

# **A STUDY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION AMONG GENDERS REGARDING THE EFFECT OF NARCISSISTIC LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION IN THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Narcissism is a personality disorder that can often be identified in professionals within the business environment. This paper will specifically focus on the accounting profession. Narcissism is prevalent in many successful leaders and is characterized as both destructive and constructive. The disorder is diagnosed when an individual possesses five of nine characteristics listed in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fourth edition, text revision version). The focus of this paper is to determine if there are significant differences in perception between males and females regarding how narcissistic leadership affects job satisfaction in the accounting profession. The paper will also analyze a very useful theory called leader-member exchange (LMX) which is a dyadic relationship between an employer/leader and employee/subordinate. LMX may play a mediating effect between narcissism and job satisfaction. The primary question in this study is: Do gender differences exist with regard to perception on how leader-member exchange (LMX) and narcissistic leadership affect employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession? This research used a quantitative design with a random sample of 152 accountants, nationwide. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS data software, and the method of analysis was a causal modeling technique called Partial Least Squares, Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Narcissism is a psychological disorder characterized by nine traits as identified by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fourth edition, text revision version). If an individual possesses five of the nine characteristics listed below, they are diagnosed as narcissistic. These nine characteristics are:

1. *Has a grandiose sense of self-importance.*
2. *Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance and beauty.*
3. *Believes that he or she is special and unique.*
4. *Requests excessive admiration.*
5. *Has a sense of entitlement to especially favorable treatment.*
6. *Is interpersonally exploitative.*
7. *Lacks empathy with the feelings and needs of others.*
8. *Is envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.*

9. *Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors and attitudes. (Amernic & Craig, 2010, 83).*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A study was done by Shurden (2014) in which she determined that narcissistic leadership does affect employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession through a theory called leader-member exchange (LMX). LMX is based on social exchange theory and relates to the dyadic or reciprocal relationship between a leader (employer) and subordinate (employee). It can be either positive or negative. If the relationship is a positive one, the outcome will generally be a lower turnover rate, higher performance by the employee, stronger commitment to the job, and higher job satisfaction (Himanshu, 2009). The Shurden study (2014) determined that narcissism has a negative (or destructive) indirect effect on job satisfaction through LMX (leader-member exchange). The indicators for this study were affect (interpersonal attraction), loyalty, contribution and professional respect which all have a strong influence on the relationship that an employee has with their employer. If that employer is a narcissistic leader, job satisfaction is significantly decreased.

Leaders in the area of finance, which includes accounting, are believed to have more narcissistic tendencies than in other business-related fields (Schwartz, 1991). Corporate financial accounting allows for a facilitating role by CEOs in the preparation of financial information. Because financial statements are prepared on a regular basis, often quarterly, CEOs have the opportunity to satisfy the “intense need to have [their] superiority continually re-affirmed” (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007, p. 354). Likewise, unless the profits are unfavorable, the recurring publication of the profits on a quarterly basis gives the CEOs “frequent applause” (Amernic & Craig, 2010, p. 85).

Consequently, the success of an organization is affected by the performance and level of employee job satisfaction within the business (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011). Tension between individuals intensifies job dissatisfaction, especially if the tension is between an employee and employer. This tension could be the result of a narcissistic leader who may use tactics such as coercion, delay and even slander (Grier, 2008). Therefore, a narcissistic leader may undercut employees because the leader feels threatened (Lubit, 2002). The result is generally absenteeism and employee turnover in an organization. However, productivity and quality are the results of employees who are satisfied in their profession (Koprowski, 1981).

Other negative effects of narcissistic leadership are that they create an imbalance in work and social life by infringing upon the personal and social time of their employees (Kernberg, 2008). Likewise, if individuals are exploited and blamed by the narcissist, these individuals exhibit a loss of identity. They begin to feel disengaged and view themselves as victims who are empty and useless (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011).

In regards to narcissism, who is more narcissistic, men or women? According to Biddle (2015) men are more narcissistic. They contend that differences in narcissistic behavior were accounted for because of several factors, one being entitlement, meaning that men in general feel more entitled to certain privileges. Gender stereotypes also have arisen over time. Women are not expected to display aggression or act in an authoritative manner. Women have been taught from an early age to conform to society's expectations. Therefore, men seem to act more assertively, which in the past has been acceptable because men were to be in a leadership or an authoritative role more so than women (Biddle, 2015).

