

Are Two Narcissists Mutually Exclusive? Toward Understanding the Effects of Leader-subordinate (Dis)similarity in Narcissism*

두 나르시시스트는 상호 배타적인가? 리더-부하 나르시시즘 (비)유사성의 효과에 관한 연구

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Prior research suggests that leader narcissism can undermine important subordinate outcomes, such as subordinate behavior and performance. However, these studies have exclusively focused on leader narcissism, neglecting to consider that subordinate narcissism should also be taken into account. Based on narcissism and similarity-attraction theory, we provide an integrated perspective and predict that narcissism (dis)similarity shapes leader-subordinate dynamics. Using a multi-source and multi-wave survey, 448 leader-subordinate dyads data (from 76 teams) supported our model: Polynomial regression and response surface analyses showed that similarity predicts counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs), but this effect is asymmetrical: CWBs are lower when leader-subordinate narcissism are similar low rather than high. On the other hand, dissimilarity predicts high CWBs, and this effect is also asymmetric: this positive effect is stronger when subordinate narcissism is higher (rather than lower) than leader narcissism. Finally, these effects of (dis)similarity on CWBs were found to be moderated by high and low team performance pressures. Overall, our study suggests that narcissism (dis)similarity affects leader-subordinate dynamics and subordinate CWBs. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings for designing functional leader-subordinate dyads in organizations.

Key Words: Narcissism, Person-Supervisor similarity, Polynomial regression, Counterproductive work behaviors, Team performance pressure

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1. Introduction

Narcissism is a popular topic in recent leadership research, as reported in a review by Grijalva & Harms(2014). This research highlights the importance of narcissism in the leadership process by establishing a relationship between leader narcissism and subordinate outcomes (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Grijalva et al., 2015). However, although these studies suggest that leader narcissism plays a crucial role in the leadership process, as Byza et al. (2017) mentioned: leadership studies have a critical flaw in that they tend to view leadership as a one-way path that flows primarily from leaders to subordinates. In response, there is a growing consensus among scholars that leadership is an interactive phenomenon involving dynamics between leaders and subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leadership scholars also point out that the focus on discrete variables of leaders or subordinates leads to a fragmented understanding of leadership dynamics. Therefore, in order to achieve a more complete picture, both leader and subordinate traits must be taken into account when understanding the relationship between leader narcissism and subordinate outcomes (Karakowsky et al., 2012).

In fact, employees' personalities are not always aligned; rather, they may have different personalities. Subordinates may or may not

share their leaders' traits on the personality, which is likely to affect their interactions and relations (Edwards et al., 2006). Unfortunately, however, we know little about how alignment or misalignment in personality traits affects the leadership process and subordinates' responses to leaders. Although researchers have begun to examine the effects of congruence between leaders and subordinates (e.g., Byza et al., 2017; Parent-Rocheleau et al., 2020), no research has examined the effects of narcissism or other negative personality traits in leaders and subordinates. This is a critical shortcoming as personalities, such as narcissism, are one of the core concepts in the leadership literature (Argyris, 1957). Besides, extant research on dyads congruence shows very few and significant heterogeneous effects (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Thus, whether or which form of fit arises between leaders and subordinates seems to depend heavily on the dimension of fit. For example, Zhang et al.(2012) presented that person-supervisor fit in proactive personalities is always beneficial to work outcomes. Other studies have found heterogeneous effects. For example, Glomb & Welsh(2005) found that employee satisfaction with leaders was highest when leaders and subordinates were dissimilar in terms of personality aspects of control. Narcissism should be a crucial dimension for fit because it significantly affects the dynamics between leaders and subordinates (London, 2019), and also

because it increases the ability to predict negative personalities in an organizational setting (Braun, 2017). Furthermore, narcissism is a particularly interesting concept because extant fit studies are limited to variables with positive or neutral valence. However, there is growing evidence that positive intentions and traits do not always guide the behavior of leaders and subordinates and that negative drivers also play an influential role (Forsyth et al., 2012; Jackson & Johnson, 2012). Hence, we know little about whether and how fit in quite dark variables may influence the dynamics between leaders and subordinates.

Our aim was to address this limitation in the existing literature. In doing so, we aim to extend previous research in three main ways. First, based on similarity-attraction theory (Ajzen, 1974; Byrne, 1971), we develop and test the argument that narcissism similarity (or congruence) between leaders and subordinates reduces subordinate CWBs, while dissimilarity (or incongruence) exacerbates subordinate CWBs. Second, when studying the effects of narcissism in leaders and subordinates, it may be somewhat oversimplified to expect general effects of similarity, as is often assumed in congruence research. Indeed,

considering that narcissism may have a strong negative valence (high narcissism) and a strong positive valence (low narcissism), it is worth considering whether the heterogeneity of high and low narcissism may have different effects. Finally, although previous research has shown that narcissism variables are associated with CWBs¹⁾ (Forsyth et al., 2012; Grijalva & Harms, 2014), few studies have examined when and why this occurs and which processes underlie this relationship. To highlight this process, we introduced the concept of team performance pressure to the study of narcissism (dis)similarity. Team performance pressure underlines the importance of teams achieving superior performance goals (Gardner, 2012) and that pressure may accentuate the negative traits of narcissistic employees at work (London, 2019). Therefore, we include team performance pressure as an essential boundary factor to help us gain more visibility into when and how narcissism (dis)similarity increases or decreases its harmful effects on organizations.

