

# Narcissistic Leadership and Resistance to Change: Mediating Role of Cynicism

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## Abstract

*The aim of the study is to examine the effect of narcissistic leadership and resistance to change through the mediating role of organizational cynicism. Transactional Theory of Stress is used to explain the mechanisms which state that person appraise the situation and according to this appraisal they interpret the situation as hindrance or challenging. Using moderated regression analyses technique, we have tested our hypothesis. With independent measures for antecedents (self-reports) and consequences (peer-reports, we have used two-source field data (N = 250). The CFA is also performed to establish discriminant validity among the variables. Our results indicate that narcissistic leadership has a significant and positive relationship with organization cynicism. And organization cynicism further has significant relationship with change resistance. Future research can examine the other mechanism through which Narcissistic leadership produce positive outcomes and also other antecedents of organization cynicism.*

**Keywords:** Narcissistic leadership, Organization Cynicism, Change Resistance.

## Introduction

In today's dynamic environment, where global market place is changing rapidly, to meet the requirements and to compete in this environment, organizations need to change themselves accordingly. At the same time successful management of change is compulsory for organizations to achieve success in today's environment. In exploring this area, change methodologies and approaches adopted by organizations are the key factors, and dominated in success by the proper use (Higgs and Rowland, 2005). However role of leaders in the management of change is an important factor for the success or failure of change process. Leader's behavior can either positively or negatively contribute to bring or enforce change. (Rowland, 2008, Senior, 2002; Higgs, 2005).

The concept of leadership reflects an individual's skills to influence his followers, to implement changes which will benefit organization in return. Since its inception, main focus of leadership literature and research done in previous years was based on positive impacts of leadership (Benson, 2008; Kellerman, 2004) and not pay proper attention to the 'bad' or negative impacts of leadership. Though lot of publications just focused on the 'good' impacts of leadership, it's been prevailing that any other behavior is not considered in the phenomenon of leadership. According to Burns (2003), 'If it is dishonorable or unprincipled it is not leadership'. However, in the early 1980s, the possibility of bad side of leadership was highlighted by (McCall and Lombardo, 1983) while addressing leadership failures.

They identified that incompetence; inner flaws and lack of interest are the main reason of leadership / command failure. By concentrating on this reason of personal failures, they highlighted

various factors like lack of skills, incapability to face social pressure, inconsideration to others, being rude and arrogant and being extraordinary hungry or motivated. Their findings concluded that personal in capabilities cause less damage to leadership as compared to character flaw.

As 'heroic' theories of leadership mainly focused on the higher command in the institution i.e. CEO's. Indeed research suggest that top level executives are the great contributors in their business dealings and institutions (Chatterjee 2007; Hambrick, 1996; Eisenhardt, 1990; Mason, 1984 ;).

As with growing attention in the reasons of leadership failure, while delivering acceptable outcomes or even the downfall of the organization itself may lead to the increasing attention in the idea of egocentric leadership. While narcissism or egocentric is a word which mainly used as a general personality trait, but its comparison with leadership has remain under research in the previous 15- 20 years (Kets de Vries, 1993). Although its inception found in late 1800s and had a great impression on Freud's research (Freud, 1957) as he explains the demonstration of egocentric behavior or narcissism as Undue pride in oneself or one's achievements; Self-aggrandizement; and Selfishness.

However, as Hall (1979) and Terry (1988) also describes, narcissism as a personality trait. Hall and Raskin (1979) introduced a developed a assessment based tool like (questionnaires, tests, raters' judgments, and personality tests) to measure narcissistic or egoistic traits in person. Emmons (1997) through empirical research on those tools highlighted four unique parts of the being narcissistic which are essential for proofing this idea. Includes:

- (i) Exploitativeness/prerogativeness; the belief that one is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment.
- (ii) Command: 'authorization to do all is commander'.
- (iii) Superiority/Arrogance: 'I am better than others'.
- (iv) Self-admiring: 'the admiration of oneself; undue pride in oneself or one's achievements'

In the past few years narcissism has widely been used in exploring the behaviors in organization especially the destroying or don't care selfish nature of CEO's.

When leaders are narcissist in nature, there behaviors can be harmful for organization in the long run performance. By characterized the negative attributes of egoistic leadership, it can be termed as putting efforts for only self-interest or for achieving personal goals (Resick, 2009; Burch, 2008). Instead of paying attention on delivering for the interest of organization egoistic leaders are more focused on getting the advantage of available resources for themselves as they want to feel superior to others. Narcissistic leaders are proved to be selfish, as there priority is self-interest. In their actions they are focused on getting the benefits for themselves and even ignore others.