Gender also has an impact on career advancement in accounting. A study by Morley, Bellamy, Jackson and O'Neill (2018) determined that males have significantly higher levels of ambition and career planning. However, women are not as focused on career progress because their attitudes reflect more emphasis on family and home commitments. The demands from housework and child care consistently seem to hamper the career progression of women. Women often will give up having a successful career for a more "balanced" lifestyle, while men plan for career success; therefore, the gap between professional demands and values of women is greater than that same gap for men, indicating that men value success more than do women. This theory is also evident in the accounting profession. Consequently, men seem to progress faster, and more men become successful leaders (Morley, et al., 2018). Himanshu (2009) also examined the effect of gender on LMX by conducting a study in a large organization in eastern India. He determined that females had a stronger positive impact on leader-member exchange relationships than men.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the differences in perception between males and females within the accounting profession with regard to narcissistic leadership, leader-member exchange (LMX), and the effect these two variables have on job satisfaction. The research question this study will answer is:

Do gender differences exist with regard to perception on how leader-member exchange (LMX) and narcissistic leadership affect employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession?

The following are the hypotheses for this study:

*Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction within the accounting profession.*

*Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession.*

*Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to narcissistic leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX) in the accounting profession.*

*Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to the how leader-member exchange (LMX) mediates between narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession.*

Initially, a random sample of approximately 1,235 accountants were drawn from the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants CPA/PFS Credential Holder Directory. An additional 3,679 emails were purchased, and surveys were emailed to this larger group as well. A total of 4,914 surveys were sent with an overall response rate of 3.3%. The response rate actually decreased because of the increase in the sample size; however, it was necessary to increase the sample size in order to get an adequate sample to use in this research. The total useable surveys were 152. In order to maintain privacy of the information, research procedures were properly applied. Therefore, both the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of participating in the study were disclosed to the participants.

This research used a quantitative design with this random sample of 152 accountants, nationwide in which 94 were male and 57 were female. In this sample, one of the accountants did not respond to the gender question. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS data software, and the method of analysis was a causal modeling technique called Partial Least Squares, Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Table 1 presents the demographic results of those surveyed. Of note is that a limitation of the study is that some informative demographic data such as level and years of experience of the participants, as well as size of the firms was not requested in the original survey.

Table 1					
Demographic Data					
Description	Gender	Age	Degree	CPA	Race
Male	62%				
Female	37%				
No response	1%				
18-30			2%		
31-40			9%		
41-50			18%		
51-60			46%		
Over 60	24%				
No response			1%		
Undergraduate			63%		
Masters			29%		
PhD			7%		
No response			1%		
CPA				91%	
Non-CPA				9%	
White					92.0%
Black					1.3%
Hispanic					2.0%
Asian					.7%
Other					3.0%
No response					1.0%

Shurden, 2014.

## DEFINITIONS

Definitions from Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt (2017) helpful in the following discussion of the PLS model are:

*Blindfolding*: is a sample reuse technique that omits part of the data matrix and uses the model estimates to predict the omitted part. It indicates a model's out-of-sample predictive power (p. 312).

*Bootstrapping*: is a resampling technique that draws a large number of sub-samples from the original data (with replacement) and estimates models for each subsample. It is used to determine standard errors and coefficients to assess their statistical significance without relying on distributional assumptions (p. 313).

*Constructs (also called latent variables)*: measure concepts that are abstract, complex, and cannot be directly observed by means of (multiple) items. Constructs are represented in path models as circles or ovals (p. 314).

*Endogenous latent variables*: serve only as dependent variables, or as both independent and dependent variables in a structural model (p. 316).

*Exogenous latent variable*: are latent variables that serve only as independent variables in a structural model (p. 316).

*Formative measurement model*: is a type of measurement model setup in which the direction of the arrows is from the indicator variables to the construct, indicating the assumption that the indicator variables cause the measurement of the construct (p. 317).

*Higher-order component (HOC)*: is a general construct that represents all underlying LOCs in an HCM (p. 318).

*Higher-component model (HCM)*: is a higher order structure that contains several layers of constructs and involves a higher level of abstraction (p. 318).

*Indicators [variables]*: are directly measured observations (raw data), generally referred to as either *items or manifest variables*, represented in path models as rectangles (p. 319).

