

## Leader Narcissism and Defensive Silence in Higher Education: A Moderated Mediation Model of Interactional Justice and Value Congruence

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Abstract	Article Info
<p><i>This study aims to investigate the relationship between the narcissism of leader and the defensive silence of employee. Specifically, it introduces interactional justice as mediator by taking a relational approach. It also considers the moderating role of leader-follower congruence in the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence. The sample included 1,023 randomly selected faculty members and department chairs from 15 universities in Turkey. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis tested the proposed model. The findings supported the positive relationship between leader narcissism and employee's defensive silence as well as interactional justice's mediating role. Moreover, when the level of congruence of leader-follower value is high, the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence is also strong, whereas the relationship is weak when the level of congruence of leader-follower value is low. This study contributes to employee silence literature by revealing the relationship between leader narcissism and employee silence. In addition, this study provides practical assistance to higher education employees along with their leaders interested in building</i></p>	<p><b>Article History:</b>  <i>Received</i>                      March 09, 2019   <i>Accepted</i>                      December 15, 2019</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Leader's narcissism, Defensive silence, Interactional justice, Leader-follower value congruence</i></p>



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*trust, enhancing employee-leader relationships, and reducing defensive silence.*

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### **Introduction**

Employee silence is common in modern organizations and is currently a critical issue in organizational management (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003). It acknowledges the intent to withhold information, opinions, suggestions or concerns about potentially essential organizational issues (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003; Wang and Hsieh, 2013). Employee silence is a multidimensional construct (Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003). It could be classified into three categories relating to cause(s) behind intentionally withholding information: acquiescent silence (a disengaged behavior stimulated by resignation), defensive silence (a self-protective behavior activated by fear), and prosocial silence (an others-oriented behavior that is instigated by the cooperation purpose). Acquiescent silence and defensive silence tend to be dysfunctional for organizations, as they may interfere with organizational change (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Ryan and Oestreich, 1991) and restrict the introduction of organizational performance (Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008; Van Dyne et al., 2003).

We concentrated our interest in defensive silence in this research because we were mainly interested in the types of silence of

employees that have a negative consequence on organizations. Prosocial silence, based on altruism or cooperative motives and aimed at benefiting others (Van Dyne et al., 2003), was not included in this study because it is not really detrimental to organizations. Unfortunately, there is so far only limited knowledge on the relationship between leader traits and employee silence (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2019). The present study aims to fill this gap in the research by examining the leader trait-defensive silence relationship. Building on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we propose that followers are likely to reciprocate their leader's narcissism by engaging in counterproductive work behavior such as defensive silence, which are detrimental to the organization and to coworkers.

Defensive silence is related with the leader's traits, behaviors, and attitudes (Detert and Burris, 2007; Lee et al., 2018). As a leader's trait, narcissism has been a significant topic in the leadership literature in part because it is easy to identify narcissism at the top of organizations and in part because narcissism seems well-suited for leadership (Campbell and Campbell, 2009). Narcissism refers to a personality trait including grandiosity, arrogance, self-absorption, entitlement, fragile self-esteem, and hostility (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Known as one of the dark triads of personality traits, narcissism is generally regarded as a destructive leadership trait (Godkin and Allcorn, 2011). Research in leadership have routinely linked leader narcissism to negative workplace behaviors including defensive silence because narcissistic leaders are exploitative, overly sensitive to criticism, arrogant, egocentric, possess a sense of entitlement and lack empathy towards others (e.g., Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006; Godkin and Allcorn, 2011). Prior research reveals leader's narcissism is usually associated with workplace deviance and numerous unethical and exploitative behaviors such as



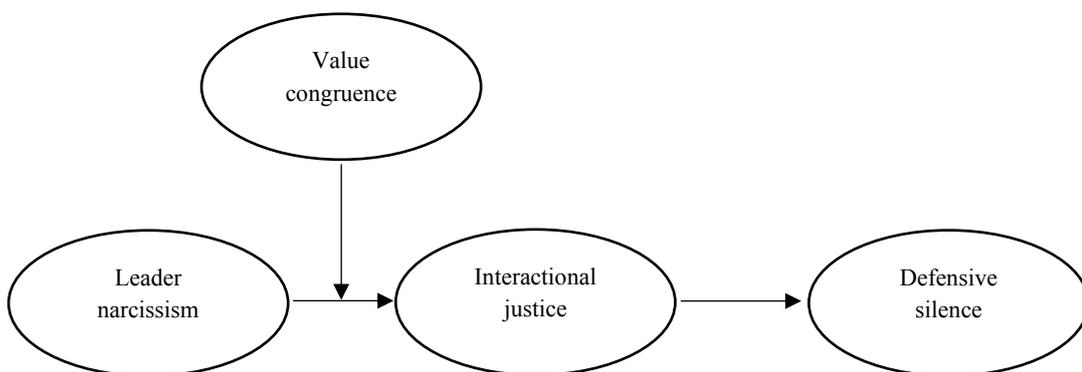
tendencies to cheat, inadequate workplace integrity, and even white-collar crime (Grijalva and Harms, 2014). When followers perceive their leaders as narcissistic, they experience workplace psychological strain, pressure, and depression. They also develop negative follower attitudes such as cynicism, turnover intention, low job satisfaction, low commitment, and silence (Grijalva and Harms, 2014). In this study, we focus on the process where leader narcissism is related with important follower outcomes like defensive silence. Nevertheless, despite narcissism's long-standing existence in the leadership literature, related research in the broad management and applied psychology literature continues to be in its infancy. To our knowledge, no study has offered to an understanding of how leader's narcissism pertains to employees' defensive silence, though leadership is among the most influential predictors of defensive silence (Briensfield, 2013). Consequently, the first objective of the study is to handle this extremely untouched concern.

