

**CAPITAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY, ISLAMABAD**



**Impact of Narcissistic Project Leadership on
Project Employee's Performance with the
Mediating Role of Social Undermining and
Moderating Role of Project Culture**

by

Sidra Amin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the
degree of Master of Science

in the

**Faculty of Management & Social Sciences
Department of Management Sciences**

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*Dedicated to my parents who dedicated their life to teach me how to step
forward...!*



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Then which of the Blessings of your Lord will you deny.

(Surah Ar-Rehman)

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Abstract

In the quest of exploring unique trends in contemporary project management research, this study highlights prevalence of narcissistic leadership in projects and provides a framework to investigate how social undermining mediates the impact narcissistic leadership portrays on project employee performance. Data were collected from 256 respondents from corporate as well as development organizations of Pakistan. The results indicated that narcissistic leadership negatively predicts project employee performance. When leaders have narcissistic tendencies, they undermine the project employees working with them that in turn diminish project employee performance. However, it is revealed through finding of the study that project culture does not moderates the relationship between narcissistic leadership in projects and social undermining. In the end, implications for the project managers and future research directions are discussed.

Key words: Narcissistic Project Leadership, Social Undermining, Project Culture, Project Employee Performance.

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Abbreviations

NL	Narcissistic Project Leadership
EP	Project Employee Performance
SU	Social Undermining
PC	Project Culture
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
IBM	International Business Machines
AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
TLI	TuckerLewis Index

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

‘Narcissism’ is one of unique individual difference, personality characteristic as well as a leadership trait associated with power, grandiosity, excessive self-love and inflated self-views” (Campbell, Hoffman, & Marchisio, 2011). The most widely used, primary forms of narcissism are overt (grandiose) narcissism and covert (vulnerable) narcissism (Higgs, 2009). Studies have revealed that the narcissist in the workplace at leading positions e.g. Project Leaders, Project Managers are most likely to be a grandiose narcissist; high in self-esteem, dominant, attention seeking, unwilling to take criticism, aggressive, lacking in empathy, exploitive and manipulative in relations (Ham, Seybert, & Wang, 2018). Also, this very notion is backed by recent researches on US President Elect, Mr. Donald Trump stating him as a leader with ‘Narcissistic Grandiosity’ (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, & Paulhus, 2017).

While narcissism is a term widely used in research, its relationship to leadership dates back to last 15-20 years only (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Recent developments and rising trends in personality & management research offshoot mounting academic interest in narcissism, in relation to top leadership positions in diverse work settings (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Braun, 2017; Grijalva & Harms, 2015). Although extant theoretical arguments evidently link narcissism

and leadership, the question whether leader narcissism is good or bad for the workplace as well as workforce remains unanswered (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). Therefore, our research is in the pursuit of advancing existing knowledge on how narcissistic leaders in project impose their impact on the project employee performance.

Narcissistic leadership has both dark and bright side to it (Hogan, 2007). The bright side of narcissists in leadership roles is associated with traits like charisma, impressive speech, a magnetic personality to influence others, ability to set compelling visions, crises and failure management skills etc. (Maccoby, 2004). However, even that bright or positive side of narcissist leaders is harmful for workforce and overall work environment (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). It is because narcissist leaders being capable of setting compelling visions let employees start retorting them positively, which in turn make narcissists more self-assured and invincible thereby resulting in their exploitative and coercive behavior towards individuals working with them hence restricting their creativity and self-motivation to perform well (Sankowsky, 1995).

Since constructive leadership still dominates extant literature, there is a growing trend focusing dark Triad traits; the dark side of narcissistic leadership in varied workplace settings and its drastic outcomes on workforce or Project employee's performance (Spain & LeBreton, 2014). Being a "dark triad" leadership trait, narcissistic leadership is directly associated with negative interpersonal behavior in the workplace (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Studies have evidenced that Narcissistic leaders occupied with an inflated ego, self-centeredness and excessive demand for admiration are extremely unfavorable to employees (Carnevale, Huang, & Harms, 2018). Our study is focusing on the dark side of narcissistic leadership in projects and the impact it imposes on project employee's performance.

The linkage of leader and his narcissism nurtures when leaders' actions are primarily motivated by their own needs and beliefs, dominating others, overriding the interests of the followers; to satisfy their inner craving for praise, power and sense of entitlement (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Campbell et al., 2011; Kaur,

2017). These negative interpersonal characteristics allow narcissist leaders to misuse and raise their power and unfavorably impact the abilities of those they lead (Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). This is how behavior of destructively narcissistic leader damages morale of employees by undermining their abilities and discourage their ambitions (Lubit, 2002).

Employee's performance is predicted in a number of ways across various disciplines and remains a major research question (Frieder, Wang, & Oh, 2018). It refers to the capability of workers to attain desirable goals in an effective and efficient manner. Good performance is a combination of individual's attributes, effort, role perception, experience, motivation and behaviors that an employee donates to accomplish project goals (Stephen, 2016). The success of any project is dependent upon the employee's commitment to work, innovation, creativity, good communication between leader-follower along with their genuine efforts to accomplish the assigned tasks (Ramlall, 2008).

Personality researchers have worked on various personality traits that affect employee job performance (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002). Leadership researchers are working on leader's traits, styles and behaviors that can affect leader-follower relationship and employee work outcomes (Griffin & Hu, 2013; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). Leadership research provides evidence that work performance is enhanced or harmed by leadership traits (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Hu & Judge, 2017). Narcissistic leadership being a toxic leadership trait is responsible for enforcing negative attitudes of employees, greater intentions to quit, undesirable behavior and poor performance in varied work settings (Burke, 2017). Therefore it would be an inordinate step for project-based organizations to explore ways through which narcissistic leaders in projects limit the project employee performance.

Social Undermining involves deliberate misdemeanors aimed at damaging, someone's promising reputation, harming their ability to build positive interpersonal relationships and accomplish assigned tasks (Crossley, 2009). It can be reinforced by certain discouraging behaviors like a destructive leadership approach (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006). Narcissistic leadership being destructive leadership turns out

to be an extreme social stressor that reinforces negative emotions among followers leading to their social undermining (Spector, Fox, & Domagalski, 2006; Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). Unfavorably, social undermining behaviors are mounting among contemporary project-based organizations, leading to work-related serious problems (Taherpour, Rajaeepour, Siadat, & Kazemi, 2016). Given the emphasis for strong leader-follower relationships at workplace and limited studies on social undermining behaviors, current researchers are more concerned with exploring such issues in detail; which may benefit projects-based organizations to deal with associated problems (Eissa, Wyland, & Gupta, 2018).

Project culture is multifaceted phenomenon that involves a supportive and collaborative environment, project challenges, obstacles, the premeditated creation of the project management customs, behaviors, norms & values of employees working in project-based organizations (Yazici, 2009). Project Culture and its influence have lately drawn focus in the literature due to its dynamic role in the successful execution of a project (Nguyen & Watanabe, 2017). It's the unique project culture that primarily bases the performance of the workforce involved; hence fruitful to be explored in diverse scenarios (Durgadevi & Vasantha, 2017).

Although extant research has limited focus on Culture-Leadership link, recently a holistic approach towards destructive leadership literature named 'the toxic triangle' has been evolved. It explains the interplay between leadership behavior, workplace culture, and employee behavior that makes narcissistic leadership flourish (Thoroughgood & Padilla, 2013). It is well established through past theorizing that a strong, supportive project culture enables ways to lead actions, drives productive behavior, reinforce positive energy and enables communication among individuals involved in the project (Suda, 2006) while a weak, less supportive, least motivating and conflict-prone project culture undermines productivity and creativity of workers (Chua, 2013).

1.2 Gap Analysis

There is enough literature focusing on the importance of integrating personality and leadership research, as followers and leaders are integral parts of the leadership process and may affect each other's performance (Frieder et al., 2018). Project management literature, however, has few studies that suggest how projects are associated with psychological factors of individual's personality in the leading roles (Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017); yet totally ignoring the critical aspect of narcissistic leaders involved in project and their impact on project employee's performance. Hence, there is a need for future research to explore the dynamics of negative emotions and behaviors triggered by narcissistic leadership under varied circumstances (Braun, 2017). Also, it is suggested to unfold mechanisms through which leader narcissism effects follower's task performance in diverse settings (Nevicka, Hoogh, Hartog, & Belschak, 2018).

Moreover, Social undermining has limited theorizing in literature but contemporary researches have established that leader's narcissism is associated with social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002) which affects employee performance (Taherpour et al., 2016); yet totally neglecting social undermining mediating between two, in particular within project management settings. However, moderating role of Project Culture in relation to the variables of our study particularly within project management domain is still untouched. Therefore, future research calls for a more active approach by focusing uncharted role of workplace 'Culture' in relation to leader narcissism (Carnevale et al., 2018).

Lastly, the phenomenon has not been studied before in the context of project-based organizations operating in Pakistan. The absence of any distinguished work which looks specifically at the above-mentioned phenomena highlights a significant gap in Project management as well as leadership research to date that needs to be addressed.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite growing trend to investigate the destructive form of Narcissistic leadership and associated inconsistencies, this line of research remains limited largely due to the lack of theoretical understanding on the underlying mechanisms allowing narcissistic leaders harm their employees; and the circumstances that alleviate or enhance this impact. Also, there has been no study so far exploring the impact of the project leader's narcissistic tendencies that may affect the performance of project employees along with the mediating role of social undermining and project culture as a moderator. In the context of Pakistan, successful implementation of projects is always a challenge; as project management domain is constantly struggling with one of the critical issues of all times that is building a productive interpersonal relationship between project leaders and the involved workforce. This is only possible by addressing the knowledge gap spotting the prevailing negative undermining behaviors through emphasizing implication of a strong project culture that in turn may contribute to positive outcomes.

The mediating role of Social Undermining linking Narcissistic Leaders in projects and the Project Employee Performance is yet uncharted. Moreover, Project Culture has never been used so far as a moderator between Narcissistic Project Leadership and social undermining. The identification of such mediating and moderating mechanisms to advance the literature on Project leader's narcissism, and Project employee's performance is a vital step towards solution of the highlighted problem. Given the negative impact of project leader's narcissism on project employee's performance, present study is an innovative domain aiming to provide rational evidence to counter our claims.

1.4 Research Questions

Based upon the problem statement of the study, the present research aims to discover answers for few questions summarized as follows;

Research Question 1

Why it is important to study Narcissistic Leadership in the project-based settings?

Research Question 2

What are the consequences of Leader's Narcissism in projects?

Research Question 3

How does Narcissistic Project Leadership relate to project employee's performance?

Research Question 4

How do Narcissistic leadership in projects contribute to social undermining?

Research Question 5

Does Social Undermining effects overall performance by mediating between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Project Employee's Performance?

Research Question 6

Does Project culture moderate the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of the current study is to explore the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership, Social undermining and Project Employee performance as per proposed model supporting the anticipated outcomes. The study aims to gauge the true essence of variables under discussion, having minimal prior focus in literature through a more elaborated theoretical framework.

Project Culture is added as the potential moderator relating the above mentioned variables to uncover the strength of the relation between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social undermining. The overall purpose is to exemplify a novel and unique facet of Narcissist Project Leaders associated with undermining tendencies

with reference to Project employee's performance outcomes so that maximum output can be achieved through smooth implementation of projects. The objectives of our study are specified as follows;

Research objective 1

To examine the relationship between narcissistic project leadership and project employee's performance.

Research objective 2

To explore the relationship between narcissistic project leadership and project employee's performance through social undermining.

Research objective 3

To discover if project culture has any moderating effect on the relationship of narcissistic project leadership and social undermining.

Research objective 4

To create and test the anticipated relationships in projects-based settings of Pakistan.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In project-based settings, the challenging and continuously varying nature of the work has imposed unprecedented expectations on project employees and raised concerns on the need of establishing positive interpersonal relationships with their leaders. Theoretically, our study is significant in terms of its contribution to limited extant literature of leadership and personality research; most importantly Project management literature. Also, the study will provide a guideline to direct the future actions of project-based organizations in corporate and development sector of Pakistan.