*Inner model*: see Structural model (p. 319).

*Latent variable*: see Constructs (p. 320).

*Lower-order component (LOC)*: is a sub-dimension of the HOC in an HCM (p. 320).

*Measurement*: is the process of assigning numbers to a variable based on a set of rules (p. 320).

*Measurement model*: is an element of a path model that contains the indicators and their relationships with the constructs and is also called the *outer model* in PLS-SEM (p. 321).

*Mediating effect*: occurs when a third variable or construct intervenes between two other related constructs. (p. 321)

*Moderator effect (moderation)*: occurs when the effect of an exogenous latent variable on an endogenous latent variable depends on the values of a third variable referred to as a moderator variable, which moderates the relationship. (p. 322)

*Outer model*: see *Measurement model* (p. 323).

*Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*: is a variance based method to estimate structural equation models. The goal is to maximize the explained variance of the endogenous latent variables (p. 324).

*Path models*: are diagrams that visually display the hypotheses and variable relationships that are examined when structural equation modeling is applied (p. 324).

*PLS-SEM*: see *Partial least squares structural equation modeling* (p. 325).

*Reflective measurement model*: is a type of measurement model setup in which the direction of the arrows is from the construct (latent variable) to the indicator variables, indicating the assumption that the construct causes the measurement (more precisely, the covariation) of the indicator variables (p. 326).

*Structural equation modeling (SEM)*: is used to measure relationships between latent variables (p. 328).

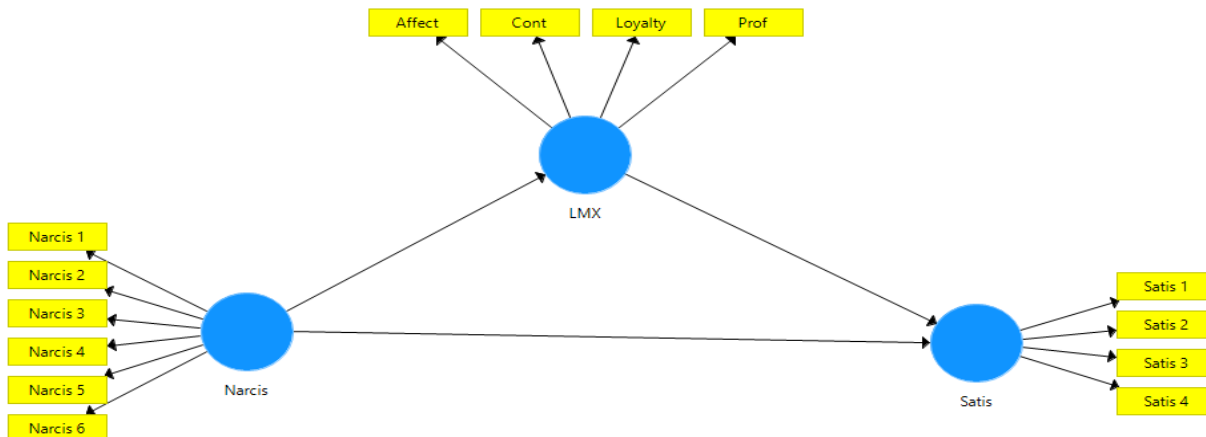
*Structural model*: represents the theoretical or conceptual element of the path model. The structural model (also called inner model in PLS SEM) includes the latent variables and their path relationships (p. 328).

## ANALYSIS

Using Partial Least Squares, Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM), the first model produced is shown in Figure 1.1 and indicates the latent variable and the paths under investigation. As can be seen in Figure 1, the circles represent the three latent variables (Narcissistic Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange and Job Satisfaction), while the rectangles represent the survey questions associated with each latent variable. Lower Component Analysis was used to group the survey questions for LMX into four categories: Affect, Contribution (Cont), Loyalty, and Professionalism (Prof). Six survey questions were associated with the latent variable Narcissistic Leadership, and four questions were associated with Job Satisfaction.

The latent variable Narcissistic Leadership (NARCIS) is the exogenous (Independent) variable while leader-member exchange (LMX) and Job Satisfaction (SATIS) are endogenous (dependent or both) variables. NARCIS is an exclusively independent variable while SATIS is an exclusively dependent variable. LMX can be both independent and dependent.