In addition, this study investigates leader-follower value congruence as the boundary condition for the leader's narcissism, i.e. the interactional justice relationship. Existing theories and research indicate that leadership behavior, followers' individual difference and contextual factors (locus of control, proactive personality, political skill and leader-follower value congruence) are considerably related with employee silence (e.g., Briensfield, 2013; Lee et al., 2017). Prior researchers stressed that leader-follower value congruence is an essential factor that prevents undesirable employee outcomes such as workplace cynicism and workplace silence (Duan et al., 2018). However, scholars have not really considered the interactive relationships of leader's narcissism and leader-follower value congruence on workplace silence; this concerns how leadership and organizational members can lower defensive silence (Lee et al., 2017).

This study intends to contribute to the prevailing literature in several ways. First, it pursues to fill up the understanding gap between leader’s narcissism and employee defensive silence. Earlier research has proven that leader’s traits, behaviors and attitudes are being among the most important factors relating to employee silence. Second, determining how interactional justice decreases employees’ workplace silence has received little empirical interest in organizational justice literature (Wang and Jiang, 2015). The present study uses social exchange theory, as the primary theoretical focus, and takes a step further to acknowledge the mediating role of interactional justice on the leader’s narcissism -defensive silence link. The results could progress our knowledge of the processes where the leader’s narcissism is related with workplace silence. Finally, this study plays a part in the literature by examining how the leader’s narcissism increases employees' silence via lower interactional justice, which explains the moderating role of the leader-follower value congruence. Fig. 1 summarizes the theoretical model that guided this study.

**Figure 1.**

*Proposed moderated-mediation model.*





## Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

### Leader's Narcissism and Employee Defensive Silence

To fully understand the adverse consequences of narcissism, considering the psychological components that motivate the behavior of narcissists is truly beneficial. The exploratory group of (highly interconnected) psychological foundations of narcissistic leaders consists of arrogance, hypersensitivity and anger, lack of empathy and paranoia (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic arrogance is the most obvious behavior to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and obviously is associated with social problems (Ronningstam, 2005). In situations where this grandiosity itself is threatened with a feeling of inferiority, narcissists often attract feelings of superiority. It is therefore likely that they will react with extreme hypersensitivity and anger (Horowitz and Arthur, 1988). "Narcissistic leaders might screen strong hostility as an exaggerated response for an insult while sense totally justified committing horrific atrocities in response" (Horowitz and Arthur, 1988:136). Narcissistic leaders also lack empathy. They make decisions that are guided by an idiosyncratic, self-centered view and disregard the advice that disagrees. Finally, narcissistic leaders are paranoiac (Glad, 2002); they may be "more likely to create opponents where there were none" (Glad, 2002:30).

Researchers acclaim that narcissistic leadership is related with on follower behaviors through social exchange processes (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017; Meurs et al., 2013). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), individuals may change their attitudes or behaviors, depending on how they perceive they are being treated or on the need for reciprocity. When followers perceive a leader as nurturing and worried about well-being, they feel valued to

reciprocate the support of that leader in conjunction with social exchange theory. On the other hand, when a leader treats a follower with arrogance, hypersensitivity, and anger or insufficient empathy, that follower considers the exchange relationship to be imbalanced or exploited. This leads to psychological strain relating his / her attitudes to work (O'Boyle et al., 2012), improves retaliatory behavior (e.g., deviance, Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016; Meurs et al., 2013) and reduces work effort (Harris et al., 2007). Building on these ideas, Meurs et al. (2013) proposed that narcissistic leaders stimulate feelings of distrust and injustice in their followers. Furthermore, they create an organizational environment where followers will reciprocate with harmful organizational outcomes including increased emotional exhaustion and silence and also reduced organizational commitment.

