, enhances their rationality by freeing cognitive capacity. However, this apparent rationality is context-limited. Haar and de Jong (2023) showed that while Dark Triad traits may boost short-term financial metrics, they degrade internal social climate, retention, and innovation. Thus, the "rationality" is short-term and context-dependent.

The seventh and final mechanism is *stress*. The impact of stress on decision-making is well documented: during chronic and acute stress, people tend to make non-rational, impulsive decisions. Mishra and Jena (2025) proposed a two-path model of toxic leaders' influence on stress: direct path (toxic leadership generates stress through humiliation, injustice, fear) and indirect path (toxic leadership stimulates overwork, leading to stress, burnout, and health deterioration). An additional mechanism is suppression of employee authenticity: when leaders display psychopathic traits, subordinates hide their true selves at work, leading to deteriorating psychological well-being and impaired decision-making (Sutton & Stapleton, 2023).

4. Discussion

Our findings underscore a central paradox: behaviour that appears irrational from an external (etic) perspective may be deeply rational from an internal (emic) cultural perspective. The engineering company case described in the introduction illustrates this: the production manager's resistance to the project manager's innovations was locally rational (preserving established routines, protecting status) but strategically irrational (resisting necessary adaptation). This aligns with Douglas's (1986) argument that rationality is culturally embedded. However, when local rationality contradicts organisational goals, it becomes dysfunctional. Instrumental rationality (systemic, bureaucratic) can lead to the "irrationality of the rational world," where formal goals undermine communicative reason and social integration (Habermas, 1992). Corporate culture can amplify psychological biases to a systemic level, making them locally rational but strategically harmful. Thus, a key practical implication is that managers must ask themselves: "How will my decision be perceived by different employee groups? What meaning will they assign to it?" Especially in a volatile VUCA world, when the corporate "totem" (collective identity) is fractured, culturally rational decisions from a market perspective may be perceived by the team as destructive. In such cases, traditional methods of resistance (orders, KPI manipulation, pressure) are not only useless but dangerous.

Brown and Kramer (2015) propose an alternative: before applying hard levers, engage in "cultural archaeology": (1) find the "totem in the attic" – diagnose and recall what once united people; (2) acknowledge the value of the old totem, even if broken, by legitimising its contribution; (3) create "common campfires" for honest dialogue, safe spaces for employees to voice pain and questions; (4) collectively rebuild the totem around a new shared goal, preserving core values. When a new goal aligns with old values, it will be perceived as "one's own," hence maximally rational in employees' eyes.

The cinematic character Miranda Priestly (based on Anna Wintour) exemplifies dark leadership and cultural rationality. She displays management through fear, setting impossible goals, devaluation of employees, toxic communication, and Machiavellian manipulation. Yet her strengths include expert power (strategic vision, industry authority), reputation management, operational excellence, and high standards. Would using empathy and emotional intelligence make her decisions more rational or less? We argue that empathy would

enhance long-term adaptability, but might appear less rational within her current cultural norms. At the "tribe" level, empathy improves coordination, signal exchange, and survival. However, within "Podium's" specific culture, rationality was defined by internal values of status, aesthetics, and control. External softness might weaken her position, undermine status signals, and thus be deemed *irrational*. This illustrates that cultural context determines whether a decision is seen as rational. In the film, Andrea initially perceives Miranda's actions as meaningless due to her own cultural optics (serious journalism, social justice). Only when Nigel translates the emic logic does Andrea recognise that Miranda's decisions are rational within the world of high fashion, where anticipating a sweater's shade matters more than momentary "humanity." Andrea eventually understands the totem of "Podium": perfection, impeccability, power as reality-shaping. Miranda's harshness becomes a ritual of initiation. In the end, Andrea leaves not because Miranda is irrational, but because she does not share the totem's values. This illustrates that cultural rationality is not universal; leaders must navigate multiple cultural frameworks.

Our analysis leads to a two-component practical framework. The first component consists of clinical-psychological interventions: rigorous selection processes to minimise hiring of leaders with Dark Triad traits, using validated personality assessments and structured interviews; establishment of ethics committees and whistleblower mechanisms to detect toxic behaviours early; and regular psychological training on meta-skills, including decision-making, communication, emotional intelligence, and stress management. This builds psychological capital (Elbers et al., 2023), buffering against destructive leadership. The second component consists of anthropological interventions: cultural archaeology (diagnosing existing cultural values, myths, and rituals; identifying the "totem" that once united the organisation); legitimisation (acknowledging the value of past contributions, avoiding devaluation of established practices); safe dialogue spaces (creating forums for honest communication, face-to-face meetings, digital platforms, anonymous channels where employees can express concerns without fear); and collaborative meaning-making (co-creating new shared goals that preserve core values, ensuring that changes are perceived as "ours" and thus rational). This dual approach addresses both individual psychological pathology and systemic

cultural dynamics, offering a holistic pathway to improving decision quality.