1) CWBs are any behavior that intentionally, rather than accidentally, harms an organization or its members (Spector & Fox, 2005). Its common defining element (e.g., Spector & Fox, 2005; Spector et al., 2006) is observable damage, rather than non-observable antecedents; thus, CWBs encompass a wide range of negative employee behaviors such as aggression or deviant behavior in organizational research.

II. Literature review and hypothesizes

2.1 The influence of narcissism on CWBs

In their recent review of narcissism literature, some scholars (Forsyth et al., 2012; Grijalva & Harms, 2014) state that narcissism is positively associated with CWBs in the workplace: Individuals high in narcissism were much more likely to harm their organizations or organizational members than individuals low in narcissism. Three distinct streams of research converge to support this idea.

First, narcissists have been shown to engage in particularly aggressive behavior when their self-esteem is threatened (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). To explain this tendency, Penney & Spector(2002) proposed a theory of threatened egotism and aggression, which suggested that those with high self-esteem but who are hypersensitive to threats to their self-esteem tend to experience more negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, or hostility), which in turn leads to aggression. In support of this theory, they found that people with high narcissism (i.e., egotism) experienced more anger prior to committing to CWBs ($r = .27, p < .05$). This theory has also become the most common theory used to explain the positive relationship between narcissism and CWBs (e.g., Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Judge et al.

2006; Konrath et al. 2006; Penney & Spector, 2002). Second, high narcissists show more self-serving attributions for their performance than low narcissists: compared to low narcissists, narcissists show a stronger tendency to attribute successes to internal causes (e.g., ability or effort) and failures to external causes (e.g., task difficulty or bad luck) (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Stucke, 2003). After receiving unfavorable external feedback, high narcissists are prone to negative reactions against others (Stucke, 2003) and subsequently lead to relational aggression and/or CWBs (Spector, 2011). Third, Paulhus & Williams(2002) noted that people with dark traits (narcissism) have a tendency to be “callous, selfish, and malevolent” in their interpersonal interactions (p. 100). They have fewer resources to bring and transfer to others because narcissists believe they are superior to other colleagues and rules about reciprocity and obligation do not apply to them (Campbell et al., 2000). Also based on a social exchange perspective (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), researchers have noted that in explaining poor quality exchanges and relationships in the workplace explain that narcissism prevents employees from developing and fostering positive and beneficial resilient relationships, thus increasing the likelihood of engaging in various CWBs (Forsyth et al., 2012). These studies all suggest that employees with high narcissism tend to view their inter-

actions with leaders more negatively.

2.2 Leader-subordinate (dis) similarity in narcissism

Due to the dyadic nature of the similarity in narcissism, the deep-level characteristics of both parties are influential for the development and evolution of subordinate behavior (Liden et al., 2016; Tsui et al., 2002). Narcissistic leaders may work with subordinates who have similar levels of narcissism. According to the similarity-attraction theory (Ajzen, 1974; Byrne, 1971), research indicates that individuals more easily interact and socially connect with each other if they share common personal characteristics (e.g., narcissism). When the leader and subordinate share such inner particularities, they tend to easily manifest a mutual understanding, experience less conflict, share similar opinions, and have higher trust in the other member (Liden et al., 2016). In this vein, empirical research by Peterson & Bossio(1991) suggests that since non-optimistic individuals generally suffer more social rejection (Helweg-Larsen et al., 2002; Norem, 2002), these individuals are more likely to develop supportive relationships only with other non-optimistic people. Therefore, we suggest that similarity matters more than negativity.

The latter conclusion has also been observed in the field of relationship science. Furthermore, Byrne(1997); Condon & Crano(1988) state

that their dynamic relationships will be more positive when leaders and subordinates share similar attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. Similarly, the self-concept and leadership literature gives similar insights. Jackson & Johnson (2012) reveal that aligned identities between the leader and subordinate are likely to foster trust, cohesion, and high-quality interactions. Benefiting from this positive leader-subordinate dynamic, subordinates will improve their performance (Jackson & Johnson, 2012; Zhang et al., 2012) rather than commit to CWBs (Martin et al., 2016). Therefore, we suggest that leader-subordinate similarity in narcissism is negatively related to subordinate CWBs (cf. H1).

The above perspective leads us to expect that the similarity between the leader and subordinate narcissism is favorable. However, this may obscure significant nuances in leader-subordinate dynamics; thus, to better understand narcissism in dyad dynamics, it may be important to recognize that the effects of similarity are not necessarily uniform. More precisely, we suggest that high narcissism may reduce the effect of favorable similarity, while low narcissism may enhance it.

As narcissism and its constitutive resources (e.g., Fung et al.(2020) identified several subdimensions of narcissism, namely entitlement, exploitation, superiority, and arrogance), are positively associated with poorer interpersonal reciprocity (Faldetta, 2020), affective

experiences (Penney & Spector, 2002), and counterproductivity (Grijalva & Harms, 2014), this is likely to undermine the development of favorable leader-subordinate dynamics. Thus, these dynamics of narcissism may, to a certain extent, offset the positive effects of similarity, and this offsetting effect is more pronounced when employees have more salient narcissistic traits (i.e., high narcissism rather than low narcissism). Thus, we argue that the effect of narcissism similarity is asymmetrical and that similarity will be less favorable for two high narcissism members than for two low narcissism members. Subordinates may increase their CWBs when both parties have high levels of narcissism rather than low levels of narcissism (cf. H2). Therefore, we predict:

H1: The similarity in narcissism between leader and subordinate will be negatively related to subordinate CWBs:

H2: Subordinate CWBs will be lower when the leader and subordinate are aligned at low levels of narcissism than when they are aligned at high levels of narcissism.

