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When grandiose meets vulnerable: narcissism and well-being in the organizational context

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In this article, we explore the implications of vulnerable narcissism in an organizational context, particularly with regard to work-related well-being and leader–follower interactions. We tested whether employees' vulnerable narcissism affects their work engagement and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, we examined whether leaders' grandiose narcissism impacts such as working relationships. We used job demands-resources theory in order to derive our hypotheses at the intra- and inter-individual level. **Method:** Multi-level analyses in a sample of 235 followers in 71 teams confirmed some of our hypotheses. **Results:** We demonstrate that vulnerable narcissism is positively related to followers' emotional exhaustion and negatively related to work engagement. Moreover, leaders' grandiose narcissism exacerbates the negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement. **Conclusions:** Our results indicate that the various facets of narcissism play an important role in an organizational context and suggest that vulnerable narcissism in particular, which has been largely neglected in previous research, is an important determinant of work-related well-being. Further, we form a holistic understanding of the leadership process by emphasizing the interaction between leaders' and followers' personalities, adding to the leadership literature by integrating leader and follower characteristics.

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Narcissism in an organizational context has received increased research attention over the past few decades (see Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011 for a review). The introduction of short instruments to measure levels of narcissism in healthy subjects, as opposed to clinical populations (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Hendin & Cheek, 1997), has amplified this development. Most organizational research has examined narcissism in relation to leadership, performance, or counterproductive work behaviours to discover both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015).

On the one hand, narcissists are perceived as charismatic and visionary, emerge more easily as leaders, possess public persuasiveness, and demonstrate good crisis management (Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & Mclwain, 2011; Watts et al., 2013). They receive higher compensation (O'Reilly, Doerr, Caldwell, & Chatman, 2014) and demonstrate high task performance, especially under conditions of high reward interdependence (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011). On the other hand, narcissism has been related to low levels of integrity and contextual, interpersonal performance, as well as workplace deviance (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In part, these controversial findings can be attributed to the multifaceted nature of this personality trait, consisting of grandiosity-exhibitionism and vulnerability-sensitivity (Wink, 1991). Further, the link between narcissism and performance seems to depend on the respective context (i.e., task vs. interpersonal performance).

In the interpersonal domain, narcissistic characteristics play an important role in shaping relationships (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006). The sense of entitlement, lack of interest in personal relationships (Carroll, 1987), and strong emotional reactivity (Meier & Semmer, 2013; Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) are likely to cause (interpersonal) difficulties in work settings. In this article, we examine the direct and interaction effects of leaders' and followers' narcissism on followers' work-related well-being.

Few studies have examined the effects of narcissism on work-related well-being. This may be due to the fact, that organizational researchers have focused on grandiose narcissism, while vulnerable narcissism has been largely ignored (see Watts et al., 2013 for an exception). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share an enhanced sense of entitlement, antagonism (Miller et al., 2011), and low levels of agreeableness (Miller et al., 2017). However, they have different self-concepts. Vulnerable narcissists tend towards low levels of self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and incompetence (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991), whereas the relationship between grandiose narcissism and self-esteem is more complex (Zeiger-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008). Upon examining the Big Five personality traits underlying the two manifestations, grandiose narcissists could best be described as disagreeable extroverts, whereas vulnerable narcissists would be disagreeable neurotics (Miller et al., 2017). Narcissistic vulnerability has been linked to burnout and depression in both clinical (Schwarzkopf et al., 2016; Tritt, Ryder, Ring, &

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Pincus, 2010) and non-clinical samples (Sandage, Jankowski, Bissonette, & Paine, 2016). However, studies examining vulnerable narcissism in an organizational context are missing.

Besides adding evidence for a negative relationship between vulnerable narcissism and employees' well-being on the intraindividual level, we will further argue that, grandiose narcissism has an impact on *others'* well-being. As vulnerable narcissism is related to lower self-esteem, and well-being, and leader's stress has been shown to be an antecedent of abusive supervisory behaviour (cf., Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013), one might also expect detrimental effects of leader's vulnerable narcissism on their team-members. As vulnerable narcissists seek more reassurance, and relational security, they are probably not prone to show abusive behaviours in a leadership position: Whereas grandiose narcissism is strongly positively related to competitiveness ($r = .48$), vulnerable narcissism was loosely negatively related to being competitive ($r = -.16$) in a study by Luchner, Houston, Walker, and Houston (2011). In addition, vulnerable narcissism is not related to proactive aggression, whereas grandiose narcissism has a strong positive relationship to proactive aggression (Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010). Therefore, we will only formulate hypotheses concerning the effects of leader's grandiose narcissism on followers' exhaustion and work engagement. Nevertheless, we will also empirically test the potential effects of leader's vulnerable narcissism.

Our study lies at the intersection of individual differences, interpersonal interaction, and organizational health research. Based on the Job-Demand Resources Model (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), we argue that leaders' personalities can constitute a demand. Leadership behaviour has been formally integrated in the JD-R model and suggested to influence job demands, as well as job and personal resources of followers (Schaufeli, 2015), and in turn work engagement, as well as strain. More specifically, we examine if individual differences in vulnerable narcissism affect emotional exhaustion and work engagement. By examining the effects of leaders' grandiose narcissism on followers' exhaustion and engagement, we test, whether leaders' personality constitutes a social demand of followers' work.

Our study offers several theoretical and practical contributions. We replicate and extend past research on narcissism in an organizational context. First, by focusing on vulnerable narcissism, we emphasize the relevance of this facet of narcissism in work settings and answer calls for the consideration of the multifaceted nature of narcissism in organizational research (Campbell et al., 2011; Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Second, by including work engagement as an outcome variable, we explore the role of vulnerable narcissism in motivational processes, while previous research has focused on the health-hampering effects (e.g., depression and burnout). Further, by introducing leaders' levels of grandiose narcissism as a moderator, we demonstrate the strong interpersonal implications of narcissism at work. Finally, our results offer advice for occupational health management and personnel development practices.

Different facets of narcissism

Sub-clinical narcissism can be understood as a continuum (Foster & Campbell, 2007) within the normal range of individual

differences and should be distinguished from clinical, categorical approaches (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The distinction between sub-clinical and clinical levels of narcissism lies mainly in the consequences for the affected individual. Clinical narcissism causes "functional impairment or subjective distress" (American Psychiatric Association), which does not apply for sub-clinical narcissism. We, therefore, apply the sub-clinical definition of narcissism throughout this article.

Two independent dimensions of narcissism exist: grandiosity-exhibitionism and vulnerability-sensitivity (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991), also referred to as grandiose and vulnerable, or overt and covert narcissism. It has been shown that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism have different correlates and should be measured as distinct from each other (Hendin & Cheek, 1997). Grandiose narcissism is related to self-assuredness, aggression, self-enhancement, dominance, and exhibitionism. It can be divided in seven further sub-dimensions, including: authority, exhibitionism, superiority, vanity, exploitativeness, entitlement, and self-sufficiency (Raskin & Terry, 1988). These traits have also been clustered in the three factors: leadership/authority, grandiose exhibitionism, and entitlement/exploitativeness (Ackerman et al., 2011). Conversely, vulnerable narcissism is associated with low self-esteem, sensitivity, and feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. Both forms share a sense of entitlement, exploitative behaviour, antagonism, and low levels of agreeableness (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991).

