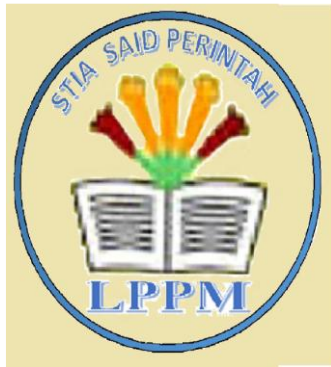

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Creativity as a Bridge: How Narcissism Affects Lecturer Performance

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Abstract

This study examines how narcissism influences job performance through creativity as a mediator. A survey of 96 lecturers in Indonesian universities used established measures for narcissism, creativity, and job performance. Statistical analyses assessed validity, reliability, and a mediation model to understand the impact of narcissism on performance through creativity. Findings: Narcissistic traits lowered creativity, which reduced job performance. However, fostering creativity can mitigate some of these negative effects, highlighting its importance for improving lecturer performance. Practical Implications: To manage the impact of narcissism on lecturer performance, organizations should focus on fostering creativity through training programs, innovation-supportive policies, and selection and evaluation processes that emphasize creativity. Additionally, psychological support for lecturers with high levels of narcissism can help mitigate negative effects and enhance overall performance. Originality: The study provides new insights for developing strategies that can enhance lecturer performance through the management of narcissistic traits and the promotion of creativity.

Keywords : Narcissim, Creativity,
Performance, Lecture

Introduction

Narcissism, defined by traits such as grandiosity, entitlement, and a strong need for admiration, has become increasingly relevant in organizational contexts. In modern workplaces, which often reward self-promotion and personal branding, narcissistic characteristics can serve as both assets and liabilities. For instance, narcissistic individuals often rise to leadership roles due to their assertiveness and charisma (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). However, these same traits may result in negative outcomes, including interpersonal conflicts, unethical behavior, and toxic work environments (O'Reilly III et al., 2018).

In academic settings, narcissism can influence how lecturers interact with students, colleagues, and the broader institutional environment (Vargo, 2023). Its complexity and dual nature have made narcissism a compelling subject in organizational research, especially as it relates to diverse workplace dynamics (Edershile & Wright, 2022; Giambatista et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2022). Although initially viewed predominantly as a destructive trait (Lubit, 2002), recent perspectives recognize both its positive and negative dimensions (Czarna & Nevicka, 2019).

Empirical evidence reflects this duality. On the one hand, narcissistic employees can contribute to short-term performance gains through their self-confidence and risk-taking behavior (Braun et al., 2018). For example, Galvin et al., (2010) found that narcissism can enhance performance by influencing leadership, charisma, and decision-making. On the other hand, contrasting studies indicate a negative relationship between narcissism and performance, often linked to poor decision-making abilities (Braun, 2017; Brunell & Buelow, 2017).

This study offers a novel contribution by focusing on creativity as a mediating variable in the relationship between narcissism and job performance, a connection that remains underexplored in existing literature. While previous research has examined narcissism's direct impact on leadership and performance, few studies have considered how creativity might explain or moderate this relationship in academic or organizational contexts.

Due to these conflicting findings, further research is warranted to explore potential mediating variables that could clarify this complex relationship. One such variable is creativity, as suggested by Credo et al., (2016). This study seeks to address the gap by examining creativity as a mediator between narcissism and individual performance.

Narcissistic individuals, with their high self-confidence, desire for admiration, and willingness to take risks, may be predisposed to creative thinking and innovation. This creative capacity could enhance their job performance, especially in tasks requiring originality and strategic vision. However, the same narcissistic tendencies may also cause interpersonal friction and hinder collaboration.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how narcissism relates to job performance through the mediating role of creativity. By examining this relationship, we hope to contribute to the theoretical understanding of narcissism in the workplace and provide practical insights for organizations. Specifically, our findings may help managers transform the potentially disruptive aspects of narcissism into constructive contributions that support organizational goals.

