

Narcissistic Leadership and the Formation Process of Team Creativity: A Multi-Perspective Study

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Abstract

Leader narcissism is a pervasive phenomenon in organizations, and whether narcissistic leaders can effectively integrate team knowledge to foster innovation represents an unavoidable challenge for managers. Building on a review of existing research, this study employs three perspectives—the componential perspective, the process perspective, and the social network perspective—to comprehensively elucidate the influence of narcissistic leadership on team creativity. Specifically, the componential perspective emphasizes the critical role of individual creativity in forming team creativity, the process perspective underscores the indispensable nature of interactions among team members in the team creativity formation process, while the social network perspective focuses on members' relative positions and internal/external relationships. These three perspectives complement one another, clarifying the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity. The research conclusions will provide references for intervention strategies in teams with narcissistic leaders, and offer guidance for managers to enhance the effectiveness of narcissistic leadership's impact on teams.

Full Text

The Influence Mechanism of Narcissistic Leadership on Team Creativity Formation: A Multi-Perspective Study

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Abstract

Narcissistic leadership is a common phenomenon in organizations, yet whether

such leaders can effectively integrate team knowledge to foster innovation remains an unavoidable question for managers. Building on a review of existing research, this study adopts three perspectives—aggregation, process, and social network—to comprehensively clarify the influence of narcissistic leadership on team creativity. The aggregation perspective emphasizes the critical role of individual creativity in forming team creativity, the process perspective highlights the indispensable interactive effects among team members in this formation process, and the social network perspective focuses on members' relative positions and internal/external relationships. These three complementary perspectives elucidate the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity. The findings will provide reference for intervention strategies in teams with narcissistic leaders and help managers enhance the effectiveness of narcissistic leadership.

Keywords: narcissistic leadership; aggregation perspective; process perspective; social networks; team creativity

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1. Problem Statement

Team creativity is a crucial factor for enterprises to maintain competitive advantage and vitality in fierce market environments. Consequently, how to promote team creativity has attracted widespread attention from scholars and practitioners. Extensive research demonstrates that team creativity performance is closely linked to leadership style and traits (e.g., Zhang, Ou, Tsui, & Wang, 2017; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), as leaders control organizational resources and different leadership styles determine resource allocation and team performance. Interestingly, many leaders exhibit a common trait—narcissism—that becomes more pronounced after attaining high positions. Some scholars have even publicly stated that “narcissism is a prevalent culture among bosses” (Li, 2015). Experimental research shows that individuals with narcissistic traits easily rise to leadership positions in organizational competition (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011), giving rise to narcissistic leadership. Therefore, a pressing question emerges: How does narcissistic leadership affect team creativity?

Despite previous explorations of this relationship, findings remain severely inconsistent. For instance, Zhang et al. (2017) found that leaders simultaneously possessing humility and narcissism enhance their socialized charisma, thereby improving organizational innovation performance and culture. Gerstner et al. (2013) discovered that narcissistic CEOs are a vital force in overcoming resistance to technological change, promoting new technology implementation by increasing management attention. Additionally, Nevicka et al. (2011) noted that narcissistic leaders set grand goals that foster organizational innovation. Conversely, Abfalter (2013) examined leadership traits in performing arts teams—a context requiring extreme creative environments—and found through interviews that narcissism represents a dark trait for leaders in this field, as

narcissistic leaders stifle creative work and success. Eisenbeiß et al. (2013) argued that transformational leaders' narcissistic tendencies may increase subordinate dependency, thereby reducing creativity. These contradictory findings necessitate deeper analysis to clarify the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity and reveal its mechanisms and boundary conditions.

Existing research on team creativity has deconstructed its formation through three perspectives: aggregation, process, and social network. The aggregation perspective posits that individual creativity determines team creativity (Zhou & Hoever, 2014; Taylor & Greve, 2006), emphasizing employee creativity as the key factor influenced by leadership traits and behaviors. The process perspective stresses interactive effects among team members (Hoever, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2012), focusing on leaders' role in integrating knowledge and shaping climate. The social network perspective examines team creativity through a more systematic and interactive lens (Perry-Smith & Vittorio Mannucci, 2014), emphasizing individuals' relative positions and interaction patterns, where the alignment between leadership traits and network configuration becomes critical. While these perspectives show complementary and integrative trends, they may yield different conclusions.

