The Impact of Perceived Leader Narcissism on Academic Staff's Organizational Deviance: Examining the Mediating Role of Ego Depletion and the Moderating Effects of Generational Cohorts and Institutional Type in Egyptian Universities.

Abstract

This study examines how perceived leader narcissism (PLN) influences organizational deviance (OD) among academic staff in Egyptian universities, with ego depletion (ED) as a mediator and generational cohort (GC) and institutional type (IT) as moderators. Drawing on conservation of resources theory and ego depletion theory, we argue that narcissistic leaders deplete employees' psychological resources, increasing their likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior. Data were collected from 297 academic staff across public and private universities using a survey design and analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

The findings indicate that PLN has a positive and significant effect on OD (supporting H1), and that ED mediates this relationship (supporting H2). Generational cohort produced nuanced effects: younger academics were more reactive to narcissistic leadership in terms of depletion and deviance, whereas older academics were more affected in the depletion–deviance pathway, highlighting age-based differences in vulnerability (partially supporting H3). Institutional type also moderated the direct PLN–OD relationship suggesting contextual variation across public and private universities (supporting H6).

This study contributes to literature by clarifying the psychological mechanisms linking perceived leader narcissism and organizational deviance and by identifying generational and institutional contingencies in higher education. **Its originality lies in examining perceived (rather than self-reported) leader narcissism, testing ego depletion as a novel mediating mechanism, and situating the analysis in Egyptian academia—a high power-distance context where cross-cultural insights are scarce. By integrating psychological, generational, and institutional perspectives, this research provides a distinctive contribution to understanding toxic leadership and workplace deviance.**

Keywords: perceived leader narcissism, ego depletion, organizational deviance, generational cohort, institutional type, higher education

الملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى بحث أثر النرجسية المدركة للقيادة على السلوك المنحرف في بيئة العمل لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالجامعات المصرية، مع دراسة دور الاستنزاف النفسي كمتغير وسيط، والفروق الجيلية ونوع المؤسسة التعليمية كمتغيرات معدلة. واستناداً إلى نظرية حفظ الموارد ونظرية الاستنزاف النفسي، تم صياغة ستة فروض لاختبار العلاقات المباشرة وغير المباشرة والمعدلة بين متغيرات الدراسة. وقد تم جمع البيانات من ٢٩٧ عضو هيئة تدريس و هيئة معاونة باستخدام استبيان وتحليلها من خلال أسلوب نمذجة المعادلات البنائية باستخدام (PLS-SEM)

أظهرت النتائج أن النرجسية المدركة للقيادة تؤثر بشكل إيجابي ودال على السلوك المنحرف في بيئة العمل، وأن الاستنزاف النفسي يتوسط هذه العلاقة. كما تبين أن النرجسية القيادية تؤدي إلى زيادة الاستنزاف النفسي، والذي بدوره يزيد من احتمالية الانحراف السلوكي. وبالنسبة لدور الفروق الجيلية، فقد كشفت النتائج عن أن الأكاديميين الأصغر سناً أكثر تأثراً بالنرجسية المدركة للقيادة من حيث الاستنزاف والانحراف، بينما ظهر أن الأكبر سناً أكثر عرضة للتأثر بمسار الاستنزاف–الانحراف. كذلك أوضحت النتائج أن نوع المؤسسة التعليمية يعدل العلاقة المباشرة بين النرجسية القيادية المدركة والانحراف السلوكي.

وتسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء الأدبيات من خلال توضيح الآليات النفسية التي تفسر العلاقة بين النرجسية القيادية والانحراف السلوكي، مع إبراز دور الفروق الجيلية والسياق المؤسسي في الجامعات المصرية. كما تقدم توصيات عملية بأهمية تطوير القيادات الأكاديمية وتبني استراتيجيات لحماية الموارد النفسية لأعضاء هيئة التدريس بما يحد من السلوكيات المنحرفة في بيئة العمل الجامعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :النرجسية المدركة للقيادة، الاستنزاف النفسي، السلوك المنحرف في بيئة العمل، نظرية الفروق الجيلية، نوع المؤسسة التعليمية، الجامعات المصرية.

Introduction

The academic field of narcissistic leadership has recently become an area of interest in organizational research, especially due to its paradoxical and multifaceted impact on followers and organizations (Grijalva et al., 2015; Braun, 2017). Basically, narcissistic leaders can be remarkably charismatic, exceptionally self-assured, and predominantly visionary and audacious; however, they are also prone to being self-serving, exploitative, and emotionally detached (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Nevicka et al., 2013). These conflicting and contradictory traits make narcissism a remarkably

fascinating leadership quality; the paradoxical nature can inspire and promote short term gains, and at the same time, sustain long term stagnation and failure. These consequences are prevalent in academic institutions where the core values include collegiality, academic seniority, high intellectual autonomy and a strong commitment to ethical standards.

Despite extensive research on narcissistic leadership, findings are still somewhat inconsistent. Some studies argue that under certain conditions, it has the potential to achieve more effectiveness and performance (Grijalva et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2020), while others emphasize its destructive impact on job engagement, trust, and workplace behavior (Fehn & Schütz, 2020; Aboramadan et al., 2020). One source of inconsistency is that much of the literature has relied on self-reported narcissism questionnaires (Back & Vazire, 2015), which tend to inflate leaders' self-perceptions, neglecting how they are actually perceived by followers (Judge et al., 2006; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Braun (2017) concluded that it is followers' perceptions that ultimately shape leader–follower dynamics, employee attitudes, and behavioral outcomes, including deviance. This makes the study of perceived leader narcissism, which is how employees interpret and react to narcissistic tendencies, an essential step toward understanding its impact.

Organizational deviance is considered as one of the most alarming effects of toxic leadership, it is defined as voluntary behavior that deviates from organizational norms and endangers the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; 2000). Evident from research, deviant behavior can take many different forms, such as sabotage, absenteeism, withdrawal, and interpersonal aggression and gossip (Marcus & Schuler, 2004; Galperin, 2012). Such actions compromise not only the effectiveness of the institution but also the quality of research and education. Thus, it is both theoretically and practically important to fully grasp the causes of organizational deviance in academia.

Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), perceived narcissistic leadership can be conceptualized as a social stressor that depletes academic staff' emotional and psychological resources, thereby

heightening the risk of deviant responses toward their institution. Furthermore, based on generational cohort theory, the generational cohort to which a staff member belongs may influence how he/she interprets and copes with narcissistic leadership (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Likewise, institutional type (public versus private universities) can alter these dynamics due to differences in organizational culture, hierarchy, and governance regulations (Altbach, 2005; Kaba, 2017).