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis Development

Self-Regulation Theory

Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister et al., 1993) suggests that individuals manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in pursuit of personal goals. When applied to narcissism, this framework highlights how narcissistic traits can impair self-regulatory capacities, primarily due to an excessive preoccupation with self-image and limited awareness of the consequences of one's actions (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Specifically, individuals with grandiose narcissism may demonstrate overconfidence, leading them to disregard constructive feedback, whereas those with vulnerable narcissism often respond defensively to criticism both tendencies can negatively affect job performance (Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Thus, Self-Regulation Theory provides a valuable lens through which to understand how the instability of self-regulation among narcissistic individuals may reduce consistency and adaptability in the workplace

Narcisim and Job Performance

Narcissism is conceptually defined as an inflated sense of self-importance, often manifested through comparisons with others to elevate one's status (Barry et al., 2007). It encompasses a cluster of egocentric traits, including entitlement, a lack of empathy, a strong need for admiration, and arrogant or haughty behavior (Ouimet, 2010); Sedikides et al., 2004). Individuals high in narcissism typically exhibit self-centeredness, self-

admiration, and a persistent desire for external validation. As noted by Bogart et al., (2004), such individuals frequently display a pronounced sense of entitlement and continuously seek attention and admiration from others.

Narcissism is composed of several subscales within the 40-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), which consists of seven dimensions (Raskin & Terry, 1988), including;

1. Authority (exaggerated self-view of leadership qualities).
2. Self-sufficiency (generalized self-efficacy).
3. Superiority (an exaggerated self-view of competencies).
4. Exhibitionism (the tendency to draw attention to oneself).
5. Exploitativeness (the motivation to manipulate others for personal gratification).
6. Vanity ("I like to look at myself in the mirror").
7. Entitlement (the belief that the person is owed the respect and admiration of

Narcissism has been found to influence individual job performance in complex and often contradictory ways. According to Braun et al., (2018), narcissistic employees may contribute positively to short-term organizational goals due to their self-confidence and willingness to take risks. Similarly, Galvin et al., (2010) reported that narcissism can enhance individual performance through its positive effects on leadership, charisma, and decision-making abilities.

However, contrasting evidence highlights the potential downsides of narcissistic traits in professional settings. Braun, (2017) argued that narcissistic leaders may hinder performance due to poor decision-making, inefficient work processes, and inappropriate judgments. Supporting this view, Almatrooshi et al., (2016) emphasized that the negative relationship between narcissism and performance can be influenced by several moderating factors, including cognitive, affective, and motivational competencies, intergroup dynamics, task characteristics, and the individual's ability to manage work responsibilities. Building on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a negative relationship between narcissism and job performance.

Narcissism and Creativity

A growing body of research has demonstrated a positive association between narcissism and creativity. Narcissistic individuals often display elevated self-confidence, a propensity for risk-taking, and a desire for recognition all of which can foster creative thinking and innovation. For instance, Goncalo & Staw, (2006) and Goncalo et al. (2010) found that narcissistic leaders tend to generate more creative solutions in group contexts, owing to their willingness to challenge norms and assert novel ideas. Similarly, Raskin & Terry, (1988) suggested that narcissists are driven by a desire to be unique and admired, which motivates them to produce original and inventive ideas, thereby enhancing creativity in certain settings

Conversely, other studies highlight the potential negative consequences of narcissism on creativity. Narcissists may become overly focused on self-promotion and external validation, which can undermine collaborative processes and inhibit creative output. Chatterjee & Hambrick, (2007) for example, found that narcissistic leaders often alienate their team members, thereby suppressing group creativity. Furthermore, Zitek & Jordan, (2016) argued that narcissists' reluctance to accept criticism may impede creative development, as they tend to reject feedback that could lead to meaningful innovation. These conflicting findings suggest that the relationship between narcissism and creativity is likely contingent on contextual variables, such as the nature of the task and group dynamics. Based on the above review, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a negative relationship between narcissism and creativity.

Creativity and Job Performance

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of creativity on individual performance. Ribeiro et al., (2018) suggest that personal creativity enhances performance development within organizations. Similarly, Hur et al., (2021) indicate that creative employees contribute to improved organizational service quality by reducing error rates. Jnaneswar & Ranjit, (2022) argue that creative workers not only explore innovative approaches but also actively engage and embrace risk. Furthermore, Ismail et al., (2019) establish a connection between employee involvement, creativity, and performance, particularly within Lebanese companies.

Creativity plays a crucial role in enhancing both individual performance (Eissa et al., 2017) and overall organizational performance (Taboli & Zaerizadeh, 2016). Eschleman et al., (2014) found that creative activities can positively influence workplace behavior, both directly and indirectly, by alleviating issues such as fatigue and stress. Consistent with these findings, other research has shown that increased creativity leads to better employee performance, particularly in creative industries like graphic design firms. Drawing from this body of research, we propose that creativity generally exerts a positive influence on individual performance by fostering innovation, improving work quality, reducing errors, and enhancing employee engagement. Creativity enables employees to approach challenges in novel and effective ways, thereby contributing to superior work outcomes and, in turn, improved organizational performance. Based on this review, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between creativity and job performance.