Consistent with the similarity-attraction perspective, dissimilarity in narcissism between leaders and subordinates is conversely presumed to lead to less mutual understanding and misalignment in expectations and level of relationship engagement, resulting in reduced

trust and higher chances of conflict (Acitelli et al., 2001; Böhm et al., 2010). Previous studies have revealed that differences in the deep-level characteristics of the leader and subordinate weaken the quality of the interaction between the two (e.g., Byza et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2012), thereby increasing the likelihood of employee engagement in CWBs (Martin et al., 2016). Therefore, we suggest that leader-subordinate dissimilarity in narcissism is positively related to subordinate CWBs (cf. H3).

The above perspective leads us to expect that the dissimilarity between the leader and subordinate narcissism is detrimental. Again, this conclusion may mask important nuances in leader-subordinate dynamics; thus, to better understand narcissism in dyad dynamics, it may also be necessary to recognize whether the effects of dissimilarity are uniform. More specifically, we suggest that high narcissism in subordinates may enhance the impact of adverse dissimilarity, while low narcissism in subordinates may mitigate it.

This presumption is based on high-narcissism individuals' general tendency to have more negative perceptions of their environment and less favorable evaluations and expectations regarding interpersonal interactions at work. More negative employees (i.e., high narcissism subordinates) will struggle to cope well with deep-level differences relative to their leader and maintain good interaction than less neg-

ative employees (i.e., low narcissism subordinates). This view is also reflected in the narcissistic leadership literature. For example, London(2019) argues that low narcissism subordinates get along more harmoniously with high narcissism leaders. These subordinates are submissive, even if this is not innate, and they are willing to express their praise and admiration to high narcissism leaders because they are equally eager to receive attention and promotion from their leaders (London, 2019). This favorable interpersonal expectation may, to a certain extent, counteract the negative effects of dissimilarity. On the other hand, ambitious high narcissistic subordinates are likely to challenge the authority of the leader, especially low narcissistic leaders, and even then they are unable to escape the control of the leader (Graham et al., 2018). This powerlessness is likely to exacerbate the development of negative leader-subordinate dynamics, thereby increasing the adverse effects of dissimilarity in narcissism. Thus, we argue that the effect of narcissism dissimilarity is also asymmetrical and that dissimilarity will be more adverse for a leader low narcissism-subordinate high narcissism combination than for a leader high narcissism-subordinate low narcissism combination. When subordinate narcissism is higher (rather than lower) than that of the leader, subordinates may increase their CWBs (cf. H4). Therefore, we predict:

H3: The dissimilarity in narcissism between leader and subordinate will be positively related to subordinate CWBs;

H4: Subordinate CWBs will be higher when subordinate narcissism is higher (rather than lower) than leader narcissism.

2.3 The moderating role of team performance pressure

We suggest that the effect of leader-subordinate narcissism similarity on subordinate CWBs will depend on the level of performance pressure in the team. London(2019) elaborates on external manifestations of leader narcissism as perceived by subordinates, such as negative affective or cognitive expressions (i.e., fragile high self-esteem, attribution bias, and a poor sense of reciprocity) that make employees underperform. This finding indicates that one member's narcissism is observable by the other, especially when the team is under performance pressure, as shared performance goals create more opportunities for team members to communicate and collaborate. Similar to previous studies, we contend that leaders and subordinates must be under high team performance pressure and that the other member's narcissism becomes more visible due to frequent task communication and interaction. Following the premise that one member's characteristics or influences must be effectively communicated to other members in order to leverage behav-

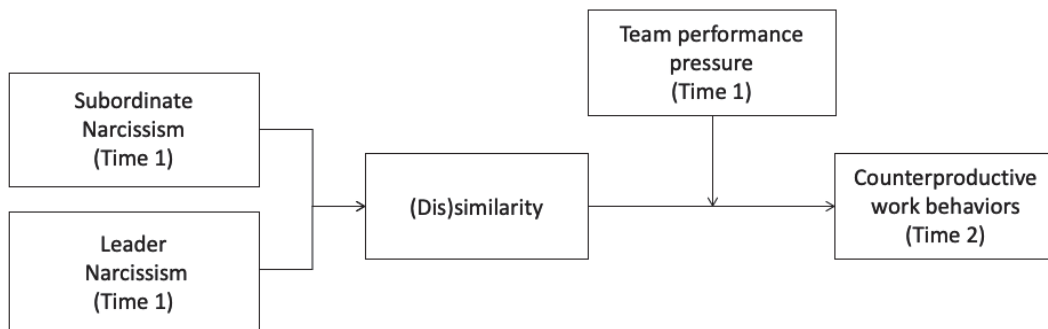
ioral outcomes, Wang & Seibert(2015) found that the frequency of positive affect display by leaders fosters subordinate performance (i.e., decreases CWBs), while the frequency of negative affect display reduces subordinate performance (i.e., increases CWBs) (Porath & Erez, 2007; Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011). Similarly, Nevicka et al.(2011) found that rewarding interdependent team environments such as those under high team performance pressure are necessary for crossover participation between team members. Based on this argument that team performance pressure creates an environment for interaction between members, therefore revealing more knowledge about the leader and providing subordinates with a better appreciation of their commonalities (e.g., similar narcissism), London(2019) found that the effect of personality and goal congruence in the leader-subordinate dyad was stronger in the case of high team performance pressure. Relatedly, Gardner et al.(2017) found that team performance pressure moderates the effect of leader narcissism dyad on collective team identity among members, whereas London (2019) depicted team performance pressure as a boundary condition for the convergence of group identity between team members since such pressures reinforce the extent to which leader and subordinate narcissism is visible (Tett et al., 2013).