In addition, distrust in the leader is negatively associated with the self-efficacy of employees (Yang and Mossholder, 2010). In other words, the higher the distrust in the leader, the lower there will be self-efficacy of individuals to make difference in the organization. We therefore assume that employees with a higher level of distrust generally have a lower level of self - efficacy, which prevents them from sharing their concerns in order to make a difference in their organization, while people with a lower degree of distrust are more likely to have a higher degree of self - efficacy in order to make changes using their recommendations and not to remain defensively silent. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1. The perception of leader's narcissism is positively related to employee's defensive silence.*



### **Mediating Role of Interactional Justice**

Interactional justice refers to the perceived fairness of social communication and treatment an individual receives from others in the organization (Murphy et al., 2003). It is undoubtedly one of the perceptions that relate to employee silence (Morrison, 2014). Earlier research recommended that interactional justice decreases employee silence (Huang and Huang, 2016; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 2012).

When individuals think that their process of interacting with the organization and the people in authority is fair, they consider that they are respected and are pleased with the organization where they are employed, thereby encouraging identification with the organization. This, consequently, causes them to show discretionary (e.g., cooperative) behaviors. Interactional justice has been demonstrated to improve employees' identification with their organization (Patel et al., 2012). This feeling of identification stimulates employees to consider organizational problems as their own and also to comprehend that their voice on organizational problems will be taken utterly. As a result, interactional justice can motivate employees to break the silence.

We suggest that the leader narcissism may relate with subordinates' defensive silence through employees' perceived interactional justice. First, we suggest that leader narcissism could decrease trust through perceptions of interactional injustice. Concentrate on absolute authority, control, arrogance, anger, inadequate empathy, and paranoia over subordinates could make subordinates feel anxious, oppressed. These, ultimately, result in negative social exchanges between supervisors and subordinates. Leader narcissism will most likely induce fear and anger (Braun et al.,

2016). Appropriately, we anticipate a positive association between leader narcissism and defensive silence.

Secondly, we recommend that interpersonal justice be perceived as an important mechanism underlying the relationship between narcissism and defensive silence. Because narcissistic leaders are less likely to screen subordinates' respect, provide them with sufficient information, and allow them to voice their concerns, subordinates tend to perceive interactional injustice. Indeed, Campbell et al. (2011) found a negative relationship of leader narcissism on interactional justice perceptions of subordinates. In addition, research has exhibited that perceptions of injustice or unfairness in a social exchange imply subordinates generally do not really reciprocate supervisory trust (Wu et al., 2012). In fact, when subordinates perceive less interactional justice of their interactions with their supervisors, they are actually even more prepared to withhold relevant ideas, information, or opinions as a type of self-protection. Consequently, leader narcissism may boost defensive silence through its relationship with perceived interactional justice.

We suppose, however, a partial instead of a full mediation of perceptions of interactional justice in the leader narcissism-defensive silence relationship. This is because leader narcissism could increase defensive silence through mechanisms aside from interactional justice. Leader narcissism in fact can boost anxiety and a sense of uncertainty amongst employees because the punitive behavior of leaders has actually gone out of personal control and is generally unpredictable. Feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and a high degree of employee silence have been confirmed (Kenworthy and Jones 2009). Leader narcissism can thus engender the defensive silence of



employees through alternative mediators. Taken together, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2. The positive relationship between leader's narcissism and employee's defensive silence is partially mediated by interactional justice.*

### **The Moderating Role of Leader-Follower Value Congruence**

Value congruence can be defined as the similarity between a leader and his/her followers in relation to personal values. As the leader and his/her followers work towards a common vision, they are likely to develop a more similar core set of values. This experience boosts followers' interpersonal confidence, personal attachment and motivation (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002).

The person-job fit theory (Edwards and Cable, 2009) suggests that value congruence might encourage communication, predictability and trust. These positive features are recognized as the antecedents of psychological need fulfillment. Furthermore, the theory of basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci, 2000) suggests that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs is crucial for intrinsic motivation and positive work behavior, whereas the lack of basic psychological needs would lead to negative attitudes and behaviors such as cynicism, deviant behaviors, and workplace silence. So, it really is rational to presume that value congruence might progress the types of positive qualities (e.g., communication, predictability) that will be the antecedent conditions for psychological need fulfillment. Researchers recommend that, when the degrees of trust and psychological need fulfillment are high, individuals are much more likely to engage in social exchange and cooperative interaction (Gambetta, 1988; Kramer and Tyler, 1996).

The research suggests that considering personal values will make it easier for us to understand the relationship between leaders and supporters (Brown and Treviño 2009). Personal values as relatively lasting convictions that guide attitudes, behaviors and decisions (Suar and Khuntia, 2010) have serious implications for individuals in general. In terms of relationships between leader and follower, the value congruence immediately becomes important (Lee et al. 2017).