Mediating Role of Creativity

Narcissism is often linked to enhanced creativity, which, in turn, can influence individual performance. Narcissistic individuals typically exhibit high self-confidence and a strong desire for recognition, traits that can drive creative thinking and innovative solutions. For instance, Goncalo & Staw, (2006) demonstrate that narcissistic individuals can significantly contribute to group creativity by challenging norms and proposing new ideas. The creativity generated by such individuals may mediate the positive relationship between narcissism and individual performance, as creative ideas often enhance performance across various work contexts.

However, the impact of narcissism on creativity is not universally positive and can be shaped by contextual factors. Research by Chatterjee & Hambrick, (2007) found that narcissistic leaders, overly focused on self-promotion, can inhibit group creativity by alienating team members and dismissing constructive feedback. In these situations, creativity may not fully mediate the negative effects of narcissism. Instead, it may serve to clarify how narcissism influences individual performance in a more nuanced and context-dependent manner. Based on this review, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₄: Creativity mediates the relationship between narcissism and faculty job performance.

Methods

This study employs a survey method to examine the connection between narcissism and job performance, using a quantitative approach and statistical analysis to elucidate the relationships among the variables. The study population consisted of lecturers from various universities in a major city in Indonesia. The convenience sampling method was utilized to select the participants who were available for the study. Out of 126 lecturers invited, 96 responded, resulting in a response rate of 76.2%. Invitations, including links to the questionnaire, were sent via email, and follow-up reminders were issued to confirm participation. This method proved to be highly efficient in reaching respondents swiftly and at a low cost (Dillman et al., 2016). Data collection took place between April 2024 and June 2024. Participants were assured of full anonymity to encourage honest responses in the survey. The data were gathered from academic staff at various universities in a major city in Indonesia.

In this study, scales were adapted from existing research to address the difficulties of creating new measures (Fowler Jr, 2013). A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate all items.

Narcissism was measured using the brief Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13) developed by Ackerman et al., (2011). This scale comprises three primary subdimensions that represent distinct aspects of narcissism: Leadership/Authority, illustrated by the item "I like having authority over people"; Grandiose Exhibitionism, as reflected in the statement "I like to be the center of attention"; and Entitlement/Exploitativeness, exemplified by the item "I find it easy to manipulate people."

Creativity was assessed using five items developed by Moulang, (2015), designed to capture the frequency and consistency of creative behaviors in the workplace. A sample item includes: "I regularly come up with creative ideas."

Lecturer job performance was measured using seven items adapted from Williams & Anderson, (1991), which reflect key dimensions of task-related performance. Sample items include: "Adequately completes assigned duties," "Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description," "Meets formal performance requirements of the job," and "Performs tasks that are expected."

This study involved 96 lecturers as participants. The demographic analysis revealed that 65% of the respondents were male, and the largest age group was between 30 and 40 years (41%). A substantial majority were married (85%), and 31% had between 6 and 10 years of professional experience. Furthermore, the vast majority of participants (84%) held a Master's degree, reflecting a relatively experienced and well-educated sample.

The measurement model was evaluated by examining convergent validity, internal consistency, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE), following the criteria proposed by Sarstedt et al., (2021), which recommend a minimum factor loading of 0.647 and an AVE of at least 0.50. As shown in Table 1, all measured items met these thresholds, indicating that the constructs demonstrated strong convergent validity.

Measurement Model

Variable	Loading	Alpha Cronbach	CR	AVE
Narcissism		0.832	0.871	0.596
NARC1 (I like having authority over people)	0.721			
NARC2 (I am assertive)	0.761			
NARC3 (I see myself as a good leader)	0.723			
NARC4 (I like to be the center of attention)	0.764			
NARC5 (I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public)	0.731			
NARC6 (I am apt to show off if I get the chance)	0.728			
NARC7 (I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me)	0.897			
Creativity		0.837	0.882	0.602
CR1 (I regularly come up with creative ideas)	0.773			
CR2 (I regularly experiment with new concepts and ideas)	0.857			
CR3 (I regularly perform tasks ingeniously)	0.775			
CR4 (I often get involved in solving problems intelligently and creatively)	0.908			
CR5 (I often generate new perspectives on old problems)	0.737			
Job Performance		0.893	0.915	0.610
JP1 (Adequately completes assigned duties)	0.756			
JP2 (Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description)	0.787			
JP3 (Meets formal performance requirements of the job)	0.707			
JP4 (Performs tasks that are expected of him/her)	0.896			
JP5 (Engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation)	0.909			

Variable	Loading	Alpha Cronbach	CR	AVE
JP6 (Neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform)	0.789			
JP7 (Fails to perform essential duties)	0.736			

Second, internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), as recommended by Fornell and Larcker, (1981). Table 1 illustrates that both Cronbach's alpha (α) and CR exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Sarstedt et al., 2021), confirming the constructs' reliability. Although the generally accepted minimum for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, some scholars find a value of 0.58 acceptable (Taber, 2018). A high alpha score, however, might not indicate unidimensionality but could suggest item redundancy.