On the other hand, some studies (e.g., Murnighan & Conlon, 1991; Parent-Rochelleau

et al., 2020) have shown that adverse outcomes resulting from low congruence are exacerbated when the personalities of leaders and subordinates are fully exposed. As shared performance goals create high connectedness between members, deep-level differences are more salient such that leaders and subordinates are more aware of their goal distinctiveness, devote more attention to their differences, and consequently are less involved in their tasks or proactive behaviors (Harinck et al., 2000).

When two low narcissism members are under high team performance pressure, high-quality dyad dynamics are likely to be reciprocated by subordinate behavior through deeper investment in similar attitudes and behaviors. In contrast, low team performance pressure may reduce the strength of the direct relationship between narcissism similarity and CWBs, since lower levels of dyad dynamics may trigger lower behavioral reciprocity.

For example, recent research found that employee perceived performance pressure is a predictor of work engagement (Kundi et al., 2021) and employee misconduct (Jensen et al., 2019). Team performance pressure has been found to be a boundary condition for the effect of congruence or contagion between dyadic members on collective identification perceptions (London, 2019) and task performance (Byun et al., 2020). Moreover, Song & Jeon(2022) observed that reduced team performance pressure weakened the direct rela-



〈Figure 1〉 Theoretical model

relationship between leader behaviors and employee CWBs.

Based on this literature, we posit that team performance pressure highlights both the positive effect of leader-subordinate narcissism similarity and the negative effect of narcissism dissimilarity on subordinate CWBs. Therefore, we predict:

H5: Team performance pressure will moderate the direct effect of leader-subordinate (dis)similarity in narcissism on subordinate CWBs, such that these effects will be stronger when team performance pressure is high.

III. Method

3.1 Participants

We collected data from a conglomerate in

Langfang, Hebei province, China, which operates in the areas of big data (one of the largest in Asia), IT, and hotels. Participants were junior employees and their immediate supervisors in these companies. In the final sample, employees were 29.580 years old on average ($SD = 8.923$), 29.0% of them were female, with an average seniority of 2.003 years ($SD = 1.610$). One hundred percent of employees had a full-time position, and 68.5% held a university degree. Managers were 37.053 years old on average ($SD = 8.756$), 18.4% of them were female, and they had an average seniority of 3.485 years ($SD = 2.216$). All participants held a full-time position, and 77.6% of them held a university degree.

3.2 Procedure

With the assistance of the human resources department of each of the participating companies, we collected data through paper-based questionnaires. All participants gave informed

consent and volunteered to participate in the study. To ensure the authenticity of the responses, we assure all staff that their responses do not reach their direct supervisors and that the questionnaires are distributed and collected directly by staff in the HR departments of the participating companies and ultimately handed over to our researchers for research purposes only. To fully examine the effect of time on our key structures and avoid common method variance, we accessed multiple sources and used a multiple wave research design by collecting leader-subordinate dyadic data at two different time points. At Time1, 698 junior employees of companies and their corresponding 91 immediate leaders participated, and we asked them to rate their respective levels of narcissism and asked the leaders to rate perceived team performance pressures. One month later (Time 2), we asked the 698 employees from Time 1 to report the frequency of their counterproductive work behaviors. Afterward, when the two-stage surveys were completed, we programmed all the data into the computer and performed data cleaning. Finally, we matched completed survey forms from 76 leaders (valid return rate = 83.5%) and 448 employees (valid return rate = 64.2%) and eliminated unpaired data or survey forms that were incomplete. Thus, a sample of 448 two-stage dyads (76 leaders and 448 subordinates) was formed for data analysis.

3.3 Measures

We used the translation/back-translation method (Brislin, 1986) to ensure the validity of all measures in the Chinese context. First, the original English items were translated into Mandarin by a specialist in the fields of organizational behavior and linguistics. Then, another specialist who had the same qualifications translated the items back into English.

3.3.1 Leader and subordinate narcissism (Time1)

Consistent with personality fit studies (e.g., Byza et al., 2017; Parent-Rochelleau et al., 2020), we also obtained narcissism measures in a self-report context. Both leaders and subordinates reported their narcissism using the 16-item NPI scale (Ames et al., 2006). The scale uses a forced-choice format, asking participants to choose between narcissistic statements (e.g., “I like having authority over people”) and their less narcissistic alternatives (e.g., “I don’t mind following orders”). Narcissistic responses were coded with a “1”, and alternative responses were coded with a “0.” Thus, higher scores indicate a higher level of trait narcissism. The reliabilities for the leader and subordinate-rated scales were $\alpha = 0.744$ and $\alpha = 0.721$, respectively.