Both vulnerable and grandiose narcissism can be explained to a certain extent by their respective underlying Big Five personality traits. Specifically, vulnerable narcissism is characterized by high neuroticism and low agreeableness, and grandiose narcissism is characterized by high extraversion and low agreeableness (Miller et al., 2017). While vulnerable narcissism is related to other personality factors, particularly neuroticism and agreeableness, measuring this construct solely via broad personality traits would not adequately reflect its' complexity (Miller et al., 2017). It is the specific combination of high neuroticism, low agreeableness, as well as complex relationships with self-esteem that constitute vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2017). It is important to note here, that vulnerable narcissism cannot be equated with a fragile self-esteem (Bosson et al., 2008). The self-esteem of vulnerable narcissists appears to be contingent on a broad array of outside sources (e.g., physical appearance, outdoing others in the competition, academic performance, others' approval, family love and support, and being a virtuous person), and thus depends on external validation (Zeiger-Hill et al., 2008). The self-esteem of grandiose narcissists, while contingent on outdoing others in competition, is unrelated or even negatively related to domains revolving around others' approval (Zeiger-Hill et al., 2008).

The multifaceted nature of narcissism has not always been considered in previous studies, particularly within an organizational context. Here, the bulk of research has focused on grandiose narcissism (Campbell et al., 2011), primarily examining its effects on leadership emergence and effectiveness (Grijalva et al., 2015). Findings regarding grandiose narcissism in organizational settings have shown positive relationships with crisis management, public persuasiveness, agenda-setting (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, & Ten Velden, 2013; Watts et al., 2013), impression management (Back, Schmukle,

& Egloff, 2010), leadership emergence (Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011), and compensation (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Further, grandiose narcissistic leaders tend to set ambitious goals and make bold decisions, which is however unrelated to the quality of their decision-making (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). On the other hand, grandiose narcissism has been linked to low integrity, interpersonal performance (Blair et al., 2008; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), contextual performance, and more deviant behaviour at work (Judge et al., 2006). In the context of occupational health, vulnerable narcissism offers valuable explanations for individual well-being and may be better suited as a predictor than the grandiose manifestation.

Narcissism and work-related well-being

The inclusion of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, V* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), and the statement "only [...] when these traits cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress do they constitute NPD." (p. 672) particularly implies a negative relationship between narcissistic traits and individual well-being. This is supported by findings relating pathological narcissism to depression (Tritt et al., 2010) and burnout (Barnett & Flores, 2016; Schwarzkopf et al., 2016).

However, in the context of *sub-clinical* narcissism, this relationship is sometimes reversed. Here, grandiose narcissism has been positively related to dispositional and daily well-being and negatively related to dispositional and daily measures of sadness, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and neuroticism (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). Furthermore, adaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism (e.g., a positive self-image) have been negatively correlated with depression and anxiety, whereas maladaptive aspects (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness) showed positive correlations (Watson & Biderman, 1993).

Constructs related to narcissists' self-concept, i.e., self-esteem (Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004), self-compassion (Barnett & Flores, 2016), and differentiation of the self (Sandage et al., 2016), have been found to mediate relationships between narcissism and well-being. While grandiose narcissism has been associated with higher self-esteem and well-being (Sedikides et al., 2004), vulnerable narcissism has been associated with lower self-esteem and well-being (Rose, 2002). The negative role of vulnerable narcissism is further emphasized by a study that identified (pathological) narcissistic vulnerability as a predictor of depression and anxiety, whereas (pathological) grandiosity was unrelated to those outcomes (Tritt et al., 2010). Overall, the evidence indicates the positive effects of grandiose and negative effects of vulnerable narcissism on individuals' psychological health (Miller et al., 2011). As such, our first two hypotheses revolve around the intra-personal effects of vulnerable narcissism in an organizational context.

Vulnerable narcissism and emotional exhaustion

Since we are examining sub-clinical levels of narcissism, we expected a somewhat weaker effect on individual health, as would be the case in a clinical population. To match the severity of predictor and outcome, we chose emotional exhaustion as an outcome variable. Emotional exhaustion is a primary

indicator of job burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 1993), and while positively related to depression, emotional exhaustion is tied specifically to the organizational context (Leiter & Durup, 1994).

Considering the central role of the narcissistic self-concept and self-regulation in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and well-being (Rose, 2002), we expect vulnerable narcissism to be an important predictor of emotional exhaustion. Vulnerable narcissists have a fragile sense of self-esteem, which heavily depends on external validation (Zeiger-Hill et al., 2008). Further, they are prone to hostile attribution bias, which leads them to interpret their environment, including neutral situations, to their disadvantage (Dodge, 1980; Miller et al., 2011). Thus, in an effort to achieve or protect a positive sense of self, vulnerable narcissists engage in cognitive-affective strategies of social-comparison, which are likely to result in (emotional) setbacks. The accumulation of these negative experiences over time will likely lead to emotional exhaustion (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). Our first hypothesis reads:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Followers' vulnerable narcissism is positively related to their emotional exhaustion.

Vulnerable narcissism and work engagement

While emotional exhaustion is a state of depletion and fatigue, work engagement is a positive, work-related state of vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002) as well as an indicator of work-related well-being (Rothbard & Shefali, 2012).

There remains a lack of empirical evidence linking vulnerable narcissism to work-related well-being in the literature. Few findings relating *grandiose* narcissism to work engagement exist, however these are somewhat varied. While grandiose narcissism has been positively related to work engagement (Andreassen, Ursin, Eriksen, & Pallesen, 2012) in one study, it has also been discovered to moderate the negative relationship between incivility and work engagement (Chen et al., 2013), thus indicating that grandiose narcissists more readily disengage from their work. The reason behind such findings is likely due to the valence grandiose narcissists attribute to their work, as well as the experience of their work environment. If their work environment enables them to maintain a positive self-view or even enhance their self-image, they are likely to invest in it in the form of engagement (Chen et al., 2013). However, if this is not the case, due to unfavourable circumstances such as uncivil treatment, they detach their sense of self from their work (Chen et al., 2013).

We believe that vulnerable narcissism may be more significant in predicting individuals' work-related well-being than grandiose narcissism. Findings of negative relationships between narcissistic vulnerability and mental health (Sandage et al., 2016; Schwarzkopf et al., 2016; Tritt et al., 2010) support this assumption.

