

Mediating Role of Toxic Leadership in the Relationship between Perceived Narcissism and Work Outcomes among Higher Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to investigate the mediating role of toxic leadership on the relationship between perceived narcissism personality and work outcomes among higher education teachers. Study I comprises of the selection and validation of major constructs of the research. Study II focused on the psychometric estimation, that is, reliability and validity of the instruments. Sample of university and college teachers (N = 382) was taken from different educational institutes of Pakistan. Results provide the evidence that all scales are reliable. Study II is consists of main study. Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010), Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008), Organizational Cynicism Scale (Dean et al., 1998), Turnover Intention scale (Seashore et al., 1982) were used. Results revealed positive correlation between narcissistic personality, toxic leadership, organizational cynicism and turnover intention. Regression analysis revealed that perceived narcissism is positively predicting organizational cynicism and turnover intention. Findings revealed that toxic leadership act as a mediator between Perceived Narcissism and work outcomes. Present study will be helpful for organizational psychologists to develop intervention techniques to help identify the toxic leadership in an organization and help to overcome negative work outcomes.

Key words: Perceived narcissism, Cynicism, Toxic Leadership

INTRODUCTION

For an extensive period, the background of personality and individual psychology has been ruled by the big five attributes that are extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness (Furnham & Paulhus, 2013). One stream of investigation that has been rapidly picking up pace and focusing to this hypothetical and actual area is the work of the dark triad personality (Jonason et al., 2012). In recent times, there has been a resurgence of concern in toxic leadership due to abuse of power in business, religion and politics. Although leadership has been studied by philosophers like Plato, Hobbes, and Bertrand Russell, modern social science has tended to take a one-sided approach to the subject, focusing on its beneficial and constructive features while disregarding its negative parts (Kaiser & Hogan, 2005; Kellerman, 2004; Yukl, 1999).

Destructive or toxic leadership has been employed in academic writings. The toxic or destructive triangle is a nexus of follower, environmental or other elements, and leader that makes harmful leadership possible, is then defined and developed. Leadership is crucial. Example of transformative leaders, who raised the expectations of their supporters, inspired or stimulated their vision, and tapped into their potential are many in history. However, history is also rife with instances of leaders who have caused unimaginable damage to their countries, businesses, churches, or educational institutions. This research

investigates the problem of toxic leadership, which is defined as leadership that adversely affects an organization's systemic health, either suddenly or gradually, from accomplishing its goals. The query paid particular attention to toxic leadership in educational institutions. The study will use a combination of methodologies to identify toxic leadership's presence in colleges and universities as well as to explain its traits.

Grandiose self-promoters, narcissists seek other people adoration (Paulhus, 2014). Narcissists behave selfishly and have an overinflated sense of identity (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The narcissistic personality inventory (NPI), developed by Raskin and Hall (1979), and is a subclinical form of the personality disorder identified by the DSM. On a conceptual level, grandiosity, entitlement, domination, and superiority are some of the narcissistic personality most prominent characteristics (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Two common types of Narcissism are vulnerable Narcissism and grandiose perceived narcissism. Vulnerable Narcissism (VN) is characterized by introversion, negative emotions, interpersonal coldness, hostility, need for recognition, entitlement, and egocentricity. Grandiose Narcissism (GN) is characterized by dominance, self-assurance, immodesty, exhibitionism, and aggression. There is a difference between narcissistic vulnerability and narcissistic grandiosity according to more recent conceptualizations. Back et al. (2013) discussed the dark and bright side of perceived narcissism, as well as narcissistic rivalry. The pursuit of originality, lofty fantasies, and beautiful demeanor are all characteristics of narcissistic admiration. Narcissistic rivalry involves haughty and combative behavior, but narcissistic admiration results in a self-assured, dominant, and expressive demeanor. Narcissistic rivalry causes a significant drop in social group popularity over the course of an average to lasting period (Back et al., 2015). Narcissists obsess about and dream about themselves, about achievement, adoration, and power (Campbell & Sedikides, 2017). Their interest in improving themselves, lack of trust, and having empathy for others is a major barrier to maintaining interpersonal connections (Ames et al. 2006).

In 1996, the phrase toxic leader first surfaced however there is still not universally accepted definition (Wicker, 1996). In fact, there are several names for the same thing. Literature regarding phenomena may be found. Bad leadership is used by Kellerman (2004) and the phrase destructive leadership is used by some (Hogan et al., 2007). However, the term toxic leadership is increasingly chosen to describe leadership, that is detrimental to a company (whether a church, a political state, or a business). Toxic leadership is described as a process in which leaders, through dint of their negative actions and dysfunctional personalities cause major problems and persistently harmful impact on people, families, organizations, and communities; they even rule whole societies (Lipman & Blumen, 2009).

