THE EFFECT OF LEADER NARCISSISM ON ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM AND SILENCE: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRAIN

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - Narcissism emerges as a topic that starts to gain its popularity in the organizational studies. Narcissism is associated with one's superiority towards other individuals. The present study was aimed at examining the relationship between leader narcissism, organizational cynicism, and employee's organizational silence. This study also put psychological strain as the mediator.

Design/methodology/approach- The present study involved 237 employees in five Regional Department Organization in Pemalang Regency, Indonesia. This survey study employed questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection. Probability sampling, i.e. stratified random sampling technique was used. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS).

Findings - The statistical result supported the positive relationship between leader narcissism, organizational cynicism, and employee's organizational silence, as well as the mediating effect of employee's psychological strain.

Practical implication – Leader's self-management and character are pivotal to prevent leader narcissism and other matters that harm the organization. Regarding the implication for organization, it is important for the organization to determine the criteria of a leader and ethical code of a leader. It is important since narcissistic leader will not develop and leads to organizational cynicism and organizational silence. Therefore, it is important for an organization to develop a leader selection system that ensures the capability of a leader.

Originality/value - Since the governmental sector keeps experiencing transformational changes, it is important to identify the organizational factors that affect employees' attitude. This study contributes to the literature regarding organizational cynicism and organizational silence by revealing the relationship mechanism between leader narcissism, organizational cynicism, and employee's organizational silence.

KEYWORDS: Leader Narcissism, Psychological Strain, Organizational Cynicism, Organizational Silence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on contra-productive work behavior such as cynicism, abusive supervision, and excessive organizational politics have revealed the human's dark side that affects employee and even an

organization (Tepper, 2007). O`Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, and Mc Daniel (2012) add that personality trait such as narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy may predict poor behavior. Individuals with dark triad character tend to be unethical, selfish, and wicked related to interpersonal matters (Robbins & Judge, 2015)

One of the dark triad personality traits, narcissism, is a topic that becomes popular in organizational studies (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). Narcissism is associated with one's superiority towards other individuals. According to Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, and Crysel (2012), it is more than a good feeling about themselves. A narcissist feels that they deserve more respect and admiration from other individuals Findings of studies have proven the effect of narcissism on various working outcomes. In a leadership context, leader's narcissism is found to affect employee's attitude and behavior such as contra-productive work behavior, task performance, and other negative attitudes (Robbins et al., 2015). Narcissism is also associated with workplace deviance and various unethical and exploitative behaviors such as deception tendency, lack of integrity, and even crimes in the workplace (Blair, Hoffman, &Helland, 2008). Findings of these studies prove that leader narcissism brings significantly affect employees' attitude and behavior.

A study conducted by Hot, Price, and Poatsy (2013) found that when the employee perceives their leader narcissistic and unethical, they have a bigger probability of undergoing psychological strain, stress and depression, developing negative employee's attitude such as cynicism, intention to quit, low work satisfaction and commitment. Thus, leader's narcissism represents a negative leadership of a workplace (Robbins et al., 2015). According to Avey, Wernsing, and Luthans (2008), negative leadership is one of the most significant predictors of employee's organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism can be defined as a negative attitude towards the organization. The negative attitudes comprise of three dimensions, namely: Belief that the organization lacks integrity; negative effect on the organization; and tendency to underestimate and exhibit critical behavior toward the organization (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). This attitude is characterized by frustration, discouragement, disappointment, and an insult to the organization, and belief that organization's decision lacks integrity (Neves, 2012). Further, Neves (2012) explains that when a leader exhibits low integrity, organizational cynicism tends to occur. According to Dean et al. (1998), organizational cynicism arises when an employee believes that his organization lacks integrity. More specifically, perception of lacked integrity can be caused by employee's allegation due to violation of sincerity, equality, and honesty (Kutanis&Dikili; in Topcu, Unaldi, &Bacaksiz, 2017).