As a result of studies held in 1990s cynicism exist in organization (e.g. Mirvis, 1988; Austin and Wanous, 1997). Employees are coming up with more cynicism in new corporate environment especially in those environments which are characterized by mistrust and involved in scandals (Twenge, Zhang, &Im, 2004). Empirical evidence shows that worker skepticism has a lot of down sampling effects on employee outcomes which results in minimizing their efficiency, contentment level of job, and institutional pain or dedication and chances of thoughts to leave job may increase (Dharwadkar, 1998). Turnover may result as a severe damage for the organization as when it happens organization may have to bear a lot of cost of Finances COF (Holtom, & Lee, 2001; Mitchell, 2006), That loss may happens in result of cost to separate or lay off employees in an organization and recruiting and hiring a new employee is a big undertaking for any company that also cost to the organization (Yardaman and Allen, 2010). As we want to know the factors which are critical for turnover, turnover intention may have the strongest support but it is equally important to know the factors which are responsible for a person's

thoughts to leave job (Allen 2010). When people start evaluation for their jobs and the working conditions then it may result in a process of turnover Mobley (1997). When employees get negative evaluation relation to their work environment then dissatisfaction regarding their jobs increases and their turnover intentions also increases. Especially that individual whose attitude is more cynical towards their organization leads them to switchover ideas. Thus it shows a positive relation between organizational cynicism and turnover intentions.

Organization commitment leads an individual to perform and involved in those actions which then leads to achieve the aim of institutions (Herscovitch, 2001). Basically it's an inner satisfaction which keeps the employees to remain attach with their institution (Chatman & O' Reilly, 1986) and it has three thoughts: employees' perceptions of their emotional attachment to organization, duty to obey institutional rules and laws regarding the job usually said as normative commitment, and how much employees feel the need to stay at their organization called as continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers employee's perceptions of their identification with their organization. Those individuals who are more cynical will have little trust towards organization and as a result will have a negative effect. Those individuals will have low commitment towards organization. And research suggests that there is a negatives relation of skepticism and institutional commitment (Mathiey, 1999 & Eaton 2000).

Every organization must be change consistent with the needs and requirement of the environment, catastrophe to excellently managing change may result in wasted resources, suboptimal organizational performance, and declining employee morale. As a result, preparing employees to be ready for the organization change is important.

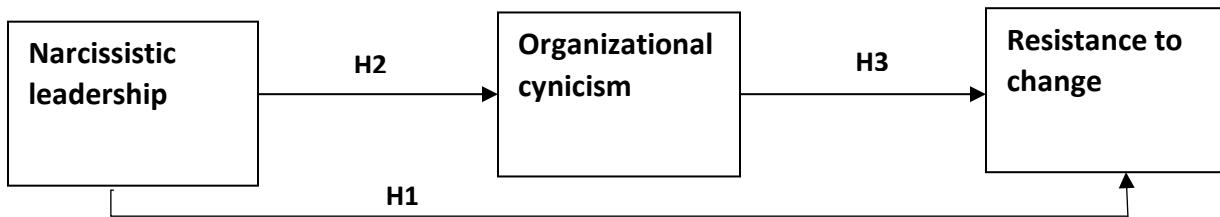
Similarly, as we discussed that, the working environment is changing and to keep pace with that an organization need a competent and motivated workforce but if the organizational cynicism exists in the organization than employee will not easily motivated towards change as they don't see their organization integral. Hence it greatly affects the change attitude of the employees.

Numerous recent studies have revealed that the organization cynicism predicts hostile and negative attitude among employees. According to resources theory, employee performance is affected by institutional skepticism and this skepticism may decrease by positive resources of institution. So employees having more job options or some other financial resources are least effected or bothered by negative behaviors of institution. (Ann Chunyan; Antecedents and consequences of employee organizational cynicism, 2013)

Past research shows a significant relation between organizational cynicism and employee performance and feelings i.e., how much employees feel the need to stick with organization, institutional commitment and switchover intention. Now we will investigate further the antecedent of institutional skepticism and its relation with employee outcome i.e., refusal to accept to change, employee innovation skills i.e., how organizational cynicism will have an effect on employee refusal to change, employee innovation skills.