**Figure 1.1**  
Introductory model showing the latent and indicator variables.



Each set of indicator variables must be classified as being reflective or formative in relation to its latent variable. The direction of the arrows from the construct also called the latent variable (circle) to the indicator variables (rectangle) or vice versa is considered either reflective or formative. When the latent variable explains the indicator variables, the arrows point from the circle to the rectangle and are considered to be reflective, while indicator variables are classified as formative when the indicator variables explain the latent variable and point from the rectangle to the circles. In each of these three sets of indicator/latent variables, the assumption was made that the latent variables explain the indicator variables; therefore, the indicator variables were

considered reflective. The arrows are shown pointing toward the indicator variables as can be seen in Figure 1.1.

Using the Bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS, the p-values of the indicator variables along with the correlation and p-value for each latent variable are presented in Figure 1.2. Also, the R<sup>2</sup> values are shown for the latent variables. All of the reflective indicator variables showed significant p-values and were assessed for reliability and validity. Table 2 shows the summary data for the assessment of the reflective latent variables. All of the indicator variables met the requirements for inclusion in the final model.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Bootstrapping Results with SmartPLS**

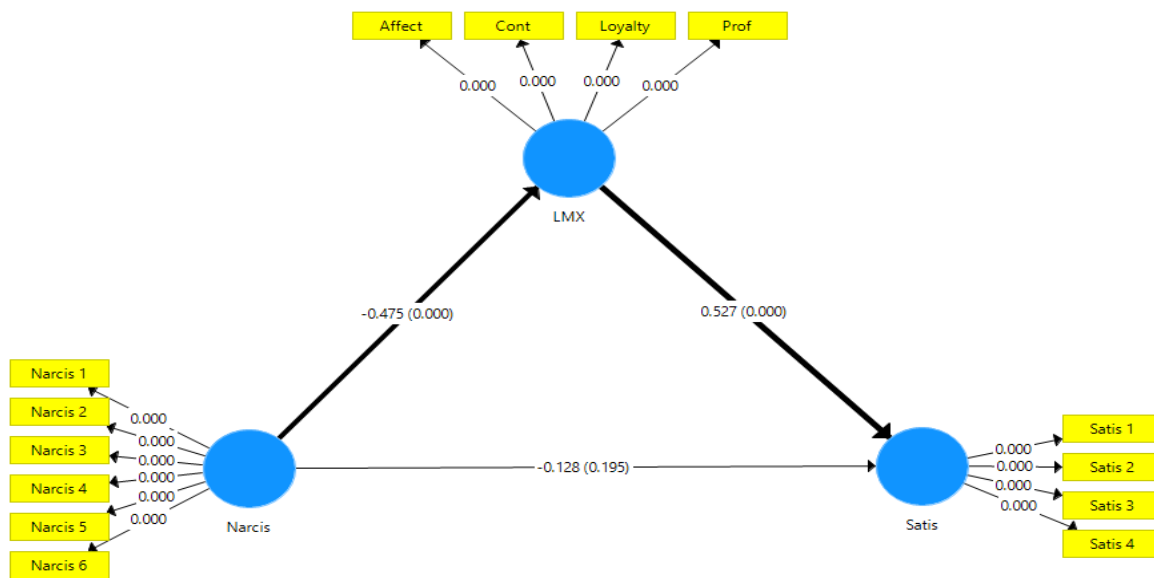


Table 2						
Summary of Final Reflective Measurement Model Evaluation/Assessment						
Latent Variable	Indicators	Loadings	Indicator Reliability	Composite Reality	AVE Table	Discriminate Validity
Narcis	Narcis 1	.888	.789	.971	.846	Yes
	Narcis 2	.939	.882			
	Narcis 3	.954	.910			
	Narcis 4	.910	.828			
	Narcis 5	.938	.880			
	Narcis 6	.889	.790			
LMX	Affect	.873	.762	.842	.585	Yes
	Cont	.749	.561			
	Loyalty	.901	.812			
	Prof	.453	.205			
Satis	Satis 1	.832	.692	.914	.726	Yes
	Satis 2	.917	.841			
	Satis 3	.813	.661			
	Satis 4	.844	.712			

However, the structural model must be assessed before the final model can be used. Bootstrapping along with a procedure called blindfolding were used to further assess the structural model. The final model was assessed for collinearity,  $R^2$  value, path coefficient significance, effect size, and predictive relevance of the model. The structural model met the assessment requirements and is now ready for further use and interpretation.