In addition to employee's cynicism, negative leadership represented by leader narcissism may also result in psychological strain(Wang, 2005). Further, Wang (2005) explains that an individual who works under negative leadership shows increased health problems and experiences psychological strain, which is defined as a subjective reaction on stress factors such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, and loss of confidence. This finding is understandable within the framework of stressor-strain where

the exposure of stressor in the workplace such as negative leadership results in a negative response, which is known as strain (Spector &Jex, 1998).

On the other hand, leader narcissism viewed as representing unethical leader's behavior due to a number of reasons. First, narcissistic individual lacks empathy, exploiting others for their own benefit, lack of willingness to respect employees (Campbell & Foster, 2011). Second, narcissistic leader seems to be lack of moral awareness due to their constant selfish bustle (Roberts, 2001). Third, narcissism has been found to affect contra-productive work behavior (Judge et al., 2006). The above-mentioned reasons make a narcissistic leader is hardly accessed by employees, which eventually resulting in employee's psychological strain (Erkutlu&Chafra, 2017).

In addition to psychological strain, another problem that may arise is silence. Following Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003) silence refers to "intentionally withholding ideas, information, and opinions with relevance to improvements in work and work organization". In one side, there is a propensity that the employee makes a simple choice between to express their voice or to remain silent (Timming & Johnstone, 2015). According to Brinsfield (2012), employee's organizational silence is considered a strategy to avoid risks that may affect the employees themselves or the organization, to avoid ruining the inter-employee relationship and organizational relationship, be afraid of expressing idea and opinion. Organizational silence may also make an employee lacks self-confidence.

The present study aims to analyze the effect of leader's narcissism on the employee's psychological strain, organizational cynicism, and organizational silence. This study was conducted in Regional Government of Pemalang. The issue of leader narcissism can be faced by various organizations, including regional government. Superior-subordinate interaction within the structure of regional government bureaucracy places a huge range between the superior's position and subordinates. According to Robbins et al., (2015) high rank in a power range indicates a huge portion of the leader's authority. This may lead to the likelihood of leader's narcissism in governmental context, resulting in superior-subordinate disharmony.

One of the problems that occur is employee placement, in some regional government bureaucracy structure, the placement is carried out using the old mindset that relies on a personal relationship, or patronage system (kompasiana.com, 20 January 2016). Patronage system is strengthened by the issue of transactional position in every mutation process of civil servant (PNS) in Regency government (Pemkab) (panturanews.com, 20 May 2019). The phenomenon occurs in the regional government work environment may affect employee's performance, productivity, teamwork, motivation, and work ethic. One of the causes of problems occur in regional government work environment is leader narcissism. Therefore, it is important for the regional government to prevent the adverse effect on employees due to narcissistic leadership in an organization.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES.

2.1 Leader Narcissism and Organizational Cynicism

Leader narcissism represents an individual with excessive feeling of self-importance, which requires excessive admiration from others (Raver et al., 2010). According to Den Hartog et al., (2018), leader narcissism forms a trait depicting self-preoccupation, increasing self-view, and excessive and defensive status assertion.

A narcissistic leader views himself possessing better capacities to lead an organization than his colleagues, while employees view a narcissistic leader performs worse organizational leadership (Erkutluet al., 2017). Besides, a narcissistic leader may lead to a certain reaction from subordinates (Erkutluet al., 2017). Subordinates who perceive their leader as narcissistic may show disapproval, leading to cynicism (Erkutluet al., 2017). The previous study conducted by Erkutlu et al., (2017) found that leader narcissism positively affects organizational cynicism. Based on the studies above, the first hypothesis of this study is formulated as follow:

H1. Leader narcissism positively affects organizational cynicism.
2.2 Leader Narcissism and Psychological strain

A psychological strain refers to an affective reaction, including attitude (work dissatisfaction) or emotion (anxiety or frustration) (Siu, Phillips, dan Leung 2002). Further, De Croon, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen, and Dresen (2004) state that psychological strain is "an individual's unfavorable, dangerous psychological reaction" that may be provoked by inconvenient work condition.

