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NARCISSISTIC LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT ON WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to explore the relationship between narcissism and productivity in an higher education organization. The research questions include:(a) In what ways does narcissism affect anorganization? and (b) What is the relationship between narcissism and the productivity of an academic institute of higher education? Research suggests the overall conclusion that Ways to address these issues are explored in this study.

INTRODUCTION

The American Psychiatric Association defines narcissism as a personality disorder characterized by "a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy" (2000, p. 717). A diagnostic criterion is available for psychiatrists to diagnose this mental condition, which includes a person's sense of entitlement, requirement for excessive admiration, envy of others, interpersonal exploitation, rarity to accept fault as well as blame other for their mistakes, and a person's preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, and brilliance.Narcissism was first introduced into the field of psychiatry in the late nineteenth century by psychiatrist Ellis, who defined narcissism as a tendency to lose one's sexuality and become almost completely absorbed in self-appreciation. In 1980, the third edition of the American Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) set specific clinical criteria for narcissistic personality, including arrogance, desire for success and power, and lack of empathy.In the 1920s, psychologist Freud proposed the view that most leaders have certain narcissistic tendencies. Subsequently, many scholars began to study narcissistic leadership as a specific leadership style. Narcissistic leadership is the synthesis of narcissistic personality traits and leadership behaviours that are motivated mainly by self-interest needs and arrogant beliefs. Such leadership style has multiple effects on organizations and employees. The amplifying influence of narcissistic leadership on their subordinates has become a hot topic in the field of organizational behaviour.Existing research has proved that narcissistic leadership is more likely to occur in the culture with a high tendency toward collectivism (Weng *et al*., 2018; Xiao *et al*., 2018) and exercise a negative influence on the stakeholders. True narcissists, assert Jennifer Chatman andCharles A. O'Reilly, the Frank E. Buck Professor of Management at Stanford Graduate School of Business in a paper titled "Transformational Leader or Narcissist? How Grandiose Narcissists Can Create and Destroy Organizations and Institutions", are self-serving and lack integrity. True narcissists, O'Reilly says, are self-serving and lack integrity. They believe they're superior and thus not subject to the same rules and norms. Studies show they're more likely to act dishonestly to achieve their ends. They know they are lying, and it does not bother them. They do not feel shame and are also often reckless in the pursuit of glory, often with dire consequences, but even worse, narcissists change the companies or countries they lead, much like bad money drives out good, and those changes can outlast their own tenure, O'Reilly says. Divergent voices are silenced, flattery and servility are rewarded, and cynicism and apathy corrode any sense of shared purpose in a culture where everyone's out for themselves. In the extreme, they can destroy the institution itself, according to Reilly & Chatman. This study attempts to explore the variegated implications of narcissistic leadership in a seat of higher education that essentially calls for dedicated motivated and value oriented academic staff for optimal productivity and development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Narcissism," a common psychological and stylistic trait of senior educational managers, has been shown to have an impact on subordinates' psychology and further provoke their negative attitudes

and behaviours, such as cynicism, low job satisfaction, silent behaviour, and turnover intentions (Alhasnawi & Abbas, 2021). An article in the *Journal of Education and Busine*ss titled "Ethics and Personality: Empathy and Narcissism as Moderators of Ethical Decision Making in Business Students" by Todd Brown, John Sautter, Levente Littvay, Alberta Sautter, Brennen Bearnes (2010) revealed that narcissistic personality traits are indicative predictors of unethical behaviour among business students, and this highlights the importance of tracing narcissistic leadership behaviour pattern as the root of unethical environment in an organization.Duchon & Drake's (2008) article "Organizational Narcissism and Virtuous Behaviour" in *The Journal of Business Ethics* provides relevant information to address ways narcissism affects an organization. In particular, the authors argue that an organization's identity is analogous to aleadership personality. This organizational identity will determine whether or not the institution will act ethically when making decisions.In the 1980s, De Vries and Miller (1985) discussed the relationship between leaders' effectiveness and dysfunction and their narcissistic personality traits, suggesting that leaders' behaviours are influenced by their degree of narcissism. Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006) first put forward the concept of "narcissistic leadership," arguing that narcissistic leaders are motivated by personal needs and perceptions, and that for them, personal interests outweigh organizational interests.