Discriminant Validity

Variables	NARC	CR	JP
NARC	(0.705)	0.552	0.385
CR	0.478	(0.811)	0.559
JP	0.262	0.539	(0.792)

Note: The diagonal values (in parentheses) represent the square root of the AVE, the values below the diagonal indicate the correlations between variables, and the values above the diagonal represent the HTMT ratio

Third, discriminant validity was assessed by analyzing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). For discriminant validity to be adequate, the square root of the AVE for each variable must be greater than the correlations with other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the HTMT ratio should be below 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). As indicated in Table 2, both of these criteria have been met.

This present paper aims to assess the impact of narcissism on lecture performance, with creativity serving as a mediating role. Based on Figure 1, the research findings indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between narcissism and faculty creativity.

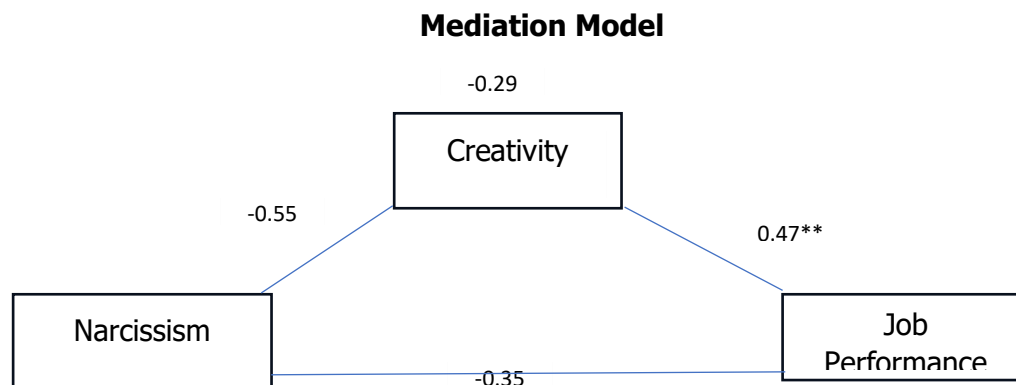
The path diagram presents the relationships among narcissism, creativity, and job performance. The results indicate, Firstly, the direct path from narcissism to job

performance was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < .05$), indicating that individuals higher in narcissism tend to exhibit lower levels of job performance. This finding supports the hypothesis (H1) that narcissism is detrimental to job performance.

Second, path analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between narcissism and lecutre creativity ($\beta = -0.55$, $p < .05$). This finding supports hypothesis 2 (23), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of narcissism tend to exhibit lower levels of creativity. This implies that narcissistic tendencies may hinder the generation of novel and original ideas, which are essential for creativity.

Thirdly, the direct path from creativity to job performance was positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.47^{**}$, $p < .01$), suggesting that creativity is a strong predictor of job performance. This aligns with the hypothesis (H3) that creativity is positively associated with job performance.

Fourth, creativity was found to partially mediate the relationship between narcissism and job performance. While narcissism had a direct negative effect on job performance, the indirect effect through creativity attenuated this relationship. This indicates that creativity can mitigate, to some extent, the negative impact of narcissism on job performance.



Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the intricate interplay between narcissism, creativity, and job performance, revealing that narcissism has a significant negative impact on both creativity and overall performance among academic staff. This aligns with prior research suggesting that although narcissistic individuals often exhibit confidence and a

desire for recognition, these traits can hinder collaborative engagement and creative problem-solving (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Narcissism's self-centered nature may obstruct teamwork and reduce the capacity for innovation, thus diminishing job performance. These results reinforce the conceptualization of narcissism as a double-edged trait—capable of driving assertiveness and leadership, yet often detrimental in environments requiring cooperation and original thought (Braun, 2017).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study draws on the resource-based view of creativity, which emphasizes the importance of personal and interpersonal resources such as openness, adaptability, and collaboration in fostering creativity (Amabile, 1996). Narcissistic tendencies, by prioritizing self-promotion and external validation, may deplete these resources, thereby limiting creative output. Additionally, role theory offers insight into the negative impact of narcissism on performance, positing that individuals must align with organizational expectations to be effective. Narcissists, by failing to integrate collective goals into their behavior, risk underperforming in professional roles (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