Besides theoretical significance, current study is significant for Project management domain by highlighting the very existence of Narcissistic leaders and underlying mechanisms that link narcissistic leaders in Projects and their impact

on Project Employee Performance. Its in-depth analysis is noteworthy as there is a need to deal with prevalent narcissism among individuals in leadership roles and avoid its occurrence in rapidly flourishing project-based organizations of Pakistan. This research, therefore provides a theoretically-driven explanation that how narcissistic leaders in projects use their influence to detract project employee outcomes, and if project culture (norms, values and practices) can help mitigate or enhance its negative effects.

Furthermore, in a project-based work settings where leaders and followers are in close coordination with one another requiring a relatively more supportive environment, exploring socially undermining behaviors is a significant step towards promoting healthy workplace relationships, prevent conflict and consequently improve (Project) employee's performance. Present study pursues to fill the knowledge gap linking Project Narcissistic leadership, social Undermining and Project Employee Performance by adding to the existing yet limited evidence on these relations.

Concluding the thoughts on significance of study, it can be stated that our study highlights various indicators to improve existing project management policies and practices, hence making a positive contribution towards the existing system. It provides a new dimension for an in-depth analysis that can help the project management sector of Pakistan in terms of creating a more supportive and success oriented environment. Overall, study explores various gauges for upgrading successful project implementation and preventing unfavorable circumstances that may limit desired outcomes.

1.7 Theoretical Support

Several theoretical perspectives have been presented by different researchers which are used worldwide to underpin the studies of diverse leadership-follower behaviors but social exchange theory can cater all the variables of the present study.

1.7.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most dominant paradigms to grasp the dynamics of workplace behavior. SET with a focus on social behavior, is drawn from economic exchange theory and suggests that unlike economic exchanges, social exchanges may involve certain benefits and favors inclined to stimulate sentiments of trust and gratitude between leader-follower relations, resulting in mutual support (Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958; Blau, 1968).

The present study is using social exchange theory as a core theoretical focus to explain the association between Narcissistic Leadership in Projects and Project Employee Performance. Social exchange theory states that exchange relationships evolve when employers “take care of employees”, leading to positive employee attitudes and effective work behavior in return (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When a leader treats an employee with conceit, lack of empathy, or arrogance an imbalance is created and employees will experience psychological strain affecting their work attitudes and performance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016).

If employees perceive that their leader is not reciprocating accordingly, they will respond with emotional reactions such as anger and psychological strain (Neves, 2012) their trust and commitment to work decreases and negative work behaviors increase (Meurs, Fox, Kessler, & Spector, 2013). Using the reciprocity rule of social exchange theory, leader narcissism is said to have an inverse or contrary relation with follower performance (O’Boyle, Forsyth, & Banks, 2012). The findings of our research can advance our understanding of the mechanisms through which Project leader’s narcissism limits Project’s employee work performance along with moderation of project culture.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The chapter contains a thoroughly reviewed extensive literature pertaining to Narcissistic leadership in Projects, Social Undermining, Project Employee Performance and Project Culture to offer a sound theory of variable definitions and in-depth account of proposed relationships. To create this, we directed our search towards an abundant number of publications and articles using keywords of “Leadership”, “Narcissistic CEO”, “Narcissism”, “Narcissistic Leader”, “Leader Narcissism”, “Employee Performance”, “Follower” or “Subordinate”, “Organizational culture”, “Project Culture”, “Social undermining” and variations thereof.

Due to limited studies and little insight about the proposed relationships of our model, we have drawn a few concepts from literature of “Destructive Leadership” (Padilla et al., 2007); “Toxic Leadership” (Blumen, 2005); “Dark Side of Leadership” (Burke, 2017; Conger, 1990); “The Dark Triad Leadership” (Volmer, Koch, & Goritz, 2016; O’Boyle et al., 2012) etc. The publications between years 1985 and 2018 were yielded through search and in order to ensure quality standards of our research, all the reference material was extracted through publications of scholarly, peer-reviewed, impact factor Journals.

2.1 Narcissistic Leadership

Narcissism is defined as “a persistent pattern of grandiosity in behavior or fantasy, lack of empathy and excessive desire for admiration” (Amernic & Craig, 2010) “vanity, conceit, arrogance, and self-centeredness” (Twenge & Campbell, 2009); a lasting pattern of actions or behaviors affecting different segments of life including society, family, and work, often in a negative manner (Cherry, 2012); narcissist individuals with a desire for glory and success emerge leaders or prefer to stay at high profile leadership roles resulting in Narcissistic leadership (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002).

Vries and Miller (1985) provided a more comprehensive and influential definition of the concept stating, ‘Narcissists are the individuals who live under an illusion that they do not depend on anyone’s love or attention for the gratification of their desires rather they only rely on their own being. Such feelings reflect their insecurities and they occupy themselves with the traits like Power, Prestige, status and superiority as coping strategies. The most striking aspect of Narcissist in the workplace is interpersonal exploitation and entitlement that let them take over those working with them (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Pincus, Cain, & Wright, 2014).

2.2 Employee Performance

In management sciences field, employee performance is defined as employee’s attitude and output towards the demands and expectations of project/organization in order to meet desired goals & targets. It involves distinct traits, abilities, experience, task perception of employees (Porter & Lawler, 1968); motivation level, workplace behavior and efforts that an employee underwrites equally to project/organization goals along with technology, resources based organizational support and environmental factors (Stephen, 2016).

2.3 Social Undermining

[Duffy et al. \(2002\)](#) defined social undermining as attitudes and behaviors intended to hinder one's capacity to build and maintain a desirable reputation, constructive interpersonal relationships and task-based success; Whereas examples of Leader/-Supervisor driven social undermining behaviors include, spreading rumors about subordinates, making them feel less capable or incompetent, insulting subordinates and belittling their work-related ideas and efforts and speaking in a derogatory manner toward a colleague. Also, Social undermining is stated as a unique form of an immoral behavior often subtle though intentional because the victim of undermining may not be aware of the conduct or the perpetrator's intent ([Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006](#)).

2.4 Project Culture

The term Project culture is derived from organizational culture and stated as a collection of shared values, morals, beliefs, norm, practices and certain behaviors held by its members and reflected in project or project organizational goals; which enables the progress to swift the vision for serving creative talent and provides a pervasive context ([Mullins, 1999](#); [Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008](#)).

[Collins and Porras \(2005\)](#) define Project culture as the assemblage of policies and procedures, and certain attitudes of project team members that establish a persistent context for everything its members practice and think with in project settings. It is a system of shared meaning held by project team members that distinguish projects from one another constituting characteristics like innovation, cooperation & communication, results, people & team orientation and harmony in practices ([Singh & Dutch, 2012](#)).

2.5 Narcissistic Leadership in Projects and Project Employee's Performance

The origin of 'narcissism' dates back to the 1st century, with the story of 'Narcissus', a self-obsessed man who was in love with his own reflection in water, as a symbol of the perfection. In psychiatry, the term was first coined as a clinical illness of "perverse" self-love (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Freud, later on distinguished this excessive self-love from clinical disorders as a subclinical personality trait and same concept is being used up till now (Braun, 2017; Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017). Extant literature theorizes narcissism as a stable trait that is perceptible to the collective effect of genetic and nurturing factors (Leary & Ashman, 2018).

From a workplace perspective, prominent features of a narcissist include arrogance, overconfidence, superficially composed strength, a sense of entitlement, unnecessary self-esteem, desire for attention and emotional state of superiority over the subordinates (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Narcissistic in the leading roles rarely accept their failure, errors, or mistakes but take an additional credit for success than is warranted; i.e. the state of "frequently in error but never in doubt" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Hogan, 2007).

In the past few years, significant attention has been given to narcissism in relation to leadership and associated behaviors that have strong influences (Grijalva & Harms, 2015). According to literature, Narcissistic leadership has both the destructive (dark) and constructive (bright) side to it (Hogan, 2007). The bright side of the latter is associated with charisma, strong interpersonal skills, creativity and vision (Foster & Trimm, 2008). Currently, an increasing number of studies are more interested in the dark side of narcissistic leadership (Spain & LeBreton, 2014).

The dark side of Narcissistic is comprised of lower quality workplace relationships and unethical behavior (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Khoo & Burch, 2008). Moreover, these leaders have a sense of grandiosity, envy, dominance, refusal to take criticism, aggression towards their followers, lacking in empathy, exploitive

and manipulative in relations, lack compassion and concern for the employees working with them (Pan & Yu, 2017; Miller et al., 2017).

Employee Performance is dependent on a number of factors and remains a critical factor in project success (Frieder et al., 2018). It includes accomplishing job-related activities, employee competency, meeting deadlines, employee efficiency & effectiveness in executing work and how well those activities were executed (Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider, 2015). When leaders practice positive behavior in projects, this enforces the personal working relationship between employees and subordinate thus fulfilling the psychological needs of the employee and provide them with a satisfaction which in turn increases level of employee performance (Reb, Narayanan, & Chaturvedi, 2014); Whereas employees experience an inability to meet performance in the absence of support and guidance necessary for performance improvement (Heneman, Ledford Jr, & Gresham, 1999). It is assumed that employee performance is enhanced with appraisal and support (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005).

Over the last decade, Narcissistic leadership is said to have strong influences for predicting the performance of employees working under them. (Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). While positive traits of narcissist leaders including charisma, creative strategists and strong social skills predict good quality of relationship between leaders, employees and work outcomes (Maccoby, 2000; Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010), negative traits of latter affect employee's wellbeing and reduce productive behavior (Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann, 2017); by overriding the interests of the employees and dominating them (Kaur, 2017). In an attempt to overrule and dominate, narcissistic leadership can act as extreme social stressor leading to negative emotions among workers, non-productive behavior by employees and employee's poor performance (Spector et al., 2006; Burke, 2017).

Sedikides and Campbell (2017) stated that Narcissistic leaders being obsessed with power combined with negative characteristics like egocentrism, develop an abusive behavioral pattern that drastically damages the abilities of for those they lead. For example, when ego of a narcissist leader is threatened and even if not provoked, they become aggressive towards people working with them (Park & Colvin, 2015).

Moreover, they usually want to take all the credit if succeed but if the project fails they refuse to take the blame and criticize their subordinates for failure, thus restricting their capabilities to perform at their best (Stucke, 2003).

Narcissistic leader may not provide a proper guidance or direction given their unethical non-supportive attitude toward employees' they lead but always expect perfection in performance (Stoeber, Sherry, & Nealis, 2015; Watts et al., 2013). Studies suggest that this self-interested and dominating behavior of narcissists leader's incline them to involve in a destructively offensive behavior characterized by the display of verbal and non-verbal aggression towards the workforce (Tepper, 2007; Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013). Due to these attributes, narcissistic leaders tend to have a destructive disposition for the individuals working under their command (Shurden, 2014).

In the support of idea under discussion, past theorization indicates that Narcissistic leader, being destructive in nature mostly display unethical behavior towards their employees; are unprofessional and incapable of accepting criticism so they refuse to listen to the workers (Lubit, 2002). These tendencies of destructively narcissist leaders are associated with weak interpersonal relations at work and low productivity (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Recent researches have established the notion that relationships between narcissistic leaders and associated task force worsen over time (Ong, Roberts, & Arthur, 2016).

When leaders treat their employees with arrogance, superiority or lack of empathy, an imbalance is created and employees will experience emotional strain affecting their work attitudes, promotes deviance and reduce performance (Carnevale et al., 2018). This emphasis of social exchange theory on the importance of resilient relationships between employee and employer, suggests an opposite/inverse relationship between narcissistic leaders and employees performance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2012). Hence, we conclude that:

H₁: Narcissistic Leadership in Projects negatively predicts Project Employee's Performance.

2.6 Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining

Extensive literature advocates that Narcissistic leaders with ‘dark side’ traits are characterized by a sense of inordinate power; so, when they interact, they display disproportionate control and impose their opinions, ideas and decisions over employees they lead (Eissa et al., 2018). The overwhelming personality traits of such leaders cannot be tolerably characterized as “normal” and are allied with inappropriate behavioral and psychological patterns (McCrae & Costa Jr, 1995; Goldberg, 1993; Wiggins, 1996).

In work environment, a malicious downward twist associated with destructive or dark personality traits of Narcissistic leaders induces stress, hampering the abilities of those they lead; which in turn may provoke uncertain behaviors and hostile reactions that only aggravate the problem (Lubit, 2002). As a result, these behaviors destroy the emotional state of everyone involved in the work (Eissa et al., 2018).