Moreover, due to disconfirming, disrespectful, and covert interpersonal relationship between narcissistic leader and his subordinates, leader narcissism brings a significant negative effect on the employee (Rosenthal &Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic leadership may bring a negative effect on the employee, such as psychological strain, among others(Erkutluet al., 2017). A study conducted by Erkutlu et al. (2017) shows that leader narcissism positively affects psychological strain. Based on the studies above, the second hypothesis of this study is formulated as follow:

H2. Leader narcissism positively affects employee's psychological strain.

2.3 Leader Narcissism, Psychological Strain, and Organizational Cynicism

Leader narcissism may increase the employee's psychological strain that eventually results in organizational cynicism (Erkutluet al., 2017). This may occur because the employee is upset by narcissistic leader's behavior such as being exploitative, low relationship quality, unethical behavior, or even because the employee perceives that the leaders and the organization do not care with employee's work-life (Blair et al., 2008). A study conducted by Johnson et al. (2003) revealed that there is a positive correlation between psychological strain and organizational cynicism. A study conducted by Erkutlu et al. (2017) discovered that leader narcissism holds significant, indirect effect

on organizational cynicism, mediated by psychological strain. Based on the studies above, the third hypothesis of this study is formulated as follow:

H3. Psychological strain mediates the positive effect of leader narcissism on organizational Nissan

2.4 Psychological Strain and Organizational Cynicism

Some studies identify the causes of organizational cynicism, these causes are excessive stress, over workload, fail to satisfy personal and organizational expectation, insufficient social support, conflict of interest, increased organizational complexity, broken promises, ineffective decision-making, poor communication, and layoff (Nauset al., 2007). Besides, organizational cynicism is based on organizational factors that lead to individual's cynical attitude or organizational characteristic that leads to rejected hope and events occurring in organization (Naus et al., 2007). Moreover, organizational cynicism arises when an organization does not hold capability or sincerity, or when there is a different fundamental value between employees and the organization (Schimitzet al., 2018).

Johnson et al. (2003) show that employee's psychological train will adversely affect organization; one of the adverse effects is organizational cynicism. The study conducted by Erkutlu et al. (2017) shows that an employee's psychological strain is positively associated with organizational cynicism. Following the findings of prior studies, the fourth hypothesis of the study is formulated as follow:
H4. Psychological strain positively associated with organizational cynicism

2.5 Organizational cynicism and Organizational Silence

An employee who remains silent and does not express his idea in work life tends to experience work dissatisfaction and feeling of disrespected (Knoll et al., 2012). This sort of feeling leads to anger, unawareness towards the organization, and administrator. Besides, an employee with this sort of feeling tends to believe that his organization is lack of fairness, honesty, and sincerity (Çaylaket al.,2017). Weaver et al. (2015) found that organizational cynicism significantly affects organizational silence. Study conducted by Knoll et al. (2012) found that organizational cynicism positively affects organizational silence. Based on these studies, the fifth hypothesis of the study is proposed as follow:
H5. Organizational cynicism positively affects organizational silence.

3. METHOD:

3.1 Participants

This survey study employed a questionnaire to collect information from the participants. This study involved 237 employees in some Regional Government Organizations in Pemalang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia This survey study employed questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection. Probability sampling, i.e. stratified random sampling technique was used. Based on the time

dimension, this study is classified as cross-sectional study. This study employed Structural Equation Model (SEM) that is done with Partial Least Square (PLS) program.

3.2 Measures
Leader Narcissism
Leader narcissism represents self-preoccupation, increasing self-view, and excessive and defensive status and superiority assertion. To measure leader narcissism, this study employed Emmons' (1984) fourteen items with 1-5 scales (1 = totally disagree, 5= totally agree). The Cronbach alpha score is 0.883.

