"Let Me Be Your Dog" or Not: A Qualitative Exploration of Narcissist Victim Traits in the Workplace

Sonya Dineva* and Kirsty Leanne Georgieff

University of East London, School of Psychology, Department of Professional Psychology, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ, UK

Submission: September 12, 2023; **Published:** October 03, 2023

*Corresponding author: Sonya Dineva, University of East London, School of Psychology, Department of Professional Psychology, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ, UK. Email id: s.dineva@uel.ac.uk

Abstract

Albeit the socially recognised narcissistic personality disorder is documented to be prevalent within leaders in many organisations, the victims of narcissistic behaviours and their experiences have been explored much less. Aiming at understanding the effects of narcissistic management upon employees generally residing within narcissist victim traits as well as their reactions and coping mechanisms, this qualitative study voiced and thematically analysed the narratives of eight participants interviewed in the UK. Four overarching themes emerged: (a) narcissistic tactics; (b) interpersonal effects; (c) intrapersonal effects and (d) effects on work, suggesting that although submissive individuals have been considered a good match to dominant leaders in the past, this 'fit' does not always guarantee harmonic collaboration. Instead, it is argued that there are specific factors that can provide such synergy and concluded that only a sufficient level of psychological need satisfaction of both parties can lead to successful outcomes. Thus, this research contributes to clarifying the mechanism of interaction between narcissistic leaders and their victims in the workplace, further proposing ideas for practical application of its findings and future research that will explore unhealthy interpersonal relationships and create awareness for positive change.

Practitioner Points

The lack of positive team connection and an unhealthy power imbalance within the management team towards workers cause low productivity and wellbeing, alongside opportunities for autonomous creativity to be lost.

Clear disciplinary policies and procedures need implementing and adhering to, in an explicit and transparent manner to maintain a sense of fairness and trust within the workplace structure and culture.

Training opportunities regarding team connection, personal awareness and workshop education within the narcissistic personality disorder and spectrum of traits could create awareness, in the hope for better wellbeing, productivity and creative innovation.

Keywords: Narcissism; Narcissist victim traits; Dark-side leadership; Followers' characteristics; Workplace; Qualitative; Thematic analysis

Introduction

The past couple of decades have noted significant interest in the topic of dark-side leadership and dark-triad personalities, all comprising subclinical but malevolent traits, i.e., narcissists, Machiavellians and psychopaths Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann [1] and in some cases even sadists Kurtulmuş [2]. The abundant attention to the matter is partly due to the high prevalence of such individuals at managerial positions caused by their inherent strive for power and social dominance Harris & Jones [3] as well as the appearance and study of many famous political and corporate leaders, consequently identified as residing within these traits S.

Braun, Kark, & Wisse [4]. As a result, a plethora of research has been performed on different features of dark leaders' personalities and behaviours along with their effects on followers and various aspects of work environment Atan [5]; Brandebo & Alvinius [6]; Neves & Schyns [7]. Nonetheless, there is still conflicting evidence with regards to the influence of such leaders on their subordinates S. Braun [8], which has been found both beneficial and adverse S. Braun [4]; LeBreton, Shiverdecker, & Grimaldi [9]; Rosenthal & Pittinsky [10]. Such contradictory findings may partially be explained by the fact that so far researchers' attention has been predominantly focused on studying the impact of dark

leadership on numerous aspects of organisational contexts rather than the underlying mechanisms for these relationships Tokarev, Phillips, Hughes, & Irwing [11]. Closely linked to the latter, there is another facet of these associations that has been consistently overlooked and that is followers' susceptibility to such influences and subjective response to them according to their own personality characteristics Wesner [12]. In line with this, the current study addresses the matter from a reversed perspective, scarcely explored so far, which refers to the workplace-related experiences and views of employees, generally operating within narcissist victim traits, and the way their disposition interacts with narcissistic people at work.

The aim of this research is to determine the manner, in which individuals exhibiting narcissist victim tendencies behave and are affected in the workplace. Although diverse investigation has been conducted on narcissistic traits (e.g. Jakobwitz & Egan [13]; Krizan & Herlache [14] and their role in leader-follower relationships Vecchio [15], the individuals who have to bear the consequences of the respective behaviours have been recognised to reside within maladaptive traits too Valashjardi & Charles [16] and their manifestation and effects in organisational settings are still underresearched Nevicka, De Hoogh, Den Hartog, & Belschak [17]. Moreover, such employees are often ignorant of the actual reasons for the observed inter- and intrapersonal dynamics Kipfelsberger & Kark [18] so the present paper aims at increasing awareness, incentivising workshops and harbouring wellbeing since workers' awareness of any psychological interferences could assist in making personal or group changes to enhance wellbeing and happiness alongside creativity and productivity Clements & Washbush [19].

Literature Review

Narcissism

The diagnostic statistical manual of mental health disorders (DSM-5) states narcissism is a recognised personality disorder, listing traits which include grandiose self-importance, success and power fantasies, believing self to be most special, desiring heightened admiration, entitlement of self, exploitation of others for personal gain as well as manifestation of jealousy, arrogance and lack of empathy American Psychiatric Association [20]. Despite its official recognition and vast use in both scientific and non-scientific literature Fatfouta [21], the concept of narcissism is still controversial. Freud's [22] psychoanalytical definition distinguishes between the states of primary narcissism (emerging in early childhood before the establishment of object relations) and secondary narcissism (occurring in normal human development and possibly leading to abnormal tendencies in adulthood due to dysfunctional attachment to primary carers) and explains the narcissistic disorder as an unwillingness to release one's primary ego of specialness and grandiosity, thus, withdrawing own libido from outside objects and converting it back to self. However, Kohut

[23] argues that healthy self-esteem is fuelled by grandiosity and is needed to maintain balance during a child's growth. This assumption has been further developed by Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro and Rusbult [24], who claim that normal narcissism is actually necessary for psychological health, as well as Cusak [25], who purports that individuals reside on a narcissism spectrum and are restricted from eliminating such behaviours. The spectrum of healthy and unhelpful narcissism is believed to be a place everyone becomes affected in multiple, sometimes socially or personally debilitating ways, affecting choices made as well as expression, creativity, productivity and feelings of fulfilment and happiness through self-awareness and congruence Malkin [26]. Although arguments for conceptual separation between narcissism and self-esteem have been consistently raised Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides [27]; Roberts, Woodman, & Sedikides [28]; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof [29]; Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman [30] and despite the lack of a clear line between normal and abnormal states and the complexity and diversity of the narcissism spectrum model Krizan & Herlache [14], its postulates have been largely embraced in both clinical and non-clinical settings, allowing a better understanding of the transactional process occurring between individuals and their social environment Rogoza, Zemojtel-Piotrowska, Kwiatkowska, & Kwiatkowska [31] as well as the mechanism underlying both types of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism Jauk & Kaufman [32].

In line with Freud's [33] theory, positing early childhood traumatizing events as antecedents of any narcissistic personality disorder, De Canonville [34] states that emotional abandonment leading to loss of reflection of genuine self from carers is the predominant cause for such deviations in psychological development. Although the effects of this relational aspect of dissociation Howell [35] have been found to be moderated by neurological Cascio, Konrath, & Falk [36] and sociocultural factors Vater, Moritz, & Roepke [37], it can exert a potentially ambiguous influence on self-perception and consequent behaviour, urging narcissists to either seek a victim to fulfil their core emotional abandonment Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg [38] or, as Kierkegaard interpreted by Roberts [39] proposes, search for a saviour to negate their self-doubt and replenish their diminishing self. In this connection, Cramer [40] hypothesizes that the choice of a maladaptive compensation strategy is dependent upon the nature of adolescent parenting deficits, where victims may be sought to generate reflection due to lack of empathy and saviours may be required in case of self-doubt, formed from the loss of self. The described mechanism can provide a useful basis for understanding the processes that happen on the receiving end of narcissism and more specifically – the development and manifestation of narcissist victim traits Todres [41].

Narcissist Victim Traits

Similarly, to narcissists, their victims may feel loss of self and core abandonment but find opposite ways to cope, thus, developing

different traits, further exacerbated by their relationship with narcissists Todres [41], and although these traits and behaviours have not been officially recognised as a personality disorder yet, they are referred to by some as a narcissist abuse syndrome Staik [42]. Narcissist victims are supposed to be attracted and fascinated by the confidence and grandiosity of narcissists De Canonville [34]; Young [43]. Hotchkiss [44] highlights that victims may be

willing to relinquish control, letting magnetisation to the narcissist to feel valued, and the latter may seek false self-reflection from the receiving individuals. Hence, victim mesmerisation happens unconsciously, allowing confusion and devaluation to commence, forming and reinforcing some or most of the traits listed in Table 1 due to fear of abandonment Valashjardi & Charles [16].

Table 1: Narcissist Victim Traits Developed from the Exposure to Narcissistic Behaviours.