Alongside these empirical findings, theoretical considerations based on the nature of vulnerable narcissism lead us to propose a negative relationship between vulnerable narcissism and work engagement. The workplace can be a source to fulfil vulnerable narcissists' craving for external validation (e.g., praise from superiors, promotion, public presentations). As previously described,

however, the biased perception associated with narcissistic vulnerability (Miller et al., 2011) and the dependency on external validation (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) combined with a low sense of self-efficacy (Miller et al., 2011) make it unlikely that vulnerable narcissists derive satisfaction from work and reach a state of vigour, dedication, and absorption. We particularly believe that the dependency on external validation, which is rooted in the contingent self-worth of vulnerable narcissists (Zeiger-Hill et al., 2008), is a main aspect driving the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and engagement. Dysfunctionally high-performance standards that remain constantly unattainable, coupled with a lack of expected recognition from others, make it unlikely for vulnerable narcissists to experience satisfaction and engagement.

Analogous to H1a, we argue that vulnerable narcissists' negative self-evaluations disrupt the motivational process. More specifically, we expect that the dissonance vulnerable narcissists experience between their expected and perceived performance, combined with low efficacy, diminishes vulnerable narcissists' work-related well-being (i.e., work engagement):

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): Followers' vulnerable narcissism is negatively related to their work engagement.

Interpersonal implications of narcissism

As narcissism has strong implications for interpersonal interactions (Campbell et al., 2011; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), we deemed it important to add an interpersonal layer to our investigation. In particular, we examine how leaders' *grandiose* and followers' *vulnerable* narcissism interact to affect followers' work-related well-being. We chose to examine the interaction between leaders and followers rather than between peers, as the leader–follower relationship, characterized by mutual dependencies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), is of particular importance for followers (Bono & Yoon, 2012). Furthermore, leaders can play a strong role in shaping followers' self-concepts (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999), a crucial factor to be considered when examining (vulnerable) narcissism in relation with well-being (e.g., Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004).

We chose to introduce leaders' *grandiose* narcissism as a moderator for several reasons. First, the relationship between grandiose narcissism and leadership emergence is well established (Grijalva et al., 2015). This entails a practical relevance, as followers are likely to be confronted with leaders possessing grandiose narcissistic traits. It may further be speculated whether vulnerable narcissism hinders leadership emergence, although this assumption cannot be currently substantiated due to a lack of empirical evidence. Second, grandiose narcissism has been related to positive as well as negative indicators of leadership and leadership performance in many instances (e.g., Judge et al., 2006), whereas vulnerable narcissism has not (e.g., Watts et al., 2013). Because low self-esteem and well-being have been shown to be positively related to abusive supervision, and vulnerable narcissism is negatively related to well-being, one might expect a detrimental effect of leaders' vulnerable narcissism on their team-members. However, empirical evidence suggests vulnerable narcissism to be unrelated to proactive aggressive behaviour, making such a relationship unlikely.

Finally, the relationship between grandiose narcissistic leaders and their followers has previously been described as parental (Blair et al., 2008; Conger & Kanungo, 1998), which is an interesting angle considering that vulnerable narcissists may seek approval and validation from their superiors (in a childlike manner). We believe the combination of leader grandiosity and follower vulnerability to be particularly harmful to followers' work-related well-being.

As described in the introduction of this article, we draw on JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) to explain the interpersonal effects of vulnerable narcissism. Previous studies have demonstrated that a positive relationship between leaders and followers is positively related to followers' work-related well-being (Bono & Yoon, 2012). In line with JD-R theory, leaders are a social aspect of followers' jobs and can, depending on their behaviour and level of support, constitute a job demand or resource for them (Schaufeli, 2015). Upon reviewing the literature on narcissistic leadership with a focus on grandiose narcissism, it becomes evident that leaders with grandiose narcissistic traits more likely pose a job demand than a resource for their followers, especially in the long term.

There may be positive aspects to being part of a grandiose narcissist's team. Especially, at first sight, leaders with grandiose narcissistic traits will appeal to followers (e.g., Back, Schmuckle & Egloff, 2010) and impress them with their charisma and visionary thinking (Watts et al., 2013). Further, grandiose narcissists are likely to set ambitious goals for their teams, and achieve above-average results through their bold decision-making. These aspects of narcissistic leaderships should specifically attract vulnerable narcissists, who are constantly looking for a way to enhance and validate their fragile self-esteem. Being part of an apparently successful team lead by someone, who makes a big impression on others, is driven to achieve grandiose visions, and most likely good-looking (i.e., a grandiose narcissist, cf., Back et al., 2010), is seen as an opportunity to enhance the vulnerable self-worth in several domains (Zeiger-Hill et al., 2008). Thus, vulnerable narcissists develop great expectations towards their leaders with regard to competence, approval, and support.

As long as the team is performing well, this is likely to work out and might even result in exceptional performance results. However, as soon as team performance falls short of the grandiose narcissists' expectations, no matter whether this is due to their own risk-taking (e.g., Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), or an external factor, they are bound to turn against their followers. Grandiose narcissism in leaders has been negatively related to integrity, interpersonal performance (Blair et al., 2008; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), contextual performance, and positively related to workplace deviance (Judge et al., 2006). The antagonistic and aggressive behaviour associated with grandiose narcissists (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991), and their tendency to use social interactions as a means to self-enhance at the cost of others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; Sporer, 2002), likely poses a challenge or demand in everyday interactions. Vulnerable narcissists, despite seeking social reassurance, are less likely to show overt aggressive behaviours (Fossati et al., 2010). We therefore only expect grandiose narcissism to moderate the relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their well-being.

The derogatory behaviour that grandiose narcissistic leaders are likely to display in the long term, especially when confronted with failure, is likely to impair followers' health (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper & Almeda, 2012), in particular, if they are vulnerable narcissists. Their inherently threatened self-worth makes them susceptible to any form of implicit or explicit aggression by their leaders. While a more confident follower might analyse the situation and engage in adaptive coping (e.g., cognitive reframing or leaving the situation), the vulnerable narcissists will feel deeply hurt, personally devalued and disappointed. Furthermore, as vulnerable narcissism has been associated with reduced forgiveness (Sandage et al., 2016), one negative incident may be enough for the leader-follower relationship to decline inexorably.

As postulated in the previous hypotheses, we expect followers' vulnerable narcissism to be negatively related to work engagement and positively related to emotional exhaustion. Moreover, we expect that leaders' grandiose narcissism is a social aspect of followers' jobs, characterized by challenging interactions, and thus posing a job demand that will amplify the detrimental relationships between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their emotional exhaustion (H1a):

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): The positive relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their emotional exhaustion is stronger (becomes more positive) when leaders score high on grandiose narcissism.

We expect a similar pattern to emerge when examining the implications of leader and follower narcissism on followers' work engagement. The negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement, is moderated by the job demand of having to interact with a grandiose narcissistic leader. This hinders the already weak motivational process (H1b) even further. We expect:

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): The negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement is stronger (becomes more negative) when leaders score high on grandiose narcissism.

Method

We tested our hypotheses in leader-follower teams in different organizations. Our selection criterion was direct, regular interaction between leaders and followers. Therefore, only teams that reported directly to their leader were included in our study. Data were collected from both leaders and team members via online and paper-pencil questionnaires. All participants received an individualized code, which enabled us to match leaders' data with those of their teams.