Based on the above discussion, this study investigates the impact of perceived leader narcissism on organizational deviance among academic staff members in Egyptian universities. Moreover, it examines the mediating role of ego depletion and the moderating effects of generational cohort and institutional type. Based on COR theory and generational cohort theory, this research potentially contributes to leadership and organizational behavior literature in three aspects. First, it shifts attention from leaders' self-assessed narcissism to followers' perceptions, providing a more realistic understanding of leader–follower interactions. Second, it enriches theory by identifying ego depletion as a psychological mechanism that links leader narcissism to organizational deviance. Finally, it fosters cross-cultural management research by conducting the analysis within Egyptian academia, a context characterized by high power distance and distinctive institutional structure.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance

Prior research has made a distinction between narcissism as a clinical disorder (NPD) which is characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success or power, an expectation of admiration from others, lack of empathy, and envy (APA, 2000) and narcissism as a subclinical personality trait, often known as trait narcissism (Campbell et al., 2011). The trait view of narcissism sees it as a normal aspect of human psychology; that is a person's narcissistic tendency is rather a degree not a personality-disorder type. Based on that

understanding, narcissists are those at the upper end of the continuum of normal narcissism (Miller & Campbell, 2010).

Within the leadership context, literature has been mainly focusing on answering the question whether leader narcissism has positive outcomes such as achieving effectiveness (Grijalva et al., 2015), higher performance when associated with political skills (Thompson et al., 2020) and improved external image especially on the short run (Braun, 2017) as well as negative implications such as lower job engagement among followers (Fehn & Schütz, 2020), employee silence and gossiping that lead to cynicism (Aboramadan et al., 2020), increased envy and counterproductive work behaviors among followers (Braun, 2017).

These inconsistencies in literature were attributed by leadership scholars to the complex and multilayered nature of the construct of narcissism itself (Back et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2011). Narcissistic characters possess such negative traits as self-centeredness, entitlement, exploitation, arrogance, and lack of empathy (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) but at the same time can exert positive attributes like charisma, visionary boldness , extroversion, and self-confidence which in turn motivate their followers to work toward their common goals (Czarna & Nevicka, 2019; Galvin et al., 2010; Lang et al., 2021; Nevicka et al., 2013).

One other consideration in the context of leader narcissism is the differentiation between self-rated and perceived (externally rated) narcissism. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that narcissistic individuals overestimate their competence, leadership capabilities, and influence on interpersonal relationships (Paulhus et al., 2001; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). This self-enhancement bias tends to create a large disparity in ratings between self and others, such that leaders with greater levels of narcissism rate themselves as very competent, confident, and charismatic, but are viewed by their subordinates as arrogant, self-serving, and manipulative (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011). In organizational settings, particularly academic settings, such disparities can have profound consequences. Although narcissistic leaders might score themselves favorably as a result of their grandiose self-perceptions, it is followers' views that actually determine the nature of relationship dynamics,

affect followers' attitudes, and elicit behavioral outcomes, including deviance or disengagement (Braun, 2017; Abeyta et al., 2017). As such, investigation of perceived leader narcissism instead of sole dependence on self-report measures yields more insight into the way narcissistic leadership is expressed and impacts followers in everyday life.

The concept of perceived leader narcissism is used to refer to followers' perception of the negativities of leader narcissism, such as arrogance and self-centeredness (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012). This definition is different from the concept of leader narcissism, which as explained above, contains both positive and negative attributes and which leaders themselves often assess. Perceived leader narcissism captures the more negative aspects of leader narcissism observed and perceived by followers (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012).

Sectoral and cultural factors can significantly influence the interpretation of narcissistic leadership. In Egyptian academic culture which is characterized by deeply rooted traditional hierarchies, centralized authority, and a high-power distance (Hofstede Insights, 2023), assertiveness and over confidence may be tolerated or even appreciated in leaders. But as soon as such behaviors escalate to the levels of exploitation, emotional detachment, or disregard for employee well-being, perceptions can instantly change towards a toxic environment (Schmidt, 2008; Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013). The issue is specifically important in educational settings, where relational dynamics and degrees of psychological safety significantly impact employee satisfaction, motivation, and overall performance (Edmondson, 1999; Barkhuizen, Rothmann, & van de Vijver, 2014).

Organizational deviance refers to voluntary behaviors that violate established organizational norms and, consequently, threaten the well-being of the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; 2000). Researchers have categorized deviance in different ways. For example, interpersonal deviance comprises actions that are targeted at people, like gossiping, insults, or derogatory comments. Organizational deviance, on the other hand, involves harming the company, with conduct such as stealing, late arrival, or rule violation (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Tiwari & Jha, 2021). Newer classifications separate constructive deviance from destructive

deviance. Constructive deviance includes actions that break rules but help the organization, like whistleblowing or creative rule-breaking. Destructive deviance is harmful in both nature and intention (Galperin, 2012). Deviant behaviors can also be classified as active or passive. Active behaviors include actions like sabotage or verbal aggression. Passive behaviors include things like withdrawal or intentional inefficiency (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). These classifications are particularly important in academic environments, where deviance can take particular forms such as passive resistance, academic sabotage, or noncompliance with institutional policies. By conceptualizing organizational deviance through these multifaceted lenses, scholars and practitioners can better identify its antecedents, manifestations, and consequences, particularly in response to adverse leadership conditions such as narcissism.

Leadership behavior has proven to be one of the major antecedents of employee deviant behavior. Hussain et al. (2015) argued that abusive supervision is linked to workplace deviance. Similarly, Malik & Lenka (2018) proved that negative supervisory behavior is a strong predictor of workplace deviance, as it creates a hostile work environment. Also, Ruslan et al. (2024) in their systematic review identified leadership styles -among other factors- as primary drivers of workplace deviance. Toxic leadership traits such as abusive supervision, authoritarianism, and narcissism have emerged as potential drivers of follower deviance, by undermining trust and violating psychological contracts (Martinko et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Conversely, ethical leadership mediated by an ethical climate has proven to mitigate workplace deviant behavior (Aryati et al., 2018). In the same vein, Akmal & Azliyanti (2024) suggested that promoting ethical leadership can enhance organizational commitment and reduce deviant behavior in the workplace.

In the context of Academia, academic staff members highly value intellectual autonomy and ethical standards. Therefore, perceived violations of fairness or dignity by narcissistic leaders can be met with stronger emotional and behavioral backlash than in more compliance-driven sectors (Jones, 2010; Abu Elanain, 2022). Understanding deviance in academia, therefore, requires an appreciation of how narcissistic leadership interacts

with institutional culture, values, and role expectations, making it a critical lens for diagnosing and preventing dysfunctional outcomes such as deviance.

Drawing from Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), narcissistic leadership may serve as a social stressor that drains employees' psychological and emotional resources. In academic settings, where intellectual autonomy and psychological safety are paramount, such perceived threats may provoke deviant responses as a form of emotional release or resistance. Therefore, the following hypothesis could be proposed:

H1: Perceived leader narcissism is positively associated with organizational deviance among academic staff.

Perceived Leader Narcissism and Ego Depletion

Perceived leader narcissism often manifest itself in behaviors such as arrogance, sense of entitlement, and a lack of empathy (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Braun, 2017). These behaviors potentially create hostile work environments characterized by hostility that push followers to invest significant psychological and emotional effort to regulate their emotions, suppress their negative reactions, and maintain professional work conduct (Nevicka et al., 2018). Over time, this continual process of self-regulation drains employees limited emotional resources. This process is consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989).