Narcissist Victim Trait	Description
People Pleasing	Victims desire value from the narcissist due to losing this in childhood. This keeps the victim controlled and the narcissist elevated by the victim dismissing personal desires and beliefs to feel valued by the narcissist Pederson [94].
Low Self-Esteem	The victim is not driven to self-satisfy or value self in high regard, they only feel worthy by using others. External sources provide confidence, much like narcissists' façade of support. It is professed by Beck [10] that victims' self-destructive behaviour patterns manifest because they allow it to.
Poor Sense of Self	Derived from abandonment in childhood, Miller [79] and Winnicott [135] argue this is due to parents' excessive controlling behaviours, which may include punishments, making a child to introject negative values and feel incompetent. Victims conform to another's beliefs, failing to form a genuine sense of self.
Anxiety	Formed by unsuccessful defence from narcissistic mental abuse, it creates fear, existential crisis and uncertainty De Canonville [37]; MacKenzie [71].
Shamefulness	Mental bullying creates shame and self-blame as victims are unheard or misunderstood, which occurs since the narcissist invalidates the victim, using them as a scapegoat to avoid their true self De Canonville [37].
Distrust	Questioning narcissists' integrity or abilities is believed by Petric [95] to instil 'gaslighting' of the victim. The narcissist accuses the victim of oversensitivity and craziness, causing the victim to distrust their perceptions and become dependent on the narcissist for judgements on their reality.
Poor Boundaries	Malkin [74] posits that emotional abuse via 'gaslighting' creates an inability to reason in victims and fear of losing the narcissist, causing loose boundaries in order to gratify the narcissist's desires. However, it is argued by Hotchkiss [55] that this relinquishment is more comfortable because fear of loss of the narcissist is too extreme.
Hopelessness	Abandonment is owned by narcissist and victim alike due to hopelessness and emptiness Hershcovis & Barling [51]. Loneliness drives victims to conform to other's needs, with Klikauer [62] believing this distorts an individual's ability to make change, causing apathy and loss of power.

Following the formation of the mentioned traits, victims can adopt several coping strategies to conform to others and feel worthy because the fear of retaliation is high Arabi [45]. Such individuals may be accustomed to humiliation and gravitate to relationships with low boundaries and high control Hammond [46] or may be rewarded with self-worth by supplying extreme energy to their narcissist Cusak [25]. Many victims avoid shame by keeping secrets about the narcissist, which can cause loss of memory Hosier [47]. The latter is a coping mechanism, whereby the hippocampus (memory) and amygdala (emotions) within the brain do not function together, causing positive and negative memory to avoid being rationalised; therefore, the victim remains submissive to satisfy the narcissist and self Squire & Knowlton [48]. Moreover, Spring [49] adds that the victim may become mentally isolated, causing symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder to manage control, fear and intimidation. Finally, depersonalisation of bodily connection may occur as a result of psychological numbing Sedeño [50], which can cause distrust and social withdrawal Medford [51]. However, Hosier [47] states that panic attacks and anxiety may follow due to the consistent

hyperalert state of these individuals. Victims' anxiety is often justified since narcissists' low commitment to the relationship can easily lead to the replacement of the former with other individuals Campbell, Foster, & Finkel [52] or obsessive-compulsive disorders, involving alcohol abuse, eating disorders and smoking Bürgy [53] or avoidance counterbehaviours such as drug use and gambling Hosier [47]. All these traits and behaviours can have a detrimental impact on the receiver's well-being and performance Beck [54]; Hotchkiss [44]; MacKenzie [55] and due to the high probability of narcissists and victims within the workplace Christiansen & Chandan [56], these adverse effects require their exploration not only in intimate contexts but in organisational settings too.

Narcissists and Their Victims in the Workplace

As already mentioned, there is voluminous research conducted on the issues of dark-triad personality traits and their manifestation in work environments Brandebo & Alvinius [6]; Furtner [1], which has led to the identification of various types of dark leaders, broadly classified into two categories, namely: narcissistic leaders, Machiavellians and corporate psychopaths

S. Braun [4]; LeBreton [9], in some cases even including sadists Kurtulmuş [2], as well as a taxonomy differentiating between emotionally toxic, destructive, abusive and ineffective leaders Milosevic, Maric, & Loncar [57]. The current study focuses on narcissistic leaders and, more specifically, the psychological effects of their behaviour on followers since a great deal of individuals in people managing and chief executive positions have been identified as narcissists Wesner [12] but the impact of their leadership style has been insufficiently explored due to the accumulated contradictory evidence S. Braun [4]; LeBreton [9]; Rosenthal & Pittinsky [10]; Strobl, Niedermair, Matzler, & Mussner [58]. This suggests the need for further investigation of the issue, taking into consideration the subjective views and characteristics of subordinates and the context of their workplaces Kipfelsberger & Kark [18]; Milosevic [57]; Nevicka, De Hoogh [59] since, as Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser [60] point out, the observed phenomenon can be understood only within the toxic triangular framework of destructive leadership, susceptible followers and conducive environments.

Unravelling this matter should start with conceptual clarification that distinguishes between the mechanism, through which narcissistic leaders exert influence over their followers, and the process of work-related bullying since one of the reasons for the lack of recognition of narcissist victim traits in the workplace Kipfelsberger & Kark [18] may be their close relation to the phenomenon of bullying and the resulting situations for employees of being unheard or scared to interact Nevicka, De Hoogh [59]. The first difference between these processes lies in the source of power predominantly used to reach the goal, which in case of bullying is done via coercive acts based on fear and negative reinforcement tactics Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish [61], whereas in many cases narcissistic leaders rely on their charisma to manage impressions and feel special Cable & Judge [60]; Rosenthal & Pittinsky [10] as well as rewards to manipulate their subordinates and gain control over them Fatfouta [21]. In fact, although some scholars argue that there is a positive relationship between bullying behaviours/aggression and narcissism Ang, Ong, Lim, & Lim [63]; Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon [64]; Lambe, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Garner, & Walker [65]; Regnaud [66], there are a lot of other authors that find no significant associations between the two phenomena Furtner [1]; Tokarev [11]; Wisse & Sleebos [67] or claim that this is gender specific Reijntjes [68], related to preferences for indirect abusive practices Mattice & Spitzberg [69], linked only to situations threatening narcissists' ego Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, & Valentine [70] or dependent on factors like self-esteem Fanti & Henrich [71] type of narcissistic tendencies Fan, Chu, Zhang, & Zhou [72] and their combination with psychopathy Bicer [73] so the actual relationship between these concepts may be much more complex than anticipated.

Moreover, there is the matter of intent and purpose of each behaviour as while aiming for control and admiration as a primary objective American Psychiatric Association [20]; Cascio [30],

narcissists, due to their personality disorder and in many cases unawareness of their abnormal traits and deeds Kipfelsberger & Kark [18], may not necessarily deliberately choose to inflict suffering and development of maladaptive traits upon the victim Holtzman & Mehl [74] as opposed to bullying behaviours that aim at intentionally causing harm via humiliation, name calling or blackmail, for example Rodkin [61], and may be prompted by reasons other than control and not remotely connected to adoration Smith [75]. Finally, a substantial difference can be found in the personal characteristics attributed to narcissists and bullies, where a bully is likely to feel empathy and is more able to rationalise their behaviour Dautenhahn & Woods [76]; Stavrinides, Georgiou, & Theofanous [77], whereas a narcissist, trying to avoid or compensate for fearful feelings of abandonment from childhood Ronningstam & Baskin-Sommers [78], may be unable to logically explain and take responsibility for their deeds or feel empathy for their victim (American Psychiatric Association [20], especially in case of grandiose narcissists Mota [79]. This implies the conclusion that not all narcissists are bullies and not all bullies are narcissists Arabi [45] and leads to the matter of the actual effects and mechanism of narcissistic influence in the workplace.

Although literature has put particular emphasis on theorizing narcissistic leadership instead of gathering empirical evidence Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio [80] and research on the topic has been criticised for conceptual and methodological issues of measurement Malesza & Kaczmarek [81]; Nevicka, De Hoogh [59]; Tokarev [11]; van der Linden & Rosenthal [82], various significant effects of narcissistic leaders have been discovered with regards to numerous individual, group and organisational parameters, which, however, reveal a high level of duality. Thus, for example, a positive impact of such supervisors has been identified with regards to subordinates' objective and subjective career success Volmer, Koch, & Göritz [83]. In addition, due to their charming, visionary and assertive persona and ability to inspire and mobilise followers to achieve collective goals Rosenthal & Pittinsky [10], such leaders are perceived as very effective by their followers, especially when the leaders are identified as midrange narcissists Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley [84] or their personal and organisational objectives coincide Conger [85]; Dostanić & Gojković [86]. However, these findings should be considered with care since Judge, Piccolo and Kosalka [87] highlight that observer-reported ratings may not provide a credible representation of the actual leadership effectiveness. Moreover, Ong, Roberts, Arthur, Woodman and Akehurst [88] argue that the attractiveness of narcissistic leaders and the effectiveness resulting from this are temporary limited and are not valid in the long run because of the selfish, impulsive and exploitative behaviour of these individuals Furtner [1].