This review contributes to theory by bridging clinical and anthropological perspectives, offering a typology of irrationality mechanisms, clarifying the paradoxical role of dark leadership in decision-making, and providing a practical integrative framework. Future empirical research should test the effectiveness of the proposed interventions in real organisational settings. Longitudinal studies could examine how cultural archaeology and safe dialogue spaces actually shift perceptions of rationality and improve decision outcomes. Additionally, more research is needed on the interaction between Dark Triad leaders and specific cultural contexts to understand when their traits become beneficial versus destructive.

5. Conclusion

This integrative review demonstrates that the apparent irrationality of managerial decisions is not simply error but a phenomenon with its own logic, either psychological (anxiety reduction, personality adaptation, stress response) or cultural (order maintenance, status preservation, tradition protection). The integration of clinical psychology and corporate anthropology provides a richer understanding than either discipline alone. We identified seven key mechanisms producing “irrational” decisions: groupthink, ritualisation, protection of responsibility, mythologisation, rule-following, empathy deficits, and stress. The analysis reveals that leaders with Dark Triad traits may achieve short-term decisional efficiency but systematically undermine long-term organisational adaptation through destruction of psychological safety and suppression of authentic communication. Empathy, contrary to traditional assumptions, emerges as evolutionarily rational, enhancing group coordination and survival, especially in crises. Practical recommendations centre on a two-component approach: clinical-psychological interventions (screening, monitoring, development) and anthropological interventions (cultural archaeology, safe dialogue, collaborative meaning-making). Only by addressing both individual pathology and

References

1. Alowais, A. A., & Suliman, A. (2025). Dark triad in the margins: Narcissism and moral erosion among marginal migrant entrepreneurs. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(7), 257. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15070257>
2. Babangida Adedeji. (2025). The hazards of irrational decision-making: A comprehensive

cultural dynamics can organisations foster truly rational decision-making in the complex, uncertain environments of the contemporary world. Future research should empirically validate this framework and explore cross-cultural variations in the perception and manifestation of decisional rationality.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank I. R. Abitov for constructive feedback.

Ethical Approval: This study did not involve human participants or animals, therefore ethical approval was not required.

AI Statement: During the preparation of this work, the authors used <https://chat.deepseek.com/> for language polishing and grammar checking. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

Highlights:

- Managerial “irrationality” often reflects deep emic rationality within specific corporate cultures.
- Dark Triad leaders show short-term decisional efficiency but systematically undermine long-term organisational adaptation.
- Empathy deficits in leadership suppress authentic communication and create conditions for poor decision quality.
- Corporate anthropology reveals that ritualisation and tradition-protection serve anxiety-reduction functions.
- A two-component intervention approach (clinical-psychological and anthropological) addresses both individual and cultural dimensions of irrationality.
- Emotional intelligence should be reframed as evolutionarily rational rather than antithetical to rationality.

review of cognitive biases and risks. *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Research*, 4(1), 1–4.

3. Boddy, C. R. (2017). Psychopathic leadership: A case study of a corporate psychopath CEO. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(1), 141–