Ego depletion, defined as the person's diminishing capacity to self-regulate that takes place after an ability to show self-control (Baumeister et al., 1998; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Ego depletion has been identified as a key result of working under stressful or toxic leadership (Courtright et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2013). When followers perceive their leaders as narcissistic, they must always monitor their interactions, avoid conflict, and manage their impressions, this -in turn- accelerates depletion of psychological and emotional resources (Grandey, 2000; Trougakos et al., 2015).

H2: Perceived leader narcissism is positively associated with ego depletion among academic staff.

Ego Depletion and Organizational Deviance

Ego depletion limits people's capacity for self-control and adherence to organizational rules and regulations (Baumeister et al., 1998). When employees are ego depleted, they may find it harder to inhibit impulses, regulate emotions, or otherwise behave in a self-controlled manner (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000; Johnson et al., 2014). This diminish in self-control capacity creates an opportunity for counterproductive behaviors, including withdrawal or avoidance, sabotage, wasting organizational resources, and/or refusal to comply with rules (Marcus & Schuler, 2004; Barnes et al., 2015).

In academic settings, where staff members are expected to be at their most ethical and intellectually engaged, the effect of ego depletion can have more serious implications. Faculty members who frequently experience ego depletion may turn to organizational deviance as a coping mechanism aimed at reducing individual and external pressures (Robinson & Bennett, 2000; Galperin, 2012), which seems to align with COR theory that suggests that resource loss can elicit defensive or destructive behavior (Hobfoll, 1989).

H3: Ego depletion is positively associated with organizational deviance among academic staff.

The Mediating Role of Ego Depletion

Ego depletion is a temporary reduction in a person's ability to self-regulate after prolonged mental effort of self-control (Baumeister et al., 1998; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). In workplaces, particularly those with toxic Perceived Leaders, employees are compelled to repress their natural reactions and exhibit proper behavior, a process that extensively depletes their self-regulatory capacity (Grandey, 2000; Trougakos et al., 2015). When subordinates deal with narcissistic Perceived Leaders who are often characterized by grandiose self-absorption, manipulative behaviors, and disregard for other individuals' views, they may form a chronic psychological state of vigilance (Nevicka et al., 2018). This ongoing necessity to regulate personal impressions, avoid clashes, and preserve outward composure while inwardly feeling injustice or rudeness contributes to increased emotional exhaustion and drains available resources of self-regulation (Courtright et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2013). On the longer-term,

such deterioration may weaken their capacity to conform to organizational norms or inhibit counterproductive tendencies, and hence, the probability of deviant behavior (Johnson et al., 2014; Barnes et al., 2015).

Ego depletion acts as a psychological mechanism by which stress in interaction with narcissistic Perceived Leaders takes the form of behavioral outcome. When employees' ego resources are depleted, they will carry out deviant behavior since their capacity for compliance with norms is impaired. Thus, Ego depletion becomes an explanatory variable of considerable significance in revealing the connection between perceived Leader narcissism and deviance within an organization. Consequently, the hypothesis presented here follows:

H4: Ego depletion mediates the relationship between perceived Leader narcissism and organizational deviance among academic staff.

The Moderating Role of Generational Cohort

Generational cohort theory asserts that individuals born during a specific historical time period develop similar values, attitudes, and expectations based on their experiences (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). In the workplace, these collective values and attitudes have an impact on how employees make sense of, and respond to, the behaviors of leaders and stressors (Twenge et al., 2010; Costanza et al., 2012).

While the theory originated primarily in Western contexts, cross-cultural studies have demonstrated its broader applicability, including in emerging economies and Middle Eastern settings (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). In Egypt, empirical evidence shows that generational cohorts (e.g., Generation X, Y, and Z) differ in their work values and career orientations, confirming that global cohort frameworks are meaningful in this cultural setting (Dajani, 2018; El-Khouly, 2022). Accordingly, this study applies internationally recognized generational cohort classifications while acknowledging that local cultural, economic, and institutional factors may shape how these cohorts are expressed within Egyptian academia.

Older cohorts (Baby Boomers and Generation X) are more likely to endorse hierarchical authority and to display greater toleration for authoritarian or

narcissistic leadership due to a greater acceptance of power-distance (Hofstede Insights, 2023) so they may still feel depletion of ego resources when led by a narcissistic leader, but be less likely to externalize this toll with deviant behavior. Conversely, younger cohorts (Millennials and Generation Z) are likely to value equity, inclusivity, and recognition of voice in organizational decisions on important matters (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011). Narcissistic leadership may be perceived by younger cohorts as a violation of organizational expectations, which makes them more vulnerable to ego depletion and behavioral expressions of resistance, such as deviance.

Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5a: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and ego depletion, such that the relationship is stronger among younger cohorts than older cohorts.

H5b: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and organizational deviance, such that the relationship is stronger among younger cohorts than older cohorts.

H5c: Generational cohort moderates the relationship between ego depletion and organizational deviance, such that the relationship is stronger among older cohorts than younger cohorts.

The Moderating Role of Institutional Type

The institutional context plays a pivotal role in shaping how leadership behaviors are perceived and acted upon. Public universities in Egypt are generally characterized by deeply entrenched hierarchies, centralized decision-making, and bureaucratic structures that may normalize or even legitimize authoritarian leadership behaviors (El Baradei & El Baradei, 2004). In such environments, expressions of dominance or overconfidence by narcissistic leaders may be interpreted as part of the accepted institutional culture, reducing the likelihood of overt deviance among subordinates despite the psychological strain such leaders impose.

By contrast, private universities often emphasize collegiality, autonomy, and participatory governance (Mok, 2005; Kaba, 2017). Within these contexts,

narcissistic leadership behaviors—such as self-centeredness or disregard for faculty well-being—are more likely to violate shared values and expectations, generating stronger negative reactions. Faculty members in these settings may be less inclined to suppress their responses and instead externalize their frustration through deviant behaviors directed at the institution.

Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we argue that narcissistic leadership drains employees' psychological resources in both contexts. However, the translation of resource depletion into deviant behavior is more contingent on institutional culture. Specifically, in public universities, hierarchical norms may buffer the outward behavioral consequences of resource loss, whereas in private universities, inclusive cultures may amplify them. Thus, we expect institutional type to moderate the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and organizational deviance.

H6: Institutional type moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and organizational deviance, such that the relationship is stronger in private universities than in public universities.

