International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Examination of the Relationship Between Narcissism and Job Stress

Hatice Işık [a]

[a] *Sakarya University, Graduate School of Business, Sakarya, Turkey*

A B S T R A C T

Narcissism, as a core component of the dark triad personality traits, has emerged as a prominent topic of research in various subfields of psychology in recent years. Organizational psychology is one of these areas. This study aims to investigate the relationship between narcissism and job stress in the workplace. The research was conducted with a sample of N = 200 employees working in various organizations in Turkey's Marmara Region. The findings reveal a positive correlation of r = 0.19 between narcissism and job stress, indicating that employees with higher narcissistic tendencies are more prone to experiencing stress in their professional lives. This result contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between narcissism and job stress within organizational contexts. Replicating similar studies with diverse samples and cultural settings could enhance comprehension of job stress among employees with higher narcissistic tendencies, thereby providing broader insights into the workplace behaviors of narcissistic individuals.

Keywords: Personality, stress, narcissism, job stress

Introduction

One of the primary objectives of organizational psychology is to provide scientifically grounded insights to managers and employees by better understanding the dynamics of psychological processes in the workplace. A myriad of organizational, environmental, and individual factors influence these processes. Employees' personality traits are critical determinants among individual factors. The influence of personality traits on employees' attitudes toward their jobs and organizations has been a significant topic of inquiry (Furnham et al., 2005; Van den Berg & Feij, 2003).

Within personality traits, the Big Five Personality Model has been widely utilized in psychological research (Goldberg, 1990; John & Srivastava, 1999). However, the Dark Triad Personality Traits, introduced by Paulhus and Williams (2002), have recently gained attraction as an alternative classification. This model comprises subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism, and subclinical psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Narcissism is primarily classified as personality disorder in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, APA, 2013). However, since the introduction of the Dark Triad framework by Paulhus and Williams (2002), narcissism has increasingly been examined at a subclinical level. Consequently, the Dark Triad has become a focal point in organizational psychology research (Cohen, 2016; Forsyth et al., 2012; Jonason et al., 2012; Koehn et al., 2019; LeBreton et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021; Jonason & Webster, 2010; Volmer et al., 2016). This study also examines narcissism within a subclinical framework.

The core characteristics of narcissistic individuals include selfishness, self-admiration, a propensity to dominate others, difficulty in empathizing, and sensitivity to criticism. These individuals exhibit a strong motivation to achieve power and success, gain others' approval, and receive admiration (APA, 2013; Campbell & Foster, 2007; Campbell et al., 2010; Furnham et al., 2013; Penney & Spector, 2002; Braun, 2017; Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

On the other hand, job stress arises when the imbalance between job demands and employees' resources escalates (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Jobs demand various resources such as time, energy, and employee information. Over time, insufficient resources to meet these demands might lead to stress, resulting in undesirable employee outcomes.

Given these dynamics, narcissistic tendencies may drive individuals to engage in high-intensity work, making them more susceptible to stress compared to their less narcissistic counterparts. Thus, a positive relationship between narcissism and job stress is anticipated (Leonelli & Primavera, 2022). This study aims to enhance the understanding of narcissism in the Turkish context by examining its relationship with job stress. Based on the rationale above, the hypothesis of the study is as follows: There is a positive relationship between narcissism and job stress.

Materials and Methods

Model and Data Collection

This study adopted a quantitative research design, with data collected via an online survey method. The participants comprised employees from various public and private sector organizations operating in Turkey's Marmara Region. The data was gathered through online surveys disseminated via the researcher's social networks.

The introductory section of the survey form provided detailed information about the voluntary nature of participation, the content and purpose of the survey, and an estimate of the time required to complete it. An informed consent form was included to ensure participants were fully aware of the study's scope. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed they could withdraw from the survey anytime.