Table 3 shows the path coefficient and p-values for the three latent variable paths. Two paths are significant according to the analysis. The path relationship between LMX and (Job) Satis is significant at the .05 significance level as indicated by a p-value of 0.000. Also, the path relationship between Narcis and LMX is significant at the .05 significance level with a p-value of 0.000. The path relationship, Narcis to Satis is not significant at the .05 level because the p-value is 0.195. Although the effect Narcis has on Satis directly is not significant, there is a mediating effect of LMX between Narcis and Satis because the effect of Narcis on LMX is significant, and LMX significantly impacts Satis.

<b>Path Coefficient, T-values and P-values for Latent Variables (Construct)</b>			
Path	Coefficient	T-values	P-values
LMX ----- Satis	.527	3.6385	0.000
Narcis ----- Satis	-0.128	1.3911	0.195
Narcis ----- LMX	-0.475	8.0571	0.000

### **MODERATOR EFFECTS “GENDER” MODEL ANALYSIS**

Gender was used as the moderator effect in order to determine if there were any differences in the paths of the original model. Figure 1.3 shows the gender moderator effects of the relationship between narcissistic leadership and job satisfaction. The moderator variable had a p-value of 0.962, which indicates there is no significant differences between the perceptions of male or female and the relationship between narcissistic leadership and job satisfaction. This analysis means that neither males or females perceive narcissistic leadership to have a direct impact on employee job satisfaction within the accounting profession.



**Figure 1.3**  
**Gender as a moderator effect on Narcissistic Leadership and Job Satisfaction**

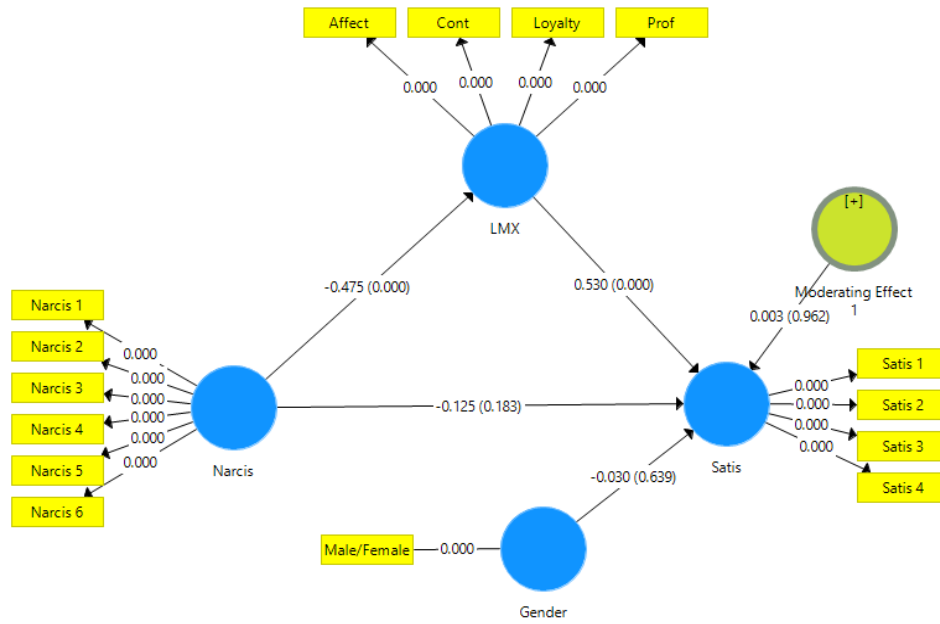


Figure 1.4 reveals the effect of using gender as a moderator between LMX and (Job) Satis. Once again, the moderator effect variable indicates there is no significant difference with a P-value of 0.945 between the perceptions of males and females and their viewpoint of the direct relationship between LMX and Job satisfaction.