Psychological Strain
A psychological strain refers to " an individual's unfavorable, dangerous psychological reaction" that may be provoked by the disconfirming working condition. To measure psychological strain, this study employed Goldberg's (1972) eleven items with 1-5 scales (1 = totally disagree, 5= totally agree). The cronbach alpha score is 0.855.

Organizational Cynicism
Organizational cynicism refers to a negative attitude towards the organization that includes beliefs that the organization lacks integrity, negative effect on the organization. To measure organizational cynicism, this study employed Wanouts et al.'s (1994) five items with 1-5 scales (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totallyagree). The cronbach alpha score is 0.759.

Organizational silence:
Organizational silence refers to employee's negative feeling such as afraid of not gaining support from colleagues, afraid that his opinion will be rejected, afraid of being mocked, afraid of ruining his relationship with colleagues and organization; and reticence to express idea related to organizational development. To measure organizational silence, this study employed Morrison et al.'s (2000) eight items with 1-5 scales (1 = totally disagree, 5= totally agree). The cronbach alpha score is 0.800.

4. RESULTS
The data of the study were analyzed using Structural Equation Model (SEM) that is resolved using Partial Least Square program using WARP-PLS 6.0 The result of the study shows that H1 (leader narcissism positively and significantly affects organizational cynicism) (β 0.41; $p<0.01$) is accepted This result indicates that when an employee perceives his leader as narcissistic, it may result in employee's cynicism. This happens because employee does not like a narcissistic leader. This eventually leads to organizational cynicism. Subordinates who perceive their leader as narcissistic may show disapproval, leading to cynicism (Erkutluet al., 2017). This finding is in agreement with Johnson and O' Learry-Kelly (2003) who found that there is a positive correlation between psychological strain and organizational cynicism.

The result of the study shows that H2 (leader narcissism positively and significantly affects employee's psychological strain) (β 0.31; p<0.01) is accepted. This study found that a narcissistic leader will lead to employee's psychological strain. This occurs because an employee who works under the leader's pressure has a negative feeling such as psychological strain. Employee's psychological strain may result in another negative effect such as organizational cynicism. Narcissistic leadership may bring negative effect on the employee such as psychological strain, among others (Erkutluet al., 2017). The result of this study supports the study conducted by Erkutlu et al., (2017), which found that leader narcissism positively affects psychological strain.

Further, H3 stating that psychological strain mediates the positive effect of leader narcissism on organizational cynicism (β 0.25; p<0.01 is accepted the result of the study shows an indirect relationship between leader narcissism and organizational cynicism through psychological strain. One of the causes of employee's psychological strain is leader narcissism. This study is in agreement with the study conducted by Erkutlu et al. (2017) that discovered that leader narcissism holds significant, indirect effect on organizational cynicism, mediated by psychological strain.

The result of the study shows that H4 (Psychological Strain positively and significantly affects organizational cynicism) (β 0.43; p<0.01 is accepted It means that when an employee is psychologically strained, organizational cynicism may arise. The causes of organizational cynicism are excessive stress, over workload, fail to satisfy personal and organizational expectation, insufficient social support, conflict of interest, increased organizational complexity, broken promises, ineffective decision-making, poor communication, and layoff. Besides, organizational cynicism arises when an organization does not hold capability or sincerity, or when there is a different fundamental value between employees and the organization. Employee's psychological train will adversely affect organization, one of the adverse effects is organizational cynicism. The result of the study supports the study conducted by Erkutlu et al., (2017) showing that employee's psychological strain is positively associated with organizational cynicism.