This research focuses on the antecedent and outcomes of institutional cynicism or skepticism. In line of Transactional theory of stress we focus on how narcissistic leadership leads to organizational cynicism. We will further investigate the relationship between organizational cynicism and resistance to change.

## Theoretical Framework



*Figure 1: Organizational cynicism mediate the relationship of Narcissistic leadership and resistance to change*

The Transactional Theory of Stress is a framework which emphasizes appraisal to evaluate harm, threat and challenges, which results in the process of coping with stressful events (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The level of stress experienced in the form of thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviors, as a result of external stressors, depends on appraisals of the situation.

For Lazarus and Folkman (1984), appraisal is a complex, high level cognitive activity and they postured that individuals evaluate a situation for relevance to their personal well-being.

As we discussed earlier that narcissistic leadership leads towards employee attitude that his organization is indulge in those attitudes and behaviors which base on self-interest maximization and benefit one's self. And this attitude may create mistrust in the eye of employee towards his organization. He becomes cynic and thinks that his organization is not trustworthy and organization loses its integrity in the eye of employee. And thus this cynicism leads to resistance to change which means when employee is cynic he will not perform well and will not put his best efforts in his job and he may get resisted towards the changes which organization make in its processes and management for the best interest of organization but employee feels that his efforts and his performance will not value by the organization.

**Hypothesis 1:** Narcissistic Leadership has a positive relationship with change resistance.

## Narcissistic Leadership and Organizational Cynicism

Recent researchers are focusing more on Narcissistic leadership but despite of large volume of research very little literature is available on Narcissistic leadership. (W. Keith Campbell, Brian J. Hoffman, Stacy M. Campbell, and Gaia Marchisio, 2011). However, regardless of clear theoretical overlap between the characteristics of narcissists and those commonly associated with leaders, leadership research has traditionally focused on the positive characteristics of leaders, with far less consideration to the role of negative characteristics (cf., Hoffman, Woehr, Maldegan, & Lyons, 2010).

Furthermore, a significant gap in more general leadership research to date has been the absence of any notable work which looks specifically at the marvel of narcissistic leadership (Maccoby, 2000, 2004; Doyle and Lynch, 2008). The purpose of this study is to study Narcissistic Leadership and its consequences that leads organizational cynicism and on resistance to change. As we know Narcissism has been used with increasing frequency to describe behavior in organizations, most particularly in the process of enlightenment the disparaging behaviors of CEO's and leaders. Narcissism is a comparatively

persistent individual difference consisting of magnificence, self-love and exaggerated self-views (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

According to Transactional Theory of Stress appraisal is the motivational significance of the situation, Appraisal of situation largely depend on the cognitive cognition of the employee. Studies has shown that Narcissistic leadership are more likely to violate the integrity standards and hence have more unhappy employees and create destructive workforce, the employee under such leader appraise this kind of situation as hindrance stressor and cognitive appraisal under this leadership make them cynic. Organization cynicism leads to a state of distrust and stress among workforce. The employee will appraise their leader behavior inappropriate, where the leaders has no implication for their personnel well-being and employees characterized this situation stressful and appraise it harmful or threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). And according to their appraisal the employee have hostile feelings for their organizations and they are not willing to utilize their resources for such an organization that they do not trust and decided to not waste their resources as it is the wastage of both energy and resources and hence resist towards change. Individuals and groups appraise this situation threatening and by the potential or actual loss of resources and are therefore motivated to obtain, retain and protect valued resources for anticipated future needs.

The violations of employees' social expectations often may have differential consequences is if they are not receiving support or the level of support is low than they behave reciprocally and they perceive their organization unresponsive and dishonest and behave cynical towards their organization.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of need theory individual are more motivated when they perceived recognition, if the leader support is high than employee are more committed and loyal towards their organization but if they perceived that the leader is not supporting or organization support is low than their behavior will accord accordingly.

**Hypothesis2:** There is a positive relationship between narcissistic leadership and organizational cynicism.

### ***Cynicism and Resistance to change***

As we know organization cynicism leads to a state of distrust and stress among workforce. The employee has hostile feelings for their organizations and they are not willing to utilize their resources for such an organization that do not support and appreciate their work and decided to not waste their resources as it is the wastage of both energy and resources. Under the Narcissistic leadership their self-esteem hurt. Individuals and groups are threatened by the potential threat of their self-interest loss, and are therefore motivated to retain and protect valued resources for anticipated future needs and do not use it for their organizations well-fair.