Literature supports the arguments denoting above mentioned destructive leadership behaviors, personality traits and associated interpersonal emotions as predispositions of social undermining (Tai, Narayanan, & McAllister, 2012). In addition, Narcissistic Leadership-Social undermining linkage is explored and backed through, moral exclusion literature (Opatow, 1995), toxic or dark leadership literature (Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011) and unethical behavior literature (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006) which focus on the reasons why leaders with such traits may undermine or demoralize their followers (Tepper et al., 2011). This relationship between toxic personality traits of narcissistic leaders and social deflation at workplace though scarce though evident from extant literature (Spain & LeBreton, 2014).

Past studies have outlined the narcissist leader’s being arrogant towards workforce, are filled with a sense of high social dominance and display status of power and prestige (Hu & Judge, 2017) that tend to act as antecedents of social undermining (Duffy, Shaw, Scott, & Tepper, 2006). Similarly studies propose that social

deflation, is the outcome of negative traits associated with a destructive form of narcissistic leadership behavior, which worsen under stress that leads to social undermining (Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Eissa, 2012). Furthermore, literature suggests that narcissistic leadership being a toxic leadership is associated with challenging the individual abilities a negative sense, enforces deviant behaviors, promotes aggression and can lead to social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, & Johnson, 2006). Hence, we speculate that,

H₂: Narcissistic Leadership in Projects is significantly and positively associated with social undermining.

2.7 Social Undermining and Project Employee's Performance

Research in the area of workplace exploitation has blasted over the last few years. As studies mostly focus on organizational barriers only and ignore behavioral barriers to relationships and job performance (Hershcovis, 2011); being a behavioral aspect of personal relationships, social undermining is said to be a fundamental determinant that effects the coordination, communication and task performance of workforce (Duffy et al., 2002). Literature provides evidence that social undermining is a significant element to consider while analyzing work outcomes because of its collective cost to employees as well as owing to its strong relation to task performance (Beheshtifar, 2014).

Baron and Neuman (1996) suggested, in workplace the nature of social undermining can be relatively critical because of its drastic effects on an interpersonal relationship, negative emotions towards employees and the discouraging behaviors that ultimately disturbs their performance. Social deflation and undermining behaviors are believed to violate relational norms, assumed as a serious threat to workforce and the surrounding environment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Studies suggest that such violations harm effective communication, cooperation, harmony and transparency among, hence affect their productivity (Tai et al., 2012).

The consequences and hidden costs of social undermining in work settings are wide ranging; from damaging worker reputation, creating problems in accomplishing daily job responsibilities, harming workplace overall culture to deteriorate employee performance (Tepper et al., 2011). It is established through literature that support and motivation is favorable to work-settings as well as workforce in several forms. It enforces self-motivation to accomplish task responsibilities and induce commitment (Beheshtifar & Herat, 2013). Similar idea is detailed through reciprocity norm of social exchange theory that specifies that employees reciprocate supportive behaviors at supportive leaders while engaging in negative responses when mistreated by their leaders (Scott, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). It is proposed that supportive & encouraging attitudes within workforce played a vital role in dealing with work-related everyday problems (Tai et al., 2012). On contrary, undermining behaviors lack support completely hence can challenge employee worth, endanger their reputation, promote a sense of helplessness which are big obstacles in accomplishing tasks in an effective manner (Duffy et al., 2002).

Researches have established a link between social undermining behaviors and deviant workplace behaviors as well as between the victim's well-being and job performance (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). It is stated that socially undermining behavior prevails within organizations and can create disharmony between employees and employers exerting a negative effect on their wellbeing and overall productivity (Strongman, 2013). Given the negative consequences of social undermining behavior including mere absence of support and being a demotivating attitude, latter induces emotional imbalance, attacks employee's credibility and damages their performance (Taherpour et al., 2016). Hence, we can assume that

H₃: There is a negative association between Social undermining and Project Employee's Performance.

2.8 Mediating role of Social Undermining between Narcissistic Leadership in Projects and Project Employee's Performance

With the advancement in the field of leader-follower research, scholars are now more concerned in interceding processes, traits and behaviors of individuals that may enhance work performance within a project-based organization where achieving desired outcomes is highly dependent on teamwork (Bowler, Brass, et al., 2006). The importance of good interpersonal relations and pleasant emotions between workers, to achieve desired goals is long realized through past management literature (Huston & Sakkab, 2006). It is stated that good quality relationships within workforce facilitate employees with emotional satisfaction, social support, confidence and sense of identity that ultimately leads to good performance outcomes (Lambert, 2008). Also, such positive interactions enable an emotionally fulfilling work environment that leads to innovation, improved efficiencies and better performance (Ganesan, 1994; Stank, Keller, & Daugherty, 2001).

During the course of task performance, these interactions and exchanges between leaders and their employees become quite complex; capable of stimulating intense feelings either of disappointment or contentment (Duffy & Lee, 2012). While positive attitudes are a key force in smooth execution of work, negative interpersonal relationship within project members may prove to be a key obstacle to success (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). These unpleasant workplace relations between the leader and follower are result of some negative attitudes or interlinking mechanism usually imposed by leadership roles, over the subordinates; which are not focused in much depth before (Duffy et al., 2002). Social undermining is figured out as one of the potential interlinking mechanism between a destructive leader's influencing his follower output (Duffy et al., 2002; Tai et al., 2012).

In past, studies have mostly focused on the direct relationship while investigating the linkage between leader's narcissism and its effects on worker's performance,

(Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Zhu & Chen, 2015) without considering any mediating mechanisms between two. Recently researchers have focused social undermining as antecedent that facilitates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and employee performance (Grijalva & Harms, 2015).

Social undermining when combined with narcissistic leadership, hinders employee's ability to maintain a favorable reputation, restricts them establish positive interpersonal relationships and limits their ability to achieve goals regarding work performance (Zhu, Duan, & Tian, 2013); through intentionally making workers feel incompetent by criticizing and holding them back from accomplishing contributory goals (Vinokur & Ryn, 1993); and giving them silent treatment & misleading information that affects employee's work-related commitments (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Narcissist leaders mostly display unethical behavior at workplace, where victim of their undermining may not be aware of their real intent (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Reynolds, 2009).

Moreover, at workplace narcissistic leader being in the position of power lack support and enforce social undermining behavior (Smith & Webster, 2017); that is likely to demotivate employees, restricts them to perform and discourage them by directly affecting the cognitive and emotional resources of employees (Barling & Frone, 2017); it can lead to depression, interfere social relationships, diminish the work-related success of victims, yet hampering victim's personal growth, productive abilities and overall reputation (Creed & Moore, 2006; Hershcovis, 2011). Studies also indicate that narcissist in leading roles undermine their subordinates by promoting negative workplace interactions, display of anger and hatred towards employees causing them to indicate negative, cognitive and behavioral responses (Dar, 2010).

Social undermining behaviors initiated by narcissists in leadership roles, not only affect employee's cognition but also the productivity, work quality, sense of trust and overall identity as a useful resource and most importantly damage their performance (Hogan, 2007). Researches have indicated that excessive undermining by dominant or destructive leader is associated with negative performance-related outcomes among followers (Beheshtifar, 2014).

The narcissistic leaders being destructive in nature lack emotional commitment to their followers and are likely to undermine the interpersonal relationships (Campbell et al., 2011) by excessively criticizing employees, devaluing and exploiting them and by taking all credit for success (Lubit, 2002). In some cases, narcissist leaders, take credit for others' work to dominate, to distinguish themselves and to undermine sub-ordinate's accomplishments (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016); in other cases, they push the errors and failures to subordinates, contradict their views and hamper their abilities to undermine them socially hence damaging their performance (Pan & Yu, 2017).

Extracting from above theoretical evidences and given the negative influences of narcissistic leadership it can be stated that latter being destructive in nature leads to social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002; Pan & Yu, 2017) induces emotional imbalance, attacks employee's worth ,resulting in employee's low self-esteem and decline in work motivation (Creed & Moore, 2006) that in turn leads negative work-related consequences such as reduced productivity, less turnover in workplace and employee's poor performance (Hershcovis, 2011; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Taherpour et al., 2016). Hence, we assume that:

H₄: Social Undermining, mediates the relationship between Narcissistic Leaders in Projects and Project employee's Performance.

2.9 Moderating Role of Project Culture between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining

Project culture is diversified concept involving project's prevailing principles, goals, assumptions, top and line management supporting attitude (Suda, 2006; Young & Jordan, 2008; Anderson & Brion, 2014). It also includes aspects like departmental support and project employee commitment in the pursuit of project goals (Kerzner, 2002), the assignment of resources to projects, overall performance of project teams (Pinto & Winch, 2016) sense of trust, communications, co-operation

among individuals involved in the project, their willingness to share problems and ideas, social actions of the workforce and level of formality within the team (Cleland & Ireland, 1999).

Literature also outlines project culture as norms, thoughts processes, feelings, beliefs, values and perceptions shared by project leaders as well as project employees to direct their positive or negative behavior (Harrison & Lock, 2017). Literature argues that lack of support in a project-based environment or prevalence of low (less supportive) culture tends to be less successful than strong supportive cultures in achieving desired outcomes (Khalili, 2016).

The connection between workplace culture and leadership was first proposed in a study in 1989 (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Meanwhile, it is a well-established notion that effects of leadership are not limited to the relationship between leader and follower rather leadership is central to the particular culture it operates (Schein, 1992). Researches emphasize the fact that understanding between the project leaders and surrounding workforce with respect to immediate culture is a big challenge and critical to project success (Kerzner & Kerzner, 2017; Timmirello, 2001).

Strong cultures with supportive top management had strong positive effects on project employee work commitment, while rigid cultures with bureaucratic leadership habits have a negative impact (Brewer & Clippard, 2002; Silverthorne, 2004). Also, Project leaders who are inflexible have difficulty understanding and adapting to different norms and behaviors while enlightened project leaders with a strong cultural connection are more, adaptive, effective and capable of better interaction guiding the project employee behavior (Suda, 2006; Conger, 1990).

Although extant research has limited focus on relationship of Culture and Leadership, recent researches about narcissistic leadership highlight the chemistry between leadership behavior, workplace culture, and employee behavior that allows destructive leaders to impose their impact on workforce (Tandon & Mishra, 2017). While narcissism of a leader is said to prevail due to the key components of “conducive environments and susceptible followers”, in that scenario it’s the culture of idol worship of certain leaders and vulnerability of some followers that allow

destructive leadership to effect followers attitudes (Padilla et al., 2007). Therefore, it is established that a substantial link exists between destructive leadership and workplace culture while any form of destructive leadership e.g Narcissistic Leadership promotes unethical, conflict prone culture that drastically effects employee behavior in different ways (Mortensen-Cronin, 2018; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007).

A more recent study shows that narcissistic being destructive leaders have a potentially negative and lasting impact on the cultures they lead putting the project at risks by, affecting persistent patterns of behavior; leading cultures that are lower in integrity, collaboration & harmony and preferring followers less likely to make decisions in support of latter (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Doerr, 2018). Consequently conflicts arise and cultural disharmony in individuals' immediate environment socially undermines their creative thinking in tasks (Chua, 2013). Although researchers have generated enough literature understanding the consequences of undermining behaviors (Duffy, Ganster, et al., 2006) but less interest has been shown on the factors enhancing such behavior e.g. surrounding Organisational environment (Khatak, Waseem, Zhao, & Hui, 2018) or Project culture.

Project Culture as an organizational environmental factor, represents a potential moderating variable that strengthens social undermining as individuals facing a weak or less supportive project culture tend to exhibit socially unappealing behaviors and unpleasant interpersonal exchanges (Vinokur & Ryn, 1993). As literature evolved, social undermining was referred to as negative emotional aspect of interpersonal relationships characterized by the mere absence of support (Finch, Okun, Pool, & Ruehlman, 1999). While social support aids the better work outcomes by employees, social undermining is seen as a direct threat to effective performance (Ruehlman & Karoly, 1991). In the absence of positive cultural and social support, employee, hesitate to communicate their problems to their leaders, fearing leader's criticism they feel insecure and undermined (Finch, 1998).