Metcalf and Daniel (2015) defined toxic leader as an entity who behaves in a hostile way and tend to manipulate and exhibit threatening, and unethical behaviors towards those around them. Toxic leadership has been defined in a variety of ways. For instance, destructive leadership, according to account for negative conduct directed against both the organization and subordinates, should not be tolerated. Considering this, they proposed the following comprehensive definition of toxic leadership, concentrating on the recipients or victims of toxicity: a boss, supervisor, or leader pattern of action that consistently transgresses that undermines and sabotages the organization objectives, tasks, resources, and effectiveness, as well as the employees' motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction.

Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude an individual possesses against the organization in which he is employed. Organizational cynicism, a pervasive attitude characterized by skepticism, distrust, and negative perceptions of an organization's motives and actions, has emerged as a significant and concerning phenomenon within contemporary workplaces. Individuals who experience organizational cynicism often view their organization decisions, policies, and leadership behaviors through a lens of doubt, suspecting ulterior motives and self-serving agendas (Abraham, 2000). This skeptical perspective

can erode trust, hinder effective communication, and contribute to a culture of negativity and disengagement. Organizational cynicism is a complex construct influenced by various factors, including leadership behaviors, organizational practices, and broader socio-cultural dynamics (Namie & Lutgen, 2010). In cynicism the following things are sacrificed, for instance equity, morality and genuineness of employees. The employees become more self-involved which led to such behaviors and activities that centered on deception and hidden drives (Abraham, 2000).

According to most of the research, organizational cynicism is a bad attitude at work that might have an impact on a variety of organizational and personal outcomes. The precise nature or definition of organizational cynicism, as well as its cause, are not universally agreed upon by scholars. Organizational cynicism, as described by James (2005), is the attitude toward one's employer that is marked by negative ideas, sentiments, and interrelated actions in reaction to a history of personal and or social experiences vulnerable to modification by environmental stimuli.

Employee turnover with the purpose to leave and knowledge concealment are both blatant roadblocks to the efficient operation of any business or organization. Turnover intention and information concealment conduct are two of the unfavorable consequences of interpersonal conflict in academics. A conscious choice to look for different options in other institutions is turnover intention (Krueger & Rouse, 1998). When employees quit their position freely, there is workers turnover. The employee turnover intention is unfavorably associated to predictable job circumstances in a company, which may help us understand why there is turnover intention (Bacha, 2016). The turnover intention has a strong positive link with the occurrence at hand and the business's inefficiencies (Alexander et al., 1994).

Conceptual Model



Theoretical Underpinning of the Study Variables

Within the framework of social exchange theory, individuals with dark triad personality traits may engage in exploitative exchanges, seeking personal gains at the expense of others. Such behavior can contribute to toxic leadership and foster cynicism among employees (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Additionally, toxic leadership while playing the role of mediator between dark triad personalities of leaders can lead to increased cynicism and turnover intention among employees (Robinson et al., 2009). Individuals having characteristics of toxic leadership may create a negative social exchange environment, where employees experience high costs (e.g., emotional distress) and limited rewards (e.g., lack of support or recognition). By instigating an augmentation in perceived costs, which encompass emotional distress and diminished job satisfaction, and concurrently diminishing perceived rewards, leaders with dark triad personality traits undermine the equilibrium necessary for positive exchanges within the employee-employer relationship (Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Ng & Sorensen, 2008).

Organizational cynicism can be viewed as a result of negative social exchange experiences, where employees feel that the costs of their contributions outweigh the rewards received from the organization (Munir et al., 2016). In the context of social exchange theory, turnover intention can be seen as a response to a perceived breach of the social contract between employees and the organization. Negative experiences, such as toxic leadership or high levels of cynicism, can increase turnover intention as employees seek better rewards and opportunities elsewhere (Tucker et al., 2016).

Hypothesis

1. Perceived narcissism of authority figures will positively predict organizational cynicism among higher education teachers.
2. Toxic leadership of authority figures will mediate the relationship between perceived narcissism of authority figures and organizational cynicism among higher education teachers.
3. Perceived narcissism of authority figures will positively predict turnover intention among higher education teachers.
4. Toxic leadership of authority figures will mediate the relationship between perceived narcissism of authority figures and turnover intention among higher education teachers.

METHOD

Sample

Three eighty two teaching faculty members from Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and Balochistan made up the study's sample. The minimal age requirement for this study sample was set at 25, and the minimum educational requirement was PhD. Data was collected from following institutes, International Islamic University, Islamabad (n=24), Fatimah Jinnah Women University (n= 21), Quaid-i-Azam university, Islamabad (n=40), National University of Modern Languages (n=15), Sargodha University(n= 12), Riphah International University(n=9), National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, sindh (n=20), Karachi University (n=22) , Iqra University Abbottabad (n=14) , Bahria University Islamabad (n= 23), Government post graduate college Abbottabad (n=32), Degree college number 1 and 2 Abbottabad (n=29), Army burn hall college for girls (n= 17), University of Turbat (n=12), University of Baluchistan (n=19), Islamia girls college Quetta (n=12).