We approached participants in professional networks online (e.g., LinkedIn) and in person (e.g., local business associations). We then contacted human resources and organizational health management departments to find an appropriate sample. As an incentive for participation, we provided a research report and an optional on-site results presentation. The reports contained only mean values to protect participants' personal information.

We informed participants of the confidential and anonymous treatment of their data.

Sample

Our sample contains data from German organizations in different industries (24% aerospace, 9% consulting services, 9% IT and telecommunications, 10% automobile, 8% steel and metal, and 40% others¹). In total, we collected data from 121 leaders and 429 team members. Matching leader with follower data further reduced the sample size to 71 leaders and 235 team members, as in some cases only leaders or only followers had responded.

The average number of members per team in the final sample was 3.31. Gender was more equally distributed among team members (46.8% female) than leaders (16.9% female). Team members were, on average, 37.36 years ($SD = 13.05$) and leaders 44.56 years ($SD = 10.40$) old. Team members indicated that they personally interacted with their supervisor three to five times a week, on average. The hierarchical position of leaders was evenly distributed, with 33.8% of supervisors occupying lower, 43.7% occupying middle, and 21.1% occupying higher managerial positions. The majority of team members did not have leadership responsibilities (82.6%). Team members had spent an average of 3.12 years working under their current supervisor ($SD = 4.04$) and 4.37 years working in the same team ($SD = 6.69$).

Measures

Vulnerable narcissism

The prevalence of leaders' and followers' vulnerable narcissism were measured using the ten-item Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS, Hendin & Cheek, 1997). The HSNS is a widely used instrument for assessment of vulnerable narcissism with high criterion validity (Miller et al., 2014). Participants indicated their responses on a scale from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). A sample question asks, "My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by the slighting remarks of others". Reliabilities were sufficient for followers (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$) and leaders (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$).

Grandiose narcissism

Leaders' and followers' levels of grandiose narcissism were assessed with the 16-item short form of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), which has shown high correlations with the extensive 40 item NPI (Ames et al., 2006). A large proportion of research on narcissism in the context of social and organizational psychology has been established using the NPI (Tritt et al., 2010). Furthermore, the validity of this instrument has been confirmed (Miller et al., 2014). This scale contains 16 forced-choice items with a narcissistic and a non-narcissistic response each (e.g., "I really like to be the centre of attention" vs. "It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention"). Due to the binary response format of items, we applied a technique proposed by Raykov, Dimitrov, and Asparouhov (2010) to evaluate the reliability of this scale based on the ratio of the total variance in relation to true variance. Applying this procedure to our samples revealed a reliability estimate of .73 for

leaders and .75 for followers. In the followers' sample, the item "I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me vs. I usually get the respect that I deserve" was deleted because it caused non-convergence of the model.

Work engagement

The three dimensions of work engagement, which include vigour, dedication, and absorption, were measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Responses for the nine items (e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy") could be indicated on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always, every day*). The scale had sufficient reliability for followers (Cronbach's alpha = .93).

Emotional exhaustion

The three highest-loading items (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work") of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) were applied to assess emotional exhaustion. The response format was identical with that of the work engagement format. Reliabilities were sufficient for followers (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

Controls

Age, gender, tenure, and frequency of interaction

To rule out the possibility that differences in emotional exhaustion and work engagement were caused by demographic factors, we decided to control for age (e.g., Antoniou, Polychroni, & Vlachakis, 2006; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004) and gender (e.g., Banihani, Lewis, & Syed, 2013; Posig & Kickul, 2004). Moreover, because the amount of time leaders and followers spent together likely impact the outcomes (e.g., the longer their interaction, the stronger the effect), we controlled for followers' tenure with their leader, as well the frequency of social interactions with the leader, ranging from 1 (*less than once a week*) to 5 (*multiple daily occasions*). All four variables were assessed using single items. Respondents chose their year of birth from a dropdown menu to indicate their age. The same format was used to assess the time participants had been working under their current supervisor. Furthermore, respondents were asked to state their gender.

Workload

In order to rule out the possibility that the hypothesized effects were caused by job characteristics, we controlled for workload using a validated scale (Spector & Jex, 1998) with sufficient reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very seldom or never*) to 5 (*very often or always*), using questions such as "How often does your job require you to work very fast?"

Autonomy

We further included autonomy as a relevant control variable. The four-item scale (Guest, Isaksson, & de Witte, 2010) demonstrated sufficient reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .84). The response format used was identical to that of the workload scale. A sample question is "I can plan my own work". With autonomy and workload, we controlled for two job characteristics that can be classified as a job resource and job demand,

respectively, and were thus likely to impact work engagement and emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Neuroticism

The positive correlation between vulnerable narcissism and neuroticism (Miller et al., 2011), as well as associations between neuroticism and our outcome variables (e.g., Langelan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006), led us to include this Big Five trait as a control measure. Neuroticism was measured with three items from the BFI-5 (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The items, e.g., "I see myself as someone who worries a lot", were rated on a scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) and had acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .60).

Analysis

We applied multilevel modelling in Mplus (Version 7.3) (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) to account for the nested data structure. All level-1 variables were group-mean centred (except for gender as a dichotomous variable), and the level-2 moderator was grand-mean centred (cf. Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). All analyses were performed in a combined model for the two outcome measures: emotional exhaustion and work engagement. To specify the ICC values of our outcome variables, we first calculated the null model. In a second model, all control and predictor variables as well as the proposed interaction effect were entered. Our focal predictor variable, vulnerable narcissism on level 1 was modelled with a random slope; all other effects were estimated as fixed effects.

To test for the conceptual distinction of constructs, we ran a set of confirmatory factor analyses. Within the sample of team-members, we compared a six-factor model (vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism neuroticism, autonomy, workload, work engagement, emotional exhaustion) with different factor solutions. The seven factor model clearly showed a better fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1660.62$, $df = 1106$, $RMSEA = .040$, $CFI = .81$) compared to a one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 3296.09$, $df = 1127$, $RMSEA = .078$, $CFI = .24$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 1608.47$, $\Delta df = 21$, $p < .001$), a five factor model with items for vulnerable and grandiose narcissism loading on the same factor ($\chi^2 = 2121.99$, $df = 1112$, $RMSEA = .053$, $CFI = .65$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 461.37$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p < .001$), and also a five-factor solution, combining workload and autonomy as well as work engagement and emotional exhaustion in one factor, respectively ($\chi^2 = 2136.01$, $df = 1117$, $RMSEA = .053$, $CFI = .64$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 475.39$, $\Delta df = 11$, $p < .001$).

In order to further ensure the conceptual distinction between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, we compared a one-factor solution ($\chi^2 = 676.35$, $df = 275$, $RMSEA = .077$, $CFI = .64$) with a two-factor model ($\chi^2 = 479.44$, $df = 274$, $RMSEA = .055$, $CFI = .81$) within the sample of team-members. The two factor solution clearly provided a better fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2 = 56.19$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .001$). The fit indices for the final measurement models fell below the thresholds proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999). Given the complexity of the models (also in relation to sample size), the differences in scaling, and the fact that not all descriptors for narcissism necessarily need to occur simultaneously (cf., Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004), we can still conclude that our measures reflect different constructs.