The latter implies multiple negative outcomes across all the levels of organisational functioning, including an increased number of counterproductive work behaviors, particularly work

withdrawal Özsoy [89] and higher levels of burnout Prusik & Szulawski [90], reduced followers' sense of work meaning, leading to cynicism, disengagement, lower organizational productivity and higher turnover rates Kipfelsberger & Kark [18] as well as dysfunctional actions in the workplace due to loss of confidence and personal growth Bicer [73]. These consequences can be further exacerbated if combined with abusive supervision of narcissistic leaders exercised upon followers low on self-esteem Nevicka, De Hoogh [59]. The list of adverse implications of narcissists in managerial positions can be additionally supplemented with inauspicious outcomes for group performance and decision-making Nevicka, Ten Velden, de Hoogh, & van Vianen [91]; Nigro [92], although in some cases narcissistic admiration may be beneficial to group cohesiveness and social identity Benson, Jeschke, Jordan, Bruner, & Arnocky [93], as well as negative effects on creativity and innovation Henriques, Curado, Jerónimo, & Martins [94], though Strobl [58] report controversial evidence with regards to the latter. In addition, researchers have associated narcissistic leadership with increased risk-taking, self-serving leader behaviours and organisational resource allocation contingent on self-definition as a leader and possessed power Rus [95], establishment of an organisational culture, tolerating narcissistic behaviours Arif [96] and unethical conduct Morais & Randsley de Moura [97], along with a competitive psychological climate Spurk & Hirschi [98], all of these hampering organisational change Neves & Schyns [7]. The ambiguous connotation of the described effects reveals the complex and dynamic nature of the relationship between narcissism and leadership, which may be better understood by consideration of the exact mechanism, underlying the social and psychological interaction between narcissists and their followers in work environments, which can be described with the idealization-devaluation-discard cycle Arabi [45].

Using them as an ego-defence mechanism Bogdanović, Vetráková, & Filip [99], narcissistic people in powerful roles may employ various tactics to gain admiration and idealisation from their subordinates Furtner [1]; Paleczek, Bergner, & Rybnicek [100], which can validate the narcissist much like what is referred to as codependency in behavioural research surrounding manipulation Bacon, McKay, Reynolds, & McIntyre [101]. This elevates narcissistic control because victims tend to comply to ensure job security Klikauer [102], although such behavioural patterns can lead to increased turnover intentions too Atan [5]; Nevicka, De Hoogh [59] since narcissistic devaluation can cause loss of self-esteem in applying for promotion or expressing ideas within the team Nevicka [91]; Nigro [92]. In this regard, Czarna and Nevicka [103] believe that the narcissist may avoid vulnerability by keeping the status quo, preventing the victim from progression unless the narcissist allows it. This 'master and slave' relationship is what Klikauer [102] relates to both pathologies as avoiding true self to minimise unhappiness and can be upheld through, for example, long or tedious work assigned

from narcissistic leaders to their employees to reinforce pressure and maintain their negative position. Supervisor's feedback may be dishonest Campbell & Siedor [104]; Schröder-Abé & Fatfouta [105] so productivity and growth would remain low alongside the ability to make decisions Klikauer [102]. Should victims challenge the dishonesty, they may be accused of being oversensitive when trying to express their emotions and, therefore, be left unheard and devalued Valashjardi & Charles [16].

Time can additionally aggravate self-doubt, with Petric [106] asserting this to be shame within the victim's unreliable reality. 'Gaslighting' is what forms self-doubt because a victim may distrust their judgements and capabilities, finding it hard to make decisions Abramson [107]. However, Snow [108] questions the process of gaslighting as according to the author victims may be aware they are correct yet convince themselves otherwise to meet their need to please. It is further argued by Edery [109] that victims may mirror the pathology of the perpetrator by manipulating and controlling colleagues to gain the outcome their narcissistic abuser requires, which is how trust erodes within the team, leading to loss of productivity S. Braun [8]. In order to maintain control, the narcissist may cancel training, ignore subordinates' achievements or even allow loose procedures and policies to enable unfair disciplinaries or terminate contracts that will let the narcissistic manager to remain at the top of the hierarchy Shurden [110].

Finally, the narcissist may easily discard an individual or group if their supply of admiration begins to decrease Campbell [52], Campbell [80], which, according to Edery [109] and Valashjardi and Charles [16], may intensify the vicious circle of stress, anxiety and loss of confidence, experienced by the followers, fuelling doubt and poor judgement due to their striving for impressing the narcissist. As a result of the described idealization-devaluation-discard mechanism of social interaction between narcissistic leaders and their employees Arabi [45], the latter may respond to these behavioural patterns via five coping strategies, including lack of an external reaction, befriending or confronting the leader, seeking help from senior management or leaving one's job Wesner [12]. However, the drives behind each of these strategies are still unclear and neither is the way the outlined interaction model gets affected by followers' characteristics such as their personality traits. Considering the narcissist victim traits a distinguishable group of such features, a question remains about how the respective individuals actually perceive and act in their workplace in the presence of a narcissistic supervisor, which is in the core of the current paper and explored through the lenses of social constructivist epistemology.

Method

Sampling and Participants

Given the nature of the research question, a qualitative approach was adopted, requiring a relatively small sample size that could ensure exploration of participants' subjective points

of view and allow for analysis from different perspectives Kothari [111]. In that connection, the researchers applied a purposive sampling strategy to include a segment of the population that would be able to provide relevant information on the topic due to their specific characteristics Sandelowski [112]. Systematic and random sampling could not be used in this research as particular behaviours and traits needed to be identified, therefore, respondents could not be chosen randomly. The inclusion criteria required partakers to be over 18 years of age, employed more than 16 hours per week, working in a department of minimum 10 employees and to have been with the organisation for at least 6 months, all of these aiming at recruitment of participants that had had sufficient time and opportunities to form stable relationships in the workplace beyond the initial period of adaptation Zalewska [13]; Živčák & Tomčíková [14] and reflect on them. In addition, in order to be eligible for the study, the prospective participants had to perceive their manager as narcissistic (a description of narcissistic behaviour was also provided to clarify meaning and ensure consistency in recruitment Bolderston [15]) as well as to have been recognised as residing within the narcissist victim traits.

Individuals' narcissist victim traits were identified via the Narcissism Spectrum Scale (NSS) Quirk, Malkin, & Martin [16], where only the "Insufficient" subscale (items number 14 to 20) was used and the other two subscales "Extreme" and "Healthy" were considered irrelevant to the purposes of the selection process. According to the authors, the NSS reveals "very good psychometric properties as a unidimensional scale, α = .89, with each subscale demonstrating good internal consistency, α's = .77, .85, .91" Quirk [116]. The 7-item "Insufficient" subscale measures self-esteem and confidence issues, whereby self is seen as insufficient and displays an unhealthy balance of narcissism. Statements such as "It is better to work behind the scenes than be in the spotlight" were asked to be valued based on a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher scores represented individuals' likelihood to manifest narcissist victim traits, therefore, answering five or more of the questions with Agree or Strongly Agree caused participant selection. Recruitment was conducted through researchers' professional networks, and as a result, eight people took part in the study as such a sample size was considered sufficient to allow for rich material to gain new experience and reach data saturation Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora [117] but small enough to manage V. Braun & Clarke [118]. Although gender was not a criterion used in selection, all the participants were female. Their age ranged from 30 to 55 years and they were all residing in the United Kingdom and working within hospitality, care, education or mental health services. None of the partakers revealed mental health concerns.

Design

As already mentioned, a qualitative approach was employed for this research to allow for an open reflection by the researcher, using the subjective perspective of the organic settings of the participants V. Braun & Clarke [118]. Design within the qualitative paradigm aims to understand personal, historical and social influence, to collect data from words and actions, thus, reducing loss of important findings or deepening understanding of quantitatively established relationships Mason [119]. Although having been criticized for validity and reliability issues Hofisi, Hofisi, & Mago [120], semi-structured interviews were deemed the preferred data collection method due to their flexibility and ability to capture in details participants' subjective views on the matter of interest Adams [121]. Focus groups or diaries were discounted as a means of data collection due to partakers' potential anxiety to disclose in groups and the need for further open questions that a diary could not expand upon Kothari [111].

The interview schedule consisted of 10 questions that were devised based on narcissist victim traits and workplace scenarios and were phrased in a broad, open-ended and Socratic way to facilitate guided discovery Turkcapar, Kahraman, & Sargin [122]. Questions such as "Can you tell me about relationships with your colleagues?" encouraged exploration, opening up the chance for further queries such as "How does that feel?" or "Can you elaborate on this?" to prompt additional reflections and clarification and help gain a deeper insight into the topic. The researcher remained with the set 10 questions but was able to investigate further regarding feelings and interpretation of participants' interactions and their consequences in the workplace.

Data Collection and Procedure

Interviews, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes, were conducted in a public place or via Skype or Facetime due to safety reasons. A detailed invitation letter was emailed to the participants prior to interviewing, outlining the reason for the research and the ways to withdraw from the study so that they would be able to make a fully informed decision. Before the actual interview a consent form was signed, and any questions or apprehensions were discussed (including the matter of audio-recording the whole interview) so extra care was taken to ensure that all individuals took part voluntarily and no ethical concerns had been raised. The process was repeated after each interview with a debrief sheet, reminding the interviewees of their right to withdraw at any time without any penalty or explanation and providing the contact details of organisations, offering free support services in case of psychological distress or discomfort as a result from the study, although none was reported.