Measures

Dirty Dozen Scale

The dirty dozen scale was developed by Jason & Webster in 2010. This scale uses 12-items for assessment of the dark triad personality (perceived narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism). A 5-point likert scale is used to assess the scale (1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree). Despite its brevity, the test is divided into three subscales to assess each trait: perceived narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism. Each subscale consists of 4 items. The elements in each subscale were averaged to create the subscale itself. Overall reliability of scale is .87, while reliabilities of subscales are given to be .78 for machiavellianism, .80 for psychopathy and .83 for perceived narcissism (Jonson et al, 2013).

Toxic Leadership Scale

Toxic leadership scale was developed by Andrew Schmidt in 2008 to evaluate toxic supervision in workplace environment. Thirty items make up the instrument, which assesses toxic leadership in its five dimensions—abusive supervision (7 items), authoritarian leadership (6 items), Narcissism (5 items), self-

promotion (5 items), and unpredictable behavior (7 items). The ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) on a 6-point Likert scale. This instrument is reliable, each of the five scales has high reliability abusive supervision: $\alpha = .93$, authoritarian leadership: $\alpha = .89$, perceived narcissism: $\alpha = .88$, self-promotion: $\alpha = .91$, unpredictable leadership: $\alpha = .92$ (Schmidt, 2008).

Organizational Cynicism Scale

For measuring the construct of organizational cynicism, the Scale of organizational cynicism was utilized which was developed by Dean et al., (1999). A 5-point likert scale, with 5 being the strongest agreement and 1 being the strongest disagreement, was used to score the items. The alpha reliability of the scale was found to be .77 (Dean et al., 1999). The number of items in scale was 13 and the score on this scale ranged from 13 to 65. The number of items in different subscales is given as; behavioral dimension consists of 4 items; cognitive dimension consists of 5 items and affective domain has 4 items.

Turnover Intention Scale

Seashore et al. (1982) Turnover Intention Scale (TOS) was used to measure employees' turnover intention. This scale has three test items. This scale has seven response categories on likert type rating scale. Those response categories range from strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). The actual score range for the scale lied between 3-21. Higher scores on this scale are indicative of employees' higher level of intention to leave their organization and vice versa. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this scale was found to be .71 (Seashore et al., 1982). Furthermore, in Pakistani context, internal consistency estimates were reported to be .81, .78 and .89 (Ali, 2016; Kabir, 2015; Malik, 2014, respectively).

Procedure

The study began by approaching respondents from the higher education teachers individually. Following an ethical evaluation of debriefing, informed consent, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw the response. The respondents were informed about the objectives and goals of the current study. Depending upon the nature of the instruments verbal and oral guidance was given to participants.

Table 1

Descriptive of Study Variables (N=382)

Var	K	α	M	SD	Range		Skew	Kurt
					Potential	Actual		
Nar	4	.70	13.09	3.59	4-20	4-20	-.42	-.42
TL	30	.92	115.13	27.06	30-180	37-168	-.32	-.50
OC	13	.88	37.62	9.63	13-65	15-59	.07	-.92
TOI	3	.63	14.08	3.96	3-21	6-21	-.68	-.21

Note. Var = Variable; Nar= Perceived narcissism; TL = Toxic Leadership; OC = Organizational Cynicism; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; skew= Skewness; kurt= Kurtosis; α = Chronbach's Alpha.

Table 2

Correlation Among Study Variables (N=382)

Var	Nar	PTL	OC	TOI
Nar	-			
TL	.60**	-		
OC	.47**	.61**	-	
TOI	.15*	.35**	.26**	-

Note. Var = Variable; Nar= Perceived narcissism; TL = Toxic Leadership

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Linear Regression Analysis showing the effect of Perceived narcissism on Organizational Cynicism (N=385)

Organizational Cynicism					
Variable	B	β	P	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Constant	23.66		.00	20.30	27.02
Nar		.39**	.00	.81	1.31
R^2				.16	
F				71.65**	
Turnover Intension					
Constant	11.43		.00	9.65	13.21
Nar		.18**	.00	.10	.37
R^2				.03	
F				12.89**	

Note. Nar = Perceived narcissism; LL=Lower Limit; UL=Upper limit.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Mediating Role of Toxic Leadership in the Relationship between Perceived narcissism and Organizational Cynicism in Higher Education Teachers (N=382)

Variables	B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	95% CI	
					LL	UL
Step 1			.15			
Constant	23.66**				20.3	27.02
Nar	1.06**	.39**			.81	1.31
step 2			.30	.15		

Constant	14.4**		10.69	18.10
Nar	.27	.10	-.01	.56
TL	.17**	.47**	.13	.20

Note. nar= Perceived narcissism; TL= Toxic Leadership ;LL=Lower Limit; UL=Upper limit.