Denoting to the above theoretical evidence, it is possible to establish a logical basis for Narcissistic Leadership, Project Culture and Social undermining, and employee performance interaction. Therefore, we speculate,

H₅: Project Culture moderates the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining, such that when Project Culture is high (Supportive) the positive relation between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social undermining weakens.

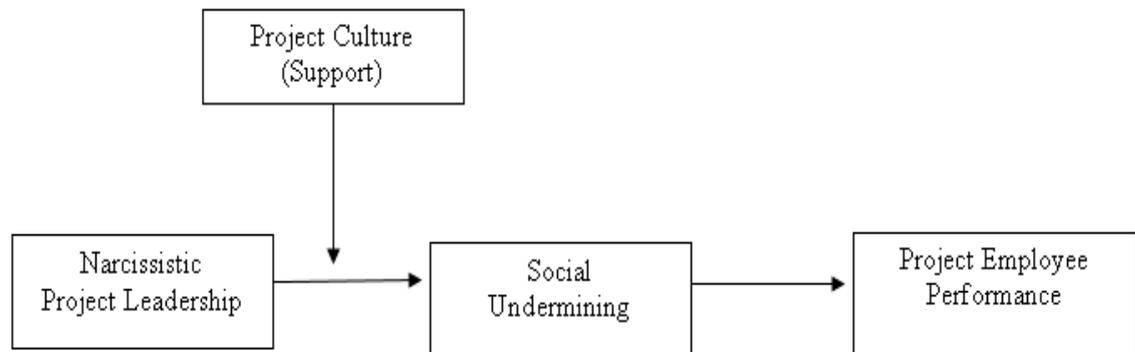


FIGURE 2.1: Research Model

2.10 Research Hypotheses

H₁: Narcissistic Leadership in Projects negatively predicts Project Employee's Performance.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and social undermining.

H₃: There is a negative association between Social undermining and Project Employee's Performance.

H₄: Social Undermining mediates the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and project employee's performance.

H₅: Project Culture moderates the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining, such that when Project Culture is high (Supportive) the positive relation between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social undermining weakens.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter comprises of all the approaches and procedures including population, sample characteristics, level of analysis, units of analysis, data analysis tools and techniques, study design, instruments and their reliabilities that are applied in order to get the effective results and description thereof.

3.1 Research Design

The research design articulates required data, appropriate methods for data collection & analysis, in order to deliver a master plan aimed to answer all of our research questions. The methods and data used for analysis must take into consideration practical and other constraints of study in order to enhance effectiveness of study and provide reliable results (Wyk, 2012). It is evident from studies that quantitative research is most significant approach to obtain most reliable and valid results as it takes into account type and strength of proposed relationships (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

3.2 Nature of Study

The current study is conducted to highlight the impact of Narcissistic leadership in Projects on the performance of Project Employee's, with the mediation of social

undermining and moderation of project culture. The co-relational study is used in this research that explains the association of variables. Different project-based organizations of Pakistan were targeted to obtain appropriate data leading to desired results. Initially, around 360 questionnaires were distributed to collect data but only 282 were returned; out of these returned questionnaires, only 256 genuine responses were collected. The selected sample is assumed to be a representative of the entire population of Pakistan. So that we can generalize the results.

3.3 Research Philosophy and Quantitative Research

Based on the ideology of determinism, the hypothetical and deductive research method is applied in this study. In this method existing and previous theories were used to support the hypothesis which is then tested empirically for validating the proposed hypothesis. Being an anticipated description of the scientific method, the hypothetical-deductive model initiates the scientific inquiry by mounting a hypothesis such that it could be convincingly falsified through a test on given data. A test that runs opposite to hypothesis predictions is termed as hypothesis falsification while a test that doesn't run opposite to the predicted hypothesis authenticates the theory. Descriptive values of opposing hypothesis are then compared to see the strength of their validation against their forecasts. Quantitative methods are largely used and appreciated in order to reach a large population so for demonstrating the nature of the association between the variables of research and for linking them to each other quantitative research methods are applied in our study.

3.4 Unit and Level of Analysis

Unit of analysis is generally one of the most important elements of any research. In this research unit of analysis comprises of organizations, cultures and individuals to

groups etc. Since the emphasis of this research is “one to one” relationship between project leaders and project employees, therefore, level of research is Dyadic and project Leaders and project employees were the unit of data analysis.

To evaluate the impact of Narcissistic Leadership in project through project employees, it was required to reach the particular sector of project-based organization which may have Narcissist individuals working in leadership roles and influencing Employees working under their authority.

3.5 Population and Sample

Meanwhile, our study pursues to focus the developmental as well as corporate sector projects in Pakistan and the population of the study is the Project Leaders, Project Employees (Subordinates and Team Members) of this sector. Data for the present study were obtained from 11 project-based organizations or the organization working on some projects operating in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Both national and international level project-based organizations were included, running various projects in the field of construction, climate change, Social work, healthcare, education, energy, environment etc. These projects include training and development, entrepreneurship, capacity building, technical reforms and basic education, children safety, water scarcity, mitigating poverty, rehabilitation or Internally displaced persons, establishment of schools and hospitals, providing access to medical care and education, youth training and similar ones. There were around 37 projects under these organizations and the data were collected from the project employees and their direct reporting line, the Project Leader.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

It is obvious that collecting data from the whole population is almost impossible due to time limitations and resource constraints. In order to deal with this problem, sampling is used in which specific group of people is selected from population

as true representatives of entire population. Sampling is the most common way to collect data without wasting time and resources. Only project-based organizations were approached for data collection because we are concerned with the influences narcissists in leadership roles may have, on the employees working under them in different projects. Moreover, in a project-based environment project leaders and project employees are in close interaction with each other and a high degree of support and open communication is required so, data would be collected in a way that it can later expose and evaluate the presence of narcissist leaders in projects and impact thereof on performance of project employees.

The number of project leaders and their reporting project employees approached for data collection was around 360; however, only 256 genuine responses were received both on narcissistic leadership as well as on assessing project employee performance. For reporting purposes, the data from both the project employees and project leaders were merged as averages, to avoid the threat of common method variance. Self-reported questionnaires were used for collecting data from project leaders. The respondents of the current study were ensured their anonymity and that their information would be used solely for research purposes.

Due to certain limitation of reaching population and to save time, convenience sampling technique was utilized in current study. It is a part of non-probability sampling method. which involves random data collection based on the feasibility to effectively collect data. Convenience sampling is most appropriate technique for randomly collecting data from Project-based organizations of Pakistan depicting realistic most of the population to determine proposed relationships between variables of the study.

3.7 Data Collection in Three-time Lags

In our study, eleven different organizations working on different projects in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were included as the population and data were collected in three-time lags. This type of research is challenging because data were collected thrice

at three points in time from the same group of respondents. The time lag basically means time interval (pause) between first and the next data collection survey which was 2 weeks in our case. The confidentiality of participants was ensured through maintaining a high degree of anonymity in order to lessen acceptance biases (Spector, 2006). It is stated that in cross sectional research usually there is a chance of common method deviations and to avoid them, time lag technique is applied (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Hence, in the time period of about two months data collection was done in 3-time lags. According to researches time lag between the measurements must be certain and limited as more the time lag increases, more the effect is eliminated (Dormann & Griffin, 2015).

Time Lag 1- T1: In Time lag 1, independent variable Narcissistic project leadership and Project culture is the moderator variable were measured.

Time Lag 2-T2: The mediator social undermining was measured at Time 2.

Time Lag 3-T3: The dependent variable project employee performance was measured at Time 3.

In first survey, narcissistic leadership and project culture part were assessed. The part of questionnaire with items on Narcissistic leadership was filled by project leader while project culture was rated by project employees reporting to same leader. After two weeks of first survey completion, project employees from same group of respondents were requested to provide feedback on social undermining part that is at Time 2, the mediator. Following that, two weeks after finalizing the second survey, the part of questionnaires was once again provided to their project leaders who filled items on employee performance at Time 3. On the whole, it took almost two months to finalize the data gathering, starting from November 2018 to January 2019 while managing this time lag study was challenging in terms of reaching same group of respondents. However, it helped in avoiding the possible errors. On the whole about 360 questionnaires were circulated among same group of respondents but at the end 256 questionnaires were utilized for analysis. The response rate was 71%.

3.8 Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics or demographics of this study include: gender of project leader and project employees, project leader's age and project employee's age, the qualification of project leader and project employee and the experience of project leaders and project employees. The characteristics. factors like gender, age experience and qualification were measured because of their likelihood of having an impact on the Social undermining and project employee performance which are independent variables of current study. This study used questionnaire in two different parts. Being a dyadic study, one part was filled by Project leaders and one by project employees. Sample characteristics details are discussed as below:

3.8.0.1 Gender

Gender is considered a vital demographic for many reasons. It not only highlights significance of gender equality but also differentiate the ratio of male and female in the given population sample. We tried to maintain a degree of gender equality in our study, results, however, depict a visible difference in ratio of males and females, showing more number of males than female.

TABLE 3.1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	percent
Male	151	59
Female	105	41
Total	256	100

Table 3.1, shows 59% of the respondents are male whereas, 41% are females.

3.8.0.2 Age

In order to maintain a level of comfort and convenience, age range was used as it is sometimes undesirable for the respondents to disclose it openly.

TABLE 3.2: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-25	53	20.7
26-33	114	44.5
34-41	64	25.1
42 and above	25	9.8
Total	256	100.0

It is shown in the Table 3.2 that 44.5% respondents were having the age range between 26-33, that means majority of population of sample belonged to 26-33 age group; whereas 25.1% of respondents were between 34-41 age range, 20.7% respondents were having age ranging between 18-25, while 9.8% were between 42 and above.

3.8.0.3 Qualification

After gender and age qualification of respondents is a vital element to consider as one of the demographics of study. Education opens avenues for success and facilitates the workforce to understand the importance of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships.

TABLE 3.3: Qualification Distribution

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Bachelors	129	51
Masters	88	34
Mphil and above	39	15
Total	256	100

Table 3.3 that most of the respondents were having qualification of bachelors, amongst population of 256 which comprises 51% while 34% were having qualification of Masters and remaining 15% having qualification of Ms/Mphil and above.

3.8.0.4 Experience

A sample characteristic used for collecting information about the experience of respondents. Different ranges were also used in order to easily collect the specific tenure of respondents working on different projects.

TABLE 3.4: Experience Distribution

Experience	Frequency	Percent
0-5	56	21.9
6-10	126	49.2
11-15	57	22.3
16 and above	17	6.6
Total	256	100

It can be depicted from the Table 3.4 that 49.2 of the respondents were having an experience ranging between 06-10 years, which depicts that majority respondents were having experience between the range 06-10 years; 21.9% respondents were having experience ranging between 1 and 6 years, 22.3% respondents were having experience ranging between 11-15 years, 6.6% respondents were having experience ranging between 16 and above years.

3.9 Control Variables

Age, gender, experience and qualification were used as control variables as they are supposed to have some effect on dependent variables of the study that are social undermining and project employee performance. To check if is there any significant

difference a one-way ANOVA comparison was performed on the variables of the present study. The results show that among all the variables none is controllable ($p > 0.05$).

TABLE 3.5: Control variables

Variables	Social Undermining		Employee Performance	
	F Value	Sig.	F Value	Sig.
Gender	1.09	.296	4.4	.135
Age	1.08	.356	1.7	.153
Experience	3.3	.120	1.1	.337
Qualification	1.1	.330	1.1	.313

3.10 Instrumentation

3.10.1 Measures

The questionnaire of our study initially consisted of two parts which was later on merged into one for the analysis purpose. The first part of questionnaire was to be filled by project leader contained demographics of project leader regarding Gender, Age, Qualification and Experience and the variables of narcissistic leadership and project employee performance. The other part was to be filled by project employee contained demographics of project employee regarding Gender, Age, Qualification and Experience along with items of variables of Social undermining and Project Culture. As per nature of study, items included in the questionnaire that is narcissistic leadership (NL), project employee performance (EP), was filled by project leaders while social undermining (SU) and Project culture (PC) were filled by employees of the projects A reliability test was performed all the scales to approve all the scales.

