

Leader Narcissism and Employee Job Performance

H.M. Nishanthi^{1,2}; Fernando², M.; Biswas, K.²

University of Wollongong¹, University of Kelaniya²

menaka@kln.ac.lk

In today's post-pandemic competitive environment, organisations are intensely renewing their efforts to expand globally but face many challenges in the process. One challenge is recruiting, training and retaining a healthy workforce while ensuring their job performance to achieve a competitive edge. Hence, employee job performance has long been central to organisational behavioural research relevant to both academia and industry. Among the many antecedents of employee job performance, leaders and their leadership behaviours play a pivotal role in influencing followers' job performance directly and indirectly. According to leadership scholars, narcissistic leadership is one such key leadership style that immensely influences employees.

Narcissism is one of the three dark triad personality traits, along with Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Jakobwitz & Egan 2006; Liyanagamage & Fernando 2023; Paulhus & Williams 2002). Narcissism includes two types of narcissistic personalities: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Makowski et al. 2021; Miller et al. 2021). Grandiose narcissism has two facades; antagonism and agentic extraversion (Leckelt et al. 2018). Individuals high on antagonism are inclined to be arrogant, callous, deceitful, and entitled. Individuals high in agentic extraversion are highly self-assured, assertive, and casually charming (Blickle et al. 2023; Miller et al. 2021).

Narcissistic leadership occurs when leaders' actions are principally motivated by their own egomaniacal needs and beliefs, superseding the needs and interests of the constituents and institutions they lead" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky 2006, p. 621). Hence, they are characterised by high egoism, superiority, and entitlement and with little room for tolerating criticisms (Hollebeek et al. 2022; Nevicka et al. 2018; O'Reilly III & Doerr 2020; Rovelli & Curnis 2021; Yao et al. 2020; Zvi & Elaad 2018). Moreover, narcissistic leaders can be self-absorbed to the extent that they undermine followers' self-esteem/respect due to poor interpersonal relationships. Thus, ultimately narcissistic leader actions might affect followers' job performance.

Individuals with narcissistic personalities tend to emerge as leaders in many organisations (Nevicka et al. 2018; Prundeanu et al. 2021; Rovelli & Curnis 2021). Though they take leadership positions in different hierarchical levels, they are mostly viewed as ineffective due to the negative consequences they bring to the organisations through abusive supervision (Gauglitz et al. 2023; Wille et al. 2023), burnout (Nevicka et al. 2018), and negative effects on followers' job performance and other counterproductive work behaviours (Braun 2017; Braun et al. 2018; Campbell et al. 2011). Further, Zhang et al. (2022) identified that employee-perceived leader narcissism negatively affects leader effectiveness perceptions and employee job performance. Moreover, due to the self-absorbed, arrogant nature of narcissistic leaders their relationships with their followers can deteriorate over time as short as in 12 weeks (Braun 2017). These empirical results explain how LMX relationships among leaders and followers weaken due to leaders' narcissistic behaviours. Thus, the mutual trust and interrelationships among leaders and followers are heavily affected, leading to decreased job performance. Thus, the negative association between leader narcissism and employee job performance can be explained with the support of the Leader-Member Exchange theory.

Keywords: Leader Narcissism, Job Performance, Leader-Member Exchange theory

References

- Blickle, G, Böhm, F & Wihler, A 2023, 'Is a little narcissism a good thing in leadership roles? Test of an inverted U-shaped relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with leader', *Personality and individual differences*, vol. 210, p. 112230.
- Braun, S 2017, 'Leader narcissism and outcomes in organizations: A review at multiple levels of analysis and implications for future research', *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 8, p. 773.
- Braun, S, Aydin, N, Frey, D & Peus, C 2018, 'Leader narcissism predicts malicious envy and supervisor-targeted counterproductive work behavior: Evidence from field and experimental research', *Journal of business ethics*, vol. 151, pp. 725-41.
- Campbell, WK, Hoffman, BJ, Campbell, SM & Marchisio, G 2011, 'Narcissism in organizational contexts', *Human resource management review*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 268-84.
- Gauglitz, IK, Schyns, B, Fehn, T & Schütz, A 2023, 'The dark side of leader narcissism: the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision', *Journal of business ethics*, vol. 185, no. 1, pp. 169-84.
- Jakobwitz, S & Egan, V 2006, 'The dark triad and normal personality traits', *Personality and individual differences*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 331-9.
- Leckelt, M, Wetzel, E, Gerlach, TM, Ackerman, RA, Miller, JD, Chopik, WJ, Penke, L, Geukes, K, Kүfner, AC & Hutteman, R 2018, 'Validation of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire Short Scale (NARQ-S) in convenience and representative samples', *Psychological assessment*, vol. 30, no. 1, p. 86.
- Liyanagamage, N & Fernando, M 2023, 'Machiavellian leadership in organisations: a review of theory and research', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 791-811.
- Makowski, D, Pham, T, Lau, ZJ, Raine, A & Chen, SA 2021, 'The structure of deception: Validation of the lying profile questionnaire', *Current Psychology*, vol. 42, no. 6, pp. 1-16.
- Miller, JD, Back, MD, Lynam, DR & Wright, AG 2021, 'Narcissism today: What we know and what we need to learn', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 519-25.
- Nevicka, B, De Hoogh, AH, Den Hartog, DN & Belschak, FD 2018, 'Narcissistic leaders and their victims: Followers low on self-esteem and low on core self-evaluations suffer most', *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9, p. 422.
- Paulhus, DL & Williams, KM 2002, 'The dark triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy', *Journal of Research in Personality*, vol. 36, no. 6, pp. 556-63.
- Prundeanu, O, Constantin, T & Popușoi, SA 2021, 'Climb up your ego! Narcissistic status pursuit and motivation to lead', *Personality and individual differences*, vol. 177, p. 110830.
- Rosenthal, SA & Pittinsky, TL 2006, 'Narcissistic leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 617-33.
- Rovelli, P & Curnis, C 2021, 'The perks of narcissism: Behaving like a star speeds up career advancement to the CEO position', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 101489.
- Wille, B, Heyde, F, Vergauwe, J & De Fruyt, F 2023, 'Understanding dark side personality at work: Distinguishing and reviewing nonlinear, interactive, differential, and reciprocal effects', *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 1-21.

Zhang, C, Gong, X, Xiao, Y, Zhong, Y, Zhong, Y, Chen, L, Wang, Y, Zhu, L, Xiong, W & Liao, C 2022, 'Relationships between self-efficacy, coping style and quality of work-life among nursing managers in China: A cross-sectional study', *Journal of Nursing Management*, vol. 30, no. 7, pp. 3236-46.

I certify that the above research topic aligns with the PhD research project Ms. Menaka Nishanthi Hewawaduge undertook.



.....
Professor Mario Fernando

(Principal supervisor)