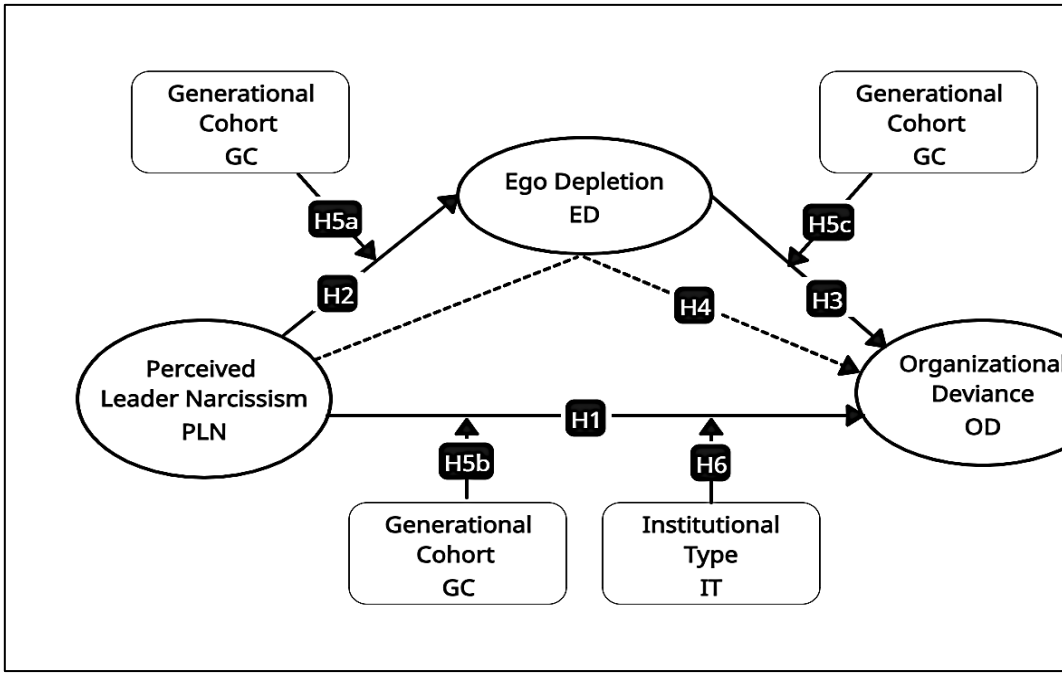

Figure (1): Research Proposed Model

Methodology

This study is grounded in a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that organizational phenomena can be objectively measured and explained through observable relationships. Following this stance, the research adopted a deductive approach, moving from established theories, namely conservation of resources theory and ego depletion theory—to test specific hypotheses. The research employed a quantitative method with a survey strategy, as this design allows for collecting standardized data from a large sample of academic staff to ensure reliability and generalizability. Data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, available in SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for theory development and prediction, as it enables the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships (i.e., several independent variables with one or more dependent variables) even with relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2021; Ringle et al., 2015). Moreover, it reduces the impact of measurement errors and offers more accurate estimates of complex structural models, which explains its growing application in management and organizational research (Mahmoud & Mousa, 2025; Mikalef et al., 2020).

Population, sample and Data Collection

The current study focused on public and private universities in Egypt, given their pivotal role in developing society and promoting intellectual growth and the well-being of citizens (Nemr & Ali, 2025; Musenze et al., 2021). The study was limited to academic staff members, excluding administrators, for two main reasons. First, academic staff are the direct subordinates of department heads and deans, making them the most relevant group to evaluate perceived leader narcissism and its effects. Their daily interactions with academic leaders place them in a unique position to experience and interpret narcissistic behaviors, unlike administrators who are less exposed to academic leadership in teaching and research contexts. Second, because academic staff are central to shaping teaching quality, research productivity, and collegial culture, their responses are critical for understanding how narcissistic leadership may lead to **organizational deviance** in higher education. Such deviance—ranging from withdrawal and noncompliance to academic sabotage—directly undermines institutional effectiveness and

academic integrity. Therefore, targeting academic staff members provides both a theoretically and practically appropriate population for examining the relationship between perceived leader narcissism, ego depletion, and workplace deviance.

A number of Egyptian public and private universities were selected for this study to ensure representation across institutional types. Cairo University, Mansoura University, and Menoufia University were chosen as leading public universities because of their large student and faculty populations, long-established academic reputations, and consistent ranking among Egypt's top higher education institutions in terms of research output, diversity of faculties, and societal impact. These universities have historically served as reference points for academic standards in Egypt and thus provide an appropriate setting for examining leadership and organizational behavior within the public sector. In parallel, Horus University, Pharos University, and Delta University were selected as representative private universities due to their rapid growth, increasing role in expanding access to higher education, and emphasis on modern governance structures and student-centered approaches. Their distinctive organizational cultures and relatively flexible administrative systems offer a meaningful contrast to the traditional hierarchical structures of public universities, making them suitable for analyzing how institutional type moderates the effects of perceived leader narcissism on organizational deviance. The following table (1) shows the universities under study, the number of faculties in each university, and the number of academic staff members.

Table (1) study universities' statistics

Universities	Number of Faculties	Population		Sample	Number of Respondents
		Number	%		
Cairo University	25	12518	38.7	147	105
Menoufia University	22	4067	12.6	48	35
Mansoura University	18	7966	24.6	93	71
Horus University	10	2158	6.7	25	24
Pharos University	12	3349	10.3	38	36

Delta University	11	2282	7.1	27	26
Total	98	32340	100	380	297

Source: Authors' own calculation

The sample size was calculated using the Stephen Thompson equation for finite populations (Thompson, 2012). Using the study population of 32,340 academic staff across the selected universities and assuming a 95% confidence level, p = 0.5 (maximum variance) and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was 380 faculty members (rounded). A stratified random sampling technique was applied because of both (a) the diversity of colleges (98 colleges across six universities with large variation in size and disciplinary composition) and (b) heterogeneity among academic staff (differences in academic rank, discipline/department, and institutional type). Stratification was therefore implemented primarily at the college level to ensure coverage of each college, with proportional allocation used to distribute the target sample across the 98 colleges and across the six universities; additional stratification by institutional type (public vs. private) and academic rank helped ensure representation of key subgroups and reduced sampling error. Within each stratum, faculty members were selected at random from available faculty lists or departmental rosters to ensure unbiased selection.

The final questionnaire was distributed during January–February 2025 via an electronic survey (Google Docs), and faculty members were contacted through official email addresses and WhatsApp. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was assured. In total, 309 completed responses were received; 12 responses were removed because they were incomplete, yielding a final analytical sample of 297 (effective response rate = 297/380 = 78.1%).

Table (2) Profile of the respondents

Variable		**N (297)**	**%**
Gender	Male	216	72.7
	Female	81	27.3
Academic Rank	Demonstrator	3	1
	Teaching Assistant	12	4

	Assistant Professor	211	71
	Associate Professor	53	17.9
	Professor	18	6.1
Generational Cohort	Generation X	150	50.5
	Generation Y	51	17.7
	Generation Z	96	32.3
Institutional Type	Public	211	71
	Private	86	29

Source: Authors' own calculation

Table (2) outlines the demographic details of the respondents. The gender distribution of the data was unequal, with male respondents representing over 72.7% of the sample, while the proportion of female respondents was 27.3%. While the majority of the sample were Assistant professors at 71%, the majority of the sample was from Generation X at 50.5%, and 71% of the respondents were from public universities compared to 29% from private universities.