Resistance to Change is 'a manifestation of reservation which normally arises as a response or reaction to change' (Block 2011). The initial research on Resistance to Change initiated in the field of organizational and industrial psychology, where Resistance to Change was abstracted as situational, depending on the types of stimulus's present in the workplace (Coch and French 1948). Resistance to Change was also observed from a perspective of different thinking from the group mindset, or that of self-interest, that organizations try to avoid (Waddell and Sohal 1998)

Align with Transactional Theory of Stress in the absence of leader support individual withhold their resources with the appraisal that organization is not taking their efforts as worthy resource so it is useless to waste ones recourses. Hence they perceive organizational cynicism and show resistance towards change

When an employee perceives his/her organization as cynical, he/she will show a negative attitude towards his/her organization, will not trust his/her organization, its processes, its management, its decisions towards changes. As we know organization cynicism leads to a state of distrust and stress among workforce. The employee has hostile feelings for their organizations and they are not willing to utilize their resources for such an organization that they do not trust and decided to not waste their resources as it is the wastage of both energy and resources. Theory also supports this argument and states that narcissistic leadership creates a feeling of uselessness and worthlessness and individual when perceived that whatever will they do their organization will not going to appreciate it, leads towards the deviant behavior i.e. cynicism which leads towards high resistance towards change.

Organizational cynicism is “a negative attitude towards employee organization by three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative impact towards the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behavior towards the organization that are consistent with these beliefs” (Dean et al., 1998:345). When an employee feels that his organization is lacking honesty and involves in injustice and unfair treatments then he feels that he cannot trust and relied upon his organization and it may reduce his reliance and belief towards his organization. When employee does not trust his organization he will not put in his best efforts towards the attainment of organizational goals. He will restrict his efforts and will not performance according to the job demand. When employee feels that his organization is not trust worthy, employee thinks that when organization is not valuing his efforts and is only focusing on the self-interest maximization and there is no use to put in extra effort in job because he may perceive that his efforts will go waste. And especially in cases when organization goes for a major or a minor change, employees may restrict themselves and does not support the changing efforts by the organization. Because employee may think like, this change may only benefits the organization and its supporting employees and will not benefit him or his job and as a result he may sit back and restricts his efforts. On the basis of this we can say that, when employee is cynical towards his organization it may increase his resistance towards change.

On the basis of all above discussion we can state following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** organizational cynicism positively relates to resistance towards change.

As we already mentioned that leader is a role model for his followers. Follower sometimes blindly follows what a leader says. Followers do perceive their leader as positive character which will influence them in positive and appropriate manner. When this happens, followers think that leader will definitely work for their well-being and they show more respect and grace towards their leader. But when things go in another direction and leader fails to fulfill follower's expectations. A narcissistic leader, who perceives to be a person, only cares about his own interest beyond followers. Followers will not respect this leader anymore and as leader is on top position in organization so as a result follower will not trust this organization as well. Because follower will think that leader works only for his own betterment. This situation leads toward organization cynicism which means that follower will not trust his organization anymore and this distrust will lead towards a situation which will just stop follower to work for the betterment of that organization which he does not trust anymore. So when organization goes for any major or minor change employees will not participate in that. Accord with Transactional theory of stress employee perceives the change as hindrance stressor and perceives the change as traumatic event in the presence of narcissistic leadership and organizational cynicism. Hence we hypothesized that

**Hypothesis 4:** Organizational cynicism will mediate the relationship of Narcissistic Leadership and change resistance.

## **Methods**

### ***Data collection and sample:***

Data was collected from banking sector in Islamabad and Pakistan. Our predictor was self-reported and outcome was peer reported.

All the respondents were assured that their response would be confidential. Total of 350 questionnaires were distributed and received 250 complete usable questionnaires which make a response rate of 71%. Out of 250 respondents, 164 were female making a percentage of 65.6% and male respondents were 85 making a percentage of 34%.