Based on these different perspectives, the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity may vary. Under the aggregation perspective, the effect on employee creativity determines team creativity. Under the process perspective, does narcissistic leadership facilitate information absorption and integration, or the diffusion of individual creative ideas? Although narcissists' self-focus may cause them to neglect or even suppress team members' innovative ideas, the social network perspective suggests a different story. Research indicates that narcissistic leaders' impact correlates with relative distance: negative effects emerge when leaders are close to employees, while "charismatic" effects become more prominent at greater distances (Nevicka, Van Vianen, De Hoogh, & Voorn, 2018). Thus, narcissistic leadership may differentially affect employees at various network positions, producing different impacts on team creativity under different network conditions. To thoroughly examine this relationship and its mechanisms, this study integrates aggregation, process, and social network perspectives to comprehensively explore narcissistic leadership's influence on team creativity, revealing underlying mechanisms and critical boundary conditions to provide theoretical guidance for balancing its advantages and disadvantages.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Team Creativity Research

Team creativity originates from individual creativity. Like its individual counterpart, team creativity concerns novel and useful ideas about products, processes, or services (Amabile, 1988; Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999), but differs conceptually as it represents team-level cognition rather than individual cognition,

encompassing member interactions (Leenders, Van Engelen, & Kratzer, 2003; Hoever et al., 2012). Existing research has overemphasized individual creativity while neglecting team creativity (George, 2007). Scholars have explored team creativity formation through aggregation, process, and network perspectives, as shown in [Figure 1: see original paper].

The aggregation perspective views team creativity formation as an accumulation process where individual creativity determines team creativity. Higher individual creativity leads to higher team creativity, with individual contributions aggregating into collective creativity. For example, Pirola-Merlo and Mann (2004) noted that team creativity is the average or weighted average of member creativity at a given time. Following this logic, research has examined how team member characteristics and composition affect team creativity, with extensive debate on homogeneity versus heterogeneity. Hoever et al. (2012) found that heterogeneous teams are more creative during perspective analysis, while Smith et al. (2005) noted that functional heterogeneity facilitates knowledge creation. Conversely, De Wit (2012) suggested heterogeneity reduces team creativity. Ni et al. (2016) reconciled these contradictory views by proposing that only balanced heterogeneity positively affects team creativity. This research stream focuses on compositional models, where individual creativity determines team creativity while team characteristics, processes, and environment moderate this relationship. For instance, member diversity may cause conflict that reduces creativity, but transformational leadership (Shin & Zhou, 2007) and perspective acceptance (Hoever et al., 2012) can mitigate these negative effects.

While acknowledging individual creativity's importance, the aggregation perspective neglects member interactions. The process perspective argues that team processes and climate are indispensable for team creativity formation. Interactions may inspire creativity even when individual creativity is low, or generate conflict that prevents high creativity even when individual creativity is high. Team vision, participative safety, task orientation, and innovation support all predict creative performance (Agrell & Gustafson, 1994; West, 2002; Hülsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009; West & Anderson, 1996; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). Additionally, leadership support, team characteristics, work environment, and team climate significantly influence team creativity (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Taggar, 2002; Amabile et al., 1996).

The aggregation and process perspectives explain team creativity through "point" and "line" logic, while the social network perspective emphasizes relationships and structure, understanding formation through "surface" logic that complements the other two. Team social networks refer to structures formed by members with internal and external actors (Oh, Labianca, & Chung, 2006; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). This perspective emphasizes how internal/external relationship strength and relative network positions affect team creativity (George, 2007; Sosa, 2011; Leenders et al., 2003). For example, Uzzi and Spiro (2005) found an inverted U-shaped relationship between creative artists' "small-world networks" and musicals' artistic and financial performance.

Perry-Smith (2006) proposed that closeness centrality and external network connections jointly explain creativity. Individual creativity formation can be divided into idea generation, elaboration, support, and implementation stages, where beneficial relationships at one stage may harm another (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). While social network research on individual creativity is mature, research on team creativity remains exploratory, with scarce theoretical and empirical studies and inconsistent findings (Kratzer, Leenders, & Van Engelen, 2010; Wu & Cormican, 2016; Zhang, Zhang, & Wang, 2019).

Although aggregation and process perspectives have advanced team creativity research and increasingly integrate, they inadequately reveal formation mechanisms, particularly by disconnecting individuals from teams and failing to address why team creativity exceeds the sum of individual creativity. A comprehensive examination requires integrating aggregation, process, and social network perspectives.