According to Chinese scholars Huang & Li (2014), narcissistic leaders often appear to be charismatic, have superior vision, are strongly egoistic and seek superiority, are blindly arrogant and enjoy widespread attention, have an extremely strong aversion to criticism, and reject negative feedback. Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006) and Grijalva & Harms (2014) suggested that narcissistic leaders are characterized by grandiosity, power-seeking, and a strong desire for success. Khoo & Burch (2008) argued that in general, the traits of narcissistic leaders and their performance at work have more negative than positive effects.It has been found that narcissistic leadership is a combination of narcissistic personality traits and leadership behaviours, such leaders have a strong sense of self and self-interest motivation, but at the same time, they desire the recognition and praise of others to maintain their inflated self-perceptions and exhibit fragile self-esteem (Duchon & Burns, 2008; Ouimet, 2010). Again, Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006) point out that leaders are narcissistic leaders when their behaviours are motivated primarily by extremely selfish personal needs and are not driven by the interests of the organization they lead. Narcissistic leaders are usually arrogant, irritable, capricious, stubborn, and have a significant impact on employees' attitudes and behaviours (Ouimet, 2010). It has been shown that leader styles and traits are significantly related to the degree of job embeddedness and job satisfaction of subordinates (Khorakian *et al.*, 2021; Amankwaa *et al.*, 2022). Job embeddedness refers to the comprehensive factors that induce individuals to stay in the organization, and the core content contains three points: connection, matching and sacrifice. Connection refers to the degree of interaction between employees and colleagues or leaders in the work process; matching refers to the degree of adaptation or integration of employees into their work environment while sacrifice refers to the opportunity or material and spiritual benefits that may be lost by leaving the organization (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001; Lee *et al.*, 2004; William *et al.*, 2014).Job satisfaction is closely related to the workplace and is an immediate attitudinal variable. Organizational commitment is also closely related to the workplace, which emphasizes continuous efforts for the organization and reflects employees' strong desire for organizational membership. Both job embeddedness and job satisfaction are directly influenced by narcissistic leadership as revealed by a review of related literature in the area.

Effect of Narcissistic Leadership on Academic Staff: Employees view leaders as agents of the organization and attribute to the organization the way leaders evaluate and treat them. The capricious nature of narcissistic leaders makes them prone to conduct negative management behaviors in order to maintain their own interests and authority, which deteriorates the perception of good relationship

between employees and the organization and leads to negative responses from employees that reduce their job embeddedness (Ogunfowora, 2013; Haggard and Park, 2018; Mackey *et al*., 2018). At the same time, the hypersensitivity of narcissistic leaders leads them to be suspicious and self-defensive and lack trust in their subordinates (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006), which can severely weaken employees' perceptions of leadership support and reduce their job embeddedness. On the other hand, resource conservation theory, as an explanation of how individuals in an organization handle resources in the face of stress, reflects the characteristics of individuals' pursuit of new resources and maintenance of existing resources. Employees are always trying to actively acquire new resources and avoid the loss of existing resources in order to achieve success. According to resource conservation theory, abusive leadership depletes employees of the self-resources needed to maintain appropriate behaviours, such as attention, willpower, and self-esteem (Hobfoll, 1989; Tepper *et al*., 2007). When the negative traits of narcissistic leadership are on display, individuals will seek new resources in response to this pressure. However, traits such as narcissistic leadership egoism attribute organizational resources and success to themselves. These pressures disrupt the balance of individuals' resources, making it significantly more difficult to acquire new resources and maintain existing resources from loss (Saks and Gruman, 2018). As a result, employees will eventually choose to reduce their job embeddedness or even leave the organization in order to preserve and protect their resources from losses. Thus, after being subjected to hostility, public denigration and threats from narcissistic leaders, employees' emotional and respectful needs and other self-resources are greatly depleted, which directly manifests itself in the form of alienation from the organization and reduced inner connection and integration with the organization.

LMX or Leader Member Exchange: LMX refers to the superior-subordinate relationship formed through contact and communication between the superior leaders and the immediate subordinates in the organization (Martin *et al*., 2018; Andersen *et al*., 2020). Due to the limitation of time, energy and resources educational managers tend to divide their subordinates into "insiders" and "outsiders" intentionally or unintentionally according to some unwritten criteria (Chen *et al*., 2009; Lam *et al*., 2015). Leaders' care, understanding and support for employees can effectively improve LMX. On the contrary, if leaders do not respect employees and ignore their needs and development, a low-quality of LMX will be established between leaders and employees or subordinates (Tang *et al*., 2020). It is seen that Narcissistic leaders tend to be self-centered in the process of working with their subordinates, focusing only on expressing and implementing their own ideas and opinions, and often tend to ignore the interests and needs of their employees, even achieving their own goals by devaluing the performance of their subordinates, and hogging their subordinates' honours and credit (De Vries & Miller, 1985; Khoo & Burch, 2008; Liu *et al*., 2017). In the long run, the emotion and dependence between narcissistic leaders and employees will inevitably be seriously damaged, which is not conducive to the cultivation and development of academic environment od a seat of higher education and will obviously reduce the quality of LMX. At the same time, narcissistic leaders can create an impression of being deceptive, hostile and intimidating through a series of self-promotion techniques (Ouimet, 2010; Back *et al*., 2013), thus undermining the mutual trust and respect between leaders and teachers, thereby reducing LMX. In addition, as narcissistic leaders are typical egoists, they will gradually expose their egoistic tendencies in the process of interacting with the qualified and competent faculties. For example, narcissistic leaders will always treat their subordinates with indifference, deprive their of the opportunities to show their talents, and belittle their performance, which will lead their subordinates to be extremely disappointed with their leaders, thus breeding negative emotions and negatively affecting LMX, causing the learned facultiesto feel demotivated, lose enthusiasm for proactive developmental activities necessary for the development of the institution, stay aloof and even look for alternate working environments whenever possible. According toorganizational socialization strategies, perceived insider status refers to the extent to