The researcher holding the interviews made every effort to create a safe and non-judgemental environment, where participants were able to share their experiences in an open manner. Where personal information threatening anonymity was shared, this was erased from the transcripts to maintain participants' safety and confidentiality. This was further reinforced by the use of pseudonyms and avoidance of any disclosure of information, relating to the interviewer or other interviewees and their opinions as suggested by the British Psychological Society

[123]. Putting aside personal triggers deemed harder to do than anticipated, yet, although heightened empathy was present, disclosure from the interviewer did not happen. However, being aware that the tone of voice and body language could have given subtle messages to the participants in recognition and agreement of their scenario Hofisi [120], the interviewer strived for objectivity and ostensible detachment, while maintaining the relationship with empathy and respect. Aiming at avoiding researcher's bias, the interviewer phrased the questions in a non-leading way and sought clarification to confirm own interpretations as well as that the interviewees' views had not been affected by any influence on the part of the researcher Hofisi [120]. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and all the recordings and transcribed data were encrypted and stored in a locked cabinet that only the researchers could access as prescribed by the British Psychological Society [123]. To ensure intercoder reliability Mouter & Vonk Noordegraaf [124], the data set and all the identified codes along with the respective quotes were discussed within the research team and in an ultimate attempt to guarantee higher validity and reliability of the findings, the researchers asked the participants for a final affirmation of the interpretations of their response's prior submission of the manuscript.

Data Analysis

The researchers opted for V. Braun and Clarke's [125] 6-stage thematic analysis to identify themes from a phenomenological, subjective perspective Maguire & Delahunt [126] via a deductive approach based on pre-existing theoretical assumptions Kothari [111]. Narrative analytical method was also considered due to it accessing the story of a person's experiences and allowing rise of a voice that might not be heard Josselson [127]. However, as personal meaning of stories was not the desired outcome of the current study but rather the effects of narcissist victim traits upon individuals' thoughts, feelings and actions in the workplace, the researchers made a methodological choice in favour of thematic analysis. Once all data was collected from the interviews and duly transcribed, the researchers began data familiarisation by immersing, engaging, listening, reading and re-reading within the six stages of thematic analysis V. Braun and Clarke's [125]. Initial codes were generated based on annotations to meaningful and relevant parts of the text, followed by interpreting notes and dividing and combining codes into subthemes and overarching themes on the grounds of recurring patterns. These were then refined based on deeper, recursive reviewing, collated, given a name according to their link to aspects of the research question and arranged in a thematic map.

Results

Thematic analysis produced four overarching themes, each with several subthemes and all describing the subjective experiences of narcissist victims and the way their traits were raised when around narcissistic behaviours in the workplace see Figure 1. The identified themes revealed five tactics typical of narcissistic leaders that had a noticeable impact on their subordinates as well as various effects on their social interactions, emotional well-being and work performance, which could trigger or amplify their existing predispositions, prompted by the specific personality attributes of the chosen sample.
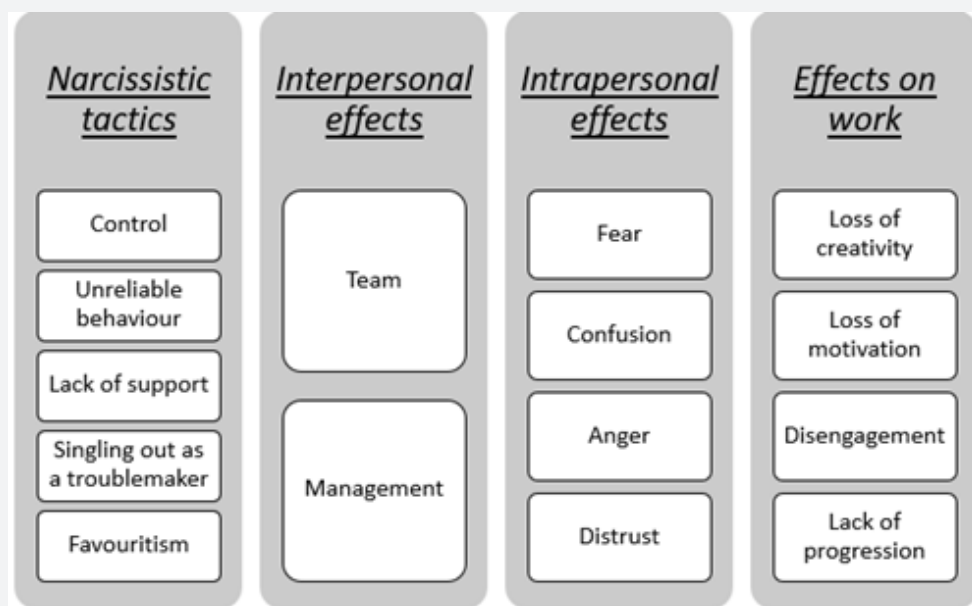

Figure 1: Thematic Map.

Theme 1: Narcissistic tactics

This theme reflected the various ways in which narcissist victims had been treated by their managers and which had provoked certain affective reactions in them or exacerbated their pre-existing dysfunctional traits. These include the following:

Control - Participants felt controlled due to their suggestions being refused and autonomy penalized: "I felt scared because I thought I'm going to get in trouble for this now and make my life hell" (P7:P71;459-460). On a reciprocal basis, participants reported a loss of self-control, creating the need to manage it: "I stayed controlled. I think she was doing it, trying to press my buttons" (P2:P61;129). Others found this challenging and expressed how "they try to make things difficult; they try to find things to control you" (P3:P64;211), mostly by using shame and anxiety. Ultimately, this brought one worker to "feel like completely out of control of my working life, my money… my food …. lays in the hands of a horrible person" (P5:P66;303 and P67;304-305).

Unreliable behaviour – Lack of predictability and unfairness were repeatedly stressed by the interviewees. Structure was desired alongside clear disciplinary procedures so incidents were dealt with properly because management "kept changing the structure there….it was difficult, because you get used to one" (P2:P61;105;107). Participants felt managers defied what had been said because no clear statements were sought if absence was needed, causing suspensions, accusation and unclear human resources practices. One conveyed that the "person from HR, they didn't know me, I just felt totally unsupported" (P2:P61;113). Sick leave and family difficulties were not respected: (the manager) "pulled a HR case against me" (P3:P63;178) as what was confirmed by management was later denied, leaving participants feeling deceived. Others felt taken advantage of after an opinion "was used as evidence why my friend was suspended" (P5:P68;342-343), causing the worker to remark: "in that environment… I just feel really low… tiny" (P5:P68;347-348). Meetings and wider perspectives were sought but ignored, with one saying, "once she (the manager) arrived, those meetings didn't happen" (P4:P65;255). Another felt better comfort working from home after becoming "quiet and reserved" in the office (P3:P63;190); she also tried to "be around different teams and different management, so I wasn't constantly in that environment" (P3:P63;191).

Lack of support - Participants felt unsupported and vulnerable, saying "when I did feel vulnerable or needed support, they … took that as weakness" (P7:P70;424), interpreting this as an indication they should not ask for help. One worker described this as feeling "awkward to turn to them (management) and ask for that extra support" (P3:P62;168) and, therefore, admitting "it feels like you're sort of left stranded" (P3:P63;170), highlighting the allowance of others to dominate and have minimal emotional boundaries.

Singling out as a troublemaker – All the narcissistic leaders mentioned within the sample were considered intolerant to criticism and different opinions. Every attempt to challenge management was faced with labelling the respective employee as a troublemaker and as one of them said "it wouldn't do me any favours. I'd only be burning my bridges really" (P2:P61;121), leaving workers with a fear of assertively making things worse. Others found themselves being regarded as "the one who stirs up the trouble" (P1:P58;21). Furthermore, speaking up evoked rage in co-workers, who used them as someone to blame or ostracised them, with a participant highlighting that her supervisor "completely just told lies and made things up about me" (P3:P63;199) and another saying managers "made up stuff that I supposedly said about another manager" (P8:P72;494-495), thus, affecting team dynamics in a negative manner and suppressing any differing voices. Participants felt this was "unprofessional behaviour and also that I was singled out a little bit" (P8:P73;509-510), spread gossip about and told lies about, causing a feeling of injustice and further shame and anxiety to ask for assistance.

Favouritism - Favouritism was evident in narcissistic leaders' recognition of some employees' work and unfair disregard of others' achievements: "I'm working myself into the floor, others are not and yet they get all the praise and good stuff" (P7:P71;443-444), instigating workers to wonder why they had been singled out: "I don't care if she didn't like me, just be fair with me really" (P4:P65;252). While some participants enjoyed seeing colleagues achieve or being promoted and recognised gratitude for their work via co-workers and clients, saying "it's quite nice, it makes me happy" (P3:P64;222) or that it was "recognition of doing a good job" (P4:P66;271), others felt "really small, because what I have done has been completely disregarded" (P5:P67;326-327). In addition, some mentioned that they loved "that someone's doing good but that has changed my personality, where I've become a little resentful or bitter" (P7:P71;465-466). Their conclusion was that there was nowhere to go to feel heard and no clear policies or record keeping. At the same time, even though management were less likely to manifest gratitude, when recognition occurred, it was said it "gives you a little boost…. an incentive" (P5:P67;322) since others had no thanks and were belittled, although for some of the participants being the centre of attention was not welcome: "I don't like everyone looking at me" (P1:P59;44) and others questioned the reasons for recognition, asking: "did I do it that well(?)…. they just feel sorry for me" (P2:P62;142;145).

Theme 2: Interpersonal effects

This theme illustrated the general attitude of narcissist victims towards their colleagues and superiors at work as well as the way this attitude and interactions had been affected by the development of the relationship with their narcissistic leaders.