## **Measures**

### ***Narcissistic Leadership***

The Narcissistic Leadership was measured using nine items scale developed by of Jones, D. N. Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Respondents were asked about how they evaluate their leader. Examples of items included “seems to people as a natural leader” and “like being the center of attention”. The scale in present collected sample had an internal consistency reliability of (0.83). The five-point Likert scale is used to tap the responses from ranging 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”

### ***Organizational cynicism***

The Organizational cynicism was measured using 12-item scale by Dean et al., (1998). The scale in present collected sample had an internal consistency reliability of (0.82). Sample items are “I believe that my organization says one thing and does other” and “I often experience tension when I think about my organization.” The five-point Likert scale is used to tap the responses from ranging 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”

### ***Resistance to change***

The resistance to change was measured by 17 item scale by Shaul Oreg et al. reliability of (0.89). Sample items are “I generally consider change to be a negative thing” and “I’ll take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events any time”. The five-point Likert scale is used to tap the responses from ranging 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”

## Results

To establish the validity of the measure we used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFAs) using AMOS. We followed Anderson & Gerbing's (1988, 1992) two step strategy where we examined measurement model first followed by the path model using structural equation modeling (SEM). We compared three factor models with single factor model and as a result three factor model gave better results than the single factor model as give in Table 1.

**Table 1: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses**

Measurement Models	$\chi^2$	Df	CFI	GFI	RMSEA
NL-OC-CR (3 factor)	<b>1.954</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>.87</b>	<b>.80</b>	<b>.06</b>
NL-OC-CR (1 factor)	3.302	665	.68	.64	.09

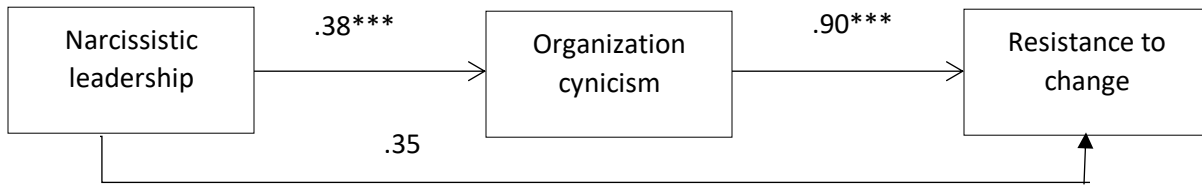
**Table 2** presents mean, standard deviation, correlation, and reliability analysis results of study variables. Narcissistic leadership was significantly and positively correlated with change resistance ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ) and organizational cynicism at ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ), which provides partial support to hypothesis 1 and 2.

**Table 2: Means, Standard deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities for the main variables of interest in this study**

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	<b>AGE</b>	2.27	1.03	-					
2	<b>EDU (PG)</b>	.32	.47	.27**	-				
3	<b>ET (PT)</b>	.34	.47	.11	-.32**	-			
4	NL	3.47	0.58	-.07	-.11	.08	<b>(.83)</b>		
5	OC	3.11	.76	-.08	-.22**	.27**	.32**	<b>(.82)</b>	
6	CR	3.2	.67	-.16**	-.22**	.23**	.35**	.77**	<b>(.89)</b>

After correlation we have conducted regression analysis to test our entire hypothesis. For moderated regression analysis we centered our variables. The result of regression is given in following tables.

Regression analysis for the direct effects of the Narcissistic leadership on Organization (**Table 3**). Regression analysis show significant impact of narcissistic leadership on organization cynicism i.e.  $\beta = 0.32; p < .001$ , where change in R square is 0.10 that is highly significant.



Where CMIN/DF= 1.920 which is less than 2. CFI, GFI are approximately .80 and RAMSA= .06 which is good model fit. The upper and lower bound is also a non-zero digit i.e. NL→OC [.25 - .50], and OC→CR [.83 - .98] which further support our hypothesis 2 and 3.

## Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the effects of dark side of leadership on employee outcome through organizational cynicism. The Transactional theory of stress provides a theoretical framework in this study to explain the relationship between narcissistic leadership and organization cynicism and further its impact on change resistance.

The studies have found the difference prevalent in national culture and its impact on different managerial practices in organizations. As study is conducted in Pakistan, the Hofstede cultural dimension might have played role in studying this effect. Considering one of the dimension of culture-power distance based on research of Hofstede, 1991, why behaviors of certain people are different from each other in same setting can be explained. Taking into account of that possibility, stating that an important aspect of unit work engagement is exchange of information among leader and employees. Thus, the efficacy of exchange of information is not successfully prevailing in cultures high in power distance.

## Conclusion

As the study provide some insights. It also has limitations. The first limitation of this study is that the data is cross-sectional. The researchers can further study by using longitudinal research design. The overtime tapping of the constructs can open way to some even more fruitful insights. Another limitation of our study is that the sample size is very small. As data is collected from the banking sector only, this is not a true representative of whole population. So, the representatives should be enough to represent scenarios prevailing in each industry. Another useful way to further this research is to take personality traits as moderator among the constructs. And we can check other outcomes as a result of narcissistic leadership.

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