During the period of questionnaire distribution, almost 40 to 50 questionnaires were distributed in each visited project-based organization. It was a basic paper and pencil survey but for a quicker response, questionnaires were also provided online. It is evident from past studies that respondents fill it easier and convenient to fill the questionnaires. However, no significant effect on the quality of data is observed so far regardless of data collection approach (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001)

All the items in the questionnaire were responded to using a 5-points Likert-scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree and for social undermining on another scale as well where 1 represents Not at all, 2 represents to a smaller extent, 3 represents to some extent, 4 represents to a moderate extent and 5 represents to a greater extent. Around 360 questionnaires were distributed on a whole but only 282 were received. For the analysis purpose, however, only 256 genuine responses were included while the incomplete papers inappropriate for the analysis were discarded.

3.10.1.1 Narcissistic Project Leadership

Leader narcissism was measured using most widely used 40 items Narcissistic Personality Inventory NPI-40 adopted from (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Scale consists of items such as “I would prefer to be a leader” and “I am a born leader”. Respondents indicated the strength of agreement to these statements on a 5-point Likert scale whereby, 1 is equal to “Strongly Disagree” and 5 is equal to “Strongly Agreed”. Earlier this scale has been indicated as a sound and frequently used inventory to measure narcissism in normal population (Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; Owens, Wallace, & Waldman, 2015) and used in a number of researches for measuring leader narcissism (Popper, 2002; Brunell et al., 2008; Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010; Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012; Ong et al., 2016).

3.10.1.2 Social Undermining

Social Undermining scale consists of 13 items such as “Project Leader has intentionally, hurt your Feelings” and “Put you down when you questioned work performance” drawn from (Duffy et al., 2002). Respondents indicated the strength of agreement to these statements on a 5-point Likert scale whereby, 1 is equal to “Strongly disagree” and 5 is equal to “Strongly agree”

3.10.1.3 Project Culture

The scale for project culture consists of 13 items such as “In this project members are encouraged to interact with other groups”, “In this project In this project senior management clearly supports the role of knowledge sharing in project success” and “In this project team members are encouraged to explore and experiment” adapted from (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Respondents indicated the strength of agreement to these statements on a 5-point Likert scale whereby, 1 is equal to “Strongly disagree” and 5 is equal to “Strongly agree”.

3.10.1.4 Project Employee Performance

Project Employee performance was measured using 11 items leader rated employee performance scale adopted from (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Each Project leader rated project employee for their performance through this scale. In other words, each project employee was rated by their project leader or direct reporting line. The items cover a broad array of job performance indicators including quantity, quality, efficiency, overall ability, judgment, accuracy, job knowledge, and creativity in performing employees assigned roles. Sample items include, “This Project Employee’s job knowledge with reference to core job tasks is high”.

TABLE 3.6: Instruments.

No	Variable	Source	Items
1	Narcissistic Project Leadership (IV)	(Raskin & Terry, 1988)	40
2	Social Undermining (Med)	(Duffy et al., 2002)	13
3	Project Employee Performance (DV)	(Tsui et al., 1997)	11
4	Project Culture (Mod)	(Gold et al., 2001)	13

3.11 Statistical Tool

The relationship between narcissistic leadership which is the independent variable and Project employee performance which is the dependent variable single linear regression was performed. Regression analysis studies, the impact of different factors on the dependent variable to show if the provided claims of literature about the variables and their relationship regarding the proposed model are supporting the acceptance or rejection of hypothesis. Furthermore, mediation and moderation analysis was performed using Preacher and Hayes (2004) methods. It provides multiple options and different models for mediation and moderation analysis. For mediation analysis model 4 while model 1 is used for moderation analysis. The moderation and mediation method has to be applied separately but both involve three steps. In the first step, the dependent variable is put in outcome column i.e project employee performance; than Independent variable. Narcissistic leadership is put in IV column. After that covariant column allows the researcher to put all the demographics.

For testing the measurement model IBM AMOS has been utilized. The models were analyzed through t statistics which include different indices RMSEA, GFI, CFI and AGFI. RMSEA analyze model goodness with population covariance matrix. Threshold values of RMSEA vary according to different authors. According

to MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996) value equal to 0.10 or below is acceptable. Whereas, according to Schumacker and Lomax (2004) value less than 0.05 is considered as best model fit. The acceptable range of CFI is 0-1 where values that are close to 1 represents good model fit and values which is below 0.90 is considered poor model fit whereas, value above 0.90 is acceptable range also lies between 0 to 1 where value below 0.80 is considered poor model fit and value above 0.80 is acceptable. Similarly, the AGFI values acceptable range is 0-1. values should be almost close to 1 for good model fit. Just like AGFI value below 0.80 is considered poor model fit and above is acceptable.

3.11.1 Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been utilized to study the model of measurement consisting of four latent variables: narcissistic leadership, social undermining, project culture and project employee performance. The combination of different fit indices was used to evaluate the model fit comprised of chi-square model, approximate root means square error approximation (RMSEA), Comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and incremental fit index (IFI).

Comparative Fit Index (CFI) index commences that latent variables are not correlated and relates the covariance matrix sample along this null model. The considered range of CFI is between 0 and 1 and value should be near to 1 as an indicator of good model fit. An acceptable model fit has values above 0.90 while a poor fit lies below 0.90.

Byrne (2016) states that root mean square error approximation RMSEA evaluates the goodness of model with population co-variance matrix. Researchers have suggested varied threshold values of RMSEA. A few suggest the less than 0.05 as accurate value of RMSEA representative of best model fit (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Other authors state that 0.06-0.08 should be the designed range of RMSEA (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Sometimes a value equal to 0.10 or below 0.10 is considered acceptable (MacCallum et al., 1996). The measurement model was

tested initially and Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed on the basis of fit statistics criteria.

3.11.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis for each Latent Variable

3.11.2.1 Narcissistic Leadership

Narcissistic leadership, the independent variable of the study was coded as “NM” that consists of 40 items in the scale. The factor loading of this scale was NL1 = 0.50, NL2 = 0.53, NL3 = 0.67, NL4 = 0.88 and NL5 = 0.96, NL6 = 1.08, NL7 = 1.02, NL8 = 0.72, NL9 = 0.97, NL10 = 1.03, NL11 = 1.16, NL12 = 0.79, NL13 = 0.96, NL14 = 1.14, NL15 = 0.93, NL16 = 0.95, NL17 = 0.98, NL18 = 1.18, NL19 = 1.14, NL20 = 1.09, NL21 = 1.16, NL22 = 1.00, NL23 = 1.00, NL24 = 1.05, NL25 = 1.18, NL26 = 1.13, NL27 = 0.90, NL28 = 1.08, NL29 = 1.12, NL30 = 1.02, NL31 = 0.66, NL32 = 0.52, NL33 = 0.79, NL34 = 0.68, NL35 = 0.75, NL36 = 0.63, NL37 = 0.92, NL38 = 1.14, NL39 = 0.78 and NL40 = 0.62. The results of narcissistic leadership were favorable and there no item was needed to be deleted any item because the values are on acceptable criteria.

3.11.2.2 Social Undermining

Social Undermining the mediating variable of the study was coded as “SUM” that consists of 13 items in the scale. The factor loading of this scale was SU1 = 1.10, SU2 = 1.16, SU3 = 1.04, SU4 = 0.75, SU5 = 1.05, SU6 = 1.00, SU7 = 1.01, SU8 = 0.73, SU9 = 1.04, SU10 = 1.03, SU11 = 1.03, SU12 = 1.04 and SU13 = 0.96. The favorable results of Social Undermining depict no need to delete any item having values on acceptable criteria.

3.11.2.3 Project Culture

Project Culture the dependent variable of the study was coded as “PCT” that consists of 13 items in the scale. The factor loading of this scale was PC1 = 1.00,

PC2= 1.10, PC3= 1.01, PC4= 1.07, PC5= 1.06, PC6= 0.94, PC7= 1.08, PC8= 1.03, PC9= 0.54, PC10= 0.59, PC11= 0.70, PC12= 0.67 and PC13= 0.94. The values of project culture are also on acceptable criteria and favorable results show no need to delete any item.

3.11.2.4 Employee Performance

Employee Performance is the moderating variable of the study was coded as “PEP” that consists of 11 items in the scale. The factor loading of this scale was EP1= 1.62, EP2= 1.20, EP3= 1.49, EP4= 1.13, EP5= 1.28, EP6= 1.22, EP7= 1.64, EP8= 1.21, EP9= 1.54, EP10= 1.57 and EP11= 1.00. The results of EP were favorable and its values are on acceptable criteria showing no need to delete any item.

3.11.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Complete Model

The measurement model showed favorable results ($(\chi^2/df)=2.22$, IFI= 0.92; TLI=0.90; CFI=0.91; RMSEA= 0.06) shown in table 3.7. A satisfactory validity is shown through CFA results of the four-factor model. The factor loadings range from 0.50 to 1.62 shows that all the items are loaded significantly on their respective latent factors. 0.05 is the ideal criteria for testing by (Thompson, 2000) for RMSEA. However, 0.06 is also acceptable.

TABLE 3.7: Measurement Model.

Model	Factors	χ^2	Df	RMESA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Baseline	Four Factors	5080.706***	2280	0.06	0.92	0.90	0.91
hypothesized model							

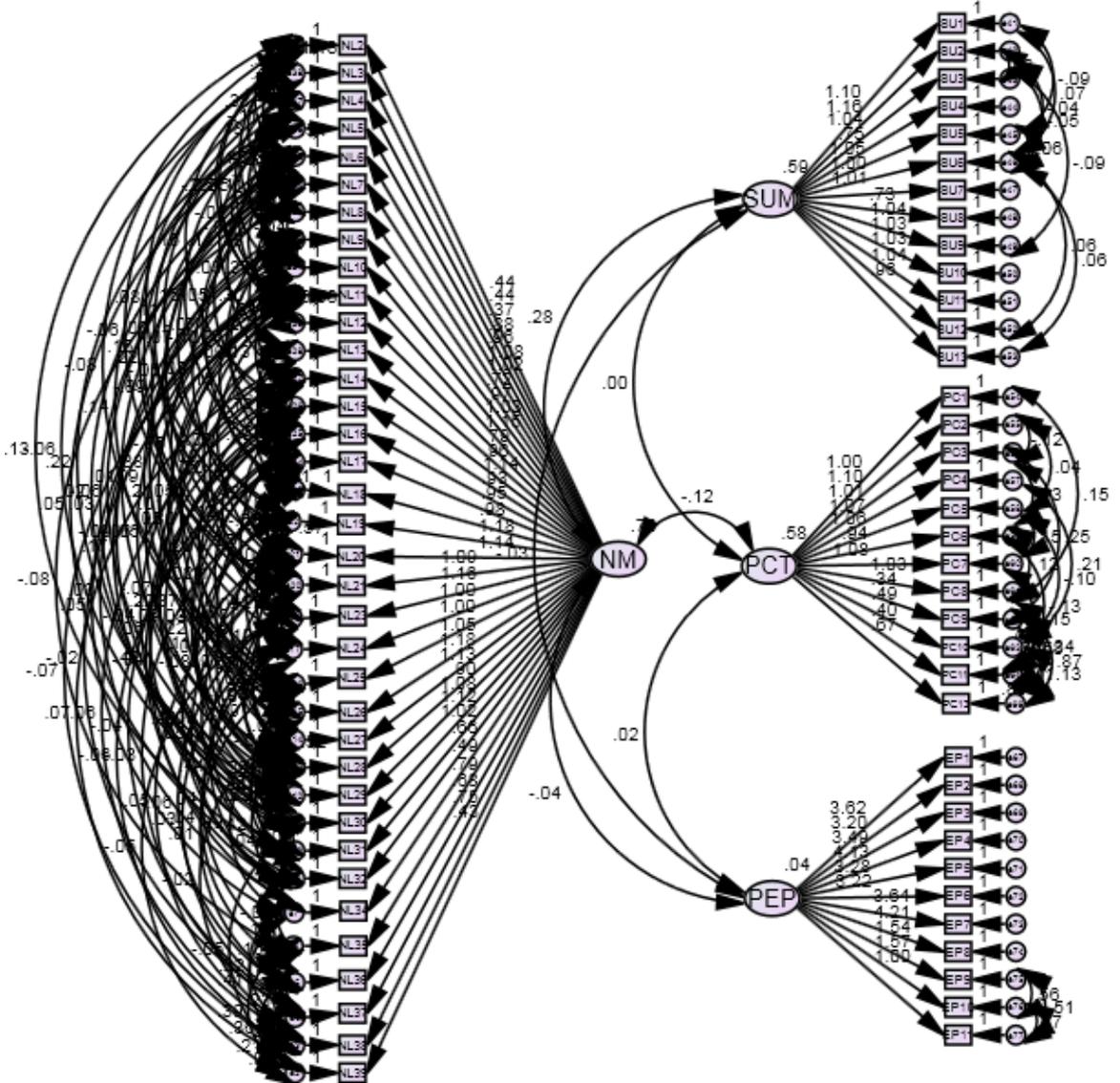


FIGURE 3.1: CFA for complete model

3.12 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is recommended before testing on a larger measure as it is a proactive approach to avoid risks related to wastage of resources and time. It was validated through the pilot testing of almost 35 questionnaires if results are in line with the proposed model or not. There were no significant issues highlighted after performing pilot testing and it was found that scales were categorically reliable for conducted pilot study.