However, not every employee can share similar values along with his or her leader. Therefore, we expect that individual differences in value congruence are related with the link between leader narcissism and defensive silence. Therefore, the relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence styles becomes weaker as the value congruence increases. Given that supervisors are believed agents of the organization, their treatment of subordinates as well as their value congruence with subordinates can relate with employees' perception of interactional justice (Carter et al., 2014). When employees have high-level of value congruence with their immediate supervisor, thus enjoying discretion, support, autonomy, and developmental possibilities, they perceive they are treated with dignity within their interpersonal interactions, such as spoken to politely, without inappropriate remarks or prejudicial statements. However, when employees have a low-level of value congruence with their immediate supervisor, they could suspect if they can trust and create a long-term relationship with their leaders and perceive low fairness in regard to the interpersonal treatment. Thus, value congruence should complement the consequences of narcissistic personality on interactional justice. Hence, we hypothesize the following:



*Hypothesis 3. Leader's narcissism influences employee defensive silence through its relationship with interactional justice and the indirect relationship will be stronger when the leader-follower value congruence is weak rather than when it is strong.*

Combining Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, we suggest a moderated mediation model, demonstrated in Fig. 1, to test the relationship between followers' perceptions of the leader's narcissism and defensive silence; the model includes interactional justice as a mediator and leader-follower value congruence as a moderator.

## Methods

### Participants

This study's accessible population contains faculty members from 15 Turkish Universities. The sample of the research included 1,023 faculty members with their supervisors (department chairs). These universities were randomly chosen from all the 185 universities in the country (The Council of Turkish Higher Education, 2019). Academic personnel employed in Turkish higher education institutions (public or private) are subject to the definitions and job descriptions stated in the Law on Higher Education (Turkish Higher Education Council, 2019). The two main qualification levels of teaching staff members are the following: "Teaching Staff Members" are those who do not hold an academic title such as lecturer, instructor and ancillary staff and "Teaching Faculty Members" are those who hold an academic title such as *professor, associate professor, and Dr., faculty member* (Turkish Higher Education Council, 2019). Faculty members are the participants of this study. A faculty member is an academician responsible for teaching certain compulsory and selective subjects common to students in various programs and

undertaking scientific and scholarly research for publication. Department chairs are also faculty members. They are elected by faculty members at the universities in Turkey.

A cluster random-sampling method was utilized to choose the sample. Using this sampling method, the division of the entire population into homogeneous groups increases the feasibility of sampling. In addition, as each cluster represents the entire population, more subjects can be included in the study. First, all of Turkey's universities were stratified into seven strata related to their geographical regions. Universities in each stratum were subsequently selected proportionally with a cluster random sampling; the study sample was comprised of faculty members working at selected universities. 4 universities from Marmara Region (27%), 3 universities from Central Anatolia (20%), 2 universities from Aegean Region (13%), 2 universities from Black Sea Region (13%), 2 universities from Mediterranean Region (13%), 1 university from East Anatolia Region (7%) and 1 university from Southeastern Anatolia Region (7%) were selected for this study. Private universities (27% of all the universities in this study) were also included in this study (2 from Marmara, 1 from Central Anatolia and 1 from Aegean Regions).

A research team of seven doctoral students visited the selected universities and received approval for the distribution of questionnaires from deans of economics and administrative sciences, fine arts, science and literature, engineering, medicine, and education faculties. Participants were informed that research was carried out to gather information on the faculty members' defensive silence levels and perceptions of their department chairs' narcissism in the higher education workforce. They had been offered confidentially



assurances and were informed that involvement was voluntary. After filling the questionnaires, they had been gathered immediately.

In terms of ethical considerations in data collection, after having obtained approvals from the faculties' deans, all procedures essential to ensure confidentiality for the participant and transparency of the researcher were taken. The survey invitation and guidelines noted the confidential nature of the study. Measures used order to do this result included specific language of confidentiality, identification of the individual researcher and research institution, identification of risks if any, and clarity of expected levels of participation and other relevant information (Creswell, 2009). The data collected remained confidential and individual data had not been made public in virtually any manner.

The faculty members who voluntarily participated in our study filled in the narcissism, defensive silence, interactional justice and leader-follower value congruence scales (69-100 faculty members per university). After missing-data analysis, 477 respondents (totaling 1,023 out of 1,500 participants) who failed to answer more than 20% of the items were excluded from the sample to reduce inaccuracies in the statistical analysis. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (1996) approach, 18 missing values were replaced with the series' mean for that respondent. 63 percent of the faculty members were female with an average age of 31.29 years. Furthermore, 83 percent of the department chairs had been male with an average age of 42.13 years. The average organizational tenure was 9.36 years for the faculty members and 12.19 years for the department chairs. The response rate was 68.20 percent.

## Measures

**Leader narcissism.** It was measured by using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Terry, 1988;  $\alpha = .89$ ). This is a 40-item scale. Example items included "My leader (the department chair of the faculty member) is a born leader," and "My leader is more capable than other people". Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Disagree very much) to 5 (Agree very much). Higher scores on the NPI represent higher levels of narcissism. Related Cronbach alpha turned out to be .80 in this study.

**Defensive silence.** It was measured by the five items scale adapted from Van Dyne *et al.* (2003). A sample item is "I do not speak up and suggest ideas for change, based on fear." Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this study was .90.