** $p < .01$.

The result in the table 15 shows the impact of perceived narcissism and toxic leadership on results for organizational cynicism among higher education teachers. According to the table in step I the value of R^2 revealed that 15% variance in organizational cynicism is predicted by perceived narcissism, ($\beta=.39$) predicts the impact of perceived narcissism on organizational cynicism. However, in step 2, the value of R^2 reveals that predictor and mediator explains 30% variance for organizational cynicism. The findings also demonstrates that perceived toxic leadership ($\beta=.47$) positively predicts the organizational cynicism. The value of ΔR^2 which is .15 shows change of model I and model 2.

Table 5

Mediating Role of Toxic Leadership in the Relationship between Perceived narcissism and Turnover Intention in Higher Education Teachers (N=382)

Variables	B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	95% CI	
					LL	UL
Step 1			.03			
Constant	11.43**				9.65	13.21
Nar	.23**	.18**			.10	.37
step 2			.10	.07		
Constant	8.34**				6.27	10.42
Nar	-.02	-.01			-.18	.13
TL	.05**	.32**			.03	.07

Note. Nar = Perceived narcissism; TL = Toxic Leadership; LL=Lower Limit; UL=Upper limit.

** $p < .01$.

The result in the table 5 shows the impact of perceived narcissism and toxic leadership of authority figures on results for turnover intention among higher education teachers. According to the table in step I the value of R^2 revealed that 3% variance in turnover intention is predicted by perceived narcissism, ($\beta=.18$) predicts the impact of perceived narcissism on turnover intention. However, in step 2, the value of R^2 reveals that predictor and mediator explains 9% variance for turnover intention. The findings also demonstrates that toxic leadership ($\beta=.32$) positively predicts the turnover intention. The value of ΔR^2 which is .07 shows change of model I and model 2

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to investigate how toxic leadership influences work outcomes of the higher education teachers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The study examined the impact of perceived narcissism of authority figures on organizational cynicism with mediating role of toxic leadership.

According to hypothesis 1, perceived narcissism of authority figures will positively predicting organizational cynicism among higher education teachers. Table 7 shows a positive relationship between the variables (see table 7). Regression analysis shows that predictor is significantly predicting outcome variable with $\beta=.39$, $p < .00$ (see table 10). According to previous literature, the correlation between

leaders' narcissism and employees' organizational cynicism is driven by the behaviors and communication patterns of narcissistic leaders. These leaders prioritize personal gain, lack empathy, and engage in manipulative actions. This behavior erodes trust, creates a perception of unfairness, and fosters negative attitudes among employees.

Hypothesis 2 states that perceived narcissism of authority figures will positively predict turnover intention among higher education teachers. As seen in table 7 of correlation, turnover intention and perceived narcissism are positively correlated and the findings of linear regression analysis shows that perceived narcissism is predictor of employees turnover intention with $\beta=.18$, $p<.00$ (see table 10). According to the Asrar (2020) study, narcissistic leadership is strongly correlated with employees' inclinations to leave the company.

Third hypothesis of the study says perceived toxic leadership of authority figures will mediate the relationship between perceived narcissism of authority figures and organizational cynicism among higher education teachers. Meditational analysis indicates that perceived toxic leadership mediated the relationship between perceived narcissism of authority figures and organizational cynicism of employees, explaining 15% distinctive variance in organizational cynicism among higher education teachers.

Meditational results are showing that perceived toxic leadership of authority figures mediate the relationship between leaders narcissism and turnover intention of employees in higher education teachers, explaining 7% unique variance in turnover intention (See Table 16, figure 7). Thus provided support to hypothesis number four. Assumption was given that when employees perceive their leader to be highly narcissistic and being toxic in his behavior toward his employees, despite other organizational measures, they are under less responsibility to continue being members (Babiak, 2015).

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study may be specific to the higher education sector in Pakistan and may not be applicable to other industries or cultural contexts. Therefore, future researchers could conduct studies on diverse sectors such as the hospitality sector. Future researchers could explore the role of these variables in other sectors such as industrial and hospitality and management. This study did not focus on the role of demographic factors such as designation, job experience. Future researchers could explore these demographic factors with these study variables.

IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights the importance of cultivating a workplace environment that supports perceived narcissism. Organizations should create a culture that encourages open dialogue, reflection, and a sense of community among employees. Managers can promote organizational cynicism by providing opportunities for employees to engage in mindfulness practices, meditation sessions, or reflective discussions. The findings of this study suggest that organizations in the higher education teachers in Pakistan should invest in programs and interventions aimed at enhancing organizational cynicism among their employees.

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