To assess the common method bias (CMB) in the current study, we randomized the questions in the survey to make the determination of independent and dependent variables difficult. We also conducted Harman's single-factor test, which is one of the most popular CMB tests, and the first factor explained 39.98% of the total variance, which is less than 50%. Therefore, common method bias is not a significant problem in the current study.

Measurement

The current study relied on a set of established and reliable scales. Perceived Leader Narcissism was measured based on Hochwarter and Thompson (2012) scale which consisted of only six items. Ego Depletion was measured based on 20 item adoption by Twenge et al. (2004). Bennett and Robinson, (2000) scale was used to measure organizational deviance, consisting of only 12 items. Additionally, a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly

disagree" (1/5)) to "strongly agree" (5(5)) was used. The survey items and scales were translated from English into Arabic by an author fluent in both languages. To ensure accuracy, a back-translation process was applied, in accordance with the guidelines applicable to both versions (Brislin et al., 1973). The face validity of the survey was verified by presenting it to a group of faculty members within the study sample, in addition to presenting it to a group of business administration professors as academic experts. They provided a set of modifications to the wording of some statements to make them clearer to the respondents.

Results

Below we discuss the results of the measurement model test and the study hypotheses test.

Measurement Model Assessment (Validity and Reliability Tests)

The measurement model was evaluated to determine its validity and reliability. When analyzing reliability, Cronbach's alphas (CA), ranged from 0.946 to 0.983 (see Table 3), all of which were above the cutoff point of 0.700 proposed by Hair et al. (2021). This shows that all variables' constructs were internally consistent.

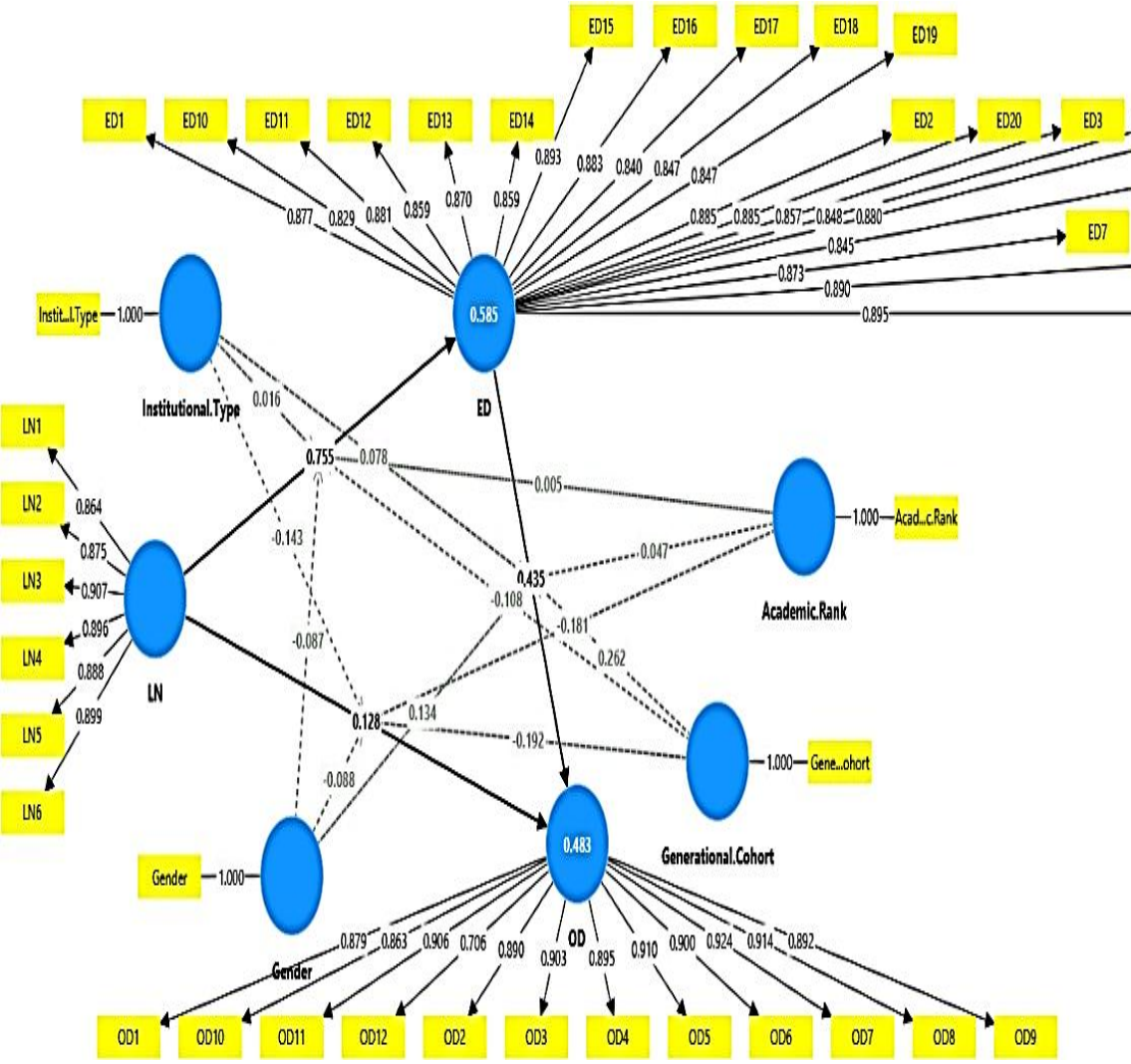

Figure (2): Research Measurement Model Assessment

Table (3) Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Factor loading	CA	CR	AVE	Mean	SD
Perceived Leader Narcissism	PLN1	0.864	0.946	0.947	0.789	3.679	0.840
	PLN2	0.875					
	PLN3	0.907					
	PLN4	0.896					
	PLN5	0.888					
	PLN6	0.899					
Ego Depletion	ED1	0.877	0.983	0.983	0.752	3.562	0.858
	ED2	0.885					
	ED3	0.857					
	ED4	0.848					
	ED5	0.880					
	ED6	0.845					
	ED7	0.873					
	ED8	0.890					
	ED9	0.895					
	ED10	0.829					
	ED11	0.881					
	ED12	0.859					
	ED13	0.870					
	ED14	0.859					
	ED15	0.893					
	ED16	0.883					
	ED17	0.840					
	ED18	0.847					
	ED19	0.847					
	ED20	0.885					
Organizational Deviance	OD1	0.879	0.974	0.976	0.781	3.973	0.846
	OD2	0.890					
	OD3	0.903					
	OD4	0.895					
	OD5	0.910					

Construct	Items	Factor loading	CA	CR	AVE	Mean	SD
	OD6	0.900					
	OD7	0.924					
	OD8	0.914					
	OD9	0.892					
	OD10	0.863					
	OD11	0.906					
	OD12	0.706					

Source: Authors' own calculation

Hair et al. (2021) provided criteria for a satisfactory measurement model, which include factor item loadings (above 0.7), composite reliability (CR) (above 0.70), and average variance extracted (AVE) (above 0.500), which were employed to assess convergent validity. In this study, all three criteria were successfully met, with factor item loadings ranging from 0.706 to 0.924 (see, composite reliability spanning from 0.947 to 0.983, and AVE values ranging from 0.752 to 0.789 (see Table 3).