**Interactional justice.** It was measured by using Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) 5-item interactional justice scale. The scale is used to measure the interpersonal behavior of the immediate supervisor when decisions are made about subordinates' jobs. All items used a five-point response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is 'When decisions are made about my job, my supervisor treats me with kindness and consideration'. Cronbach's alpha turned out to be 0.89 in this study.

**Leader-follower value congruence.** It was measured by using Cable and Derue's (2002) 3-item value congruence scale. A sample item is "My personal values match my supervisor's values and ideals." The items used a 1–5 response scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this study was .93.



*Control variables.* The demographic factors: age and gender, found to be significantly related to employee silence (Wang and Hsieh, 2013), were controlled. They were included as control variables in the regression equations because of their potential relationships with the dependent variable as suggested by Cohen *et al.*, 2003. Age was measured in years whereas gender was measured as a dichotomous variable coded as 1 for male and 0 for female.

In two interrelated steps, we tested our hypotheses. First, we carried out a hierarchical regression analysis to use the simple mediation model (Hypotheses 1 and 2) of Baron and Kenny (1986). As Hayes and Preacher (2010) and Preacher and Hayes (2004) recently recommended a bootstrap approach to confidence intervals (CIs), we also tested the mediation hypothesis using a bootstrap test and the Sobel test. Second, we examined the overall moderated mediation hypothesis using Preacher et al. (2007) SPSS macro. Through these procedures, we confirmed that the strength of the hypothesized mediating (indirect) role of interactional justice on the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence depends on the moderator's value (i.e., congruence of leader-follower value).

The results of testing the assumptions of the regression analysis showed that all the following conditions were met: The Durbin Watson index was 1.69, indicating no residual autocorrelation; the minimum value of the tolerance limit for the variables was 0.71 or greater than 0.10; and the maximum value of the variance inflation factor was 1.90, which was smaller than 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a problem. In addition, the results of the residual analysis confirmed the linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity of the model. The linearity was inspected for plot regression standardized residuals and regression standardized

predicted values with the dependent variable of leader's narcissism. Linearity is presented by a randomized distribution of negative and positive values with no obvious pattern in the plot. The Breusch-Pagan test was used to investigate homoscedasticity. If the p value is less than 0.05, homoscedasticity is not present. The normality of the whole distribution was tested with the Anderson-Darling test. If the p value is less than 0.05, normality is not present.

### Results

Before testing the hypotheses within the proposed model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess model fit and construct validity by using the AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 2006). Model fit is a series of tests to see how well the covariance matrix from the sample matches the proposed model (Kenny, 2015). Results showed that the hypothesized 4-factor model of leader narcissism, interactional justice, leader-follower value congruence, and defensive silence,  $\chi^2=2411.19$ ,  $df=919$ ; RMSEA=.07; CFI=.92 and IFI=.92, yielded a better fit to the data than any other models including a 1-factor model (i.e., combining all four study variables),  $\chi^2=8582.26$ ,  $df=926$ ; RMSEA=.017; CFI=.52 and TLI=.52. These CFA results also provide support for the distinctiveness of the four study variables for subsequent analyses.

Table 1 shows all study variables' means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations. Most of the variables were correlated in the expected direction. The control variables were not significantly correlated with the dependent variable (defensive silence). Furthermore, all the measures showed high internal reliabilities.



**Table 1.**

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations of studied variables (n = 1023).*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age (year)	31.29	1.93					
2. Gender	0.63	0.37	-0.04				
3. Leader narcissism	3.69	0.79	0.05	0.05			
4. Interactional justice	3.11	0.89	-0.07	0.06	-0.25**		
5. Value congruence	3.29	0.93	-0.05	0.07	-0.16*	0.25**	
6. Defensive silence	3.06	0.96	0.08	-0.08	0.36***	-0.32***	-0.33***

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, leader narcissism showed a positive relationship with defensive silence ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 2 posited that interactional justice mediates the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence. To test our hypothesis concerning the mediating role of interactional justice, we used the approach suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). This mediation test has certain significant features. First, the independent variable should be significantly related to the dependent variable. Second, there should be a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator. Finally, the mediator should be significantly related to the dependent variables with the independent variables included in the equation. If the first three conditions hold, at least partial mediation is present. If the independent variables have non-significant beta weights in the third step, full mediation exists.

The result of the test for Hypothesis 1 satisfied the first condition of mediation. Next, the result of the test for the significant relationship between leader narcissism and interactional justice

satisfied the second mediating effect criterion ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). To test the third criterion, the dependent variable was regressed on the mediating variable, controlling for leader narcissism. As reported, interactional justice was significant ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), reducing the coefficient of the effect of leader narcissism on defensive silence ( $\beta = 0.05$ , n.s.). Therefore, the result of the mediation analysis suggests that the effect of leader narcissism on employee defensive silence is fully mediated by employees' interactional justice.

