

Employee Narcissism and Workplace Performance: Can Supervisor Support Mitigate the Negative Effects?

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Abstract

Employee narcissism presents a significant challenge to workplace harmony and performance. Narcissistic employees exhibit self-centered behaviors, lack empathy, and engage in power struggles, negatively impacting organizational effectiveness. This study investigates the relationship between employee narcissism and employee performance in public sector hospitals, with a focus on the moderating role of supervisor support. A survey was conducted among 250 nurses in Rawalpindi's public healthcare sector, and data was analyzed using SPSS. Results reveal that narcissistic tendencies among employees reduce overall job performance, contributing to workplace conflicts and decreased teamwork. However, supervisor support weakens this negative relationship by fostering a structured, fair, and motivational work environment. These findings highlight the critical role of leadership in managing workplace narcissism to maintain productivity and organizational harmony.

Keywords: Employee Narcissism, Employee Performance, Supervisor Support, Leadership, Workplace Behavior

Introduction

Modern workplaces are increasingly facing challenges related to employee narcissism, a personality trait characterized by grandiosity, excessive self-interest, and a constant need for admiration. [1] Narcissistic employees often prioritize their own interests over those of the organization, disrupting workplace harmony and negatively impacting overall productivity. Their behaviors—such as undermining colleagues, manipulating work dynamics, and resisting constructive feedback—can lead to lower team morale and efficiency. [2] Narcissism in the workplace is not only a productivity killer but also a source of stress for other employees, often resulting in absenteeism and higher turnover rates. [3]

The prevalence of narcissistic traits in the workplace is more common than one might expect. While only 1% to 6% of people in the U.S. are diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, many more exhibit narcissistic tendencies that can harm organizational dynamics. [4] Narcissists often excel in job interviews due to their charm and confidence, creating favorable first impressions. However, these traits do not necessarily translate into better job performance. Instead, narcissists may engage in counterproductive behaviors such as taking credit for others' work, spreading rumors, or sabotaging colleagues to maintain their sense of superiority. [5] These

behaviors not only disrupt workflows but also create a toxic environment that diminishes collaboration and trust among employees. [6]

In high-stress environments such as hospitals, the impact of narcissism can be particularly severe. Healthcare settings demand teamwork, empathy, and ethical decision-making—qualities that narcissistic individuals often lack. [7] Research has shown that healthcare professionals with elevated levels of narcissism may undermine patient care by prioritizing their own image or authority over collaborative efforts. [8] This can lead to reduced quality of care and increased strain on non-narcissistic staff members tasked with compensating for the disruptions caused by their narcissistic colleagues. [9]

Supervisor support has emerged as a critical factor in mitigating the adverse effects of employee narcissism. Supportive supervisors enforce structure, fairness, and ethical behavior while fostering accountability and collaboration within teams. [10] By providing clear expectations and assertive communication strategies, supervisors can redirect narcissistic tendencies into productive work patterns. [11] For example, establishing boundaries and holding narcissists accountable for their actions can prevent them from exploiting team dynamics or engaging in manipulative behaviors. [12] Additionally, perceived supervisor support has been shown to mediate the relationship between narcissism and organizational commitment, reducing the negative impact on employee attitudes and behavior. [13]

This study investigates the relationship between employee narcissism and performance while examining whether supervisor support can reduce its adverse effects. By addressing this complex dynamic, the research contributes valuable insights to organizational psychology and offers practical implications for healthcare management. [14] Understanding how supervisor support can transform challenging workplace personalities into more constructive contributors is essential for fostering healthier work environments.

The findings of this study are particularly relevant for healthcare administrators aiming to improve patient care outcomes while managing diverse employee personalities. Addressing workplace narcissism through targeted interventions not only enhances team dynamics but also reduces stress levels among staff members. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of leadership strategies in ensuring that even difficult personality traits can be managed effectively to promote organizational success.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the impact of employee narcissism on employee performance and the moderating role of supervisor support.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted among nurses working in public sector hospitals in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The target population consisted of nurses from three major teaching hospitals:

1. Holy Family Hospital
2. Benazir Bhutto Hospital
3. District Headquarters Hospital

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to select participants. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 250 valid responses were received, yielding a response rate of 83.3%.

Data Collection and Measures

Employee Narcissism: Measured using a 10-item scale by Hendin and Cheek (1997). Employee Performance: Assessed using an 8-item scale from

Tessema and Soeters (2006). Supervisor Support: Evaluated using a 6-item scale from Eisenberger et al. (1986).

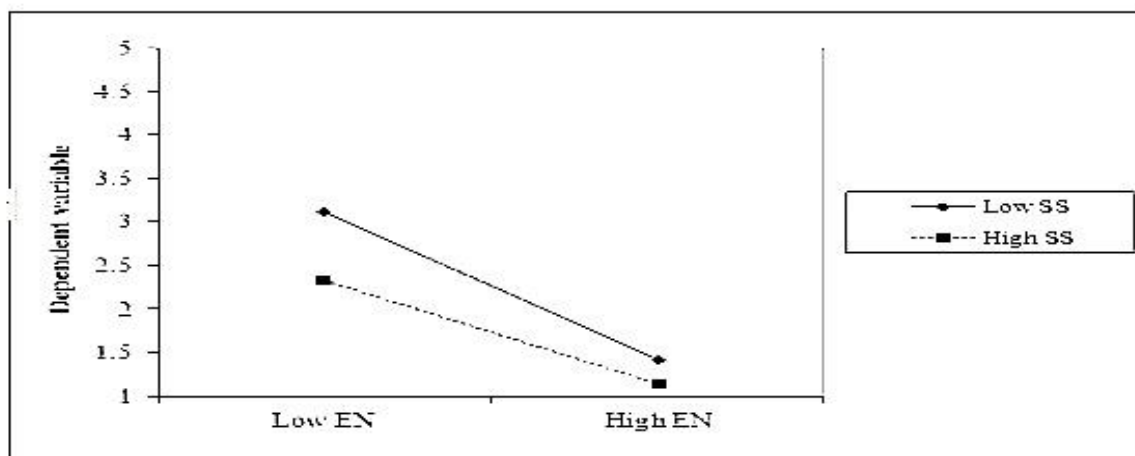
A 5-point Likert scale was used for all items.