3.13 Reliability Analysis of Scales Used

Reliability analysis is such a method in which when an item or scale is tested over a number of times it gives same consistent outcomes repeatedly. Reliability of the scale means that the scale has the ability to give consistent outcomes over and over again when it is tested multiple times. In this study, reliability is tested through Cronbach alpha. Which shows the reliability of a single construct and variable's internal reliability as well as link between those variables. The range of Cronbach alpha is 0 to 1. The smaller value represents smaller reliability, whereas, the higher value represents higher reliability. In this study, while measuring a selected set of construct Cronbach alpha value above 0.7 is considered as reliable whereas, below 0.7 is considered as less reliable.

Table 3.8 shows the Cronbach alpha values for the variables of current study are above 0.7 indicating that these scales are highly reliable to be used in this study according to the context of Pakistan.

TABLE 3.8: Scales Reliability.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Narcissistic Project Leadership	0.967	40
Social Undermining	0.946	13
Project Culture	0.811	13
Project Employee Performance	0.806	11

3.14 Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, version 20 of SPSS software was used in order to examine the data. The series of steps involved while analyzing the data for the current study are as follows;

1. The first step involves only selecting the questionnaires that were complete and appropriate in terms of responses.
2. After selecting appropriate questionnaires, variables and their associated data were coded for data analysis in SPSS.
3. For explaining characteristics of the sample, frequency tables were used.
4. Numerical values of the variables were used for conducting descriptive statistics.
5. The reliability test was performed through Cronbach alpha.
6. To justify the measurement model CFA (confirmatory factor analysis was used).
7. Correlation analysis was performed to signify if there is any significant relationship exist between the variables or not.
8. To determine the proposed relationship between independent variable Narcissistic project leadership and dependent variable project employee performance single linear regression analysis is performed.
9. Preacher and Hayes process is used in order to conduct moderation and mediation analysis by using model 1 and 4 respectively.
10. To test the acceptance and rejection of proposed hypothesis correlation and Preacher and Hayes methods were used.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter includes the results of descriptive statistics (Mean & Standard deviation), analysis of correlation, regression analysis along with moderation and mediation analysis. The results of analysis are depicting if the hypotheses of study are accepted or not. In order to conduct analysis Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used. For confirmatory factor analysis of latent variables, analysis of moment structures (AMOS) was used which is an added manual of SPSS.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Analysis of correlation was carried out to examine if a relationship exists among the variables of research. The primary objective to perform analysis of correlation was to figure out the association of Narcissistic project leadership and project employee performance, mediating role of social undermining along with moderation of project culture to validate the anticipated hypotheses. Correlation analysis tells about the degree of variation between two variables but being different from regression analysis it doesn't cater association of two or more than two variables. Correlation analysis also called Pearson correlation analysis indicate the degree and strength of the association ranging between -0.1 to 0.1 termed as Pearson

correlation range. The distance of correlation from zero signifies the strength of the relationship between two variables.

More the correlation is away from zero more the relationship is stronger among two variables and more the correlation is closer to zero, weaker is the relationship. The nature of relationship is denoted by a negative or positive sign; where a positive sign indicates a direct relationship that increases in one variable increases other and a negative sign shows an indirect relationship that increasing one variable will decrease the other variable and no relationship exists at zero.

The correlations, mean and standard deviation between the variables of the study are given in the table as below illustrating the extent and nature of relationship between the variables.

TABLE 4.1: Means, Standard Deviation, Correlation

S.No	Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4
1	Narcissistic Project Leadership	3.1210	0.776	1			
2	Social Undermining	3.2079	0.785	.383**	1		
3	Project Culture	2.9239	0.772	-.454**	-.262**	1	
4	Project Employee's Performance	3.2003	0.648	-.370**	-.272**	.204**	1

* $P < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < .001$ N=256 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.1 depicts that Narcissistic Leadership, has a mean of 3.1210 with a standard deviation of .77654. The mediator, Social Undermining mean is 3.2079 while standard deviation is .78552. Project culture has a mean value of 2.9239 and a standard deviation of value .77246. Employee performance mean value is 3.2003 and a standard deviation of 0.64833.

Correlation Table 4.1 illustrates a significant negative relationship between Narcissistic leadership and project employee performance where $r = -.370^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$. Moreover, narcissistic leadership has a significant positive relationship with Social undermining where $r = .383^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$. Also, narcissistic leadership has a significant negative relationship with project culture where $r = -.454^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$. Similarly, Social undermining has a significant negative relationship

with project employee performance $r = -.272^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$. There is a negative relationship between project culture and social undermining where $r = -.262^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$. A significant and positive association exists between Project Culture and project employee performance, where $r = .204^{**}$ at $p < 0.01$.

4.2 Regression Analysis

It is not sufficient to rely on correlation analysis solely as it does not indicate if variables of study have any casual relation; rather it only signifies a relation exists among variables provided with insufficient support. Because of lack of substantial evidence correlation provides, about the relationship, regression analysis is carried out that validate the degree of dependence of one variable over the other one. It depicts how much one variable depends on the other variable.

For mediation and moderation, Preacher & Hayes method of regression analysis has been used in current study. Mediation analysis was performed to see the mediating role of social undermining between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance through model 4. While, model 1 of [Preacher and Hayes \(2004\)](#) is applied to observe if project culture is the moderating between Narcissistic leadership and social undermining.

TABLE 4.2: The mediating effect of Social Undermining

		β	se	t	p
Narcissistic Project Leadership	→ Project Employee Performance	-0.26	.05	-4.97	.00
Narcissistic Project Leadership	→ Social Undermining	0.38	.05	6.61	.00
Social Undermining	→ Project Employee Performance	-0.13	.05	-2.44	.00

$N=256$, * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$

Table 4.2 shows that narcissistic project leadership has a significant and negative relationship with project employee performance. The unstandardized regression coefficient results are a strong justification for hypothesis acceptance. Therefore, H_1 : Narcissistic project leadership is negatively and significantly associated with project employee performance is accepted ($\beta=-.26$, $t=-4.97$, $p= .00$). Similarly, results also show that H_2 : Narcissistic leadership is positively and significantly associated with social undermining is accepted as depicted by unstandardized regression coefficient ($\beta= .38$, $t= 6.61$, $p= .00$). H_3 : Social undermining is negatively and significantly associated with project employee performance.is also accepted based on the unstandardized regression coefficients ($\beta=-.13$, $t= -2.44$, $p= .00$).

TABLE 4.3: Mediation of Social Undermining between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Project Employee's Performance

Direct Effect of IV on DV in presence of M	Total Impact of IV on DV		Bootstrap results for Indirect Effects		
	B	T	B	T	LL 95% CL
-0.26	-4.97	-0.12	-2.44	-0.36	-0.15

Note. Un-standardized regression coefficient stated. Bootstrap sample size 5000. LL =lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit. $N=256$, * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$

Table 4.3 shows the effect of narcissistic leadership on project employee performance through social undermining has the upper limit -0.36 and lower limit -0.15. clearly indicating that it doesn't contain zero in the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval. Therefore, results show that social undermining is mediating between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance. So, H_4 : Social undermining is mediating between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance is also accepted.

TABLE 4.4: The Moderating effect of project culture

		β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Int_term	→ Social	-0.09	0.08	-1.11	0.26
Undermining					

N=256, * *P* < .05; ** *P* < .01

Table 4.4 results show that project culture doesn't act as a conditional factor or moderator between narcissistic leadership and social undermining as depicted by unstandardized regression analysis ($\beta = -0.09$, $t = -1.11$, $p = .26$). Hence H_5 : Project culture moderates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and social undermining; such that when project culture is high, the positive relation between Narcissistic Leadership and Social undermining weakens, is rejected.

4.3 Summary of Accepted/ Rejected Hypothesis

TABLE 4.5: Hypotheses Summarized Results.

Hypothesis	Statements	Results
H_1	Narcissistic Leadership in Projects negatively predicts Project Employee's Performance	Accepted
H_2	There is a positive relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and social undermining.	Accepted
H_3	There is a negative association between Social undermining and Project Employee's Performance.	Accepted
H_4	Social Undermining mediates the relationship between Narcissistic Project leadership and project employee's performance	Accepted

<i>H</i> ₅	Project Culture moderates the relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining, such that when Project Culture is high (Supportive) the positive relation between Narcissistic Leadership and Social undermining weakens	Rejected
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Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This chapter comprises of discussion related to major findings in support of proposed model of the study. The chapter explains results of hypothesis testing through proper references of previous researches related to the domain of study. This discussion is followed by practical and theoretical implications, limitations, overall recommendations about leader narcissism in a deeper context and lastly, suggestions for the future researches. The discussion concludes with a general summary of our study.

The basic emphasis of our research was to create an understanding of relationship between narcissistic leadership in projects and performance of project employees' working in project-based organization of Pakistan. In addition, our study focused on examining the mediating mechanism of 'social undermining' between Narcissistic leaders in projects and project employee performance as well as attempt is made to explore moderating role of 'Project Culture' between narcissistic leadership and social undermining.

For this a theoretical framework was established, on the basis of which we hypothesized certain relationships between variables of study. The results of our research state that narcissistic leadership has a negative impact on project employee's performance, indicating that if narcissistic are involved in projects in

leadership roles they somehow restrict the performance of employees ultimately limiting the smooth execution of project.

Whereas narcissistic leadership has a positive association with social undermining. Also, a negative association between social undermining and project employee's performance has been found. Likewise, in support of our claims, results have revealed that that social undermining has a negative & adverse effect on project employee performance. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis which states that social undermining is mediating between narcissistic project leadership and project employee performance is also accepted. Therefore, the four hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 and H_4 are accepted as shown through the results, however project culture has been found with no moderating role between narcissistic project leadership and social undermining being termed as an insignificant moderator of the model because the relationship between two variables doesn't change with the presence of project culture.

Each hypothesis is thoroughly discussed as below:

5.1.1 Hypothesis H_1 : Narcissistic Project Leadership in Projects Negatively Predicts Project Employee Performance

Hypothesis 1 signified that narcissistic project leadership is negatively and significantly associated with project employee performance and the results of the hypothesis ($\beta=-.26$, $t= -4.97$, $p= .00$) predicting the presence a significant and negative association between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance in support of hypothesis. The coefficient value $-.26$ indicating that one-unit change in project narcissistic leadership will bring 26 % decrease in project employee performance. Also, $t = -4.97$ showing a significant negative relationship between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance as $t>2$ represents statistical significance.

There is enough literature in support of above mentioned accepted hypothesis of the study. It was revealed that narcissist leaders are not supportive in their interpersonal relationships and mostly lack empathy for their workers that create an unpleasant experience for employees leading to their non-productive behavior (Heneman et al., 1999; Padilla et al., 2007; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). It enhances the focus of management on Narcissistic leadership behavior due to which employees' experience inability to meet targets necessary for performance improvement (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2003; Tepper, 2007; Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Zhu & Chen, 2015). In contrast, it can be assumed that employee performance is enhanced with empathy, appraisal and support (Salanova et al., 2005) that is lacked by narcissist leaders.