We then tested the significance of the indirect relationships using the Sobel test and bootstrapping in accordance with the procedure used by Hayes and Preacher (2010). The formal two-tail significance test (assuming normal distribution) showed a significant indirect relationship (Sobel  $z = 2.19$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). The Sobel test was confirmed by the bootstrapping results. In particular, we estimated that by bootstrapping 10,000 samples, 95 percent of bias-corrected CIs had indirect relationships. Shrout and Bolger (2002) suggested that the researcher can be assured that the indirect relationship is different from zero if zero is not in the CI. In this study, the CI is between  $-0.10$  and  $-0.01$ , excluding zero in the CI, which suggests that the indirect relationship in our model is statistically significant. Hypothesis 2 has therefore been supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the indirect effect of interactional justice between leader narcissism and defensive silence would be weakened by high leader-follower value congruence. The results indicate that the interaction term between leader narcissism and leader-follower value congruence on interactional justice is significant ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). To confirm the direction of this interaction effect, we applied conventional procedures for plotting simple slopes (see Fig. 2) at one standard deviation above and below the mean of the



leader-follower value congruence measure. As expected, the slope of the relationship between leader narcissism and interactional justice was strong for employees who assessed leader-follower value congruence as low (simple slope = 0.29,  $t = 3.66$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas the slope was weak for employees who assessed leader-follower value congruence as high (simple slope =  $-0.01$ ,  $t = -0.11$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ).

Next, to examine the conditional indirect relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence (through interactional justice) at two values of leader-follower value congruence, we used an SPSS macro developed by Preacher et al. (2007). Following their recommendation, we set high and low levels of leader-follower value congruence at one standard deviation above and below the mean score of leader-follower value congruence. As expected, the indirect relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence via interactional justice was conditional upon the level of leader-follower value congruence. The indirect relationship was stronger ( $-0.06$ ) and significant at a low level of leader-follower value congruence (CI ranging from  $-0.09$  to  $-0.01$  and not crossing zero) but was weaker ( $-0.00$ ) and insignificant at a high level of leader-follower value congruence (CI ranging from  $-0.04$  to  $0.03$ , crossing zero). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

**Table 2.**

*Regression analysis for testing mediation.*

Variables	Interactional justice		Defensive silence		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.06	-0.03	0.06	0.04	0.03
Gender	0.05	0.04	-0.07	-0.06	-0.03
Leader narcissism		-0.23**		0.34***	0.05
Interactional justice					-0.26**
Overall F	4.83**	7.03***	0.33	1.89	2.93*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.14	0.01	0.03	0.06
ΔF		12.63***		6.69**	6.49**
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		0.05		0.02	0.02

\**p* < 0.05.

\*\**p* < 0.01.

\*\*\**p* < 0.001.

**Table 3**

*Hierarchical regression results for moderated mediation*

Variables	Interactional justice				Defensive silence				
	Mod	Model	Mode	Mode	Mod	Mode	Mode	Mod	Mod
Age	-0.06	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.02
Gender	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.03	-0.07	-0.06	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01
Leader		-0.23**	-	-0.15*		0.34**	0.30**	0.26**	0.09
Value			0.23**	0.21**			-	-	-
LN*VC				-				-	-0.19*
Interaction									-
Overall F	4.83**	7.03***	5.93**	5.13**	0.33	1.89	1.66	1.78	2.13*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.14	0.16	0.18	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.09
ΔF		12.63**	3.13*	2.66		6.69**	0.49	2.96	4.96*
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		0.05	0.03	0.02		0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02

\**p* < 0.05.

\*\**p* < 0.01.

\*\*\**p* < 0.001.



**Table 4.**

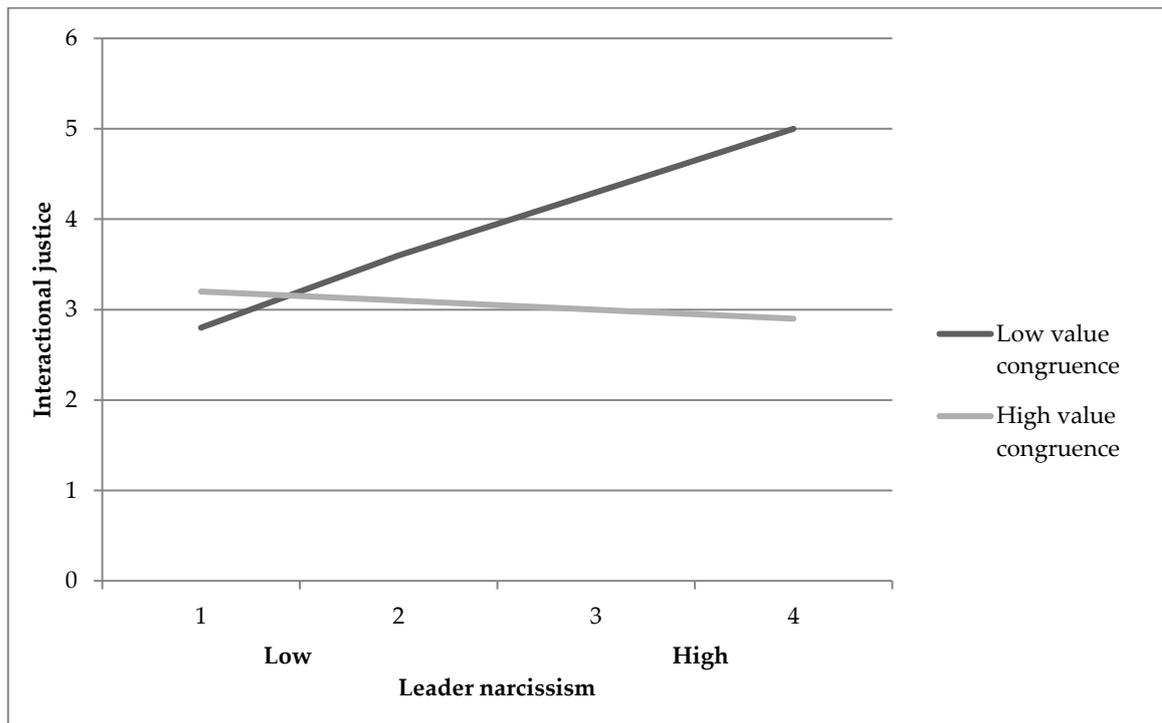
*Moderated mediation results for defensive silence across levels of value congruence.*