Table 1. Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Individual-Level Study Variables.

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	M	SD	range
1 Tenure with Leader	-											3.14	4.03	-
2 Gender ^a	.11	-										-	-	-
3 Neuroticism	-.12	-.13	(.60)									3.95	1.14	1-5
4 Workload	.08	.08	.09	(.82)								3.50	0.72	1-5
5 Autonomy	.16**	.08	-.12	-.00	(.84)							3.57	4.62	1-5
6 Vulnerable Narcissism (F)	-.14	.07	.34***	-.02	-.12*	(.70)						2.89	0.79	1-7
7 Grandiose Narcissism (F)	.00	.09	-.13*	.10	.12	.07	(.75 ^b)					4.62	2.99	1-15
8 Emotional Exhaustion	.04	.05	.34***	.45***	-.12	.23**	.01	(.84)				2.95	1.21	1-6
9 Work Engagement	.27***	.15	-.20*	.03	.34***	-.25***	-.02	-.22**	(.93)			4.45	1.00	1-6
10 Vulnerable Narcissism (L)	-.04	.12	.08	.10	.04	.09	-.05	.13	.08	(.71)		2.49	0.69	1-7
11 Grandiose Narcissism (L)	-.15	-.09	.03	.15	.05	-.02	.13*	.03	-.05	.14	(.73 ^b)	6.49	2.95	1-16

Note. To compute correlations we used the TYPE = COMPLEX option in Mplus, (F) = Follower, (L) = Leader, $N_{\text{Level 1}} = 235$, $n_{\text{Level 2}} = 73$; ^a0 = female, 1 = male; * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, two-sided. Cronbach's Alpha in parentheses on the diagonal, ^bDue to binary coding of items, reliability estimate based on Raykov et al. (2010).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Inter-correlations, means, and standard deviations for the study variables can be found in Table 1. Concerning individual-level correlations followers' vulnerable narcissism was significantly related to their work engagement ($r(235) = -.25$, $p = .001$) and emotional exhaustion ($r(235) = .23$, $p = .004$), providing initial support for H1a and H1b. Furthermore, work engagement was negatively ($r(235) = -.22$, $p = .009$) related to emotional exhaustion. It is also interesting to note that leaders scored significantly higher on grandiose narcissism ($M = 6.49$, $SD = 2.95$) compared to followers ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 2.99$, $t = -6.08$, $p < .001$), whereas followers scored significantly higher on vulnerable narcissism ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.79$) compared to leaders ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.69$, $t = 4.17$, $p < .001$). As the control variables age and interaction with the leader showed no significant correlation with the outcome variables, we excluded them from further analysis (cf. Becker et al., 2016).

The unconditional null models showed no significant between-group variance ($\tau_{00} = 0.12$, $p = .053$) but significant within-group variance ($\sigma^2 = 1.32$, $p < .001$) for emotional exhaustion, and significant between-group ($\tau_{00} = 0.21$, $p = .003$) and within-group variance ($\sigma^2 = 0.77$, $p < .001$) for work engagement. Accordingly, ICC values indicated that differences between teams accounted for a larger variation in work engagement (ICC = .21) than in emotional exhaustion (ICC = .08). Despite the low variation between teams for emotional exhaustion, we deemed the application of multi-level analysis appropriate due to the nested structure of the data (Kahn, 2011): "The fact that there is little or no between-group variance in a measure does not mean that the relationship between this measure and another measure is the same across all groups [...]" (Nezlek, 2008, p. 857). To ensure, however, that results remained stable, independently of the statistical modelling, we ran multiple regression analyses for the proposed main effects, without considering the nested data structure.

Main effects

The results of the multilevel analyses are presented in Table 2. Hypotheses 1a suggested a positive relationship of vulnerable narcissism with emotional exhaustion, and Hypothesis 1b

suggested a negative relationship of vulnerable narcissism with work engagement. Following recommendations on statistical control provided by Becker et al. (2016) we will contrast results with and without the inclusion of control variables. We chose the control variables strictly considering theoretical arguments, as described before.

Followers' vulnerable narcissism was positively related to their emotional exhaustion only when omitting control variables ($\gamma = .40$, $p < .001$), but not when all control variables were included ($\gamma = .18$, $p = .505$), and negatively related to work engagement both with and without the inclusion of controls (with controls: $\gamma = -.23$, $p = .050$; without controls: $\gamma = -.29$, $p = .009$, respectively), lending support to Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Concerning the control variables, neuroticism, and workload showed to be positively related, and autonomy negatively related to emotional exhaustion. Autonomy showed to be positively related to work engagement.

Cross-level interaction effects

Hypotheses 2a and 2b suggested that leaders' grandiose narcissism would moderate the main effects of followers' vulnerable narcissism on emotional exhaustion (H2a) and work engagement (H2b). Moderation of the positive relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their emotional exhaustion by leaders' grandiose narcissism was not significant (with controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .062$, without controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .161$), leading us to reject Hypothesis 2a. The negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement was moderated by leaders' grandiose narcissism (with controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .023$; without controls: $\gamma = -.06$, $p = .005$).

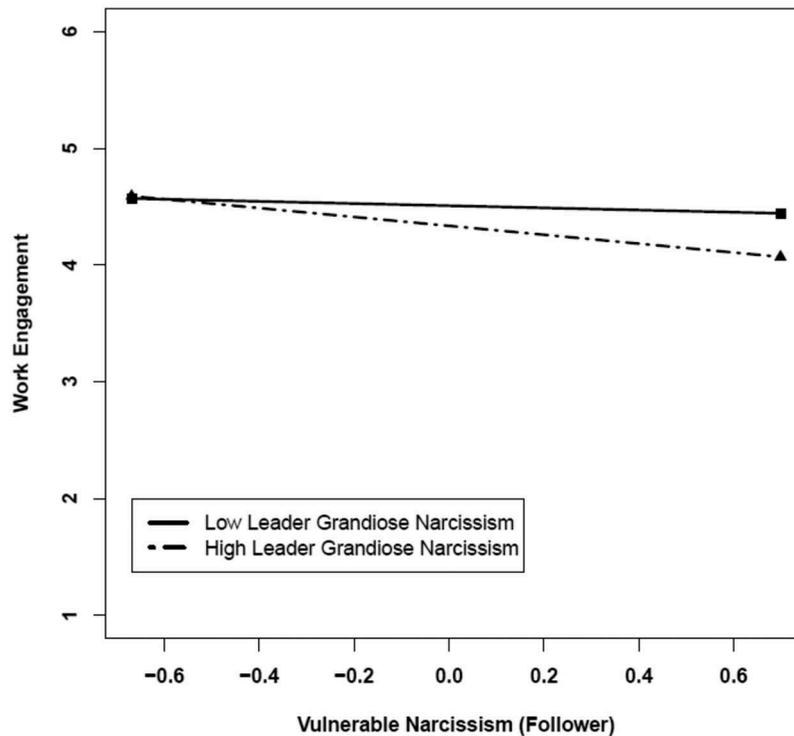
Although we did not formulate hypotheses, we also tested the interaction of followers' and leaders' vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerable narcissism of the leader showed no significant interaction effect for emotional exhaustion (with controls: $\gamma = .09$, $p = .416$; without controls: $\gamma = .04$, $p = .815$). For work engagement, we found a significant interaction effect, but only without the control variables (with controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .618$; without controls: $\gamma = -.17$, $p = .048$).