Previously few researches have explored 'productive' or bright side of narcissistic leaders comprising of their abilities like charisma and magnetic personality that may attract a potential follower (Maccoby, 2000; Tepper, 2007). However, studies suggest that even bright side of narcissists is productive only for organizations in terms of their ability to convince workforce to achieve goals; but still its toxic for employees (Martinko et al., 2013) Literature claims that, in the long run the same bright side is exploitive for employee's psychological well-being, lethal for their personal growth and creative abilities because of the use of coercion and power by a narcissist leader that in turn results in deteriorating their performance (Campbell et al., 2011). However, our research has focused the dark side or the dark traits of narcissistic leaders in projects and it is proved that the consequences are negative.

A cluster of dark traits of narcissistic leaders including vulnerability to criticism, lacking empathy, desire for power and to control others, and inability to accept their mistakes; are the traits that limit employee's ability to perform with full confidence hence diminish their productivity (Vazire & Funder, 2006; Martinko et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Mach & Baruch, 2015). Literature has strong evidence signifying that narcissists in leading positions at their worst are extremely destructive for employees working under them, given their inappropriate and potentially destabilizing attitude hence restricting the work-related success

(Leary & Ashman, 2018; Whetten, 2006; Vazire & Funder, 2006; Miller et al., 2017; Foster & Trimm, 2008).

Our research has solely focused on the dark and negative side of narcissistic leadership and its adverse effects on project employee performance as proven through the hypothesis under discussion. Consequently, through literature support and after acceptance of our hypothesis, it is indicated that narcissistic individuals exist in Project-based organizations of Pakistan working in lead roles, and their flawed leadership traits and behaviors influence employee behavior and hinder their performance reducing the overall turnover of the project.

5.1.2 Hypothesis H_2 : There is a Positive Relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining of Project Employee

Hypothesis 2 postulated that narcissistic leadership in projects is positively associated with social undermining as shown in the results of this hypothesis, there is a presence of positive and significant relationship through values of $\beta = .38$, $t = 6.61$, $p = .00$. The value of β coefficient is .38 representing that one-unit change in narcissistic leadership in projects will bring 38% increase in social undermining of project employee. The value of $t > 2$ indicates a significant association, so the results showing $t = 6.61$ representing a statistically significant association of Project narcissistic leadership and social undermining of project employee. In other words, results are depicting that the presence of a narcissistic leader in projects tends to socially undermine the project employee working in close interaction with them.

Literature has also supported the above-mentioned results regarding the positive relationship between narcissistic leadership and social undermining. There is substantial amount of evidence-based research that suggest that narcissistic leaders being toxic in nature act as an extremely social and role stressor that harms employee emotional well-being by undermining them socially hence pushing them to behave aggressively and indulge in sabotage (Barling & Frone, 2017; Zineldin & Hytter, 2012; Martinko et al., 2013).

Previously studies have established that narcissist in leading roles have a strong desire to control their followers hence they urge to misuse their power and promote negative interpersonal relationships (Anderson & Brion, 2014) through deliberately hindering a worker to perform well and intentionally damage their reputation, hence socially undermine them (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Moreover, studies by (Guinote & Vescio, 2010) and (Camm, 2014) also suggest that narcissist leader's being arrogant towards workforce, are occupied with a sense of high social supremacy and display in ordinate power and prestige leading to social undermining of workforce.

With the acceptance of H_2 , it is generalized that project leader narcissism is associated with social undermining of project employees working in project-based organizations of Pakistan. Besides literature support, this line of research had limited insight in terms of evidence-based findings. Our study has provided evidence against our claims in support of under discussion hypothesis of the study that narcissistic leadership tends to be a potential antecedent of social undermining of employees working in different projects. As demonstrated by results of our study, more the leader is narcissist more there is a tendency to undermine the follower, resulting in diminished outcomes contrary to the desirable targets of project. It is revealed through the findings of study that various forms of social undermining are prevalent in project-based organizations of Pakistan as one of the harmful consequences narcissist leaders are capable of that in turn is a big hurdle for smoother and successful implementation of projects in rapidly growing project-based organizations in Pakistan.

5.1.3 Hypothesis H_3 : There is a Negative Association between Social Undermining and Project Employee Performance.

Hypothesis 3 of the study assumed that social undermining is negatively and significantly associated with project employee performance. This hypothesis is supported through the results as well ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -2.44$, $p = .00$). Meanwhile, the

β co-efficient appeared to be -0.13 which is indicating that one-unit increase in social undermining of project employees by a narcissist project leader will bring 13 % percent decrease in project employee performance. In addition, value of $t > 2$ illustrates statistical significance, therefore in this hypothesis $t = -2.44$ shows significantly negative association of social undermining with project employee performance.

Past studies also support the results of hypothesis as stating that social Undermining behaviors are demotivating and they directly harm work attitudes (Buch, Martinsen, & Kuvaas, 2015; Judge & Piccolo, 2004) and affective commitment to assigned tasks (Jackson, Meyer, & Wang, 2013). It is evident through studies by Schyns and Schilling (2013) that social undermining is associated with a number of potential harms to the workforce including damaged well-being and confidence hence resulting in employees' reduced performance.

Judge and Piccolo (2004) suggested in a study that social undermining behaviors are work or role stressors that contribute to negative work-related outcomes including employee poor well-being and depression (Schmidt, Roesler, Kusserow, & Rau, 2014) leading to role ambiguity or poor role clarity that limits the expected performance (Jackson et al., 2013). Also, evidence exist in literature that social undermining harms individual emotional resources hence damaging their commitment to work and capability to perform (Zineldin & Hytter, 2012; Buch et al., 2015). In the long run, such behaviors badly affect the overall effectiveness by restricting the team deployed on diversified work settings as suggested by Barling and Frone (2017), particularly in project-based work settings.

Social undermining being a social stressor is always a serious danger to the workforce as well as work environment. This kind of behavior promotes unhealthy work-related interpersonal interactions and exchanges that are never desirable for successful completion of project. With the acceptance of H_3 it is proved that project employees are often being socially undermined and this demotivate their ability to give their best which in turn effects the project success. The basic purpose of establishing a project-based environment is to complete the projects within triple constraints and utilizing the maximum potential of project employees, that

is impossible with the exitance of social undermining as it discourages project employees to initiate and progress in desirable manner hence limit their performance. On the other hand, socially, supportive environment is required to overcome the work-related issues hence improving the productivity and self-motivation to perform needed for project success.

5.1.4 Hypothesis H_4 : Social Undermining Mediates the Relationship between Project Narcissistic Leadership and Project Employee Performance.

The fourth hypothesis H_4 postulated that social undermining mediates the relationship between narcissistic leaders in Projects and Project employee performance. The results of our study are supporting the hypothesis. It is indicated through results that the indirect effect of narcissistic leadership on project employee performance through social undermining has the upper Limit - 0.36 and lower limit -0.15 showing that it doesn't contain zero in the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval. Therefore, results illustrate social undermining is mediating between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance, accepting the hypothesis.

The results of the current study are supported through the earlier evidence in literature that have established a link between Narcissistic leadership and social undermining behaviors and deviant workplace behaviors (Tai et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2002). Studies have indicated that excessive undermining by individuals in leading roles is associated with negative performance-related outcomes.e.g. aimlessness, the decline in work motivation, and low life quality (Creed & Moore, 2006). Social undermining demotivates employees at workplace, and reduce their performance by directly affecting their cognitive and emotional resources hence limiting their output (Strongman, 2013; Nahum-Shani, Lim, Henderson, & Vinokur, 2013).

Scholars emphasized that leader narcissism is a direct threat to a healthy workplace and social relationships as undermining being mere absence support create a sense

of injustice among followers causing them to retaliate in the form of deviant work behavior (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Liu, Liao, & Wei, 2014). It is suggested through studies that Narcissist at the top positions claims false sense of grandiosity by taking credit of success which in turn promote distrust, emotional sense of distance with their subordinates hence undermining them ultimately decreasing employee's potential to perform (Sankowsky, 1995; Martinko et al., 2013).

H4 of the study was illustrating that social undermining mediates the relationship between narcissistic leaders in Projects and Project employee performance; the results of the study have supported the fourth hypothesis. Hence after the acceptance of this hypothesis we reached to conclusion that narcissistic leaders tend to socially undermine follower employees that in turn affect their performance. It has been proven through results of hypothesis that narcissistic leadership is one of the potential antecedents of undermining behaviors; that prevails within project-based organizations of Pakistan and create disharmony between project leaders and project employees exerting a negative effect on their productive performance. In other words, the acceptance of the fourth hypothesis highlights the existence of phenomena pertaining to our basic research question hence proves that narcissistic leaders exist in projects, tends to undermine the project employees working under them which has obvious negative project- based organizational consequences such as low performance, reduced productivity, and less turnover in the workplace.

5.1.5 Hypothesis H_5 : Project Culture Moderates the Relationship between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining, such that when Project Culture is High (Supportive) the Positive relation between Narcissistic Project Leadership and Social Undermining Weakens.

The fifth hypothesis H_5 of our study was Project Culture moderates the relationship between Narcissistic Leadership and Social Undermining, such that when

Project Culture is high (Supportive) the positive relation between Narcissistic Leadership and Social undermining weakens. However, the hypothesis 5 of the study is not supported through results depicting project culture doesn't moderates between narcissistic leadership and social undermining on the basis of unstandardized regression analysis ($\beta = -0.09$, $t = -1.11$, $p = .26$). The value of $t = -1.11$ is less than 2 ($t < 2$) representing a statistically insignificant association and the upper limit value of -0.24 and lower limit value of 0.06 indicating presence of zero in bootstrapped 95% of the confident interval upper and lower limits ($-0.24, 0.06$) showing no moderation. Therefore H_5 : Project culture moderates the relationship between narcissistic leadership in projects and social undermining of project employee such that when the project culture is high the positive relationship between variables weakens, is rejected.

Literature suggests that workplace culture is a dynamic interplay between destructive leadership and follower behavior that it's a supportive or non-supportive culture that chiefly predicts how employees will perceive and reciprocate to their toxic leadership both emotionally as well practically (Maseko, 2017). On the basis of similar evidence it was hypothesized that project culture moderates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and social undermining as in the presence of supportive or high project culture employees are believed to be less affected by toxic or negative effects of narcissistic leadership (Brewer & Clippard, 2002), such that positive relation between narcissistic leadership and social undermining weakens. However, by looking at the statistically insignificant results, hypothesis is not accepted accordingly depicting that project culture do not act as a potential moderator between narcissistic leadership and social undermining of project employee.

There can be a number of reasons due to which our speculation wasnt supported. One of the reasons for this insignificant relationship as suggested by past studies can be perception of project employees about existing project culture. As Silvester, Anderson, and Patterson (1999) and Marrewijk (2007) stated that project culture involves open communication, support & cooperation, knowledge sharing, valuing individual expertise, shared beliefs and ideas in line with the goals of project, for a

specified period of time. However, there is a clear distinction between establishing and implementing (or adopting) a particular project culture and it depends on how a project employee is perceiving the project culture (Aronson, 2015). In a project, where employees are in a close and direct one to one interaction with their leader, control and command prevails and project leader being a narcissist lacks support and instead keep demotivating and undermining the innovative & creative abilities of project employees, impact of project culture will be suppressed and will not be perceived by employees as per expectations, irrespective of presence of a high positive project culture (Dougherty, 1992; Mach & Baruch, 2015; Suda, 2006).

Also, the perception of project culture varies from employee to employee because project-based work often involves employees from diverse settings, different level of expertise and varied exposure hence have different levels of susceptibility, emotional well-being, therefore they retaliate and respond differently against a dominating, non-empathetic narcissist leader (Singh & Dutch, 2012; Padilla et al., 2007). Mostly it happens when project employees are vulnerable to the mistreatment, exploitation and strong influence of their narcissist leader which may mask the effect of supportive project culture (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2003; Nevicka et al., 2018). Therefore, a high or positive project culture may exist there but it doesn't necessarily mean it is adopted and effective as it was supposed to hence its impact is suppressed.

Another reason may be the phenomena of 'Power distance' as in most of Asian countries there is a high power distance culture where employees are most likely to follow their leaders without any arguments and they don't feel any problem in accepting the dominance of their leaders (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016; Hofstede, 2010). Literature also suggests that in the presence of high power distance, the toxic behavior of leaders high on dark triad is judged less harshly and very much acceptable by the followers, therefore, a culture of support and cooperation is not likely to prevail (Pilch & Turska, 2015; Anderson & Brion, 2014).