Job Stress Scale (JSS): Job stress was measured using the seven-item Job Stress Scale developed by House and Rizzo (1972) and adapted into Turkish by Efeoğlu (2006). Participants responded to the scale items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale is unidimensional, with higher scores indicating greater levels of job stress.

Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS): Narcissism was assessed using the Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS), developed by Konrath, Meier, and Bushman (2014) and adapted into Turkish by Özsoy et al. (2017). Participants evaluated the single-item self-report measure using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores reflected higher levels of narcissism.

Participants

A total of 200 individuals participated in the survey. However, responses from three individuals were excluded from the analysis due to carelessness identified through attention control questions. As a result, the final analysis was conducted on 200 valid survey responses.

The sample consisted of 54.5% male, 44% female, and 1.5% who preferred not to disclose their gender. Marital status was distributed as follows: 62.5% were married, 28% were single, 7% were divorced, and 2% were in a relationship. Regarding educational levels, 2% had completed elementary school, 1% middle school, 13.5% high school, 19% associate degrees, 44% bachelor's degrees, 20% master's degrees, and 0.5% doctoral degrees. Regarding sectoral distribution, 80% of the participants worked in the private sector, while 20% were in the public sector.

Results

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha), and correlation analyses were conducted. All results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics, internal consistency findings, and correlation analysis results.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	α	Job Stress	Narcissism	Age
Job Stress	2.59	0.82	.87	-		
Narcissism	1.47	0.79		.19**	-	
Age	36.73	9.33		-.08	-.07	-

Note. N = 200, All scales were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

α = Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

As shown in Table 1, participants exhibited relatively low levels of narcissism and moderate levels of job stress. The internal consistency of the job stress scale was high, indicating its reliability. However, internal consistency could not be calculated for narcissism as it was measured using a single item. The participants' average age was 36.73 years. Correlation analysis revealed no relationship between age and either job stress or narcissism. However, a positive relationship was identified between narcissism and job stress. This finding suggests that as narcissism levels increase, job stress levels also rise, supporting the study's hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate that participants' levels of job stress were not excessively high, and their levels of narcissism were relatively low. No significant relationship was found between age and either job stress or narcissism. However, a positive association between narcissism and job stress was observed, corroborating the study's hypothesis.

This finding highlights the potential link between personality traits and the critical issue of stress in organizational psychology and broader social contexts. While narcissistic individuals may appear charismatic and exhibit high leadership tendencies, they tend to experience higher levels of stress in the workplace. The emphasis narcissistic individuals place on power, admiration, and achieving success, coupled with their constant efforts to maintain

prominence (LeBreton et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021), may account for these results. Narcissistic tendencies might predispose such individuals to heightened struggles, efforts to gain power, and greater stress.

This study has several limitations due to its modest sample size and reliance on limited measurements. First, the small sample size and lack of focus on a specific sector represent significant limitations. Second, measuring narcissism using a single-item scale is another limitation. Additionally, the self-report nature of the data collection method might have introduced social desirability bias, wherein participants could portray themselves in a more favorable light.

Future research should explore a broader range of personality traits—such as the Big Five, the Dark Triad, components of psychological capital, perfectionism, stubbornness, ambition, and Type A personality—to establish more comprehensive links with job stress. Studies could also utilize larger samples and focus on specific sectors. Cross-cultural comparisons and international studies could provide valuable contributions to literature. Despite these limitations, the primary conclusion remains robust: Individuals with higher levels of narcissism are more prone to experiencing job stress.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands-Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328.

Bartram, T., Joiner, T. A., & Stanton, P. (2004). Factors affecting the job stress and job satisfaction of Australian nurses: implications for recruitment and retention. *Contemporary Nurse, 17*(3), 293-304.

Braun, S. (2017). Leader narcissism and outcomes in organizations: A review at multiple levels of analysis and implications for future research. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, 260159.

Campbell, W. K., & Foster, J., D. (2007). The narcissistic self: Background, an extended agency model, and ongoing controversies. In C. Sedikides, & S. Spencer (Eds.), *Frontiers of social psychology*. The self (p. 115-138). New York: Psychology Press.