Team – In general, participants enjoyed social interactions and being a member of a team: "I like that it's a team-based

role" (P3:P62;151) and "I like that, I feel like they trust me" (P1:P58;12). They emphasized particular aspects of group work that they found appealing such as "team banter" (P4:P65;240) or "you'd just build up good rapport with people, that's what I like" (P6:P68;357), although many of them expressed a preference for one-to-one contact, saying: "I prefer one-to-one" (P7:P70;409) and "I liked one-to-one because I felt like it was a special time for me" (P2:P59;58). Friendliness was perceived to be valuable, with one stating: "a lot of them brought me out of my shell" (P6:P68;355) and another sharing: "there were a few close friendships that I made ...they would thank me for what I'd done.... I'd go away and feel appreciated" (P2:P59; 64-66), therefore, this caused feelings of worth derived from other people. However, in many cases, this dramatically changed as a result of their interaction with the leader, and participants felt divided from the group and ignored by colleagues. In addition, they noticed "it's affecting the whole team" and "you have to overcome those nervous feelings" (P3:P64;225;227), revealing some awareness of hope for change.

Management - Little emotional connection was reported with managers, with one participant admitting "I loathed them" (P8:P72;498) when talking about their narcissistic team leader. Participants wanted better rapport with management, asking for team meetings to be implemented. Workers predominantly felt undervalued by management, particularly the upper management: "I feel like I say things, but nothing's going to get done" (P1:P58;15) and its "her way or the highway basically" (P4:P65;264) with one exception where direct contact was made with the chief executive and the participant expressed: "it was nice to be around different type of management and I did feel like I was looked after and supported" (P3:P62;156). However, a common perception of intimidation from supervisors and managers was registered: "I'm standing there shaking because she's behind me" (P6:P69;381-382). One worker expressed the difficulty of having managers related to one another because this created further strengthening of the inability to express own voice, saying "if people have relationships within management, try and keep that separate" (P6:P69;382-383). Managers were seen as nice people at first, then becoming "unpredictable, nice to you one minute, then next minute not so nice" (P7:P70;417-418), causing anxiety by anticipating nastiness: "if she's nice, then I'm even more worried" (P5:P66;297). This "tender hooks" and "walking on eggshells" (P5:P66;294-295) became what one described as "putting down, you got used to and it became normal" (P7:P70;419), keeping employees controlled by another's emotions and leading to poor boundary management.

Theme 3: Intrapersonal effects

This theme referred to the cognitive and affective states, evoked by the evolving relationship between narcissistic leaders and their victims in the workplace and comprising the following:

Fear - The fear created from the embarrassment, derogatory comments and lies left one participant feeling "just petrified, I didn't

want to go in. I didn't want these snide comments" (P6:P69;402). Derogatory words caused lack of confidence and worry, forming anxiety of criticism in front of colleagues and clients. Feeling downtrodden, taken advantage of and spoken down to culminated into a feeling of humiliation and shame. Emotional reactions were described as being frightened by vibes from management, causing anxiety to be evident with clients. This anxiety was explained by a participant, saying: "I did start to get dizzy spells as well, through stress" (P4:P66;274) and that she would "make stupid mistakes.... because she (the manager) won't leave me alone in my head" (P4:P66;280-282). In order to cope with anxiety and stress some used medication and others said: "to cope with it.... It was as if I took myself out of my body" (P7:P72;486), leaving her to feel detached and not hear other people.

Confusion - "You'd say something, she'd twist it, then you'd start doubting yourself, did I say that?" (P7:P72;482-482). Confusion was commonly reported: "I don't know how I should have been" (P5:P67;321), leading to mistakes, a closed mind and no motivation to improve or have responsibilities within the workplace. Self-doubt crept in, usually regarding comments from one specific person, asking "why did she take a dislike to me... I didn't do anything wrong" (P4:P65;249).

Anger – In parallel to fear and self-doubt, participants conveyed feeling "angry and upset" (P1:P59;51). When talking about how some team leaders had disparaged their opinions to the team, they described their experiences as "really frustrating" (P8:P74;539), "really embarrassing.... used that against me to embarrass me" (P3:P64;233;235), causing subordinates to feel unworthy to express and question why they were even there.

Distrust - Trust was lost when promises went unactioned, leading to further confusion and a feeling of not knowing "who to go to, who to trust, who to talk to" (P7:P70;433-434). "I couldn't trust them. It was very difficult because when someone is being nice to you.... you want to believe that... I hope this gets better" (P7:P70;429-431) said one of the interviewees, highlighting the experienced loss of trust in the company system and management. Workers recognised low energy derived from their uncertainly about employment and leadership as well as helplessness due to their poor ability to express own concerns, saying: 'but I didn't feel I could say anything" (P2:P60;89) as I am just "telling tales" (P2:P60;94).

Theme 4: Effects on work

A distinct theme related to the effects of narcissistic leaders' behaviour on their victims' work and more specifically the following aspects of it:

Creativity - Participants manifested great creativity whereby initially some had restructured departments, made creative displays, set up libraries and new innovative programmes and therapies. However, slowly uncertainty in their abilities became evident with one saying: "no, I think I am, no, yeah, no, I am"

(P1:P58;28), yet although this may sound positive, the recording reveals the hesitant tone of voice and gaps in thinking. Further responses to questions regarding contriving ideas were met with "it's a good feeling… like I am making a small difference in the world" (P8:P73;514-515) but when asked if the participant voiced her ideas, she said "yep, loads, they were all squashed" (P8:P73;521), creating loss of self-esteem and nervousness to express own thoughts. Another interviewee shared "it's quite nerve wracking doing that (expressing ideas) because you might get looked at like an idiot" (P3:P64;215-216).

Loss of motivation – Another consequence of the described narcissistic tactics at work was that participants felt "detached from certain aspects…to go in there, (work) it's like walking on eggshells, like being a little kid" (P5:P66;293-294). The power exerted by management left another having to "talk myself into going up to the door and talk myself into going into work" (P7:P71;448), wondering who would be singled out today. Some said: "I hate going in to work every day, so it's like I have to give myself a prep talk to walk through the door" (P5:P66;291-292).

Disengagement - Participants expressed the need to remain separated, quiet and reserved with one saying she was "hesitant, just plod along, won't say nothing either way" (P5:P67;331) as expression created nervous feelings, so "you don't want to rock the apple cart" (P5:P67;333). Detachment left others saying "it's like being a robot" (P7:P72;473), uninvolved in conversations with the leadership team, and participants feeling they needed to just be silent and do their job with minimum interaction with colleagues.

Lack of progression - Opportunities to apply for progression were desired but limited, as some expressed: "I didn't really see any way to move forward" (P2:P62;137), so had a closed mind to the idea. Others felt similarly, stating: "I could apply to managers positions but don't really want to" (P1:P59;34) as promotion caused further pressure from upper management. One participant said: "in terms of courses that would be a definite no" (P5:P67;310-311) when asked about opportunities, stating she would not have been heard. Training was requested and refused, yet the chief executives were attending courses, which manifested low self-worth for participants and a clear unhealthy hierarchy. Although in some places where there was an awareness of opportunities to grow with the business, one said: "after she (the new manager) arrived I was not bothered…. would prefer to go under the radar" (P4:P65;261;263). In addition, participants expressed fear for job security, saying they were "so unhappy…. all the time I was looking for other jobs" (P2:P60;75-76), as well as fear of financial loss: "if I don't work, how am I going to feed my family?" (P7:P70;435-436).

Discussion

The current study aimed at discovering the leadership impact on individuals within the workplace who exhibited narcissist victim traits based upon the Insufficient sub-scale of narcissism.

This was prompted by the established contradictory effects on such people at work since according to some authors, these subordinates have a natural propensity for submissiveness, which makes them a very good fit to managers with an elevated need for dominance and self-promotion Grijalva & Harms [128], whereas others dispute that due to their low self-esteem and insecurity, such employees may actually be more susceptible to and suffer to a greater extent from their leader's behaviour Padilla [60]. Our findings revealed several prominent self-serving behaviours of leaders that had specific interpersonal and intrapersonal ramifications with additional negative consequences to work-related aspects.

The results clarified some of the exact tactics that narcissistic leaders apply in the workplace through the prism of individuals who are most inclined to be sensitive to them Wisse & Sleebos [67]. They indicated that such managers tend to exercise excessive control, which is in line with previous research, reporting a preference for an autocratic leadership style Schoel, Stahlberg, & Sedikides [129] and distrusting and self-affirming relationships with followers Sedikides [24]; Wesner [12]. Unreliable behaviour and lack of empathy and support were further identified as apparent characteristics of narcissistic leaders, showing consistency with existing findings Furtner [1]; Kipfelsberger & Kark [18]. An interesting discovery referred to the tactics of favouritism and ruling out dissenters as troublemakers since according to our sample, predilection for certain employees could be exhibited with regards to non-submissive followers rather than narcissistic victims despite the supposed better match between the latter and their leaders Grijalva & Harms [14]. A possible explanation of this can be found in the ego-defensive reaction of narcissists when faced with a lack of obedience from their subordinates, in which case they may engage in behaviours pertinent to the second or third stage of the idealization-devaluation-discard cycle, where they would derogate their victims, act unethically towards them or even replace them with someone else who can better serve the purpose of feeding their ego Arabi [45]; Campbell [52]. Alternatively, the perceived favouritism to others and negative attitude to employees with low self-esteem and high need for social approval may be due to these individuals' tendency to vulnerably and oversensitively assess their leader's conducts and even consider them abusive when their psychological dependence on the other is not satisfied Bacon [101]; Padilla [60], which however does not devaluate the importance and consequences of narcissistic behaviour.