Moderator	Level	Defensive silence				
		Conditional indirect effect	SE	LL	95% CI	UL
Value congruence	Low (-0.93)	-0.06	0.03	-0.09		-0.01
	High (0.93)	-0.00	0.02	-0.04		0.03

Note. LL= lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL =upper limit.

**Figure 2.**

*Interaction of leader narcissism and value congruence on interactional justice*



## Discussion

We investigated the relationship between leader's (department chairs) narcissism and followers' (faculty members) defensive silence of universities in Turkey. Data from our sample supported the initial hypotheses. Results displayed that leader's narcissism is positively associated with followers' silence and negatively associated with interactional justice. Furthermore, interactional justice provided an explanation of the relationship between leader's narcissism and defensive silence. Moreover, leader-follower value congruence effectively buffered the negative relationship between interactional justice and defensive silence.

### Theoretical Contribution

This study expands narcissism literature by adding a substantial mediator to explain how leader narcissism causes the defensive silence of the employees. It provides an insight into the importance of interactional justice as a psychological conduit in which narcissist leaders encourage employees to hold out relevant ideas, information or opinions as a kind of fear-based self-protection. Further, interactional justice is actually a generalized causal mechanism for worsening or improving organizational efficiency through different types of behavioral options, such as organizational cynicism or citizenship behavior. This study identifies interactional justice as a psychological pathway that relates to employees' behavioral choices and enables future research to identify interventions which may ultimately be effective in reducing workplace silence.

Moreover, this study linked two conventionally independent research areas, leader's narcissism, and employee silence, thereby



checking new possibilities for enhancing the development of each field. Among the many negative consequences of leader's narcissism to an organization, employee silence is among the most serious. Employees of highly narcissistic leader perceive that the latter is generally arrogant, emotionally isolated, distrustful, without empathy, sensitive to criticism, exploiting, unfairly treating their followers and lacking ethical values (Naseer et al., 2016). Those leadership traits are obviously associated with difficulties in interpersonal associations, which, subsequently, result in low trust in leader, leader-member-exchange quality, interactional justice and high defensive silence (Xu et al., 2015). This finding places leader narcissism as one important precedent to employee workplace silence.

Another essential contribution of the study rests on the role of interactional justice mainly because a mediator of the link between narcissistic leadership and employee silence. Usually, the negative consequences of interactional justice have been limited to trust in supervisor, turnover intentions and workplace deviance (Aryee et al., 2002). We now have expanded this to add the employee silence.

This study adds to the literature by studying the moderating role of value congruence, given the call for the extension of the criterion domain to include the interpersonal antecedents of employee silence (e.g., Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008).

The moderated mediation model that applied the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) to define the mediation path could be a notable consequence of this research. This model provided a theoretical framework on how an independent variable (such as leader narcissism) can relate to the dependent variable (defensive silence) via the mediator (interactional justice). As for the moderator,

the mediating role of interactional justice on the indirect relationship between leader narcissism and employee silence was moderated by value congruence. Low degrees of congruence in value increased interactional justice's mediating role.

### **Managerial Implications**

The study results are consistent with previous research (Grijalva and Harms, 2014; Naseer et al., 2016) that leader narcissism has negative outcomes for employees such as low job satisfaction and commitment, as well as high organizational cynicism, turnover intention and silence in the workplace. Similarly, this study has significant implications for the management of higher education. The results emphasize the importance of leader narcissism since it is positively associated with employee silence. Narcissistic leaders tend to exploit others, have lower quality relationships (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006), and take brief cuts or behave in unethical ways (Campbell et al., 2011). In terms of implications for organizations, these results indicate the necessity for reinforcing an ethical context as well regarding the dependence on leader selection. In particular, it is important to maintain an ethical context in order to ensure that narcissistic leaders usually do not thrive in organizations. If the context is unethical, behaviors will most likely be more prominent and evaluated by employees even more negatively. Thus, in a highly ethical context, it truly is improbable that narcissistic leaders will become successful in advancing (Campbell et al., 2011).