2.2 Narcissistic Leadership Research

Narcissism research spans psychology, psychiatry, and social personality studies (Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011). In organizational behavior, scholars increasingly view narcissism as a normally distributed personality trait (Foster & Campbell, 2007). Narcissistic leadership emerges from this trait. De Vries and Miller (1985) first linked narcissism and leadership, categorizing narcissistic leaders as reactive, self-deceptive, or constructive. Reactive narcissistic leaders pursue self-advancement with little concern for harming others, are sensitive to criticism, and refuse to admit mistakes. Self-deceptive narcissistic leaders fear failure, listen to others, and make conservative decisions, but their perfectionism and hesitation may stall organizations. Constructive narcissistic leaders, confident in their abilities with strong judgment and goal orientation, represent the only positive type. Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) proposed that narcissistic leadership emerges when leaders' actions are driven by narcissistic needs such as grandiosity and power fantasies. Khoo and Burch (2008) and Resick et al. (2009) defined it as power exercised for personal purposes. Based on this literature, we define narcissistic leadership as a leadership style where leader behavior is influenced by narcissistic personality traits.

Due to narcissism's unique characteristics, narcissistic leadership differs from other types in self-concept/cognition, behavioral tendencies, and third-party perceptions. As shown in , in self-concept and cognition, narcissistic leaders have inflated self-concepts (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002), strong vanity (Ackerman et al., 2011), intense self-expression desires (Campbell et al., 2005), and a sense of power. However, their self-esteem and existence typically depend on others' attention and praise, making their self-esteem vulnerable to external interference and unstable (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). Behaviorally, narcissistic leaders are typically self-serving (Liu et al., 2017). They crave attention and praise while tolerating no criticism (Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017; Reilly, Doerr, & Chatman, 2018; Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004). Their inflated

self-concept creates a strong sense of entitlement, leading to knowledge suppression of others and complete self-affirmation (Ouimet, 2010). They also easily ignore external rules, creating high potential for management fraud (Rijsenbilt & Commandeur, 2013). In third-party perception, narcissistic leaders initially win favor but cannot sustain it over time (Wurst et al., 2017; Zhang, Ou, Tsui, & Wang, 2017), showing lack of empathy by disregarding others' interests and feelings (Back, Küfner, Dufner, & Rauthmann, 2013).

Research on narcissistic leadership effectiveness presents a mixed picture with both bright and dark sides. At the employee level, narcissistic leadership reduces organization-based self-esteem, negatively affecting helping and voice behaviors (Carnevale, Huang, & Harms, 2018); increases malicious envy, prompting counterproductive work behaviors against leaders (Braun, Aydin, Frey, & Peus, 2018); and increases turnover among lower-level managers (Resick et al., 2009). However, positive effects also exist: when combined with humility, narcissistic leadership enhances employee work engagement and performance (Owens et al., 2015). At the team level, narcissistic leadership negatively affects citizenship behavior and increases counterproductive behavior (Martin et al., 2016), yet produces positive outcomes when team goals align with leaders' personal goals (Nevecká, De Hoogh, et al., 2011). At the organizational level, CEO narcissism reduces the positive impact of corporate social responsibility on performance (Grijalva & Harms, 2014) and increases risk-taking expenditures (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Conversely, narcissistic CEOs are more likely to engage in acquisitions, alliances, and R&D projects related to new technology, while increasing management attention to new technology (Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013). Humble narcissistic CEOs can enhance socialized charisma and benefit innovation performance and culture. Overall, existing research focuses predominantly on individual-level effects, with limited team- and organization-level studies emphasizing destructive impacts, though some explore how narcissism combined with positive traits or contexts can trigger beneficial effects.

2.3 Theoretical Links and Review

Although team creativity and narcissistic leadership have been examined separately, the two research domains remain disconnected, with few studies directly testing their relationship. However, existing research and theoretical clues suggest intricate connections that urgently require empirical examination.

First, previous research has not deeply explored the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity. Existing narcissistic leadership studies concentrate on immediate supervisors' effects on individuals or CEO narcissism's organizational-level impacts, lacking investigation into team-level outcomes and mechanisms. Limited findings remain inconsistent: some scholars find that narcissistic leaders' confidence, charisma, and ambitious goals activate employee enthusiasm and overcome difficulties, benefiting team creativity (MacCoby, 2000; Tsai, Chi, Grandey & Fung, 2012; Gerstner et al., 2013). Others argue that narcissistic leaders' selfishness, self-focus, and knowledge suppression

hinder creative outcomes (Ouimet, 2010; Abfalter, 2013). Empirical research on this relationship can expand narcissistic leadership literature, clarify its connection with team creativity, deepen understanding of team creativity formation mechanisms, and further test narcissistic leadership effectiveness.