Another interesting finding yielded by our study refers to a confirmation of the temporal effect of narcissists' appeal and charisma on employees Ong [88], which is also in support of Campbell [80] contextual reinforcement model as well as the more recent Sedikides and Campbell's [130] energy clash model, both positing that such leaders' popularity deteriorates over time.

Due to their extravert nature, confidence and humour, narcissistic managers are capable of making positive first impressions and easily amass social capital Czarna & Nevicka [103]; Liu, Ainsworth, & Baumeister [131], which can be catalysed by the contextual factors of uncertainty and organisational need for bold actions and innovation Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, & Ten Velden [132]. However, with time passing by and the more proximal employees are to narcissistic leaders Nevicka, Van Vianen, De Hoogh, & Voorn [59], the more the former are able to detect their toxic characteristics, which results in diminishing leadership popularity and perceived effectiveness Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back [133]. Based on our findings, the described dynamics of interplay between narcissistic supervisors and their victims in the workplace seems particularly relevant to individuals predisposed to the deleterious narcissistic influence, which contradicts Grijalva and Harms' [128] narcissistic leaders and dominance complementarity model.

Although these scholars claim that submissive followers, striving for humility and control relinquishment due to deeper psychoanalytical experiences and own pathology De Canonville [34]; Hosier [47], would work most synergistically with dominant, narcissistic leaders Grijalva & Harms [128], our respondents reported dysfunctional outcomes not only with regards to team members in general but for themselves too, sharing unsatisfactory relationships with their managers and experiences of fear, confusion, anger and distrust. Given our inclusion criterion of job tenure, time seems to be crucial for the interaction between these parties with waning attractiveness of leaders with the development of the relationship with their victims, which implies that these effects have to be considered not only in static but also in dynamic perspectives.

The role of time in the explored relationship can be complemented with another important factor that may explain our results – the level of leaders' narcissism. Although our findings provided support for the idealization-devaluation-discard mechanism Arabi [45], surprisingly, they delivered only partial confirmation of the gaslighting effect for narcissist victims in the workplace Petric [106]. Indeed, our participants shared confusion and self-doubt but instead of blindly adopting and following leader's opinions, they responded to their exploitative propensity with anger and distrust, emotionally and sometimes physically distancing themselves from the narcissist and developing workplace phobic anxiety Vignoli, Muschalla, & Mariani [134], which is contrary to continuously trying to please the narcissist as suggested by Snow [108]. A likely interpretation may lay with the level of satisfaction of victims' core needs for approval and psychological security that stem from their low self-evaluation and make them more vulnerable to narcissists' self-assertive behaviours Nevicka, De Hoogh [59]; Padilla [60]. It is possible that such employees' submissive comportments and loyalty are only reinforced when individuals can have their basic psychological needs reciprocally met by their leaders (though not completely as this might hinder the pathological dynamics between them), in which case they willingly avoid power conflicts and collaboration can bring benefits to both parties – a conclusion supported by Grijalva [84] finding that midrange level of narcissism can actually be productive for such followers.

Finally, our study revealed some of the work-related effects of narcissistic leaders on employees with such victim traits, including negative ramifications for their creativity, motivation, engagement and career progression. While loss of motivation and disengagement from work had been commonly reported by other scholars Bogdanović [99]; S. Braun [8]; Rus [95], research on workers' creativity was inconclusive and our findings corroborated the notion of a dynamic interplay between these variables. Thus, at the first, idealization, stage of the relationship between narcissists and their victims, the latter may be full of ideas, imaginative and proactive as suggested by Strobl [58], whereas with the development of this connection and frequent manifestation of pure egocentric behaviour, the employees may become less creative and reluctant to voice their opinions as found by Henriques [94]. Such variable influence can be ascribed to subordinates' career progress too since according to both our participants and previous research, should they wish to do so, narcissistic leaders can contribute significantly to their protégé's job development and promotion Volmer [83] but as Czarna and Nevicka [103] point out, these benefits are usually reserved for the most devoted followers and quickly withdrawn in case of insufficient obedience or a sudden whim of the leader's.

Nevertheless, the current study shows that any career advancement of employees exhibiting narcissistic victim traits comes at a cost for them. In addition, our findings add to the existing understanding of the mechanisms underpinning the relationship between narcissistic leaders and their victims in the workplace and provide some clarification on Czarna and Nevicka's [103] unanswered question about the circumstances under which this relationship can be beneficial or hazardous to followers. Based on this, workshops in recognising narcissistic abuse could be designed and incorporated into awareness training and discrimination policies because, as our study shows, this phenomenon does not only affect one person but has the potential to migrate to teams and affect organisational culture and performance.

Limitations and Future Research

Using real-life narratives, this research explored the effects of narcissistic leadership on employees considered most susceptible to it – those with narcissistic victim traits. However, it has several limitations, which need to be considered by future researchers of the topic. Firstly, due to the study design, its findings cannot be generalised so quantitative and longitudinal data will help to test the uncovered mechanisms and understand the models better. Secondly, the research was limited to the United Kingdom and was conducted with female participants over the age of 30 years with

no revealed mental health concerns, as these were the only group that came forward for interview. The perspective of male workers and of people of a different generation, culture or mental health could provide further subjective insight. A culture, which holds very strong union representation and is bound by law to exercise policies and procedures regarding workplace wellbeing, could manifest very different findings. In addition, our participants' work sectors were limited to hospitality, healthcare and travel industries and samples with more diverse demographics could reveal valuable information on the environmental effects on the investigated relationship Chatterjee & Hambrick [135].

Thirdly, as our focus was on a specific combination of elements at work, future researchers could explore other patterns such as manifestation of narcissist victim traits in the absence of a narcissist in the workplace; non-victim individuals and their susceptibility to narcissistic leadership; effects of narcissists in non-leadership roles; intra- and interpersonal dynamics or physical health symptoms occurring as a result of narcissistic people leaving or joining the organisation as well as transference of affective responses to customer relations/ effects on employee performance. All of these will elucidate various angles of the overarching topic of narcissism at work and can help design workplace interventions for healthier environments and more productive organisations [136-139].

Conclusion

This research explored the impact of narcissistic leaders on employees exhibiting narcissist victim traits, showing that despite the supposed pathological match between them Grijalva & Harms [128], their relationship can be harmonious only if the psychological needs of both parties are met. Thus, the study provides a stepping stone into explaining these phenomena at work and raises questions about finding coping strategies and further helpful understanding to form fairer practises and highlight wellbeing in the working environment.

References

1. Furtner MR, Maran T, Rauthmann JF (2017) Dark leadership: The role of leaders' dark triad personality traits. Leader Development Deconstructed. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

2. Kurtulmuş BE (2019) The Dark Tetrad of personality traits. In The Dark Side of Leadership Cham: Springer International Publishing p. 25-43.

3. Harris A, Jones M (2018) The dark side of leadership and management. School Leadership & Management 38(5): 475-477.

4. Braun S, Kark R, Wisse B (2018) Editorial: Fifty shades of grey: Exploring the dark sides of leadership and followership. Frontiers in Psychology p: 1-3.

5. Atan E (2019) The Impact of the Dark Triad on Organizational Opposition: A Model of Structural Equality. Turkish Journal of Business Ethics 11(2): 275-298.

6. Brandebo MF, Alvinius A (2019) Introductory chapter: Dark sides of organizations and leadership - An integrative approach and definitions. In Dark Sides of Organizational Behavior and Leadership.

7. Neves P, Schyns B (2018) With the bad comes what change? The interplay between destructive leadership and organizational change. Journal of Change Management 18(2): 91-95.

8. 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(5): 1-22.

9. LeBreton JM, Shiverdecker LK, Grimaldi EM (2018) The Dark Triad and workplace behavior. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior 5(1): 387-414.

10. Rosenthal SA, Pittinsky TL (2006) Narcissistic leadership. Leadership Quarterly 17(6): 617-633.

11. Tokarev A, Phillips AR, Hughes DJ, Irwing P (2017) Leader dark traits, workplace bullying, and employee depression: Exploring mediation and the role of the dark core. Journal of Abnormal Psychology 126(7): 911-920.

12. Wesner BS (2007) Responding to the workplace narcissist.

13. Jakobwitz S, Egan V (2006) The Dark Triad and normal personality traits. Personality and Individual Differences 40(2): 331-339.

14. Krizan Z, Herlache AD (2018) The narcissism spectrum model: A synthetic view of narcissistic personality. Personality and Social Psychology Review 22(1): 3-31.

15. Vecchio RP (2007) Leadership: Understanding the dynamics of power and influence in organizations.

16. Valashjardi A, Charles K (2019) Voicing the victims of narcissistic partners: A qualitative analysis of responses to narcissistic injury and self-esteem regulation. SAGE Open 9(2): 1-10.