3.3.2 Counterproductive work behaviors (Time2)

Measuring CWBs through objective or supervisory assessments is difficult because employees' CWBs are often hidden (Penney & Spector, 2002; Song & Jeon, 2022); therefore, we continued to obtain CWBs measures in a self-reported context. Subordinates reported the frequency of their own CWBs over the past one month using the five items in the interpersonal dimension of the scale provided by Spector et al. (2010). These items are better aligned with our theoretical background (i.e., leader-subordinate dynamics and interpersonal interactions). Example items are "Ignored someone at work" and "Started an argument with someone at work" (1 = never, 7 = always; $\alpha = 0.953$).

3.3.3 Team performance pressure (Time1)

Based on general management practice, team leaders respond more objectively to team performance pressure, compared to their subordinates; therefore, to obtain objective measures, we adopted a leader-report (rather than subordinate-report), using Rubin et al.'s (2010) 3-item scale. Example items are "The most important part of performance here is making the numbers" and "At my team, it's results at all costs" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.758$). The leaders' responses to

performance pressure represent a team-level performance pressure score. Thus, higher scores indicate a higher level of shared performance pressure in the team.

3.3.4 Control variables (Time1)

We also analyzed several control variables that may influence the links of our model variables. Based on the literature on the effects of demographic factors on subordination and relational output (Kacmar et al., 2009; Tsui & O'Reilly III, 1989; Tsui et al., 2002), gender differences (coded as 0 = same gender; 1 = different gender) and age differences (absolute age differences) were controlled for. Also, given the potential familiarity between subordinates and leaders (Green et al., 1996) and the effect of seniority on behavioral investment (Ng & Feldman, 2010), binary leader-subordinate tenure and subordinate tenure were included in the control factor analysis.

3.4 Analytical framework

After the preliminary analysis (validated factor analysis and aggregation index calculation), polynomial regression (PRA) and response surface analysis were performed to test the hypotheses. PRA is the most suitable technique to examine the effects of different levels of (dis)similarity between two predictor variables (Edwards, 1994). Just as suggested

by Edwards & Parry(1993), the results were regressed on two mid-scale centered predictors (b1: subordinates' narcissism; b2: leaders' narcissism) (stage 1) and three polynomial terms (b3: squared subordinates' narcissism; b4: interaction of subordinates' and leaders' narcissism; b5: squared leaders' narcissism) (stage 2). Based on the results of this regression, four response surface coefficients (a1, a2, a3, and a4) were calculated and plotted in three dimensions to depict the slope and curvature of the surfaces along the similarity axis ($y=x$) and the dissimilarity axis ($y=-x$). The coefficients $a1(b1+b2)$ and $a2(b3+b4+b5)$ stand for the linear and quadratic effects of similarity (i.e., the slope and curvature of the surface along the similarity axis), respectively. The coefficients $a3(b1-b2)$ and $a4(b3-b4+b5)$ stand for the linear and quadratic effects of dissimilarity (i.e., slope and curvature of the surface along the dissimilarity line), respectively.

To test the moderation hypotheses with PRA scores as a predictor, the five regression terms were multiplied by team performance pressure ratings, and the incremental variance explained by the model was examined. The significance of the CWBs effect then indicates whether or not it exerts a direct influence on the relationship between (dis)similarity and CWBs. This method was proposed by Edwards & Cable(2009) and later used by Vogel et al. (2016).

3.5 Data Analysis

We used Stata/SE 16.0 to process and analyze our data.

IV. Results

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for all variables. We also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the distinctiveness between the variables rated by the subordinates (i.e., subordinate narcissism, counterproductive work behaviors). The hypothesized two-factor model showed an adequate fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 555.760$, $df = 188$; CFI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.066).

Polynomial regression and response surface analysis were then performed to test our hypotheses. As shown in Table 2, the addition of the polynomial terms significantly increments the explained variance of CWBs (Model2: $\Delta R^2 = 0.091$; $F = 5.990$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the polynomial effect (i.e., the quadratic term of subordinate narcissism, the quadratic term of leader narcissism, and the product of leader and subordinate narcissism) predicts CWBs above and beyond the respective baseline effect of each member's narcissism (Shanock et al., 2010). We then explored the response surface along the similarity line. As shown in

〈Table 1〉 Descriptive, correlations among study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Subordinate tenure	2.003	1.610	1							
2. Dyadic tenure	1.620	1.249	0.773*	1						
3. Age difference	10.270	7.522	-0.124*	-0.087	1					
4. Gender difference	0.243	0.430	0.115*	-0.003	0.025	1				
5. Subordinate NARC	3.469	2.667	-0.010	-0.035	0.058	-0.002	1			
6. Leader NARC	3.701	2.600	-0.081	-0.033	-0.073	0.121*	0.022	1		
7. TPP	3.880	1.323	-0.071	0.017	0.280*	-0.058	0.044	0.111*	1	
8. CWBs	1.262	0.724	-0.049	-0.068	0.022	-0.047	0.149*	0.019	-0.009	1

Note: N = 448 leader-subordinate dyads. NARC: narcissism. TPP: Team performance pressure. CWBs: Counterproductive work behaviors. Gender difference is coded 0 = same gender/ 1 = different gender. Age difference is the absolute discrepancy in years between leader's and subordinate's age.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed.