**Figure 1.4**  
**Gender as a moderator effect on Leader-Member Exchange and Job Satisfaction**

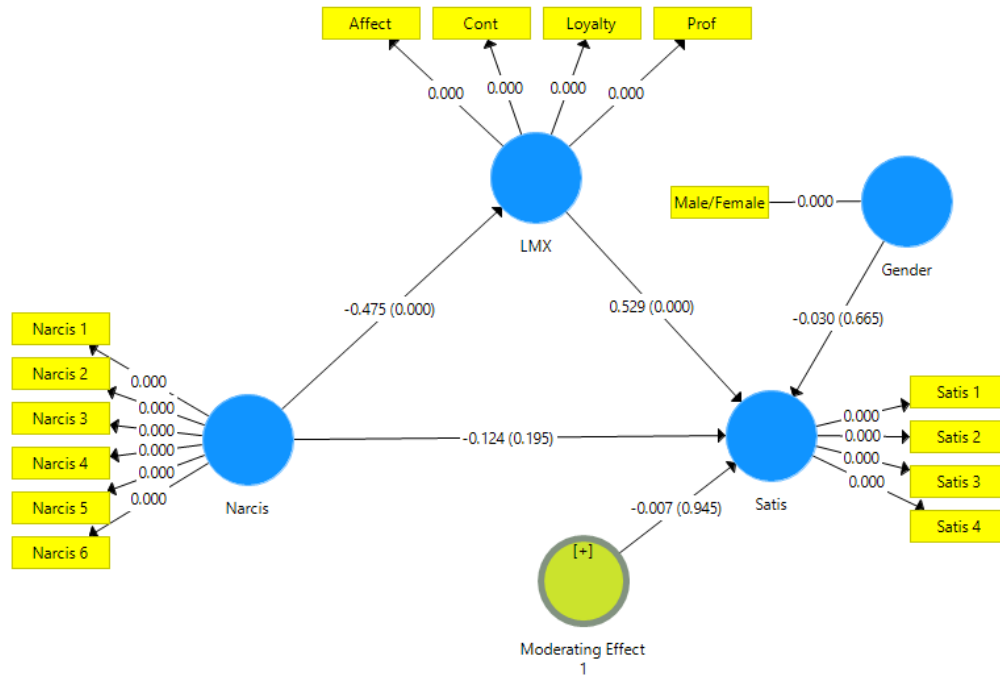
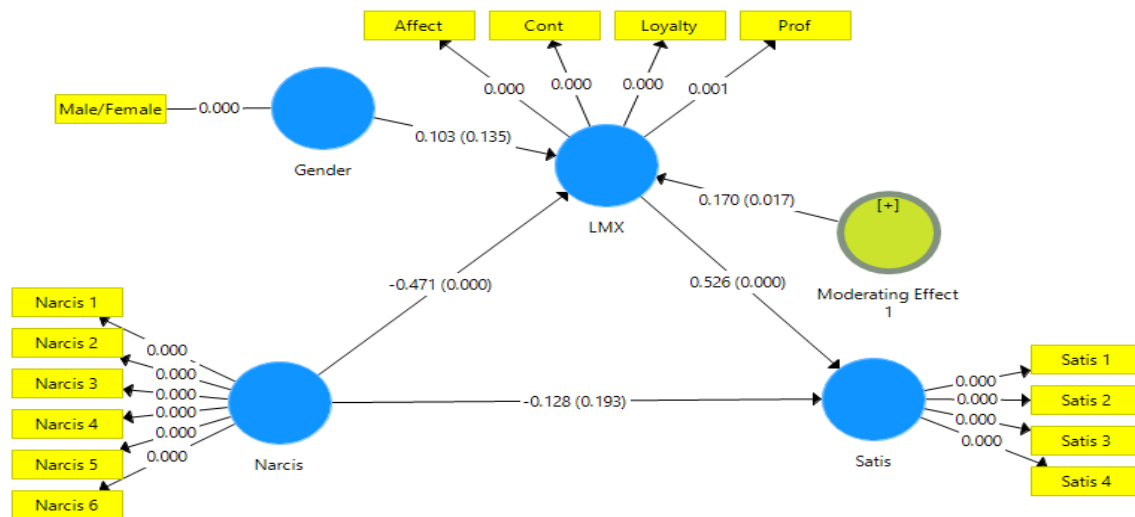


Figure 1.5 shows the PLS results concerning the use of gender as a moderator variable. Gender was used to determine if the perception of male or female is significantly different in relation to narcissistic leadership and leader-member exchange (in the accounting profession). Gender did have a significant moderator effect on the relationship between narcissistic leadership (Narcis) and leader-member exchange (LMX).