The results recommend that interactional justice acts as a link between the leader's narcissism and employee silence. In general, employees consider managers who behave in a disrespectful and abusive way as a burden. However, employees do not necessarily react or speak up with their manager, also if (s)he behaves abusively



(Tepper, 2007). Employees, who perceive interactional justice, think that they have been treated with dignity and respect, have trust their leader and have a tendency to show less negative relationships when met with a narcissistic leader. Indeed, interactional justice seems to be a mediator on followers' negative reactions to narcissistic leadership. Thereby, organizations, in the interests of buffering the experience of interactional injustice, should provide additional support and resources-based measures. For example, organizations can provide victims with psychological consultation, focusing on their voice tone. In addition, employers can apply for the health enhancement program from time to time to recognize their employees' health status.

Given the objective of reducing stress in the workplace, it is generally a starting point for the look of preventive interventions to recognize a state of perceived leader narcissism. For example, if perceived narcissistic leadership is undoubtedly a factor that creates low interactional justice, human resources specialists could include supporting leadership styles such as transformational, servant, ethical or authentic leadership behaviors in management training curricula. Based on the goal of improving the management of existing low degree of justice, identifying leader narcissism as a factor of low interactional justice may benefit counseling and employee support initiatives. These activities can help employees, for instance, to identify situations that lead to narcissistic behavior as a contributing component to poor justice. Employees could therefore probably learn how to handle their feelings of narcissism perceived.

Our research showed that low-value congruence increases the negative relationship of the leader's narcissism on interactional justice. Managers should pay more focus on the buffering role of

value congruence specifically for employees having low interactional justice and displaying workplace silence. This study shows that managers should design an environment where employees and supervisors work towards common values and their organizations, with a priority to reduce silence. The existence of value congruence offers a fertile basis for creating an even more committed workforce that reduces the opportunity for employees to choose activities that contradict their organization's interests. A culture that embraces supportive leadership such as ethical, transformational, servant or authentic leadership could be instrumental in this respect, as supportive leaders tend to effectively align the interests of followers with the organization's interests (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2018; Stone et al., 2004). Alternatively, organizations should be aware that whenever the values of employees and managers are unique, the uncertainty produced and insufficient control may prompt employees to pursue activities that only fulfill their personal passions, even if these activities may harm their employing organization. On an even more general level, top management should stimulate their employee base across hierarchical ranks to completely disappear from looking through a self-interested lens at their personal goal setting. They must instead motivate their employees to see themselves and their supervisors as 'partners' sharing a set of shared values and interests with the primary goal of helping the organization to achieve its objectives (De Clercq et al. 2014).

Educational organizations need the input of comments and suggestions from employees in a complex, diverse, and competitive work environment to tackle and solve critical problems and problems and minimize job-relating silence (e.g., Detert and Burris, 2007, Morrison and Milliken, 2000, Ryan and Oestreich, 1998). It has therefore become important for educational administrators to



understand the antecedents and conditions that allow employees to conduct themselves in silence and not to express their concerns and opinions on the situation at work (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of the scholarly study is that our sample was only taken from universities in Turkey, so external validity is a problem. Another limitation stems from cross-sectional data since no causal relationship can be established only without longitudinal studies. In addition, the use of a self-assessment scale can likely maintain a bias in social desirability, as individuals tend to provide socially desirable responses instead of selecting responses that reflect their exact feelings.

Future research could possibly be carried out to address the limitations of this study. We call for empirical research into the relationship between leading narcissism and follower silence based on samples from universities running in different other economies. Since consensus can only be achieved by gathering evidence from an even more representative combination of samples, we are presenting the existing results as a basis for further research. Dealing with longitudinal research will be much more important in examining how the changes in the narcissism of the leader relate to silence in the workplace. In addition, potential research on narcissistic leadership could benefit from focusing on the role of context in reducing or exacerbating the influence of such leadership styles on organizational outcomes. In line with Johns ' (2006) admonition of the need to recognize and add the effect of context in research, we argue that situational factors such as perceived organizational politics or organizational culture can significantly relate to employee behavior.

Our results recommend that organizations should focus on leader narcissism due to its detrimental results. This is not only relevant when filling leadership positions, but also when dealing with the organization's existing leaders. Existing leaders should actually notice the effect their personality could have on employees. Furthermore, they need to find out on several effective leadership styles (e.g., transformational or authentic leadership) primarily because a compensation for the potential unfavorable effects of the Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). As narcissism research continues to develop in organizational contexts, we hope that our research can stimulate further research into the role of contextual factors in the relationship between narcissism and silence.

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