Second, the mediating mechanisms between narcissistic leadership and team creativity lack empirical exploration, particularly regarding positive mechanisms. Most research portrays narcissistic leadership as “dark,” though de Vries and Miller (1985) theoretically identified constructive narcissism. For example, Sosik et al. (2014) found that perceived constructive narcissism increases psychological empowerment and moral identity. Notably, recent research suggests narcissistic leaders affect internal versus external team members differently, as low leader visibility reduces negative effects (Neuvicka, Van Vianen, De Hoogh, & Voorn, 2018). Thus, leader narcissism may differentially impact internal and external processes: while dark sides may harm team processes, narcissistic leaders’ glamorous appearance, confident body language, and humorous speech (Back, Mainz, Schmukle, Egloff, & Mainz, 2010) may help them gain external support, absorb external resources, and promote team creativity.

Finally, team creativity differs from individual creativity, as members’ internal/external relationships and cooperation play vital roles. Combining social network perspective can more clearly reveal narcissistic leadership’ s influence processes and effects. As team “pacesetters,” leaders may be central network nodes or important “bridges” connecting internal and external networks, significantly shaping team social networks. Existing narcissistic leadership research focuses on “points” (individual creativity effects) and “lines” (team process effects) from individual psychology and behavior, whereas social network methods link “points” and “lines” as part of relational networks to more clearly depict “surface” effects. Therefore, examining structural network characteristics (Scott, 1988) to explore mechanisms and boundaries of narcissistic leadership’ s effect on team creativity represents important advancement for both leadership and team creativity research.

In summary, this study examines narcissistic leadership and team creativity from aggregation, process, and social network perspectives to reveal mechanisms and critical boundary conditions.

3. Research Framework

This study focuses on team creativity formation, exploring narcissistic leadership’ s key role from both leader and team member perspectives to inform organizational intervention strategies. Specifically, it aims to: (1) examine narcissistic leadership’ s effects on team creativity at both team and employee levels to resolve inconsistent findings; (2) open the “black box” of how narcissistic leadership affects team creativity, revealing influence mechanisms and enriching understanding of this relationship; and (3) explore intervention strategies to amplify advantages while reducing negative effects, providing theoretical and

empirical references.

Current team creativity research primarily adopts aggregation and process perspectives. Therefore, this study draws on these frameworks to theoretically link narcissistic leadership with team creativity, exploring mechanisms and boundary conditions. The overall framework is shown in [Figure 2: see original paper].

3.1 Study 1: The Influence Mechanism of Narcissistic Leadership on Team Creativity: An Aggregation Perspective

The aggregation perspective emphasizes that team creativity derives from aggregating individual employee creativity, making employee creativity levels directly determine team creativity. Leaders control resource allocation and information flow, so their characteristics and behaviors significantly affect employee psychology and behavior. Narcissistic leadership may thus influence employee creativity, thereby affecting team creativity. Based on social cognitive theory and self-determination theory, this section examines: How does narcissistic leadership relate to employee/team creativity? What are the underlying mechanisms? The research model appears in [Figure 3: see original paper].

(1) Relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity.

Previous research shows leaders are key factors affecting employee creativity (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017; Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015). Although no direct link between narcissistic leadership and employee creativity has been established, theoretical clues suggest connections. When creative behaviors receive attention and support, creativity may increase; when ignored or suppressed, it may decrease (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens, 2011). Narcissistic leadership may suppress employee creativity: while individual narcissism correlates positively with creativity (Raskin, 1980), narcissistic leaders—believing themselves superior—may focus on their own ideas while ignoring others'. Narcissists are self-centered, poor at understanding others' perspectives, and unreflective (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Exline et al., 2004), making them 难以接受他人创意. Interview research shows narcissism is undesirable in high-creativity-demand team leadership because it stifles members' creative work (Abfalter, 2013). Therefore:

Hypothesis 1a: Narcissistic leadership is negatively related to employee creativity.