〈Table 2〉 Polynomial regression for leader-subordinate (dis)similarity in narcissism

Variable	CWBs			
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4
Constant	1.531***	1.431***	1.467***	2.267***
Control				
Subordinate tenure	0.023	0.020	0.018	0.020
Dyadic tenure	-0.080	-0.063	-0.060	-0.075
Gender difference	-0.053	-0.043	-0.044	-0.041
Age difference	0.012	-0.009	-0.004	-0.025
Predictors				
S NARC	0.145**	0.496***	0.498***	0.666
L NARC	0.022	-0.134	-0.131	0.470
S NARC ²		0.535***	0.534***	0.118
S NARC × L NARC		-0.165	-0.163	0.675
L NARC ²		-0.057	-0.057	-0.146
Moderators				
TPP			-0.017	-0.346
S NARC × TPP				-0.154
L NARC × TPP				-0.633
S NARC ² × TPP				0.449
S NARC × L NARC × TPP				-0.853*
L NARC ² × TPP				0.131
R ²	0.029	0.110	0.110	0.127
ΔR ²	0.016	0.091	0.090	0.096
F statistic	2.210*	5.990***	5.390***	4.180***
D-W	1.906	1.935	1.938	1.971

Note: N = 448. S: Subordinate. L: Leader. NARC: narcissism. TPP: Team performance pressure. CWBs: Counterproductive work behaviors. D-W: Durbin-Watson statistic. Every other incremental r-squared (ΔR^2) information is based on their preceding model.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed.

Table 3, results showed an insignificant upward curvature ($a_2 = 0.313$, $p > 0.05$), indicating a positive but insignificant congruence effect of leader and subordinate narcissism similarity (Edwards, 1994), and therefore rejecting hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicts that the frequency of CWBs is lower when leaders-subordinates are aligned at low levels of narcissism than when they are aligned at high levels of narcissism. To test this hypothesis, we need to consider the slope along the similarity line. Consistent with our hypothesis, results showed a positive and significant slope along the similarity line ($a_1 = 0.362$, $p < 0.05$; see Table 3). Panel A of Figure 2 illustrates this result: The response surface shows that CWBs are significantly lower when the leader and subordinate are aligned at a low level of narcissism (in the rear

corner in Panel A of Figure 2) rather than at a high level of narcissism (in the front corner in Panel A of Figure 2), thus providing support for hypothesis 2.

Regarding dissimilarity, As shown in Table 3, results showed a significant upward curvature ($a_4 = 0.643$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a significant and positive congruence effect of leader and subordinate narcissism dissimilarity (Edwards, 1994). Panel A of Figure 2 illustrates these results. It shows that along the dissimilarity line, the surface followed a U-shaped form. Taken together, these results support hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the frequency of CWBs is higher when subordinates have higher narcissism (rather than lower) than leaders. To test this hypothesis, we considered the slope along the dissimilarity line.

〈Table 3〉 Surface values for leader-subordinate (dis)similarity in narcissism

	CWBs		
Variable	Overall	Low team performance pressure	High team performance pressure
Similarity line(Y=X)			
Slope(a1)	0.362*	-0.984*	0.319
Curvature(a2)	0.313	-0.570	0.527
dissimilarity(Y=-X)			
slope(a3)	0.630***	-0.152	1.441*
Curvature(a4)	0.643***	0.740	1.239

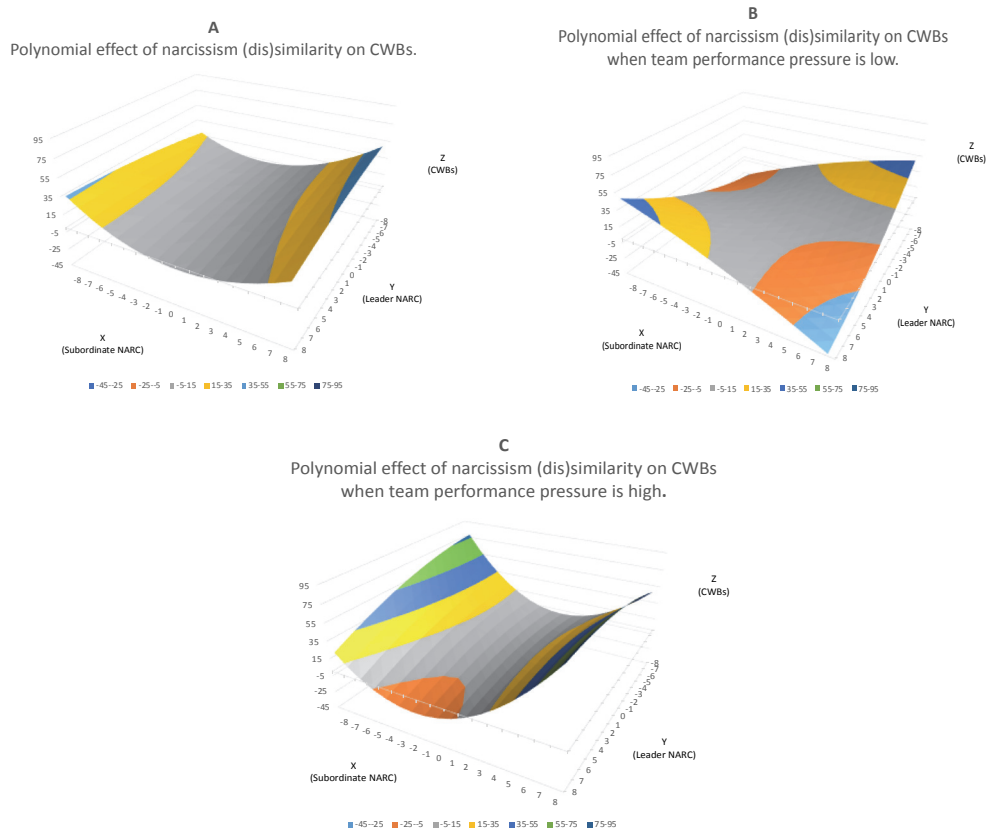
Note: $N = 448$. $a_1 = (b_1 + b_2)$, where b_1 is beta coefficient for subordinate narcissism and b_2 is beta coefficient for leader narcissism. $a_2 = (b_3 + b_4 + b_5)$, where b_3 is beta coefficient for subordinate narcissism squared, b_4 is beta coefficient for the cross-product of subordinate narcissism and leader narcissism, and b_5 is beta coefficient for leader narcissism squared. $a_3 = (b_1 - b_2)$. $a_4 = (b_3 - b_4 + b_5)$. CWBs: Counterproductive work behaviors.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed.