Campbell, W.K., Hoffman, B. J., Campbell, S. M., & Marchisio, G. (2010). Narcissism in organizational contexts. *Human Resource Management Review, 21*, 268–284. doi: 0.1016/j.hrmr.2010.10.007.

Chienwattanasook, K., & Jermsittiparsert, K. (2019). Factors affecting job stress among employees in the banking sector of Malaysia. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 6(2)*, 288-302.

Cohen, A. (2016). Are they among us? A conceptual framework of the relationship between the dark triad personality and counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs). *Human Resource Management Review, 26*(1), 69-85.

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.

Furnham, A., Petrides, K. V., Tsaousis, I., Pappas, K., & Garrod, D. (2005). A cross-cultural investigation into the relationships between personality traits and work values. *The Journal of Psychology, 139*(1), 5-32.

Furnham, A., Richards, S.C., & Paulhus, D.L. (2013). The Dark Triad of personality: A 10-year review. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 7*, 199–216. doi: 10.1111/spc3.12018.

Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*(6), 1216–1229. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.59.6.1216

Grijalva, E., & Newman, D. A. (2015). Narcissism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB): Meta-analysis and consideration of collectivist culture, Big Five personality, and narcissism's facet structure. *Applied Psychology, 64*(1), 93-126.

House, R. J., & Rizzo, J. R. (1972). Role conflict and ambiguity as critical variables in the model of organizational behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 7*(3), 467–505. https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(72)90030-X

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 102–138). Guilford Press.

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The Dirty Dozen: A concise measure of the Dark Triad. *Psychological Assessment, 22*(2), 420–432. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019265

Jonason, P. K., Slomski, S., & Partyka, J. (2012). The Dark Triad at work: How toxic employees get their way. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*(3), 449-453.

Koehn, M. A., Okan, C., & Jonason, P. K. (2019). A primer on the Dark Triad traits. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 71*(1), 7-15.

Konrath, S., Meier, B. P., & Bushman, B. J. (2014). Development and validation of the Single Item Narcissism Scale (SINS). *PLoS ONE, 9*(8), e103469. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0103469

LeBreton, J. M., Shiverdecker, L. K., & Grimaldi, E. M. (2018). The dark triad and workplace behavior. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 5*(1), 387-414.

Leonelli, S., & Primavera, E. (2022). Narcissism and perceived stress among Italian hospital nurses during COVID-19: The moderator role of age. *International Journal of Healthcare Technology and Management, 19*(3-4), 260-279.

Ma, G. X., Born, M. P., Petrou, P., & Bakker, A. B. (2021). Bright sides of dark personality? A cross-cultural study on the dark triad and work outcomes. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 29*(3-4), 510-518.

Nguyen, N., Pascart, S., & Borteyrou, X. (2021). The dark triad personality traits and work behaviors: A person-centered approach. *Personality and Individual Differences, 170*, 110432.

Özsoy, E., Rauthmann, J. F., Jonason, P. K., & Ardıç, K. (2017). Reliability and validity of the Turkish version of Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD-T), Short Dark Triad (SD3-T), and Single Item Narcissism Scale (SINS-T). *Personality and Individual Differences, 117*, 11–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.05.019

Paulhus. D. L., & Williams. K. M. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality, 36*, 556–563. doi: 10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00505-6

Penney, L. M., & Spector, P. E. (2002). Narcissism and counterproductive work behavior: Do bigger egos mean bigger problems?. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 10(*1-2), 126-134.

Van den Berg, P. T., & Feij, J. A. (2003). Complex relationships among personality traits, job characteristics, and work behaviors. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 11*(4), 326-339.

Volmer, J., Koch, I. K., & Göritz, A. S. (2016). The bright and dark sides of leaders' dark triad traits: Effects on subordinates' career success and well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences, 101*, 413-418.