The aggregation perspective suggests team creativity largely depends on individual creativity levels, calculable as average or weighted average member creativity (Pirola-Merlo & Mann, 2004). Gibson and Gibbs (2006) and Pearsall et al. (2008) used this averaging approach. Based on our analysis that narcissistic leadership negatively affects employee creativity, and given aggregation perspective's tenet that employee creativity averages determine overall team creativity:

Hypothesis 1b: Narcissistic leadership is negatively related to team creativity.

(2) Mediating roles of employee creative self-efficacy and intrinsic mo-

tivation. While aggregation scholars view employee creativity as the foundation of team creativity, they also emphasize team processes' influence. Taggar (2002) analyzed the individual-to-team creativity transformation, noting that individual characteristics (e.g., personality, values) and behaviors significantly affect this process. Leaders occupy important positions with resource allocation and voice rights, so different leadership traits inevitably affect the individual-team creativity relationship. Narcissistic leadership may influence employee creativity through two pathways.

First, **employee creative self-efficacy.** Narcissistic leadership may reduce employee creativity by lowering creative self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory posits that self-efficacy—individuals' cognition of their ability to complete tasks—influences subsequent behavior (Bandura, 1986; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Only with sufficient task efficacy can individuals complete tasks effectively. Creative self-efficacy refers to employees' belief in their ability to achieve innovation outcomes (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). According to Ouimet (2010), narcissistic leaders pursue self-influence, tend to suppress others to elevate themselves and gain honor, likely ignoring others' perspectives and negatively affecting employees' creative self-efficacy. Additionally, narcissistic leaders' knowledge suppression hinders employees' knowledge accumulation, undermining creative self-efficacy. Lower creative self-efficacy reduces employees' belief in completing creative work, undoubtedly decreasing creativity (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Therefore:

Hypothesis 1c: Employee creative self-efficacy mediates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and employee creativity. Specifically, narcissistic leadership reduces employee creativity by decreasing creative self-efficacy.

Second, **employee intrinsic motivation.** Narcissistic leadership may reduce employee creativity by diminishing intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory holds that individual motivation and personality are influenced by social environments, which can either enhance self-motivation or cause negative behaviors and attitudes. Supportive external environments better stimulate intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which associates with persistence, positively affects heuristic activities (Deci & Ryan, 2012), aids conceptual understanding (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and promotes creativity (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984). However, narcissistic leadership—typical controlling leadership (Matosic et al., 2017) lacking empathy and exploiting subordinates—may kill employee work autonomy, damaging intrinsic motivation (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thøgersen, 2011). Furthermore, Carnevale et al. (2018) found narcissistic leadership reduces belongingness, lowering team identification and suppressing intrinsic work motivation. Reduced intrinsic motivation decreases creativity (Amabile et al., 1996). Therefore:

Hypothesis 1d: Employee intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and employee creativity. Specifically, narcissistic leadership reduces employee creativity by decreasing intrinsic motivation.

3.2 Study 2: The Influence Mechanism of Narcissistic Leadership on Team Creativity: A Process Perspective

The process perspective posits that team creativity formation is determined by member interaction processes. For example, Gong et al. (2013) identified innovation-supportive climate as a crucial process for team creativity formation. Leadership significantly affects team behavioral processes. Therefore, based on narcissistic organizational identification theory, this section examines: How does narcissistic leadership affect team creativity by influencing team processes? The research model appears in [Figure 4: see original paper].

(1) Narcissistic leadership and team creativity. Although no direct test exists, literature suggests a controversial relationship. Some scholars argue that narcissistic leaders' confidence, charisma, and ambitious goals activate employee enthusiasm, overcome difficulties (Maccoby, 2000), and enhance team creativity (Tsai, Chi, Grandey & Fung, 2012). Gerstner et al. (2013) found narcissistic CEOs positively correlate with new technology implementation, reducing innovation barriers by increasing management attention. Conversely, others note that narcissistic leaders' selfishness, self-focus, and neglect of others damage team climate and cohesion (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Campbell et al., 2011), with Abfalter (2013) showing narcissistic leadership is unsuitable for creative teams. These contradictory conclusions likely stem from: (1) the richness of narcissistic leadership dimensions producing different process effects, and (2) contextual differences activating different trait behaviors and team processes. Therefore, we propose that the relationship depends on interactive processes and situational climate, and will not hypothesize a direct relationship here. Instead, we focus on mediating effects through team processes and moderating effects of team climate to establish connections.