Consequently, these findings indicate that the variables measures exhibit adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated to ensure that the square root of AVE surpassed the correlations between the variables, (see Table 3), the square root of the AVE values exceeded the highest correlation coefficient (r = 0.755). Therefore, the findings affirm the establishment of discriminant validity.

Descriptive Statistics: Correlation Matrix

Table (3) shows the means and standard deviations of the variables, while Table (4) shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables. The mean values for all variables in the study range from 3.56 to 3.97, with standard deviations between 0.840 and 0.858. The Pearson correlations indicate that Perceived Leader Narcissism have a positive significant relationship with Ego Depletion and Organizational Deviance. Also, Ego Depletion have a positive significant relationship with Organizational Deviance.

Table (4) Discriminant Validity (HTMT criterion)

Variables	Perceived Leader Narcissism	Ego Depletion	Organizational Deviance
Perceived Leader Narcissism	**0.888**		
Ego Depletion	0.755	**0.867**	
Organizational Deviance	0.457	0.435	**0.883**

Bold numbers indicate the square Root of AVE
Source: Authors' own calculation

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized relationships between the study variables shown in figure (1). Table (5) shows the results of path coefficients (β), t-values, effect size (f2), predictive relevance (Q2), and Collinearity Statistics "variance inflation factors (VIF) and Tolerance (TOL)". As all VIF values were below the threshold of 5.00 and (TOL) values are greater than (0.1) for each variable, the collinearity between the latent variables was acceptable for the structural model. Accordingly, an evaluation of the remaining tests was conducted.

Table (5) Hypothesis testing of direct and mediating effects

Relationships		β	T-value	P-value	F^2	Q^2	TOL	VIF	Decision
Direct Effects									
H_1	PLN→OD	0.128	3.621	0.007	0.232	0.561	0.436	2.292	Accepted
H_2	PLN→ED	0.755	9.165	0.000	0.265	0.179	0.419	2.496	Accepted
H_3	ED→OD	0.435	5.293	0.000	0.655	0.391	0.337	2.831	Accepted
Mediating Effect of Ego Depletion									
H_4	PLN→ED→OD	0.329	4.805	0.000					Accepted

Source: Authors' own calculation using PLS analysis

Table (5) shows the results of the direct effect among the variables under study to test the first three hypotheses. Specifically, Perceived Leader Narcissism (PLN) had a significant positive impact on Organizational Deviance (OD) of academic staff members in Egyptian Universities Under study ($\beta1 = 0.128$, t-value = 3.621, $p < 0.01$); thus, H1 was supported. Next, H2 was also supported by emphasizing that Perceived Leader Narcissism (PLN) had a significant positive impact on Ego Depletion (ED) ($\beta2 = 0.755$, t-value = 9.165, $p < 0.001$). For H3, the value of $\beta3 = 0.435$ with t-value = 5.293 at $p < 0.001$, reflecting the significant positive impact of Ego Depletion (ED) on Organizational Deviance (OD) of academic staff members in Egyptian Universities Under study. Accordingly, H3 was also confirmed.

A further assessment of the effect size (f^2) of the exogenous latent constructs on the endogenous latent constructs was conducted using Cohen's (1988) guidelines (large effect = 0.35; moderate effect = 0.15; small effect = 0.02).

As can be seen in Table (5), the effect of Perceived Leader Narcissism (PLN) on Organizational Deviance (OD) of academic staff members in Egyptian Universities Under study was moderate (f^2 = 0.232), the effect of Perceived Leader Narcissism (PLN) on Ego Depletion (ED) was moderate (f^2 = 0.265), and the effect of Ego Depletion (ED) on Organizational Deviance (OD) of academic staff members in Egyptian Universities Under study was large (f^2 = 0.655). Then, the PLS predict/CVPAT procedure was applied to determine the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the research model based on the suggestion of Hair et al. (2021), i.e., the value of Q^2 should be greater than 0. In this study, the model was sufficiently predictive as the Q^2 values for this study ranged from 0.179 to 0.561. Therefore, the three direct effects mentioned above have large predictive significance.

Mediation Effect of Ego Depletion

The mediating effect of Ego Depletion on the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance was tested using Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping method for indirect effects. This method works for single and multiple mediator models and allows simultaneous testing of the relationship between variables (Hair and Alamer, 2022). Table (6) shows an indirect relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance through Ego Depletion (β4 = 0.329, t-value = 4.805, p < 0.001). Hence, H4 is confirmed.

Table (6) Hypothesis testing of moderating effects.

Relationships			β	T-value	P-value	Decision
Moderating Effect of Generational Cohort	H_{5a}	PLN×GG→ ED	-0.087	3.435	0.028	Accepted
	H_{5b}	PLN×GG→ OD	-0.239	4.683	0.000	Accepted
	H_{5c}	ED×GC → OD	0.262	5.991	0.000	Accepted
Moderating Effect of Institutional	H_6	PLN×IT→ OD	-0.136	4.283	0.000	Accepted

Relationships			β	T-value	P-value	Decision
Type						

Source: Authors' own calculation using PLS analysis

Moderation Effect of Generational Cohort

Table (6) shows the results (i.e., path estimates and bootstrap t values). It is clear that Generational Cohort moderates the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Ego Depletion. As, increasing age (GC) reduces the positive relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Ego Depletion ($\beta 5 = -0.087$, t-value = 3.435, $p < 0.05$), Which supports H5a. Likewise, Generational Cohort moderates the relationship Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance. As, increasing age (GC) reduces the positive relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance ($\beta 6 = -0.239$, t-value = 4.683, $p < 0.01$), Which supports H5b. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the interaction effect diagrams of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The diagrams show that the positive effect of the relationships was stronger when the age was low; (Generational Cohort) was younger.