which individuals perceive themselves as "insiders" in the organization. Perceived insider status influences numerous important organizational outcomes. In dealing with employees, narcissistic leaders tend to act recklessly for their own personal interests, mainly by doing whatever it takes to obtain personal achievements, abusing, denying, and criticizing employees to maintain their own authority and sense of control (Back *et al.*, 2013). This behaviour not only weakens employees' self-esteem and identification with the organization, but also increases their resentment toward their work, rust the distance between them and the organization, and reduce their perception of insider status. At the same time, the over-sensitive characteristics of narcissistic leaders can lead to their distrustful and defensive mentality toward employees, and fear to take the negative consequences and risks caused by the others' mistakes or incompetence. The narcissistic leaders need to maintain their authority and status through centralization of power. Therefore, under the management of narcissistic leaders, employees tend to listen to the instructions given by the leaders and cannot make their own decisions, play freely, l*et al*one question the decisions of the leaders and challenge the authority of the leaders. However, the self-determination theory states that individuals have three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relationship (Wang S. *et al.*, 2021; Xiang *et al.*, 2021).

Narcissistic leadership, therefore, directly opposes the basic needs of the qualified faculties and researchers in an institution of higher education.Narcissistic leaders tend to doubt employees' abilities, rejects suggestions put forward by them, and takesscant initiative to address employees' competency and relationship needs. These can reduce employees' sense of control over their work and make them perceive that their competence, qualifications, potential and talents are not recognized and accepted by their leaders and the organization, thus making it difficult for them to perceive themselves as insiders of the organization (Nevicka *et al.*, 2018). Zhang *et al.* (2020) showed that employees with higher insider status perceptions proactively strengthen ties with their leaders and colleagues and enhance organizational identity, and thus reducing the propensity to leave. On the contrary, employees with a lower perception of insider status lack sufficient organizational resources to establish a strong connection and fit with the organization, and there is no significant emotional or material cost to them for leaving. In summary, narcissistic leaders reduce employees' insider identity perceptions, and lower insider identity perceptions in turn reduce employees' job embeddedness.

CONCLUSION

Narcissists infect the culture through the policies and practices that they directly influence, or, more often, all that they fail to institute. According toJennifer A. Chatman (2020), they often choose not to put in place strong policies governing ethical behaviour, conflicts of interest, and pay equity between men and women, as well as practices that promote teamwork and encourage people to treat others with civility and respect and also frequently fail to sanction employees when they violate these shared norms. In effect, Chatman asserts in her article titled "How narcissistic leaders infect their organizations' cultures", people get rewarded for less ethical, less collaborative behaviours which is detrimental to the interest of the organization.O'Reilly's hope is that by learning from the lessons from what is now a large body of research on narcissistic leadership, we can learn to better distinguish between real transformational leaders and the self-dealing look-alikes who exploit our hopes and fears to gain power and refrain from hiring narcissistic personalities to leadership positions. Annebel de Hoogh and Corine Boon, in their article titled "Narcissistic Leaders: How to Avoid When Hiring", warns us to cautiouslyemploy a few strategies to identify and reject a narcissist who, if appointed to academic leadership, would destroy the organizational health. These include personality assessments, cognitive ability tests, tracking performance and potential leadership qualities over time instead of evaluating performance at eh interview table only. This study reveals the urgent social need to avoiding narcissistic leaders especially in seats of higher learning that calls for

free thinking, critical thinking, autonomy and respect for efficiency and potential of highly qualified academic staff to emancipate higher education from unhealthy power dynamics, sadism, exploitation, and destruction of academic environment and progress. The evolution of effective selection criteria suggested by researches should be taken into cognizance and implemented for a more productive and effective academic environment.

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