H5 stating that organizational cynicism positively and significantly affects organizational silence (β 0.52; p<0.01) is accepted An employee who remains silent and does not express his idea in work life tends to experience work dissatisfaction and feeling of disrespected (Knoll et al., 2012). This sort of feeling leads to anger, unawareness towards organization and administrator. Besides, an employee with this sort of feeling tends to believe that his organization is lack of fairness, honesty, and sincerity. The result of this study supports the study conducted by Knoll et al., (2012), which found that Organizational Cynicism positively affects Organizational silence.
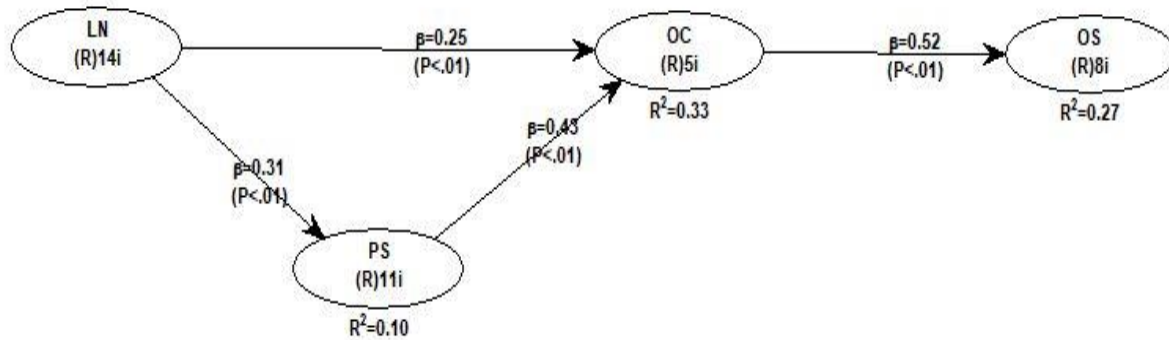
The relation between the variables are depicted as follow:

Figure 4.1. Output Warp PLS 6.0

Source: Erkutlu&Chafra, 2017 and Çaylak&Altuntas, 2017

Description: LN (leader narcissism), PS (psychological strain), OC (organizational cynicism), and OS (organizational silence).

5. CONCLUSION

Grounded from the analysis, this study proved that leader narcissism significantly and positively affects organizational cynicism. This result indicates that when an employee perceives his leader as narcissistic, it may result in the employee's cynicism.

This study found that leader narcissism positively and significantly affects employee's psychological strain. It means that narcissistic leader may result in employee's psychological strain.

Furthermore, this study proved that psychological strain mediates the positive effect of leader narcissism on organizational cynicism. It means that there is indirect relationship between leader narcissism and organizational cynicism through psychological strain. One of the causes of employee's psychological strain is leader narcissism.

This study found that psychological strain positively and significantly affects organizational cynicism. In other words, employee's psychological strain may result in organizational cynicism.
The analysis result also shows that organizational cynicism positively and significantly affects organizational silence. An employee who remains silent and does not express his idea in work life tends to experience work dissatisfaction and feeling of disrespected (Knoll et al., 2012). This sort of feeling leads to anger, unawareness towards organization and administrator.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study holds some practical implication. This study found that narcissistic leadership results in negative effect such as organizational cynicism. Thus, leader's self-management and character are pivotal to prevent leader narcissism and other matters that harm the organization. Narcissistic leader tends to exploit other peoples, and has low-quality relationship with subordinates.

Regarding implication for organization, it is important for the organization to determine criteria of a leader and ethical code of a leader. It is important since narcissistic leader will not develop and leads to organizational cynicism. Therefore, it is important for an organization to develop a leader selection system that ensures the capability of a leader.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.

Like other empirical studies, the present study holds some limitations. First, the participants of the study were employees in some Regional Government Organization of Pemalang Regency. Thus, generalization should be made carefully. The second limitation of the study is related to the use of self-report, indicating that the data collection is based on participant's interpretation. This increases the risk of participant's different interpretation on the question. The third limitation of the study is that this study was conducted in a governmental institution. It is recommended for future studies to conduct a study in private sector so that the result can be compared.

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