(2) Mediating roles of leader creative self-efficacy and team creative process engagement. Narcissistic organizational identification theory provides the theoretical foundation. Narcissistic organizational identification occurs when individuals view their identity as central to organizational identity, incorporating organizational identity into personal identity (Galvin, Lange & Ashforth, 2015). Creative self-efficacy refers to confidence in one's innovative ability and outcomes (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Team creative process engagement refers to team members' participation in forms and processes related to creative activities (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Research shows narcissistic individuals are confident with high self-evaluation (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; John & Robins, 1994) and pursue praise and influence (Gerstner et al., 2013). Therefore, narcissistic leaders may demonstrate their creativity to gain team members' praise and recognition, potentially driving team creative process engagement and promoting team creativity. In other words, narcissistic leaders may promote team creativity by evaluating their creative abilities and driving creative processes. Narcissistic leaders rate their creativity highly, even when objectively unwarranted (Goncalo, Flynn, & Kim, 2010), demonstrating strong confidence in achieving innovation outcomes. Narcissistic organizational

identification theory indicates narcissists consider themselves central to organizational identity, attributing organizational achievements largely to themselves (Galvin et al., 2015). Seeking praise, when narcissistic leaders have high creative self-efficacy, they may drive team creative processes to gain recognition. Creative process engagement—comprising problem identification, information search/coding, and idea generation (Zhang & Bartol, 2010)—enhances cognitive abilities and attention to creative activities, facilitating creativity when members actively identify problems, gather information, and generate innovative ideas (Amabile, 1988). Research shows team creative process engagement is a key driver of team creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Therefore, despite narcissistic leaders’ “selfish” motives, their promotion of team creative processes may enhance team creativity:

Hypothesis 2a: Leader creative self-efficacy and team creative process engagement mediate the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity. Specifically, narcissistic leaders’ self-assessment of creative ability drives team creative process engagement, thereby enhancing team creativity.

(3) Moderating role of leader perceived organizational valuing of creativity. Narcissistic organizational identification leads individuals to see themselves as key organizational drivers, causing narcissists to seize opportunities to enhance their organizational status (Galvin et al., 2015). Perceived organizational valuing of creativity refers to individuals’ perception of organizational support and emphasis on innovation (Farmer, Tierney, & Kung-Mcintyre, 2003). When leaders perceive high organizational valuing of creativity, teams become competitive and leaders recognize innovation as an important performance metric. According to narcissistic organizational identification theory, narcissistic leaders will work hard for their teams, using them as tools for self-glorification and expansion (Galvin et al., 2015). With high perceived valuing, narcissistic leaders with creative self-efficacy will focus more on driving innovation development, building competitively innovative teams. High perceived valuing also increases risk tolerance and subordinate innovation fault tolerance, encouraging exploration of new methods and fostering team creativity encouragement, strengthening the relationship between leader creative self-efficacy and team creative process engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Conversely, with low perceived valuing, narcissistic leaders—overly self-interested (Huang, Krasikova & Harms, 2020)—will invest less energy in encouraging innovation, choosing other organizationally valued activities instead. For example, Shalley (1991, 1995) found that assigned creativity goals enhanced creative performance while assigned production goals reduced it. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2b: Leader perceived organizational valuing of creativity moderates the relationship between leader creative self-efficacy and team creative process engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when perceived valuing is high.

Narcissistic leaders’ inherent high creative self-efficacy may drive team creative process engagement and enhance team creativity. Research shows narcissistic

leaders rate their creativity and performance highly (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; John & Robins, 1994), seeking distinctiveness and innovation. As organizational leaders, narcissists generalize this self-concept to their teams (Galvin et al., 2015), expecting innovation and driving creative process engagement. Henker et al. (2015) found employee creative process engagement effectively enhances individual creativity, while team-level engagement aggregates individual perspectives and experiences (To, Herman, & Ashkanasy, 2015), promoting collective creative cognition and positively affecting team creativity (Amabile, 1988). Therefore, team creative process engagement effectively enhances team creativity. Narcissists are results-oriented and self-interested (Huang, Krasikova & Harms, 2020), and leader performance typically links to team performance. Thus, when narcissistic leaders perceive high organizational valuing of creativity, they will more vigorously drive innovation for self-interest, strengthening the positive indirect effect on team creativity through creative self-efficacy and process engagement. Conversely, low perceived valuing reduces motivation to drive innovation, weakening this indirect effect. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2c: Leader perceived organizational valuing of creativity moderates the indirect relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity, such that the positive indirect effect through creative self-efficacy and team creative process engagement is stronger when perceived valuing is high.