In Figure 1, we plotted the simple slopes for $\pm 1SD$ of the moderator (taking the results from the model including control variables). For the plot and computation of simple slopes, we made use of online tools developed by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006). Simple slope analyses indicated

Table 2. Results of multilevel modelling analysis predicting followers' emotional exhaustion and work engagement.

	Null-Model		Main Effects		Cross-Level Moderation	
	EE	WE	EE	WE	EE	WE
	γ (SE)	γ (SE)				
Level 1 (Follower)						
Intercept	2.83(.08)***	4.52(.07)***	2.89(.12)***	4.40(.12)***	2.90(.12)***	4.42(.12)***
Tenure with Leader			.01(.01)	-.00(.01)	.01(.01)	-.00(.01)
Gender ¹			.11(.16)	.09(.15)	.11(.14)	.05(.15)
Neuroticism			.29(.09)**	-.07(.08)	.29(.09)**	-.08(.08)
Workload			.56(.11)***	.12(.07)	.59(.11)***	.13(.07)
Autonomy			-.18(.09)*	.34(.07)***	-.19(.08)*	.33(.07)***
Grandiose Narcissism (F)			.02(.02)	.00(.02)	.01(.02)	.01(.02)
Vulnerable Narcissism (F)			.18(.28)	-.23(.12)*	.14(.10)	-.24(.08)**
Level 2 (Leader)						
Grandiose Narcissism (L)			.01(.03)	-.03(.03)	.01(.03)	-.03(.03)
Vulnerable Narcissism (L)			.17(.17)	.10(.13)	.16(.17)	.10(.13)
Cross-Level Interaction						
Vulnerable N. (F) x Grandiose N. (L)					-.05(.02)	-.05(.02)*
Vulnerable N. (F) x Vulnerable N. (L)					.09(.11)	-.05(.10)
Variance Components						
Level-1 Error Variance	1.32(.11)***	.77(.08)***	1.05(.14)***	.62(.07)***	.99(.12)***	.60(.08)***
Level-2 Error Variance	.12(.06)	.21(.07)**	.16(.11)	.24(.07)***	.19(.11)	.25(.07)***
Additional Information						
ICC	.08	.21				
-2 Log Likelihood		1877.44		1305.40		1291.62
Number of Free Parameters		8		28		35

Note. ¹0 = female, 1 = male; EE = Emotional Exhaustion, WE = Work Engagement; F = Follower; L = Leader. L1 N = 235 and L2 sample size = 71. Unstandardized estimates; values in parentheses are standard errors; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

**Figure 1.** Cross-Level Interaction of Leaders' Grandiose Narcissism and Followers' Vulnerable Narcissism on Followers' Work Engagement.

that the relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement was not significant ($\gamma = -.09$, $p = .463$) when leaders reported a low value in grandiose narcissism, whereas it was significant for mean values of the moderator within the sample ($\gamma = -.24$, $p = .048$), as well as for high values ($\gamma = -.38$, $p < .001$) of the moderator. Hypothesis 2b was thus supported.

Additional analyses

Due to the fact that we only had data from one follower for some teams, which may cast doubts on the inherent variation within teams, we ran an additional analysis using only teams for which we had a minimum of three respondents. This reduced the sample size to 181 employees nested within 33 leaders. The results on this sample showed the same pattern. Vulnerable

Table 3. Multivariate Regression Results (Individual Level) for Main Effects ($N = 224$).

	Emotional Exhaustion	Work Engagement
Intercept	-0.97(.54)	3.84(.55)
Tenure with Leader	.02(.02)	.05(.02)**
Gender ¹	.12(.14)	.22(.12)
Neuroticism	.27(.07)***	-.04(.06)
Workload	.68(.10)***	.02(.09)
Autonomy	-.09(.08)	.31(.07)***
Grandiose Narcissism (F)	-.01(.02)	-.01(.02)
Vulnerable Narcissism (F)	.25(.09)**	-.23(.08)**

Note. ¹0 = female, 1 = male; F = Follower; $N = 224$. Unstandardized estimates; values in parentheses are standard errors; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

narcissism had a significant negative relationship with work engagement (with controls: $\gamma = -.30$, $p = .011$, without controls: $\gamma = -.33$, $p = .004$). The relationship of vulnerable narcissism with emotional exhaustion again only reached significance in a model without control variables (with controls: $\gamma = .23$, $p = .428$; without controls: $\gamma = .39$, $p = .021$). The cross-level moderation effect of leaders' grandiose narcissism was significant for work engagement (with controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .043$; without controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .005$) and for emotional exhaustion only when excluding control variables (with controls: $\gamma = -.06$, $p = .021$; without controls: $\gamma = -.05$, $p = .100$).

In addition to the multilevel modelling, we confirmed our results on the individual level due to the limited between level variation on emotional exhaustion. Results are displayed in Table 3. The individual level results including control variables confirm our hypotheses, demonstrating a positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism and emotional exhaustion ($b = .25$, $p = .006$), and a negative relationship between vulnerable narcissism and work engagement ($b = -.23$, $p = .004$). This overall supports the robustness of presented results.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the implications of vulnerable narcissism in an organizational context, specifically with regard to work-related well-being and leader-follower interactions. By partially confirming the expected positive relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their levels of emotional exhaustion, we transfer existing findings relating narcissistic vulnerability to adverse health outcomes (e.g., Sandage et al., 2016; Tritt et al., 2010) to the organizational context. Furthermore, we extend these findings by demonstrating that vulnerable narcissism not only has health-impairing effects, but is also a negative predictor of employees' work engagement.