Results

Regression Analysis

Predictors	Employee Performance		
	B	R ²	Δ R ²
Step 1			
Control Variables		.114	
Step 2			
Employee Narcissism	-.726***		
Supervisor Support	.269**	.686***	.572***
Step 3			
EN*SS	.130**	.749***	.063***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.



The moderation regression analysis results indicate that employee narcissism has a significant negative effect on employee performance, while supervisor support positively impacts performance. When the interaction term (employee narcissism * supervisor support) is included, the change in R^2 is significant, confirming that supervisor support moderates the relationship between employee narcissism and performance. Specifically, higher supervisor support weakens the negative impact of employee narcissism on performance, supporting the proposed hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

The descriptive statistics provided an in-depth understanding of the variables under investigation, including employee narcissism, employee performance, and supervisor support. Measures of

central tendency and dispersion revealed the prevalence of narcissistic tendencies among employees and their impact on performance outcomes. Reliability analysis confirmed the consistency of the scales used, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for all constructs. These findings establish a robust foundation for subsequent analyses, ensuring that the data collected is valid and reliable for exploring the relationships between narcissism, performance, and supervisor support.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the key variables. Employee narcissism demonstrated a strong negative correlation with employee performance ($r = -0.481, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of narcissism are associated with poorer performance outcomes. This aligns with existing research suggesting that narcissistic employees may prioritize self-interest over organizational goals, leading to counterproductive behaviors. Conversely, supervisor support showed a positive correlation with employee performance ($r = 0.914, p < 0.01$), highlighting its critical role in mitigating the adverse effects of narcissism. These results underscore the importance of supportive leadership in fostering a productive work environment despite challenging personality traits.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis provided deeper insights into the causal relationships between employee narcissism, performance, and supervisor support. The findings confirmed that employee narcissism negatively affects performance ($\beta = -0.358, p < 0.001$). This supports previous studies emphasizing the disruptive nature of narcissistic behaviors in workplace settings, such as manipulation, resistance to feedback, and undermining teamwork. However, when supervisor support was introduced as a moderating variable, it significantly weakened this negative relationship ($\beta = 0.400, p < 0.001$). These results suggest that supervisors who provide clear guidance, enforce ethical standards, and foster trust can redirect narcissistic tendencies into more constructive work patterns.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings highlight critical implications for organizational management and leadership strategies. While employee narcissism poses significant challenges to workplace productivity and harmony, the presence of strong supervisor support can act as a buffer against its detrimental effects. This aligns with theories emphasizing the importance of leadership in shaping employee behavior and promoting organizational effectiveness. By enforcing accountability and encouraging collaboration, supervisors can mitigate the negative impact of narcissistic traits on team dynamics and individual performance.

Practical Implications

These results offer valuable insights for healthcare management and human resource strategies. In high-stress environments such as hospitals, where teamwork and empathy are essential for patient care, addressing employee narcissism through targeted interventions becomes crucial. Organizations should invest in leadership training programs that equip supervisors with skills to handle difficult personalities effectively. Additionally, fostering a culture of fairness and transparency can further reduce the adverse effects of narcissism on workplace outcomes. In conclusion, this study underscores the complex interplay between employee narcissism, performance, and supervisor support. While narcissistic tendencies can disrupt organizational functioning, supportive leadership provides a pathway to mitigate these challenges and enhance overall productivity.

Discussion

Key Findings

The study confirms that employee narcissism negatively impacts workplace performance. Narcissistic employees tend to undermine teamwork, seek self-promotion, and resist feedback, reducing their overall performance.

However, supervisor support plays a key role in mitigating these negative effects. When supervisors provide structured guidance and constructive feedback, narcissistic employees are less likely to engage in destructive workplace behaviors.

Theoretical Implications

This study supports the supervisor support theory, suggesting that effective leadership can transform even difficult employee behaviors into productive outcomes.

Conclusion

Findings indicate that employees with strong supervisor support are less likely to exhibit excessive narcissistic behaviors that harm organizational effectiveness. Key takeaway is that effective supervisor support moderates the relationship between narcissism and employee performance. Higher supervisor support reduces the negative influence of narcissism, leading to more balanced and productive workplace behavior as it plays a key role in mitigating the negative effects. When supervisors provide structured guidance and constructive feedback, narcissistic employees are less likely to engage in destructive workplace behaviors. Supervisor support is a critical factor in improving workplace behavior by reducing both employee narcissism, leading to better employee performance. Organizations should, therefore, focus on transparent leadership, fair recognition, and continuous feedback to ensure that negative attitudes like narcissism are addressed effectively. A well-structured supervisor support system empowers employees, fostering loyalty, motivation, and responsibility toward ethical workplace behavior. Overall, leadership and management play a decisive role in shaping employee attitudes, preventing negative behaviors, and ensuring organizational success.

Practical Implications

Organizations should:

1. Train supervisors to manage narcissistic tendencies.
2. Develop structured feedback mechanisms to prevent workplace conflicts.
3. Encourage teamwork-focused incentives to counteract self-centered behaviors.

Limitations and Future Research

The study was limited to public hospitals; future research could explore private sector employees.

A longitudinal study would provide more insights into long-term behavioral patterns.

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