17. Nevicka B, De Hoogh AHB, 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 9: 422.

18. Kipfelsberger P, Kark R (2018) Killing me softly with his/her song: How leaders dismantle followers' sense of work meaningfulness. Frontiers in Psychology 9: 654

19. Clements C, Washbush JB (1999) The two faces of leadership: Considering the dark side of leader-follower dynamics. Journal of Workplace Learning 11(5): 170-176.

20. American Psychiatric Association (2019) About DSM-5.

21. Fatfouta R (2018) Facets of narcissism and leadership: A tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? Human Resource Management Review p: 0-1.

22. Freud S (1914) On narcissism: An introduction. London: Hogarth Press.

23. Kohut H (1966) Forms and transformations of narcissism. Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 14: 243-272.

24. Sedikides C, Rudich EA, Gregg AP, Kumashiro M, Rusbult C (2004) Are normal narcissists psychologically healthy? Self-esteem matters. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 87(3): 400-416.

25. Cusak T (2012) Living under the shorts, t-shirt, things and skin of my narcissistic kin: Narcissistic victim syndrome. Brisbane, Australia: Hands Full of Hope Counselling Service.

26. Malkin C (2015) The narcissist test. How to spot outsized egos and the surprising things we can learn from them. London: Harper Thorsons.

27. Brummelman E, Thomaes S, Sedikides C (2016) Separating narcissism from self-esteem. Current Directions in Psychological Science 25(1): 8-13.

28. Roberts R, Woodman T, Sedikides C (2018) Pass me the ball: Narcissism in performance settings. International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology 11(1): 190-213.

29. Thomaes S, Bushman BJ, Stegge H, Olthof T (2008) Trumping shame by blasts of noise: Narcissism, self-esteem, shame, and aggression in young adolescents. Child Development 79(6): 1792-1801.

30. Watson PJ, Little T, Sawrie SM, Biderman MD (1992) Measures of the narcissistic personality: Complexity of relationships with self-esteem and empathy. Journal of Personality Disorders 6(4): 434-449.

31. Rogoza R, Zemojtel-Piotrowska M, Kwiatkowska MM, Kwiatkowska K (2018) The bright, the dark, and the blue face of narcissism: The spectrum of narcissism in its relations to the metatraits of personality, self-esteem, and the nomological network of shyness, loneliness, and empathy. Frontiers in Psychology.

32. Jauk E, Kaufman SB (2018) The higher the score, the darker the core: The nonlinear association between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Frontiers in Psychology 9: 1-14.

33. Freud S (1957) On narcissism: An introduction. In J. Strachey (Ed.), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud pp. 67-102.

34. De Canonville CL (2015) The three faces of evil: Unmasking the full spectrum of narcissistic abuse. Ontario: Black Card Books.

35. Howell EF (2003) Narcissism a relational aspect of dissociation. Journal of Trauma and Dissociation 4(3): 51-71.

36. Cascio CN, Konrath SH, Falk EB (2013) Narcissists social pain seen only in the brain. Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci 10(3): 335-341.

37. Vater A, Moritz S, Roepke S (2018) Does a narcissism epidemic exist in modern western societies? Comparing narcissism and self-esteem in East and West Germany. PLoS ONE 13(1): 1-16.

38. Sedikides C, Campbell WK, Reeder G, Elliot AJ, Gregg A (2002) Do others bring out the worst in narcissists? The "Others Exist for Me" Illusion. In Y. Kashima, M. Foddy, & M. J. Platow (Eds.), Self and identity: Personal, social and symbolic pp. 103-123.

39. Roberts D (2013) In defense of defenselessness: Kierkegaard's critique of an accepted narcissism. The Heythrop Journal 55(5): 827-844.

40. Cramer P (2015) Adolescent parenting, identification, and maladaptive narcissism. Psychoanalytic Psychology 32(4): 559-579.

41. Todres L (2004) The wound that connects: A consideration of "narcissism" and the creation of soulful space. Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology 4(1): 1-12.

42. Staik A (2017) Narcissistic abuse and the symptoms of narcissistic abuse syndrome.

43. Young E (2016) All about me. New Scientist 231(3081): 26-29.

44. Hotchkiss S (2002) Why is it always about you? The seven deadly sins of narcissism. New York: Free Press Simon and Schuster.

45. Arabi S (2016) Becoming the narcissists nightmare. New York: Archer Publishing.

46. Hammond C (2015) Identifying victims of narcissistic abuse.

47. Hosier D (2014) The devastating effects of childhood trauma. London: Sage.

48. Squire LR, Knowlton BJ (1999) The medial temporal lobe, the hippocampus, and memory systems of the brain.

49. Spring C (2019) Dissociative identity disorder.

50. Sedeño L, Couto B, Melloni M, Canales-JA, Yoris A, et al. (2014) How do you feel when you can't feel your body? Interoception, functional connectivity and emotional processing in depersonalization-derealization disorder. PLoS ONE 9(6).

51. Medford N (2012) Emotion and the unreal self: Depersonalization disorder and de-affectualization. Emotion Review 4(2): 139-144.

52. Campbell WK, Foster CA, Finkel EJ (2002) Does self-love lead to love for others? A story of narcissistic game playing. J Pers Soc Psychol 83(2): 340-354.

53. Bürgy M (2000) On the question of the link between obsessive-compulsive disorder and narcissism]. Psychother Psychosom Med Psychol 50(5): 201-208.

54. Beck MJ (1979) Pathological Narcissism and the psychology of the married victim. Family Therapy 6(3): 155-159.

55. Mackenzie J (2019) Whole again: Healing your heart and rediscovering your true self after toxic relationships and emotional abuse. Tarcher Perigee.

56. Christiansen B, Chandan HC (2017) Handbook of research on organizational culture and diversity in the modern workforce.

57. Milosevic I, Maric S. Loncar D (2019) Defeating the toxic boss: The nature of toxic leadership and the role of followers. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies.

58. Strobl A, Niedermair J, Matzler K, Mussner T (2019) Triggering subordinate innovation behavior: The influence of leaders' dark personality traits and level 5 leadership behavior. International Journal of Innovation Management 23(05): 1950045.

59. Nevicka B, Van Vianen AEM, De Hoogh AHB, Voorn BCM (2018) Narcissistic leaders: An asset or a liability? Leader visibility, follower responses, and group-level absenteeism. Journal of Applied Psychology 103(7): 703-723.

60. Padilla A, Hogan R, Kaiser RB (2007) The toxic triangle Destructive leaders susceptible followers, and conducive environments. Leadership Quarterly 18(3) :176-194.

61. Rodkin PC, Espelage DL, Hanish LD (2015) A relational framework for understanding bullying: Developmental antecedents and outcomes. American Psychologist 70(4): 311-321.

62. Cable DM, Judge TA (2003) Managers' upward influence tactic strategies: The role of manager personality and supervisor leadership style. Journal of Organizational Behavior 24(2): 197-214.

63. Ang RP, Ong EYL, Lim JCY, Lim EW (2009) From narcissistic exploitativeness to bullying behavior: The mediating role of approval-of-aggression beliefs. Social Development 19(4): 721-735.

64. Baughman HM, Dearing S, Giammarco E, Vernon PA (2012) Relationships between bullying behaviors and the Dark Triad: A study with adults. Personality and Individual Differences 52(5): 571-575.

65. Lambe S, Hamilton-Giachritsis C, Garner E, Walker J (2018) The role of narcissism in aggression and violence: A systematic review. Trauma Violence Abuse 19(2): 209-230.

66. Regnaud DA (2014) The relationship between top leaders observed narcissistic behaviors and workplace bullying.

67. Wisse B, Sleebos E (2016) When the dark ones gain power: Perceived position power strengthens the effect of supervisor Machiavellianism on abusive supervision in work teams. Personality and Individual Differences 99: 122-126.

68. Reijntjes A, Vermande M, Thomaes S, Goossens F, Olthof T, et al. (2016) Narcissism, bullying, and social dominance in youth A longitudinal analysis. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 44(1): 63-74.

69. Mattice C Spitzberg B (2008) Bullies in business: Self-reports of tactics and motives. In Poster session presented at the 6th International Conference on Workplace Bullying. Montreal, Canada.

70. Bettencourt BA, Talley A, Benjamin AJ, Valentine J (2006) Personality and aggressive behavior under provoking and neutral conditions: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin 132(5): 751-777.

71. Fanti KA, Henrich CC (2015) Effects of self-esteem and narcissism on bullying and victimization during early adolescence. The Journal of Early Adolescence 35(1): 5-29.

72. Fan C, Chu X, Zhang M, Zhou Z (2019) Are narcissists more likely to be involved in cyberbullying? Examining the mediating role of self-esteem. J Interper Violence 34(15): 3127-3150.

73. Bicer C (2019) The darkest triad of personality, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy: How toxic employees get their way at workplaces and how to reduce their devastating effects.

74. Holtzman NS, Mehl MR, Vazire Simine (2010) Sounds like a narcissist: Behavioral manifestations of narcissism in everyday life. Journal of Research in Personality 44(4): 478-484.

75. Smith PK (2016) Bullying: Definition, types, causes, consequences and intervention. Social and Personality Psychology Compass 10(9): 519-532.

76. Dautenhahn K, Woods S (2003) Possible connections between bullying behavior, empathy and imitation. In Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on Imitation in Animals and Artifacts p: 1-11.

77. Stavrinides P, Georgiou S, Theofanous V (2010) Bullying and empathy: A short-term longitudinal investigation. Educational Psychology 30(7): 793-802.