3.3 Study 3: The Influence Mechanism of Narcissistic Leadership on Team Creativity: A Social Network Perspective

Compared to traditional perspectives, social network analysis compensates for excessive static limitations, reflecting team internal behavior from a more holistic and interactive viewpoint. Since its proposal, social network theory has attracted widespread scholarly attention in management research (Burt, Kilduff, & Tasselli, 2013). Research shows leader traits and behavioral tendencies significantly affect intra-team and external network relationships and structures (Zhang & Peterson, 2011; Friedrich, Griffith, & Mumford, 2016). Therefore, narcissistic leadership may also affect team performance through social networks. While Studies 1 and 2 examine narcissistic leadership from aggregation and process perspectives within team boundaries, this section draws on leader distance theory to examine from a social network perspective: How does narcissistic leadership affect team creativity by influencing external social network relationships? The research model appears in [Figure 5: see original paper].

(1) Mediating role of team external network relationships. Team external relationships refer to connection quantities between team members/leaders and external stakeholders. More external network relationships provide greater access to social information and resources (Yoo, Reed, Shin, & Lemak, 2009; Carpenter & Westphal, 2001; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997). Narcissistic leadership may enhance team creativity by promoting external network relationships. First, research shows narcissistic leaders possess superior social skills and deception, excelling at impression management and thus having personal charisma

(Ouimet, 2010; Huang & Li, 2014), though this charm rapidly fades as others understand their true nature (Higgs, 2009). Natural barriers between teams and external actors create information asymmetry, causing external parties to perceive mainly narcissistic leaders' surface charm, which greatly facilitates external network formation. Second, leaders symbolize and represent teams; narcissistic leaders' "boasting" may create promotional effects, potentially increasing team external attractiveness. Third, leaders serve as role models; narcissistic leaders may "cultivate" narcissistic subordinates who, like their leaders, can display personal charisma externally, increasing members' external network relationships. Research shows external network relationships provide heterogeneous information, avoiding homogenization and effectively promoting team creativity (Tang, 2014). External network relationships also symbolize social capital, bringing diverse resource support—established as a key factor in team creativity (Chen, Chang, & Hung, 2008; Han, Han & Brass, 2014). Therefore:

Hypothesis 3a: Team external network relationships mediate the relationship between narcissistic leadership and team creativity. Specifically, narcissistic leadership enhances team creativity by promoting external network relationships.

(2) Moderating role of leader boundary-spanning behavior. Leader distance theory suggests followers' leader image perception relates to leader-subordinate distance. Greater social distance prevents followers from obtaining detailed leader information, simplifying leader cognition (Shamir, 1995). Recent research shows leader visibility is one aspect of leader distance: lower visibility increases perceived leader effectiveness (Nevicka et al., 2018). To explain why narcissistic leaders' boundary-spanning behavior benefits external networks, we draw on leader distance theory.

Leader boundary-spanning behavior refers to continuous interactive actions aimed at establishing connections with external stakeholders to achieve goals (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992), including ambassador, task coordination, and scanning behaviors. Boundary-spanning activities are distinguished from internal team activities by team boundaries (Xue, 2010). External interaction time is brief relative to total work time, and narcissistic leaders' strong impression management skills (Back et al., 2010), social adeptness, and external charisma (Ouimet, 2010) are amplified in boundary-spanning activities, increasing team attractiveness and maintaining good external network relationships (Korschun, 2015). When leaders engage in more boundary-spanning behavior, narcissistic leaders' advantages in maintaining short-term relationships manifest, earning more external goodwill (Campbell & Campbell, 2009), enhancing team external attractiveness, and facilitating external network formation (Kempe, Kleinberg, & Tardos, 2003, August). More boundary-spanning also exposes leaders to external cultures and additional knowledge/resources (Teigland & Wasko, 2003), which they transmit internally, enhancing members' knowledge and insights and strengthening external networks. Conversely, less boundary-spanning increases internal activity time, constraining leader-external communication and amplify-

ing narcissistic leaders' internal harms (Nevicka et al., 2018), hindering external network expansion. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3b: Leader boundary-spanning behavior moderates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and external network relationships, such that the positive relationship is stronger when boundary-spanning behavior is high.