The mediating role of creativity found in this research is consistent with empirical literature linking creativity to improved job outcomes. Creativity supports innovation, adaptability, and effective problem-solving key drivers of job performance across sectors (Ribeiro et al., 2018). While narcissists may initially appear innovative due to their confidence and desire for attention, their long-term creative capacity is often constrained by a need for control and dominance, which stifles collaboration (Goncalo & Staw, 2006).

In practical terms, the findings offer valuable implications for human resource management. Organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of narcissism by implementing soft skills training that enhances emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Kram, 1988) and promotes self-awareness among employees. Incorporating psychometric assessments, such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Gentile et al., 2013), in recruitment processes can help identify candidates with narcissistic traits, particularly for team-based roles (Grijalva et al., 2015). Furthermore, adopting peer-assessment performance reviews and collective incentive systems may reduce unhealthy competition and foster a more collaborative workplace culture (Bush-Evans, 2020).

The study also supports recent research suggesting that creative engagement may act as a buffer against the detrimental aspects of narcissistic behavior. Creative tasks can

offer narcissistic individuals an alternative outlet for expression and achievement, potentially redirecting their energy toward constructive contributions (Eschleman et al., 2014). Thus, creating an innovation-driven environment may not only enhance overall organizational performance but also allow narcissistic employees to function more productively.

This research contributes to the literature by clarifying the role of narcissism in academic performance and offering strategies for mitigating its harmful effects. While prior studies often emphasized the leadership potential of narcissism, this study underscores its limitations in domains requiring sustained creativity and collaboration. The findings encourage the development of organizational cultures that prioritize creativity as a counterbalance to self-centered tendencies.

Nonetheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of the results, as the sample may not adequately reflect broader academic populations (Etikan et al., 2016; Scholtz, 2021). Future research could employ probability sampling techniques to enhance representativeness. Additionally, the study's focus on Indonesian university lecturers may limit its applicability across other professions or cultural contexts (Nurtjahjani et al., 2022). However, this population was selected due to its high demands for creativity in both teaching and research, making it a suitable context for exploring the relationship between narcissism and job performance (Amabile & Pratt, 2016 ; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The study's implications extend to other creativity-dependent professions, such as software development, advertising, and graphic design, where individual autonomy is central to performance. Creative work environments that allow for self-expression and psychological flexibility may help individuals with narcissistic or neurotic traits convert emotional sensitivity into productive outcomes (Tse, 2022 ; Alam, 2025). Furthermore, in collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where autonomy is intertwined with group responsibility, understanding how personality traits interact with cultural values is crucial for designing effective HR strategies (Hofstede, 2011; Moilanen et al., 2021).

Future research should explore the moderating effects of organizational culture and leadership style on the narcissism-creativity-performance nexus. Investigating these dynamics across diverse occupational fields and international contexts could deepen our

understanding of how narcissistic traits manifest in different environments. Moreover, intervention studies aimed at enhancing creativity and job autonomy among narcissistic individuals could offer actionable insights for improving organizational effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that narcissism exerts a significant negative effect on both creativity and job performance among academic staff. Furthermore, creativity partially mediates the relationship between narcissism and performance, suggesting that while narcissism may hinder performance, fostering creativity can mitigate some of its adverse effects. These findings reinforce the theoretical perspective that narcissism, while sometimes associated with leadership and confidence, often undermines collaboration and innovation qualities essential to high performance in academic settings.

Implications

Organizations, particularly academic institutions, should prioritize the development of creativity-enabling environments and implement soft skills training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence. Psychometric assessments during recruitment and team-based performance evaluations can be used to identify and manage narcissistic traits, thereby supporting more effective collaboration and sustained performance.

Limitation and Recommendations for Future Research

The study is limited by its use of convenience sampling, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample is confined to Indonesian university lecturers, which may not reflect dynamics in other cultural or occupational contexts. This context-specific focus, while theoretically justified, calls for caution in interpreting the results more broadly.

Future research should use probability-based sampling for better representativeness and include diverse professions and international settings. Examining moderating factors like organizational culture, leadership style, and job autonomy could enhance understanding of managing narcissistic traits. Intervention studies targeting creativity in narcissistic individuals are also recommended.

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