78. Ronningstam E, Baskin-Sommers AR (2013) Fear and decision-making in narcissistic personality disorder - a link between psychoanalysis and neuroscience. Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience 15(2): 191-201.

79. Mota S, Leckelt M, Geukes K, Nestler S, Humberg S, et al. (2019) A comprehensive examination of narcissists' self-perceived and actual socioemotional cognition ability. Collabra: Psychology 5(1): 6.

80. Campbell WK, Hoffman BJ, Campbell SM, Marchisio G (2010) Narcissism in organizational contexts. Human Resource Management Review 21(4): 268-284.

81. Malesza M, Kaczmarek MC (2018) The convergent validity between self- and peer-ratings of the Dark Triad personality. Current Psychology p. 1-8.

82. van der Linden S, Rosenthal SA (2016) Measuring narcissism with a single question? A replication and extension of the Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS). Personality and Individual Differences pp. 238-241.

83. Volmer J, Koch IK, Göritz AS (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.

84. Grijalva E, Harms PD, Newman DA, Gaddis BH, Fraley RC (2015) Narcissism and leadership: A meta-analytic review of linear and nonlinear relationships. Personnel Psychology 68(1): 1-47.

85. Conger JA (1990) The dark side of leadership. Organizational Dynamics 19(2): 44-55.

86. Dostanić JS, Gojković V (2019) The Dark Triad in the organizational setting: The prediction of employees' commitment. Psychological Research 22(1): 47-67.

87. Judge TA, Piccolo RF, Kosalka T (2009) The bright and dark sides of leader traits: A review and theoretical extension of the leader trait paradigm. The Leadership Quarterly 20(6): 855-875.

88. Ong CW, Roberts R, Arthur CA, Woodman T, Akehurst S (2016). The leadership is sinking A temporal investigation of narcissistic leadership. Journal of Personality 84(2): 237-247.

89. Özsoy E (2018) Dark Triad and counterproductive work behaviors Which of the Dark Triad traits is more malevolent. Journal of Business Research -Turk 10(4): 742-756.

90. Prusik M, Szulawski M (2019) The relationship between the Dark Triad personality traits motivation at work, and burnout among HR recruitment workers. Frontiers in Psychology.

91. Nevicka B, Ten Velden FS, de Hoogh AHB, van Vianen AEM (2011) Reality at odds with perceptions: Narcissistic leaders and group performance. Psychological Science 22(10): 1259-1264.

92. Nigro TL (2018) The shadows in healthcare leadership. Healthcare Management Forum 31(3): 97-102.

93. Benson AJ, Jeschke J, Jordan CH, Bruner MW, Arnocky S (2019) Will they stay or will they go? Narcissistic admiration and rivalry predict ingroup affiliation and devaluation. J Pers 87(4): 871-888.

94. Henriques PL, Curado C, Jerónimo HM, Martins J (2019) Facing the dark side: How leadership destroys organizational innovation. Journal of Technology Management & Innovation 14(1): 18-24.

95. Rus D (2009) The dark side of leadership: Exploring the psychology of leader self-serving behavior.

96. Arif S (2018) Dark side of leadership in educational setting. In Dark Sides of Organizational Behavior and Leadership.

97. Morais C, Randsley de Moura G (2018) The dark side of leadership: What happens when leaders behave badly? In The Psychology of Ethical Leadership in Organizations Cham: Springer International Publishing p. 41-56.

98. Spurk D, Hirschi A (2018) The Dark Triad and competitive psychological climate at work: A model of reciprocal relationships in dependence of age and organization change. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology 27(6): 736-751.

99. Bogdanović M, Vetráková M, Filip S (2018) Dark Triad characteristics between economics & business students in Croatia & Slovakia: What can be expected from the future employees? Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues 5(4): 967-991.

100. Paleczek D, Bergner S, Rybnicek R (2018) Predicting career success Is the dark side of personality worth considering? Journal of Managerial Psychology 33(6): 437-456.

101. Bacon I, McKay E, Reynolds F, McIntyre A (2018) The lived experience of codependency: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction.

102. Klikauer T (2015) Negative recognition: Master and slave in the workplace. Thesis Eleven 132(1): 39-49.

103. Czarna AZ, Nevicka B (2019) Narcissism and leadership. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

104. Campbell WK, Siedor L (2016) Narcissism and dishonesty: The SAC model. Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty pp: 151-165.

105. Schröder-Abé M, Fatfouta R (2019) Shades of narcissistic dishonesty: Grandiose versus vulnerable narcissism and the role of self-conscious emotions. Journal of Economic Psychology 148-158.

106. Petric D (2018) Gaslighting and the knot theory of mind.

107. Abramson K (2014) Turning up the lights on gaslighting. Philosophical Perspectives 28(1): 1-30.

108. Snow JB (2016) Gaslighting: The ultimate narcissistic mind control: Transcend mediocrity, Book pp. 131.

109. Edery RA (2017) Recovery from narcissistic abuse through a spiritual lens: Who is in charge? Journal of Psychiatry and Psychiatric Disorders 1(5): 244-251.

110. Shurden S (2014) Identifying the effects of narcissistic leadership on employee job satisfaction: A study within the accounting profession.

111. Kothari CR (2004) Research methodology: Methods and techniques. New Delhi: New Age International Ltd.

112. Sandelowski M (1995) Sample size in qualitative research. Research in Nursing & Health 18(2):179-183.

113. Zalewska AM (1997) Adaptation to a new workplace according to reactivity and values-motives coherence at work. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics 3(3-4): 161-172.

114. Živčák P, Tomčíková M (2012) The proceedings of adaptation process in the company. Applied Computer Science 8(1): 58-63.

115. Bolderston A (2012) Conducting a research interview. J Med Imaging and Radiat Sci 43(1): 66-76.

116. Quirk S, Malkin C, Martin S (2015) Development of the Narcissism Spectrum Scale.

117. Malterud K, Siersma VD, Guassora AD (2016) Sample size in qualitative interview studies. Qualitative Health Research 26(13): 1753-1760.

118. Braun V, Clarke V (2013) Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

119. Mason J (2002) Qualitative researching. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

120. Hofisi C, Hofisi M, Mago S (2014) Critiquing interviewing as a data collection method. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 74(2): 233-235.

121. Adams WC (2015) Conducting semi-structured interviews. In Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation pp: 492-505.

122. Turkcapar, M, Kahraman M, Sargin A (2015) Guided discovery with Socratic questioning. Journal of Cognitive-Behavioral Psychotherapy and Research 4(1): 47.

123. British Psychological Society (2018) Code of ethics and conduct.

124. Mouter N, Vonk Noord Graaf DM (2012) Intercoder reliability for qualitative research: You win some, but do you lose some as well? TRAIL Research School.

125. Braun V, Clarke V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology 3(2006): 77-101.

126. Maguire M, Delahunt B (2017) Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 3(Autumn) pp. 3351-33514.

127. Josselson R (1996) Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

128. Grijalva E, Harms PD (2014) Narcissism: An integrative synthesis and dominance complementarity model. Academy of Management Perspectives 28(2): 108-127.

129. Schoel C, Stahlberg D, Sedikides C (2015) Psychological insecurity and leadership styles. In PJ Carroll, RM Arkin, AL Wichman (Eds.), The handbook of personal security pp. 55-73.

130. Sedikides C, Campbell WK (2017) Narcissistic force meets systemic resistance: The energy clash model. Perspectives on Psychological Science 12(3): 400-421.

131. Liu D, Ainsworth SE, Baumeister RF (2016) A meta-analysis of social networking online and social capital. Review of General Psychology 20(4): 369-391.

132. Nevicka B, De Hoogh AHB, Van Vianen AEM, Ten Velden FS (2013) Uncertainty enhances the preference for narcissistic leaders. European Journal of Social Psychology 43(5): 370-380.

133. Leckelt M, Küfner ACP, Nestler S, Back MD (2015) Behavioral processes underlying the decline of narcissists' popularity over time. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 109(5): 856-871.

134. Vignoli M, Muschalla B, Mariani MG (2017) Workplace phobic anxiety as a mental health phenomenon in the job demands-resources model. BioMed Research International p. 1-10.

135. Chatterjee A, Hambrick DC (2007) It's all about me: Narcissistic CEOs and their effects on company strategy and performance. Administrative Science Quarterly 52(3): 351-386.

136. Hershcovis MS, Barling J (2010) Towards a multi-foci approach to workplace aggression: A meta-analytic review of outcomes from different perpetrators. Journal of Organizational Behavior 31(1): 24-44.

137. Miller A (1996) Prisoners of childhood. New York: Basic Books.

138. Pederson T (2015) The economics of libido: Psychic bisexuality the superego and the centrality of the Oedipus complex. Karnac Books.

139. Winnicott DW (2005) Playing and reality (2nd ed.).

**Your next submission with Juniper Publishers
will reach you the below assets**

- Quality Editorial service
- Swift Peer Review
- Reprints availability
- E-prints Service
- Manuscript Podcast for convenient understanding
- Global attainment for your research
- Manuscript accessibility in different formats
  (Pdf, E-pub, Full Text, Audio)
- Unceasing customer service

Track the below URL for one-step submission
https://juniperpublishers.com/online-submission.php