In addition to investigating the intra-individual effects of vulnerable narcissism, our study offers a significant contribution by integrating leaders' grandiose narcissism as a contextual moderator. Our findings confirmed that leaders' grandiose narcissism enhanced the negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement, thus suppressing the motivational process. Interpreting this result in the context of JD-R theory, it becomes apparent, that leaders' personality is a social aspect of followers' work environment, and as such can constitute a work demand with an impact on followers' well-being. Leaders' vulnerable narcissism did not show the

same effects. However, when omitting all control variables, leaders' vulnerable narcissism did moderate the link between employees' vulnerable narcissism and work engagement. These findings demonstrate that the interaction of followers' and leaders' personalities do impact followers' well-being. Specifically with regard to leaders' grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, one might argue that different underlying mechanisms are responsible for a differential impact on followers' work engagement. When vulnerable narcissistic followers are confronted with (or attracted by) a grandiose narcissistic leader, it is likely that overt aggression; tendencies towards abusive supervision, and derogatory behaviour explain the moderating effect. This kind of leader behaviour would further undermine followers' fragile self-worth and sense of professional accomplishment, thus strengthening the negative relationship between vulnerable narcissism and work engagement. When both followers and leaders score high in vulnerable narcissism, it is unlikely, that overt aggressive behaviours cause this interaction effect. It may be speculated however, that leaders' vulnerable insecurities might transfer to their followers, thus exacerbating the negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism on their work engagement. In this combination, both leaders' and followers' would tend to ruminate about potential negative outcomes of their decisions at work, and rather than providing a clear sense of direction or an optimistic outlook, a vulnerable narcissistic leader would enhance followers' negative thinking. Future research is needed to challenge, or confirm these findings and extend them in the sense that certain aspect of leaders' personality could surely form a resource for their followers.

Contrary to our expectations, leaders' grandiose narcissism did not moderate the relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their emotional exhaustion. According to job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), job demands are more strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, and job resources are more strongly associated with work engagement. It could therefore be that leaders' grandiose narcissism has differential effects on the health-impairment versus the motivational process. From a methodological perspective, small differences in levels of emotional exhaustion between teams precluded the addition of a level-2 variable (i.e., leaders' grandiose narcissism) to explain variation in the outcome, which needs to be considered when interpreting the results of this study. Additionally, the limited sample size and associated power restrictions could have resulted in the effect not reaching significance.

It is interesting to note, that increasing the sample size might have resulted in a significant effect in the opposite direction, i.e. leaders' grandiose narcissism buffering the positive relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their emotional exhaustion. Even though the direction of this relationship would be contrary to our hypothesis, theoretical considerations could provide an explanation. Specifically, contextually adaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism could be at work here. The highly authoritative and self-assured style of a grandiose narcissistic leader could potentially strengthen a vulnerable narcissistic follower's low self-esteem. Especially, if vulnerable narcissists would find themselves in a work environment characterized by low levels of resources e.g. in times of organizational change or crisis, where they would be

prone to experience high levels of emotional exhaustion, a leader making bold decisions and clearly directing the way forward might counteract this effect (cf. Nevicka et al., 2013). Even though this may be a fascinating route for future research, we would like to emphasize that this explanation should be considered with reservations, as the effect did not reach statistical significance in our study.

In summary, we demonstrate the negative intrapersonal implications of vulnerable narcissism for followers' work-related well-being. Moreover, we demonstrate that, in the case of work engagement, this effect can be enhanced when followers are confronted with a leader possessing grandiose narcissistic traits. The moderating role of leaders' personality could not be confirmed in the case of emotional exhaustion. By demonstrating the important individual and interpersonal implications of narcissistic vulnerability at work, this study confirms calls in the literature to differentiate between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism in the organizational context (e.g., Campbell et al., 2011; Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Our study uncovers several directions for future research concerning the multifaceted nature of narcissism and its differential effects on work-related well-being, interpersonal interactions, and leader- and followership.

Limitations and directions for future research

The main methodological strength of the current study lies in the multilevel design and the combination of leader and follower data. However, the limitations of this study must clearly be noted. First, the sample size, particularly on level 2, is relatively small. This shortcoming is owed to the challenge of recruiting leaders and followers in teams.

Another limitation of our study that must be considered is the selection of measurement scales for the outcome variable emotional exhaustion, as well as the facet of grandiose narcissism. To minimize participants' effort, we assessed both constructs with a short scale format, which might attenuate the measures' validity (Miller et al., 2014). This concern is somewhat mitigated by the fact that both scales have been validated and applied in previous research (Grijalva & Newman, 2015; Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, Mauno, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2014). The use of the NPI 16 did not allow us to examine differential effects of the more subtle dimensions of grandiose narcissism such as authority, exhibitionism, superiority, vanity, exploitativeness, entitlement, and self-sufficiency (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

The heterogeneity of our sample in terms of industries and companies could be considered a strength. However, potentially different norms regarding the acceptability of (grandiose) narcissistic behaviour within certain organizations or industries could mask potential effects. Future studies could examine whether narcissistic behaviour is tolerated to different extents in different organizations and answer whether certain industries or economic circumstances foster a culture of narcissism. If such effects were found, it would be fruitful to examine how they affect narcissists' professional success and interpersonal behaviour.

Further, while we included neuroticism as a control measure, the inclusion of other personality traits, particularly agreeableness or extraversion (Miller et al., 2011), could have been useful. Out of the Big Five traits, we chose neuroticism because we expected the strongest relationship to negative

psychological well-being, as well as the greatest overlap with narcissistic vulnerability (Miller et al., 2011).

We incorporated employees' grandiose narcissism in our analyses to account for the multifaceted nature of narcissism and to examine potential differential effects. Past research has established a relationship between grandiose narcissism and well-being (e.g., Sedikides et al., 2004) that was not confirmed in our analyses. This might be due to restricted variance within the sample of followers.

Regarding the study design, one could criticize the cross-sectional nature of the data. While a cross-lagged panel design with separate measurements of predictors and outcomes might have reduced sampling and measurement biases (Selig & Little, 2012), we estimated the additional cost to be disproportionate to the benefits in the light of our research question. Since we examined narcissism as a stable personality trait (Del Rosario & White, 2005), we deemed reversed causality, e.g., work engagement causing lower levels of narcissism, unlikely. Our primary interest was the investigation of, theoretically, time-invariant effects. However, considering that leader and follower narcissism did interact in our study, it would be interesting to examine dynamic trajectories (Collins, 2006) as well. For example, using an ambulatory, event-based sampling approach, future research could examine day-to-day interactions of leader-follower dyads with narcissistic characteristics to determine how these exchanges differ from dyads without narcissistic traits and how they affect leaders' and followers' work-related well-being.

Furthermore, the underlying mechanisms explaining the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and work-related well-being could be investigated more thoroughly. It is likely that constructs related to employees' self-concept, and particularly their self-esteem (e.g., Rose, 2002), play a crucial role here. If such underlying mechanisms could be uncovered, this would have great practical implications, as they would provide levers for organizational health management and personnel development measures.

Aside from the examination of well-being outcomes, an interesting avenue for future research could be to further explore the implications of vulnerable narcissism in the leadership process. First, in our follower sample, vulnerable narcissism was more prevalent, whereas the leader sample reported higher levels of grandiose narcissism. This is in line with previous research linking grandiose narcissism to leadership emergence. Little is known about the implications, if any (Watts et al., 2013), of vulnerable narcissism on leadership and its emergence. It may be speculated whether the maladaptive aspects of vulnerable narcissism, particularly the fragile self-concept, hinder leadership emergence. Moreover, vulnerable narcissism may be particularly relevant in the context of followership (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). It could be fruitful to examine the implications of vulnerable narcissism on followers' perceptions of leadership and leader behaviour, which, in turn, affects the quality of leader-follower exchanges (van Gils, van Quaquebeke, & van Knippenberg, 2010).