Consistent with our hypothesis, results revealed a positive and significant slope along the dissimilarity line ($a_3 = 0.630, p < 0.001$; see Table 3). As shown in Panel A of Figure 2: The response surface shows that CWBs are higher when subordinates have higher narcissism than leaders, compared to when subordinates have lower narcissism than leaders, thus providing support for hypothesis 4.

Results displayed in Table 2 further reveal that the interaction of the polynomial terms

with the level of team performance pressure significantly contributes to explaining the variance of CWBs, beyond the main effect of the team performance pressure itself (Model 4: $\Delta R^2 = 0.096; F = 4.180, p < 0.001$). To verify hypothesis 5, which suggests that the effect of narcissism (dis)similarity will be stronger in the case of high team performance pressure, we divided the sample into two subgroups, comprising respondents who reported low (-1 SD) and high ($+1$ SD) team perform-



(Figure 2) The effects of leader-subordinate narcissism (dis)similarity on subordinate CWBs.

ance pressure. The response surface results for each of these groups are reported in Table 3 and indicate that dissimilarity ($a_3 = 1.441$, $p < 0.05$) in the case of high team performance pressure and similarity ($a_1 = -0.984$, $p < 0.05$) in the case of low team performance pressure have a significant effect on CWBs, thus providing partial support for hypothesis 5. Response surface coefficients provided in Panel C of Figure 2 reveal that the direct effect of dissimilarity is significant and stronger when team performance pressure is high. This effect does not appear to be significant in the case of low team performance pressure. Panel C of Figure 2 depicts the case of high team performance pressure and reveals that CWBs are substantially higher when the narcissism of the subordinate exceeds that of the leader, as compared to the other dissimilarity situation (where the narcissism of the leader exceeds the narcissism of the subordinate). Surprisingly, the response surface coefficients provided in Panel B of Figure 2 reveal that the negative effect of similarity is significant and stronger when team performance pressure is low. This effect does not appear to be significant in the case of high team performance pressure. These findings are depicted in Panel B of Figure 2, which shows that in the case of low team performance pressure, CWBs are instead lower in the front corner (where the leader and subordinate narcissism is high) than in the rear corner (where the leader and

subordinate narcissism is low).

V. Discussion

This paper is an empirical article on the effects of leader-subordinate narcissism (dis)similarity. Based on narcissism and similarity-attraction theory, we hypothesize that similarity in narcissism would reduce subordinate CWBs, while dissimilarity would increase subordinate CWBs. However, our results do not fully meet these expectations. Our results show that similarity predicts CWBs and that this effect is asymmetric; we observe lowest CWBs when leaders and subordinates have similar low narcissism, yet when team performance pressure is low, leaders and subordinates with similar high narcissism unexpectedly show lowest CWBs than two members with similar low narcissism. On the other hand, dissimilarity predicts high CWBs, and this effect is also asymmetric; we observe the most pronounced subordinate CWBs when subordinates have high levels of narcissism and leaders have low levels of narcissism, and this deleterious effect is more salient when team performance pressure is high.

5.1 Theoretical implications

A central tenet of the narcissistic leader-

ship literature is that leader narcissism affects the dynamics between leaders and subordinates, which in turn influences subordinate behaviors (see review: Grijalva & Harms(2014). Although empirical studies have provided consistent support for this view (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Grijalva et al., 2015), this line of research has largely focused on leader narcissism and neglected the impact of subordinate narcissism. By developing and testing a model that examines the joint impact of leader and subordinate narcissism, we address this research limitation and extend several theoretical implications.

First, our study on leader-subordinate narcissism (dis)similarity provides general support for the similarity-attraction principle. Among the mechanisms of influence of similarity in narcissism, we find that the positive dynamics of similarity between two high-narcissism members are lower than those of two low-narcissism members, as high narcissism to a certain extent counteracts the favorable effects of similarity. This finding also supports the general view that narcissism is negative (Faldetta, 2020; Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Penney & Spector, 2002). Further, as the similarity effect values between two high and two low narcissism are inconsistent, this result rejects the conclusion in Peterson & Bossio(1991) that similarity matters more than negativity; rather, narcissism negativity may hold a value that cannot be underestimated

in the effects of narcissism similarity. That is, subordinates who share similar high-level characteristics (e.g., egotistical, aggressive) with their leader would significantly perceive less understanding, loyalty, and trust in the supervisory relationship.