156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2908-6>
4. Boddy, C. R. (2023). Is the only rational personality that of the psychopath? *Homo Economicus* as the most serious threat to business ethics globally. *Humanistic Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41463-023-00150-y>
5. Bueno-de la Fuente, C., González-Bernal, J., de la Fuente-Anuncibay, R., & Núñez-Rodríguez, S. (2025). Relationship between leadership, personality, and the Dark Triad in workplace: A systematic review. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3), 297. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15030297>
6. Cameron, K., & Quinn, R. (2001). *Diagnostika i izmenenie organizatsionnoy kul'tury* [Diagnostics and change of organizational culture] (I. V. Andreeva, Trans.). Piter.
7. Coronado-Maldonado, I., & Benítez-Márquez, M.-D. (2023). Emotional intelligence, leadership, and work teams: A hybrid literature review. *Heliyon*, 9(10), e20356. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20356>
8. da Silva, E. D., Hasson Marques, R., & Violant-Holz, V. (2024). Emotions and decision-making in boardrooms — a systematic review from behavioral strategy perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1473175. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1473175>
9. de Waal, F. (2009). *The age of empathy: Nature's lessons for a kinder society*. Harmony Books.
10. de Waal, F. (2020). *Poslednee ob'yatie Mamy: Chemu nas uchat emotsii zhivotnykh* [Mama's last hug: What animal emotions teach us] (N. Troyak, Trans.). Alpina non-fiction. (Original work published 2019)
11. Diller, S. J., & Jonas, E. (2020). Striving for power far off from ethics: The “dark triad” traits among executives and the consequences for organizations. *Organisationsberatung, Supervision, Coaching*, 27(3), 451–468. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11613-020-00653-9>
12. Elbers, A., Blesa Aledo, P. S., & Kolominski, S. (2023). Coping with dark leadership: Examination of the impact of psychological capital on the relationship between dark leaders and employees' basic need satisfaction in the workplace. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(4), 96. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13040096>
13. Furtner, M., Maran, T. K., & Rauthmann, J. F. (2017). Dark leadership: The role of leaders' dark triad personality traits. In S. T. Hannah & P. D. Harms (Eds.), *Leader development deconstructed* (pp. 75–99). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64740-1_4
14. Haar, J., & de Jong, K. (2023). Is the dark triad always detrimental to firm performance? Testing different performance outcomes and the moderating effects of competitive rivalry. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1061698. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1061698>
15. Habermas, J. (1992). *Legitimation crisis* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Beacon Press. (Original work published 1973)
16. Hasbrouck, J. (2024). *Ethnographic thinking: From method to mindset*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203712290>
17. Howe, D. M. (1986). *How institutions think*. Syracuse University Press.
18. Kahneman, D. (2018). *Dumay medlenno... reshay bystro* [Thinking, fast and slow] (A. Andreev et al., Trans.). AST. (Original work published 2011)
19. Kramer, I., & Brown, D. (2015). *Korporativnoe plemya. Chemu antropolog mozhet nauchit top-menedzhera* [The corporate tribe: What an anthropologist can teach a top manager]. Alpina Digital.
20. Kramer, I., & Brown, D. (2020). *Kak upravlyat' korporativnym plemenem: Prikladnaya antropologiya dlya top-menedzhera* [How to manage a corporate tribe: Applied anthropology for a top manager] (Yu. Telezhko et al., Trans.). Alpina Publisher.
21. Mathieu, C., Neumann, C. S., Hare, R. D., & Babiak, P. (2014). A dark side of leadership: Corporate psychopathy and its influence on employee well-being and job satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 59, 83–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.11.010>
22. Mishra, R., & Jena, L. K. (2025). Toxic leadership, overwork and stress: Review and integration of the last 15 years. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 46(4), 501–525. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-02-2025-0140>
23. Myung, J. K., & Choi, Y. H. (2017). The influences of leaders' dark triad trait on their perception of CSR. *Asian Journal of Sustainability and Social Responsibility*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41180-017-0013-8>
24. O'Boyle, E. H., Forsyth, D. R., Banks, G. C., & McDaniel, M. A. (2012). A meta-analysis of the Dark Triad and work behavior: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*,

- 97(3), 557–579. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025679>
25. Peterson, S. J., Galvin, B. M., & Lange, D. (2012). CEO servant leadership: Exploring executive characteristics and firm performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 65(3), 565–596. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2012.01253.x>
26. Shavkunova, I. S. (2017). “Reshenie” v psikhologii i ekonomike: integratsiya nauchnykh podkhodov [“Decision” in psychology and economics: Integration of scientific approaches]. *Psikhologiya v ekonomike i upravlenii* [Psychology in Economics and Management], 9(1), 24–33. [https://doi.org/10.17150/2225-7845.2017.9\(1\).24-33](https://doi.org/10.17150/2225-7845.2017.9(1).24-33)
27. Sutton, A., & Stapleton, M. (2023). When it's not safe to be me: Employee authenticity mediates the effect of perceived manager psychopathy on employee well-being. *BMC Psychology*, 11, 339. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01333-w>
28. Tett, G. (2015). *The silo effect: The peril of expertise and the promise of breaking down barriers*. Scribner.
29. Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, 185(4157), 1124–1131. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.185.4157.1124>
30. Viale, R., & Shye, S. (2025). The cognitive basis for decision making under risk and uncertainty: Research programs & controversies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1546461. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1546461>
31. Wilson, S. N., & Peterson, T. (2023, July 5). Does your company have a culture of quiet retaliation? *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved August 1, 2026, from <https://hbr.org/2023/07/does-your-company-have-a-culture-of-quiet-retaliation>