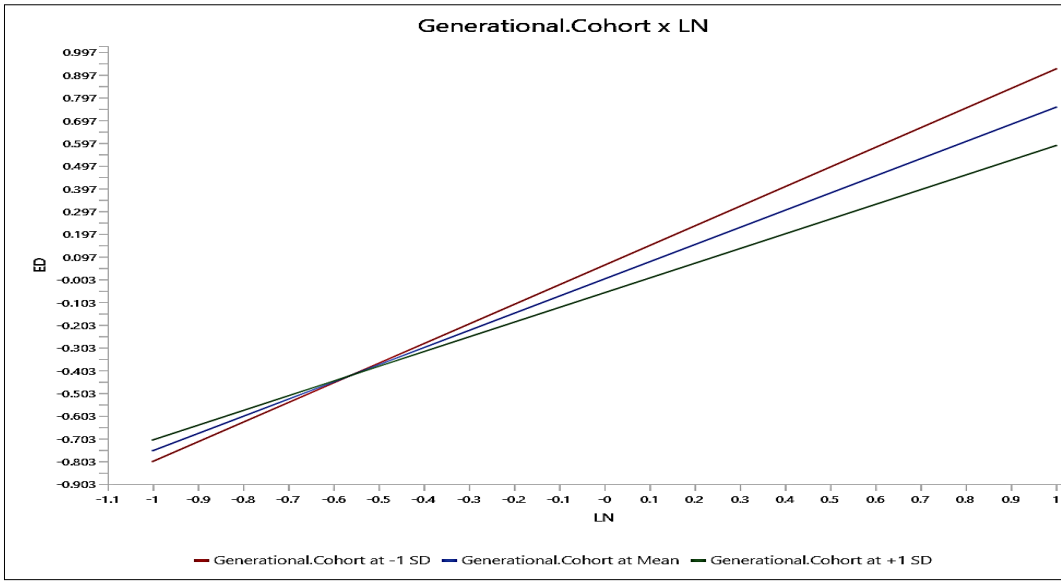

Figure (3): Moderation Effect of Generational Cohort on the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Ego Depletion

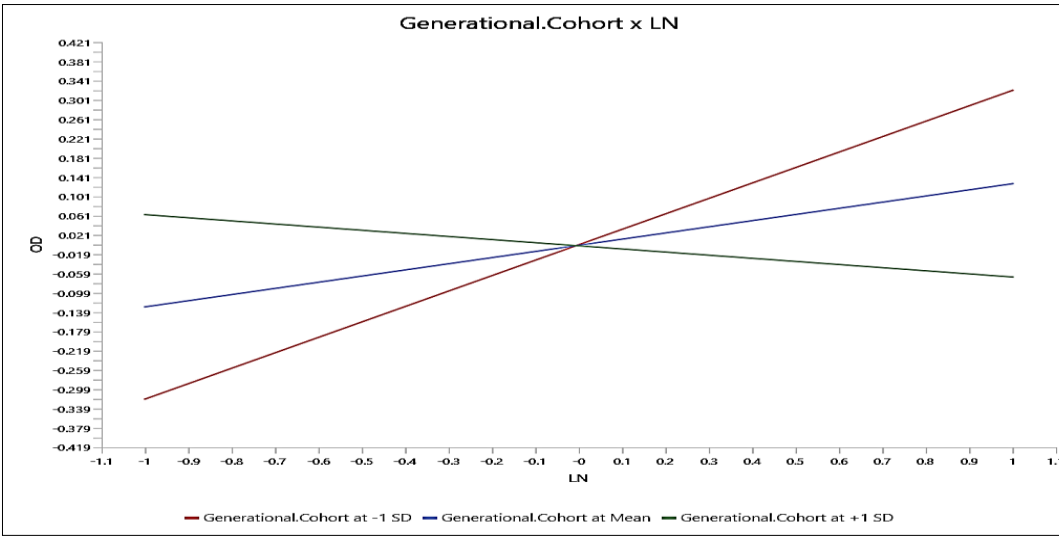

Figure (4): Moderation Effect of Generational Cohort on the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance

Conversely, increasing age (GC) increase the positive relationship between Ego Depletion and Organizational Deviance (β7 = 0.262, t-value = 5.991, p < 0.01), which supports H5c. Figure 5 illustrate the interaction effect diagrams of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The diagrams show that the positive effect of relationships was stronger when the age was higher; (Generational Cohort) was older.

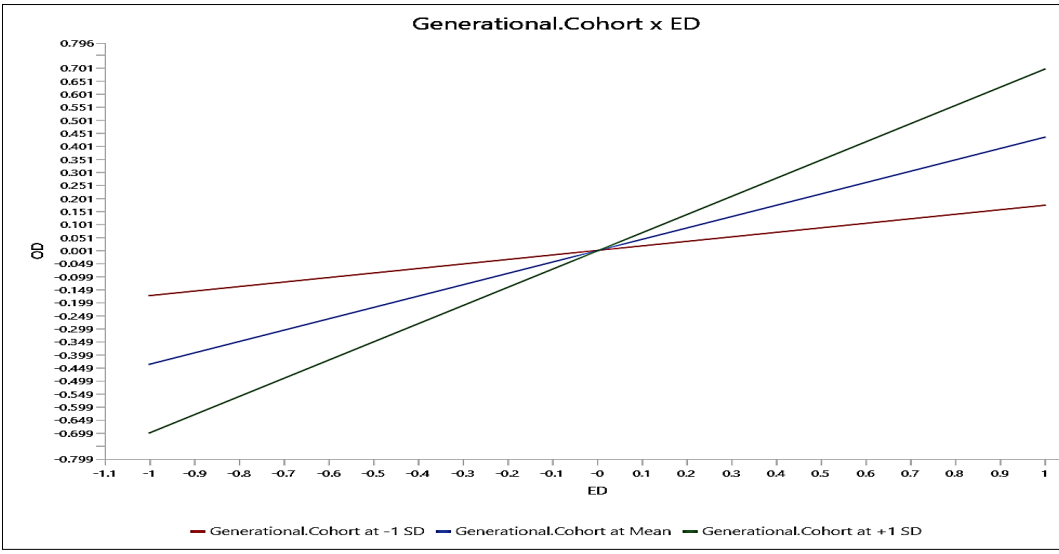

Figure (5): Moderation Effect of Generational Cohort on the relationship between Ego Depletion and Organizational Deviance

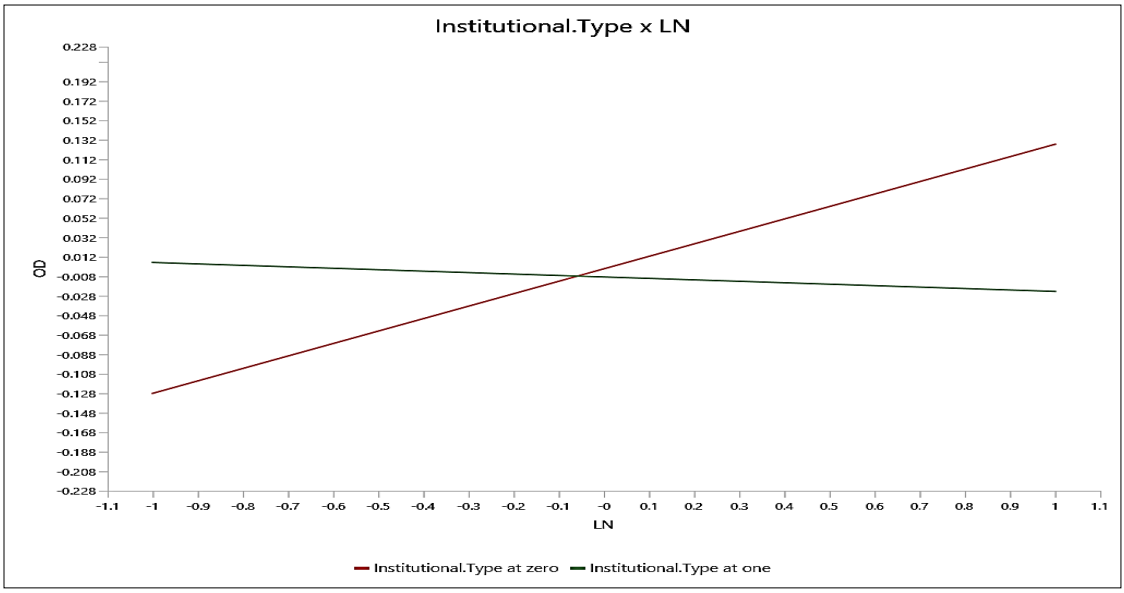

Figure (6): Moderation Effect of Institutional Type on the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance

Moderation Effect of Institutional Type

It is clear from table (6) that Institutional Type moderates the relationship Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance. Where the relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Organizational Deviance becomes negative among faculty staff members at private universities ($\beta 9 = -0.136$, t-value = 4.283, $p < 0.01$), which supports H6. Figure (6) illustrate the interaction effect diagrams of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The diagram shows that the positive effect of relationships was stronger at public universities.

Discussion

The present study examined the effect of perceived leader narcissism on organizational deviance among academic staff in Egyptian universities, incorporating ego depletion as a mediator and generational cohort and institutional type as moderators. Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and generational cohort theory (Lyons & Kuron, 2014), the study makes three key contributions: it confirms that perceived narcissistic leadership fosters deviant behaviors in academia, it establishes ego depletion as a critical mediating mechanism, and it demonstrates that generational cohort and institutional shape the intensity of these relationships.

Convergence with Theory and Prior Research

Our findings indicate that perceived leader narcissism was positively related to organizational deviance (H1), consistent with a number of toxic leadership studies finding that narcissistic leaders create hostile climates that cultivate counterproductive behaviors (Braun, 2017; Aboramadan et al., 2020). The strong positive association between perceived leader narcissism and ego depletion (H2) also reflects the salience of numerous studies in the area of leadership research that highlight a significant relationship between

toxic leaders and emotional suppression (Nevicka et al., 2018; Courtright et al., 2016) that ultimately depletes followers' ability to self-regulate.

The results also confirm that ego depletion is a predictor of organizational deviance (H3), which corroborates previous research which indicates that depleted employees exhibit impaired impulse control and adherence to organizational norms (Baumeister et al., 1998; Johnson et al., 2014). Additionally, the mediation effect of ego depletion (H4), supports the theoretical position that a loss of ego resources serves as the psychological mechanism that connects toxic leadership to deviant behavioral outcomes (Barnes et al., 2015).

Finally, the moderating effect of generational cohort (H5a - c) is consistent with generational cohort theory. Younger academics (Millennials and Gen Z) reported greater levels of ego depletion and deviance when exposed to narcissistic leaders, which aligns with their higher expectations of participative work experience and fair leadership (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Older academics (Gen X) demonstrated a less robust link between narcissistic leadership and ego depletion than their younger counterparts.

Divergence from Theory and Prior Research

Contrary to our hypothesis that narcissistic leadership would have stronger negative effects in private universities due to their participatory and collegial cultures (Mok, 2005; Kaba, 2017), our results indicated that public universities were more vulnerable to the PLN–OD relationship. This finding contrasts with studies suggesting that private institutions often exhibit higher sensitivity to toxic leadership (Fang et al., 2024). The cultural reality of Egyptian public universities, characterized by strong hierarchies and limited opportunities for faculty to voice concerns, may explain this divergence. In such settings, faculty may have fewer legitimate channels to resist or challenge narcissistic leaders, leading them to express frustration through deviant behaviors.

Our study revealed that while younger cohorts (Millennials and Gen Z) were more affected by narcissistic leadership in terms of ego depletion and deviance, older cohorts (Gen X) showed a stronger link in the ego depletion–deviance pathway. This partially diverges from earlier research

suggesting that older employees are less vulnerable to narcissistic leadership due to their acceptance of hierarchical authority (Hofstede Insights, 2023; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). However, studies have shown that narcissism levels vary across generations, with younger cohorts exhibiting higher levels (Kooij et al., 2025). Our findings suggest that although older academics may initially tolerate narcissistic leadership, prolonged psychological strain eventually overwhelms their self-regulation resources, making them more prone to deviant behavior over time. This indicates a more complex age-related vulnerability than what prior studies have typically reported.

Research implications

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior literature in several ways. First, by focusing on perceived narcissism rather than leaders' self-assessments, it emphasizes the role of followers' interpretations in shaping outcomes (Braun, 2017; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Second, it extends COR theory by identifying ego depletion as the mediating mechanism through which narcissistic leadership fosters organizational deviance, confirming that resource loss is central to understanding toxic leadership effects. Third, it enriches generational cohort theory by demonstrating that the strength and pathways of leader–follower dynamics vary by generational cohort, shedding the light on the importance of contextualizing leadership effects across age groups. Finally, by situating the study within Egyptian academia, the study contributes to cross-cultural leadership research, revealing how institutional type and high power-distance contexts alter the behavioral consequences of narcissistic leadership.

Practical Implications

The findings also have significant implications for higher education governance. First, senior academic leaders should recognize the harmful effects of narcissistic leadership on both academic staff well-being and institutional outcomes. Leadership development programs should emphasize self-awareness, humility, and emotional intelligence to counterbalance narcissistic tendencies in academic leaders. Second, interventions should be

tailored by generational cohort where younger academics may benefit from participatory decision-making and mentoring programs, while older academics may require resilience-building strategies to prevent ego depletion from translating into deviant behaviors. Third, academic leaders must be mindful of organizational culture. In public universities, where faculty may have limited voice, establishing stronger procedures for accountability and liability and transparent communication could help reduce deviant responses to toxic leadership.

Limitations and future research

While this study makes significant contributions to the field, limitations remain that inform future research endeavors. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal claims. While the findings align with COR theory, we cannot firmly establish the directionality of the relationship between narcissistic leadership, ego depletion, and subsequent deviance. Future research might pursue longitudinal or experimental designs in order to examine these dynamic processes of resource depletion and behavioral resulting engagement over time (Mitchell & James, 2001).

Second, this study looked specifically at faculty in Egyptian universities. There are important limitations in terms of generalizability in other cultural and institutional contexts. Given the higher power-distance culture of Egypt (Hofstede Insights, 2023), faculty decisions or actions in reaction to narcissistic leadership would be rooted in different cultural situatedness compared to cases in lower power-distance cultures. Following the recommendation of other scholars examining this topic (Rockstuhl et al., 2011), comparative studies across differing countries or sectors would provide clarity to these cultural and institutional boundary conditions given the specific findings from this study.

Third, while we looked at generational cohort and institutional type as moderators, additional organizational and personal resources could diminish and amplify the effects of narcissistic leadership (e.g. perceived organizational support, ethical climate, resilience, etc.). Future studies could leverage multi-level models to account for these variables to generate a

more holistic conception of protective and risk factors. Finally, this study examined only negative implications of narcissistic leadership.

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