Narcissistic leaders' external network relationships may affect team creativity formation. Research shows external network relationships closely link to team creativity by increasing diverse information intake, avoiding homogenization, and providing resource support (Tang, 2014; Chen, Chang, & Hung, 2008; Han, Han & Brass, 2014). Narcissistic leaders' strong self-promotion abilities (Ackerman et al., 2011) effectively enhance team external image, promote external network relationships, and thereby boost team creativity (Yoo, Reed, Shin, & Lemak, 2009). When narcissistic leaders engage in more boundary-spanning activities, they bring more external relationships, promoting team creativity. Conversely, with less boundary-spanning, narcissistic leaders' advantages cannot manifest, external network relationships fail to form, and teams become isolated from external resources and information, hindering creativity. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3c: The interaction between narcissistic leadership and leader boundary-spanning behavior enhances team creativity through team external network relationships.

4. Theoretical Construction

Team creativity is key to enhancing core competitiveness and promoting team development. Literature review reveals research trends shifting from individual traits to key individual traits, and from internal to external processes. Team leaders are critical figures with substantial impact on team performance, and narcissistic leaders constitute a considerable proportion in organizations. Although narcissism is long-established, narcissistic leadership research is emerging. Despite its prevalence, no consensus exists on its effects. This project focuses on narcissistic leadership, examining its intervention and orientation effects on team creativity formation through aggregation and internal process perspectives, then adopting social network perspective to shift from internal to external processes for a more comprehensive exploration.

This study examines team creativity formation from leader and team member perspectives to inform organizational intervention strategies. First, it explores narcissistic leadership' s effects on team creativity at team and employee levels to resolve inconsistent findings. Second, it opens the "black box" of narcissistic leadership' s influence on team creativity, revealing mechanisms and enriching understanding of this relationship. Third, it explores intervention strategies to amplify advantages while reducing negative effects, providing theoretical and

empirical references. Based on this framework, three modules investigate narcissistic leadership and team creativity relationships.

Study 1 adopts an aggregation perspective, drawing on social cognitive and self-determination theories to propose that narcissistic leadership inhibits employee creativity by reducing creative self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, thereby affecting team creativity and revealing individual-level effects. Study 2 adopts a process perspective, using narcissistic organizational identification theory to propose that narcissistic leaders integrate self-concept into organizational concept (Galvin et al., 2015), driving member creative interaction and positively affecting team creativity. Study 3 adopts a social network perspective, using leader distance theory to propose that narcissistic leaders' charisma and external impression management help expand external network relationships, affecting social and information resources and thereby influencing team creativity. These three perspectives complement each other, examining narcissistic leadership-team creativity relationships from positive and negative aspects and proposing boundary conditions.

This study extends existing research in several ways. First, narcissistic leadership and team creativity are relatively independent research domains with insufficiently revealed relationships and controversial conclusions, partly because previous studies haven't carefully distinguished team creativity research perspectives. This study connects narcissistic leadership with team creativity through three perspectives—aggregation, process, and social network—to comprehensively reveal their relationship. Different perspectives may reveal narcissistic leadership playing different roles with different effects on team creativity. Examining mechanisms from three perspectives can comprehensively open the “black box” and enhance understanding.

Second, this study reveals narcissistic leadership' s influence mechanisms on team creativity based on different theoretical foundations. Previous research primarily used social exchange and trait activation theories, yielding mostly “negative” conclusions about destructive effects (Braun et al., 2018; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). This study draws on self-determination theory, social cognitive theory, narcissistic organizational identification theory, leader distance theory, and social network theory to reveal narcissistic leadership' s role in affecting team creativity. This approach simultaneously reveals positive and negative aspects across different theoretical perspectives, providing a more comprehensive reflection of narcissistic leadership' s effects and contributing to fuller understanding of its effectiveness.

Finally, this study explores boundary conditions of narcissistic leadership' s effects on team creativity. According to contingency theory, narcissistic leadership effects vary across situations (Liu, Chiang, Fehr, Xu & Wang, 2017). Previous boundary condition research is limited, with scholars calling for further exploration (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Nevicka et al., 2018) because boundary conditions can better guide practical interventions. Therefore, this study examines boundary conditions from organizational emphasis on innovation and

external processes across different theoretical perspectives, helping organizations leverage narcissistic leadership advantages while avoiding disadvantages to guide management practice.

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LI Mingze: Developed research ideas, designed research framework; wrote, revised, and finalized the manuscript.

YE Huili: Discussed research framework; wrote and revised the manuscript.

ZHANG Guanglei: Discussed research framework; revised and finalized the manuscript.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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