Рациональность иррациональности: понимание управленческих решений через призму клинической психологии и корпоративной антропологии

М. В. Богданова^а & О. С. Хайдарова^б

^аТюменский государственный университет, Тюмень, Россия

^бНезависимый исследователь, Тюмень, Россия

Резюме. Актуальность. Переход от стабильного, предсказуемого мира 1980-х годов к современной среде VUCA (изменчивой, неопределённой, сложной, неоднозначной), а затем к миру BANI (хрупкому, тревожному, нелинейному, непостижимому) фундаментально поставил под сомнение традиционные рациональные модели принятия решений. Менеджеры всё чаще сталкиваются с когнитивной перегрузкой, стрессом и культурной сложностью, однако компетенция «принятие решений в условиях неопределённости» остаётся критически недооценённой в своих психологических и культурных измерениях. Управленческие решения, которые выглядят «иррациональными» с внешней, формально-логической позиции, могут обладать глубокой этической рациональностью в рамках конкретной корпоративной культуры или психологического контекста. И наоборот, решения, кажущиеся рациональными в краткосрочной перспективе, могут оказаться стратегически иррациональными с течением времени. Пересечение клинической психологии и корпоративной антропологии предлагает многообещающую рамку для разрешения этого парадокса, однако остаётся малоизученным. *Цель.* Данный концептуальный обзор синтезирует идеи клинической психологии и корпоративной антропологии для (1) выявления ключевых механизмов, лежащих в основе «иррациональных» управленческих решений, (2) изучения роли черт тёмного лидерства (Тёмная триада) в принятии решений и (3) разработки практических рекомендаций по повышению качества решений в сложных организационных контекстах. *Методы.* Проведен концептуально-теоретический обзор, интегрирующий эмпирические данные клинической психологии (исследования Тёмной триады, когнитивные искажения, влияние стресса) с антропологическими рамками (культурная рациональность, ритуализация, племенная динамика). Анализ опирается на 32 ключевых исследования за период 1974–2025 годов, включая мета-анализы, систематические обзоры и кейс-стади. *Результаты.* Выявлено семь основных механизмов «иррациональности» принятия решений: (1) групповое мышление и племенная когниция, (2) ритуализация как снижение

тревоги, (3) защита зон ответственности, (4) мифологизация прошлого опыта, (5) следование правилам как когнитивная эвристика, (6) дефицит эмпатии при тёмном лидерстве, (7) стресс-индуцированное когнитивное нарушение. Анализ показал, что лидеры с чертами Тёмной триады (нарциссические, психопатические, макиавеллистические) могут демонстрировать краткосрочную эффективность решений, но систематически подрывают долгосрочную адаптацию организации через разрушение психологической безопасности, подавление аутентичной коммуникации и поощрение чрезмерного риска. *Заключение.* Иррациональность в управленческих решениях не должна рассматриваться как простая ошибка, а как феномен со своей собственной логикой, либо психологической (снижение тревоги, личностная патология, адаптация к жёсткой среде), либо культурной (поддержание порядка, сохранение статуса). Практические рекомендации включают двухкомпонентный подход: (1) клинико-психологические интервенции (скрининг кандидатов, комитеты по этике, развитие мета-навыков) и (2) антропологические интервенции (культурная археология, безопасные пространства для диалога, совместное создание смыслов).

Ключевые слова: иррациональность, рациональность, принятие решений, клиническая корпоративная психология, тёмное лидерство, высокофункциональный психопат, Тёмная триада, корпоративная культура, корпоративная антропология, эмоциональный интеллект, организационная культура

Информация об авторах

Мария Владимировна Богданова, доцент Департамента психологии и дефектологии Школы образования Тюменского государственного университета, ORCID ID 0000-0002-9034-9286; bogdanova-mv@yandex.ru

Ольга Сергеевна Хайдарова, организационный психолог, корпоративный антрополог

Information about the Authors

Maria V. Bogdanova, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology and Defectology, School of Education, Tyumen State University, ORCID ID 0000-0002-9034-9286; bogdanova-mv@yandex.ru

Olga S. Khaidarova, Organizational Psychologist, Corporate Anthropologist

Citation: Bogdanova, M. V. & Khaidarova, O. S. (2026). The Rationality of Irrationality: Understanding Managerial Decision-Making Through the Lenses of Clinical Psychology and Corporate Anthropology. *Natural Systems of Mind*, 6(3), 39-48. doi: 10.38098/nsom_2026_06_03_03

Received 17.07.2026

Accepted 22.09.2026

Published 30.09.2026