Implications for theory and practice

Our study offers several theoretical contributions. First, we demonstrate that the calls to integrate vulnerable narcissism

into organizational research (e.g., Campbell et al., 2011; Grijalva & Newman, 2015) are justified. While vulnerable narcissism may be less relevant for outcomes such as leadership emergence, which have been a primary focus in past research on narcissism in organizations, we highlight its relation to work-related well-being and leader–follower interactions. While vulnerable narcissism has been related to reduced well-being in a clinical context (Tritt et al., 2010), we now demonstrate the levels of vulnerable narcissism within the normal range of personality are relevant for well-being within the work context. More specifically, we found direct relations between vulnerable narcissism and emotional exhaustion, as well as reduced work engagement (in case of emotional exhaustion, neuroticism as a feature of vulnerable narcissism seems an important aspect). We further demonstrated that individuals with high levels of vulnerable narcissism are more prone to be affected by social aspects at work in the sense that they experience less work engagement when working under a grandiose narcissistic leader. This finding adds even more complexity to existing research on leadership and (grandiose) narcissism. Looking at leaders' narcissism as a moderator it becomes apparent that grandiose narcissism does not only have direct effects on task and interpersonal performance as shown in the previous research, but that grandiose narcissism can also act indirectly, via followers' well-being. The multidimensional nature of narcissism should thus be considered in future organizational research.

Through examining the interpersonal effects of narcissism, we demonstrate that leaders with high levels of grandiose narcissism can pose a job demand, especially for followers with high values in vulnerable narcissism. Moreover, preliminary analyses suggest that followers' grandiose narcissism can represent a threat for leaders, as it showed to be positively related to leaders' emotional exhaustion. This emphasizes the relevance of social aspects at work (i.e. the type of person employees interact with) as an important aspect of JD-R theory. It would be interesting to examine in future research, if leaders' grandiose narcissism always constitutes a work demand, or if certain aspects of the grandiose narcissistic personality (e.g. authority) can also become a resource, especially in times of crisis (e.g. Nevicka et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2013). Further, it would be interesting to examine which other aspects of leaders' personality foster employees' work-related well-being, and, following through with the interactive perspective, to examine how followers' personalities impact leaders' well-being.

Finally, underlining the interpersonal dynamics of narcissism in the leader–follower relationship, our study contributes to the leadership literature. In particular, we contribute to leadership approaches that consider the outcomes of leadership to be a result of mutual contributions from both leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; van Gils et al., 2010). While traditional approaches have examined leadership effectiveness as a function of leaders' personality traits (Grijalva et al., 2015; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), we suggest that both leaders' and followers' characteristics must be studied to determine individual-level outcomes. Moreover, it is not enough to study leaders' and followers' traits in isolation, but rather their interaction needs to be considered. By adopting a follower-centric view, we emphasize, that leaders

may constitute a social aspect of followers work, which will impact them depending on the make-up of their own personality.

Furthermore, practical implications can be derived from our findings. The relationship of employees' vulnerable narcissism to reduced work engagement and enhanced emotional exhaustion sheds light on individual risk factors for mental health. Examining the nature of vulnerable narcissism and particularly the core characteristic, a fragile self-concept, which is easily threatened by external events, personnel development measures could aim to stabilize the self-image of these individuals. More importantly, individuals and organizations would benefit from training that generates awareness of different perceptions and attribution styles, thus creating more room for mutual understanding and improved conflict management.

An additional implication lies in the finding that the negative relations between followers' personality and their well-being can be reinforced as a function of leaders' grandiose narcissism. In light of adaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism enhancing leadership emergence (Grijalva et al., 2015), followers might frequently be confronted with (grandiose) narcissistic leaders. Therefore, organizations should find solutions that allow them to diminish the negative effects of narcissistic leadership. One important lever in this regard could be leaders' expression of empathy towards their employees. While grandiose narcissists are able to cognitively understand others' emotions and motives as described in the theory of mind (Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001), they are less able to emphasize with others on an affective level (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). These different routes to understanding and dealing with others' emotions are represented in different brain areas (Kanske, Böckler, & Singer, 2016; Nummenmaa, Hirvonen, Parkkola, & Hietanen, 2008). They can be addressed using different types of training methods, i.e., cognitive perspective taking vs. exercises in compassion (Valk et al., 2017). While a certain amount of emotional detachment might be beneficial in a business development context, e.g., in order to face threatening situations in a calm and optimistic manner (Nevicka et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2013), genuine compassion, and empathy may be needed for team development (e.g., to build up the confidence of employees with a vulnerable self-concept).

Looking at the fact, that leaders' and followers' personality interact to negatively impact followers' work-related well-being, common measures, i.e., including both leader and follower, would have to be implemented to solve this issue. While future research would have to confirm this notion, the theory suggests, that the negative interaction between grandiose narcissistic leaders and vulnerable narcissistic followers would become especially pronounced with time, and when confronted with failure. To prevent a negative performance spiral with adverse effects on employee health, organizations could instal mandatory team coaching or mediation, when performance drops below a certain point. Bringing together both leaders and followers with a third party, would enable a more objective analysis of the situation and allow mutual appreciation. Further measures that could be implemented from a personnel development perspective are regular feedback and performance review processes in both directions, i.e., from leaders to followers and from followers to

leaders. Taking this idea one step further, self-organized teams or more agile team roles, e.g., employees elect their leader, could improve collaboration and particularly foster mutual understanding. While such a set-up would surely pose other challenges for grandiose narcissistic leaders, i.e., the personal offence when being *unelected*, might cause them to leave, the organization itself could benefit. This would allow to utilize grandiose narcissistic personalities where needed, e.g., in tackling new tasks, public relations, or creating new visions, and vulnerable narcissistic personalities to heal, e.g., when being elected for a role that values their individual competencies.

In order to utilize positive aspects of (grandiose) narcissistic personalities and minimize its negative effects, organizations would benefit from assessing levels of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in order to provide customized employee development solutions such as leadership coaching, mediation, or employee assistance programs with psychologically trained personnel.

Conclusion

Our article successfully transfers clinical research on narcissistic vulnerability to the organizational context. We demonstrate that vulnerable narcissism can have an adverse impact on employees' psychological health and further suppresses the motivational process. On an interpersonal level, the negative relation between vulnerable narcissism and work engagement is exacerbated by leaders' grandiose narcissism. Our study emphasizes the relevance of vulnerable narcissism in organizational research and the need to take a differentiated perspective on the multiple facets of narcissism. While grandiose narcissism appears particularly relevant with regard to leadership and its emergence, vulnerable narcissism is a promising predictor for individual health outcomes.

Note

1. The category "others" includes building, mining and raw materials, education, biotechnology, chemistry and pharmaceuticals, electrical engineering, energy, finance and insurance, research, and development, real estate, rubber, agriculture and forestry, plant and mechanical engineering, paper and printing, and transport. Each of these sectors was represented by 6% or less in our sample.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflict of interest

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