On the other hand, dissimilarity in narcissism predicted high subordinate CWBs; this result rejects Glomb & Welsh's(2005) conclusion that two members with dissimilar personalities are a better fit, as applied to negative personality (i.e., narcissism) fit studies. Furthermore, the effect of dissimilarity in narcissism is asymmetric, as the value of the dissimilarity effect is inconsistent when leader narcissism is higher or lower than that of subordinates. Specifically, subordinates showed fewer CWBs when leader narcissism was higher (rather than lower) than subordinates. This result supports the finding in London(2019) that high narcissism leaders and low narcissism subordinates fit better in group work. It also supports the general view that narcissism is adverse and that this negative value is not to be underestimated in the heterogeneous influence process.

Finally, we extend previous research on the link between narcissism and CWBs. Specifically, we explored the link between narcissism (dis)similarity and subordinate CWBs, using team performance pressure as a critical boundary factor. Our findings show that high team performance pressure enhances the adverse dy-

namics between low narcissism leaders and high narcissism subordinates, while low team performance pressure weakens the favorable dynamics between low narcissism leaders and subordinates. These results extend the research dialogue on when and how narcissism increases or decreases harm to organizations and therefore provide another contextual thread for interpersonally relevant CWBs and narcissism research.

5.2 Practical implications

The main practical implications of this study are related to personnel selection and organization decisions.

Firstly, organizations should be vigilant about the negativity of narcissism. High narcissism subordinates (compared to high narcissism leaders) are more detrimental to organizational outcomes. However, it may be difficult to identify such people during the selection process, as they dress well, speak well, and feel charming when meeting them for the first time (Back et al., 2010). Therefore, our findings suggest that a personality test for candidates is necessary as it helps the interviewer to get a more comprehensive picture of the candidate in a shorter period of time. When candidates exhibit high narcissism, interviewers should be alert to potential dangers they may have, such as higher CWBs, to further help managers make the right hiring decisions. Secondly, we

believe that this may also be an option that can be suggested, where organizations match leaders and subordinates according to their level of narcissism. Although in practice, it may be difficult to avoid the need for leaders and subordinates with different levels of narcissism to work together, as other factors such as the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees need to be considered when undertaking a certain project or task. However, a focus on the fit between leaders and subordinates is still useful as it reminds leaders about the crucial role of narcissism in the work environment and how the fit can reduce CWBs in employees. It also helps managers reflect on their own behavior and interactions and guides them in making appropriate management decisions. For example, when two high narcissism leaders and subordinates are inevitably combined, leaders should anticipate that frequent interactions with these subordinates may increase their CWBs; we therefore recommend that leaders control the expression of their narcissistic views or reduce unnecessary interactions with these subordinates, as this may reduce adverse subordinate outcomes. However, it can also happen that the pressure for high performance in a team makes it difficult to avoid or even increase interaction between the two members, especially between a low narcissism leader and a high narcissism subordinate; again, the fitted performance between the two high

narcissism members in this clock case was not satisfactory, instead the dynamics between a similar high narcissism leader and subordinate under low team performance pressure showed the best results (i.e., the lowest CWBs); for which we give a third suggestion. While objective team performance pressure may be difficult to reduce in organizational work, we believe that leaders can find ways (e.g., organizing outdoor activities or opening break rooms) to release employees' negative motivation to work under high performance pressures. Alternatively, reducing employees' perceptions of team performance pressures by building an internal process and climate that enhances the positive psychological capital of leaders and subordinates (e.g., creating a comfortable team working atmosphere or balancing employees' work-leisure time) is also a method that can be considered to reduce employees' negative work motivation. These efforts are important (Smith et al., 2022) as they may help employees maintain emotional well-being at work and help companies build a productive and dynamic corporate work environment.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study also has some limitations, for which we make three useful recommendations.

First, as our study was conducted in China and the measures were based on Western scales, when Chinese participants answered questions

on the United States, we do not know to what extent our results generalize to different cultural characteristics between countries. As Meisel et al.(2016) explained: there are significant cross-cultural differences in narcissism variables between China and the USA. We therefore believe that this is also a promising path to test (dis)similarity effects between leaders and subordinates across different cultures in future research. Second, both leaders and subordinates in our sample were nested within work groups. However, we only analyzed narcissism (dis)similarity effects at the individual-level (Level 1; $n = 448$ dyads), ignoring team-level analyses (Level 2; $n = 76$ teams). Therefore, we expect that future studies can fully examine the effects of narcissism (dis)similarity at both the individual and team levels. This multi-level analysis approach is necessary, especially when there is sufficient variability at both levels of analysis. Third, our study only examined the direct link between narcissism (dis)similarity-CWBs and did not examine the mediating process between such links. However, understanding this meditative connection is a central step in testing and advancing organizational theory (MacKinnon et al., 2002). Therefore, we expect future research to continue to explore this mediation process based on our findings, providing a more complete theoretical framework for narcissism (dis)similarity-CWBs research.

VI. Conclusion

Integrating the literature on narcissism and similarity-attraction theory, our study aimed to contribute to a more accurate understanding of leader-subordinate dynamics. The findings suggest that going beyond a primary focus on leader narcissism, while incorporating subordinates' perspectives, can provide critical insights into when and why leaders are ineffective. We hope that our findings will stimulate more research on the topic of narcissism (dis)similarity-CWBs, making a meaningful contribution to organizational theory and practice.

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