Therefore, it can be established that Pakistan being an Asian country has a high-power distance culture and project employees easily accept the power and dominance of narcissist leader and therefore are exploited and undermined by their leader's mistreatment without raising any concerns; hence a high project culture may not prevail or unlikely to moderate between the narcissist leader and his undermining behavior. However, these are only the assumptions and we need to explore it further for providing concrete evidence to our claims.

5.2 Research Implications and Suggestions

So far, no previous study has examined the impact of narcissistic project leadership on project employee performance particularly in Pakistani context; therefore, our study has both theoretical as well as practical implications tend to be fruitful for Project Based organizations in Pakistan in a number of ways. Theoretically, our study is capable to contribute to the existing leadership literature, Personality research and most importantly the contemporary domain of Project management, hence opening new avenues and novel dimension adding to existing limited knowledge. The findings of the study are practically considerable and relatable since a positive and significant relationship between narcissistic leadership and project employee performance has been proven along with meditating role of social undermining which is receiving great attention in recent times due to its inadequate evidence through previous studies but adverse effects on the stability of projects and associated workforce in the context of Pakistan.

Researches have been conducted on narcissistic leadership since long but due to complex nature of phenomena either it has a good or bad impact on work behavior is never clearly answered highlighting need to explore it further. Though, to the best of my knowledge, no intervening mechanisms under varied settings are explored to date as performed in our model; introducing social undermining as a mediator that is revealed as a possible outcome of narcissistic project leadership which in turn effects project employee performance. The findings of this study

validated that narcissistic leadership can and promote social undermining, that consequently negatively predicts project employee performance.

Practically, given the negative impact of narcissistic leaders on susceptible followers, project-based organizations can devise strategies to restrict narcissists' entry to leadership roles or getting rid of narcissistic leaders altogether; which can be done through using screening tests at the time of recruitment or even during the job period time to time. Though, it may appear to be a good alternative avoiding narcissistic individuals in leadership roles, however, another option best suited in projected based settings can be utilizing narcissist for their positive characteristics beneficial for projects; or in other cases making the project employees' trained enough to deal with the leaders with narcissistic tendencies hence avoiding being socially undermined by them which is actually providing best t between project leader and their task force.

Besides, our study has explored a less touched domain of socially undermining behaviors and findings of study have established that social undermining is costly being associated with multiple negative consequences at workplace. Therefore taking into accounts its implication in practice, our study emphasize taking serious steps to prevent and mitigate adverse effects of latter in triple constrained projects hence promoting mandatory healthy workplace relationships, open communication, cooperation and trust, which in turn prevent conflict and consequently improve project employee's output. Furthermore, exploring the dynamics of Project narcissistic leadership along with social undermining will make a positive contribution to revamp and improve existing Project management practices by assisting and training project leaders for appropriate workplace behaviors through clearly communicating policies for smooth and successful execution of projects running in different organizations of Pakistan.

5.3 Limitations of Research

Despite of extensive literature on narcissistic leadership and mounting research trends in social undermining as an antecedent of employee poor performance, this

domain of research is still in the early stages of progress. Our study has revealed various notable insights into this emergent literature however our study like any other study isn't without limitations. Firstly, this study was conducted within a limited time and resources that allowed choosing a medium sample size. The technique used for data collection was convenience sampling that somehow limits the generalizability of results.

Moreover, this study scrutinizes the model solely in Pakistani context, where there is a highpower distance culture, however, if taken other contexts into account, there would have been entirely different findings. A few results of the study do not turn out as per expectations and reviewed literature support. Reason of this problem can be cultural context of Pakistan therefore; these results cannot be applied to a context other than Pakistani context.

Another limitation was collection of dyadic data (i.e., one project employee per leader) so we divided questionnaire into two parts each for the project leader as well as project employee in an attempt to match responses of project leader with those of project employees that was later on merged; yet reaching leaders for collecting data was a real challenge. However, collecting multilevel data could be more beneficial for our study involving teams level interaction.

Lastly our research model focused on the dark or negative side of narcissistic leadership exclusively however, literature has detailed its bright and positive side too that could be focused yet highlighting another limitation of current study.

5.4 Future Research Directions

Our study while highlighting its limitations, also paved way into new opportunities for further research in a novel dimension. One direction can be exploring narcissist for their seemingly bright characteristics like charisma, a convincingly magnetic personality and setting bold visions in certain contexts ([Anninos, 2018](#); [Sedikides & Campbell, 2017](#)) that tend to be appreciated in corporate world ([Harrison & Clough, 2006](#)). As scholars suggest these traits let narcissist in lead roles stand firm in the face of failure and manage crisis in best possible ways ([Galvin, Lange,](#)

& Ashforth, 2015; Watts et al., 2013). Therefore, narcissist leader's bright side should also be taken into consideration for future studies in project-based settings. Further, it is suggested to study the phenomena with a different moderator like 'Emotional Intelligence' being a positive personality trait that may mitigate the harmful effects of narcissistic leadership as well as can mask the impact of social undermining led by a destructive leadership behavior (Lubit, 2004; Carmeli, 2003), hence can produce different results.

5.5 Conclusion

The present study attempted to investigate the association between narcissistic leadership in projects and project employee performance in project-based organizations of Pakistan. A questionnaire survey was carried out for data collection from the project-based organizations of Pakistan aimed to explore impact of narcissistic project leadership on project employee performance with the mediating role of social undermining and moderation of project culture. About 360 questionnaires were distributed for the purpose of investigating the proposed relations between variables of the study but only 256 questionnaires were used for the analysis purpose as only these questionnaires had genuine and complete information needed for performing the analysis. Through statistical testing it was depicted that validity and reliability of the variables of proposed model was appropriate. Also, the proposed hypotheses and results of study were supported by notion of social exchange theory that exemplifies an inverse relation between narcissistic project leadership and project employee performance. However, it was found that the hypothesis stating project culture moderates between narcissistic project leadership and social undermining was rejected which can be due to the perception of project employees about the project culture around them as being suppressed by the dominance of their narcissist leader and also due to the power distance culture in Pakistan.

Overall, this study has provided a holistic, evidence-based view of narcissistic leadership in projects and its impact on project employee performance through the mediating role of social undermining.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

I am a student of MS Project Management Capital University of Sciences & Technology, Islamabad. I am conducting a research on the topic: “Impact of Narcissistic project Leadership on Project employee performance, Mediating Role of Social undermining and moderating role of Project Culture”. You can help me by completing the attached questionnaire. I appreciate your participation in my study and I assure that your responses will be held confidential and will only be used for education purposes.

Sidra Amin,

MS Scholar,

Capital University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad.

PART 1: To be filled by the Project Leader**Demographics**

	1	2		
Gender	Male	Female		
	1	2	3	4
Age	18-25	26-33	34-41	42 and above
	1	2	3	
Qualification	Bachelors	Masters	MPhil and above	
	1	2	3	4
Experience	0-5	6-10	11-15	16 and above

Please tick the relevant choices as specified

where (1= Strongly Disagree,2= Disagree,3=Neutral,4=Agree,5=Strongly Agree)

Project Leader Narcissism

1	I see myself as a good leader.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I would prefer to be a leader.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am a born leader.	1	2	3	4	5
4	People always seem to recognize my authority.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have a natural talent for influencing people.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I like to have authority over other people.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am assertive.	1	2	3	4	5
8	If I ruled the world it would be a much better place.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I like to take responsibility for making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am more capable than other people	1	2	3	4	5

11	I can live my life in any way I want to.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I always know what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I am going to be a great person.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am an extraordinary person.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I like to be complimented.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I think I am a special person	1	2	3	4	5
18	I wish somebody would someday write my biography.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I am apt to show off if I get the chance.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I like to be the center of attention.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I would do almost anything on a dare.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I really like to be the center of attention.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I like to start new fads and fashions.	1	2	3	4	5
25	I can read people like a book.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.	1	2	3	4	5
27	I find it easy to manipulate people.	1	2	3	4	5
28	I can usually talk my way out of anything.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Everybody likes to hear my stories.	1	2	3	4	5
30	I like to look at my body.	1	2	3	4	5
31	I like to look at myself in the mirror	1	2	3	4	5
32	I like to display my body.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve	1	2	3	4	5
34	I expect a great deal from other people	1	2	3	4	5
35	I want to amount to something in the	1	2	3	4	5

	eyes of the world					
36	I have a strong will to power	1	2	3	4	5
37	I insist upon getting the respect that is due me	1	2	3	4	5
38	I can usually talk my way out of anything	1	2	3	4	5
39	I will be a success	1	2	3	4	5
40	I am more capable than other people	1	2	3	4	5

Project Employee Performance

1	This Project Employee's quantity of work is higher than average	1	2	3	4	5
2	This Project Employee's quality of work is much higher than average	1	2	3	4	5
3	The Project employee's efficiency is much higher than average	1	2	3	4	5
4	Project Employee's standards of work quality are higher than the formal standards for this job	1	2	3	4	5
5	Project Employee strives for higher quality work than required	1	2	3	4	5
6	Project Employee upholds highest professional standards	1	2	3	4	5
7	Project Employee's ability to perform core job tasks is higher than average	1	2	3	4	5
8	Project Employee's judgment when performing core job tasks is high.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Project Employee's accuracy when performing core job tasks is higher than average.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Project Employee's job knowledge with reference to core job tasks is higher than required.	1	2	3	4	5

11	Project Employee's creativity when performing core tasks is higher than average.	1	2	3	4	5
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Part 2: To be filled by the Project Employee

Dear respondent,

I am a student of MS Project Management Capital University of Sciences & Technology, Islamabad. I am conducting a research on the topic: “Impact of Narcissistic Project Leadership on Project employee performance, Mediating Role of Social undermining and moderating role of Project Culture”. You can help me by completing the attached questionnaire. I appreciate your participation in my study and I assure that your responses will be held confidential and will only be used for education purposes.

Sidra Amin,

MS Scholar,

Capital University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad.

Demographics

	1	2		
Gender	Male	Female		
	1	2	3	4
Age	18-25	26-33	34-41	42 and above
	1	2	3	
Qualification	Bachelors	Masters	MPhil and above	
	1	2	3	4
Experience	0-5	6-10	11-15	16 and above

Please tick the relevant choices as specified

where (1= Strongly Disagree,2= Disagree,3=Neutral,4=Agree,5=Strongly Agree)

Social Undermining

How often has your Project Leader has intentionally,

1	Hurt your Feelings	1	2	3	4	5
2	Put you down when you questioned work performance	1	2	3	4	5
3	Undermined your effort to be successful on Job	1	2	3	4	5
4	Let you know they didn't like you or something about you	1	2	3	4	5
5	Talked bad about you behind your back	1	2	3	4	5
6	Insulted you	1	2	3	4	5
7	Belittled your Ideas	1	2	3	4	5
8	Spread Rumors about you	1	2	3	4	5
9	Made you feel incompetent	1	2	3	4	5
10	Delayed work to made you look bad or slow you down	1	2	3	4	5
11	Talked down to you	1	2	3	4	5
12	Gave you silent treatment	1	2	3	4	5
13	Didn't defend you when people spoke poorly of you	1	2	3	4	5

Project Culture

1	In this project team members understand the importance of cooperation to project success	1	2	3	4	5
2	In this project high levels of participation are expected in capturing and transferring knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
3	In this project team members are encouraged to explore and experiment	1	2	3	4	5
4	In this project on the job training and learning are valued	1	2	3	4	5

5	In this project members are valued for their individual expertise	1	2	3	4	5
6	In this project members are encouraged to ask others for assistance when needed	1	2	3	4	5
7	In this project members are encouraged to interact with other groups	1	2	3	4	5
8	In this project members are encouraged to discuss their work with people in other teams	1	2	3	4	5
9	In this project overall project vision is clearly stated	1	2	3	4	5
10	In this project overall project objectives are clearly stated	1	2	3	4	5
11	In my organization the knowledge is shared with other organizations (e.g. partners, trade groups)	1	2	3	4	5
12	In this project the benefits of sharing knowledge outweigh the costs	1	2	3	4	5
13	In this project senior management clearly supports the role of knowledge in project success	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your time and cooperation