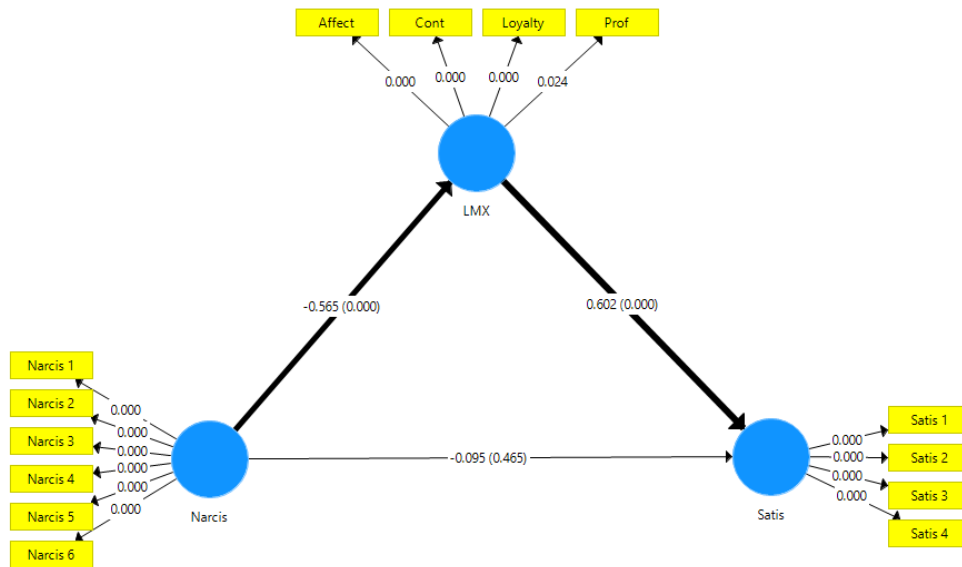
**Figure 1.5**  
**Gender as a moderating effect on Narcissistic Leadership and Leader-Member Exchange**



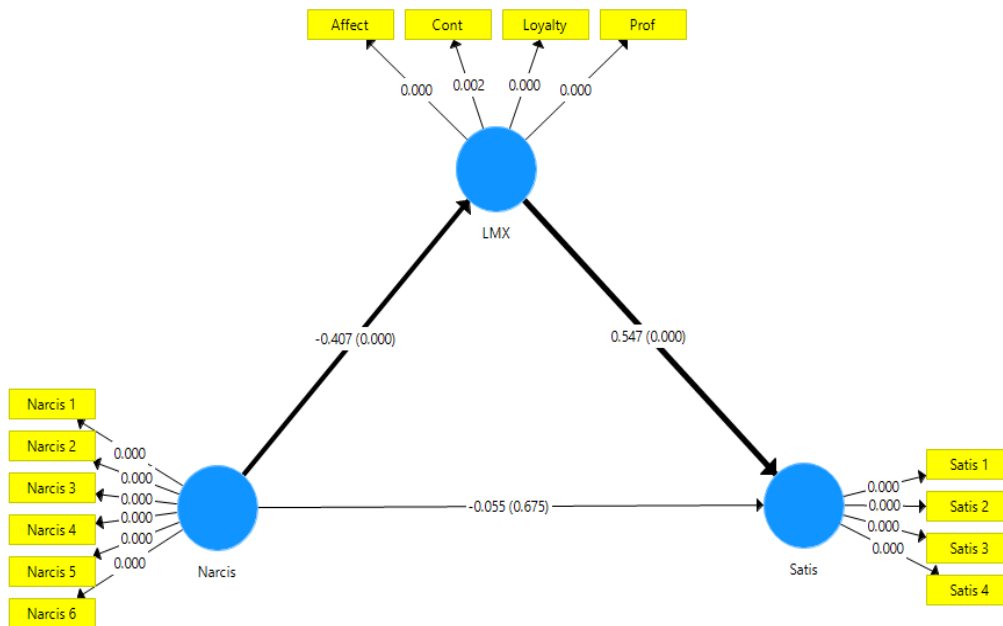
According to Figure 1.5, the analysis yields a p-value of 0.017 for the path linking the moderator effect variable and LMX. These results provide clear support that Gender exerts a significant effect on the relationship between Narcis and LMX.

Since there is a significant negative relationship between Narcis and LMX, the conclusion is that the perceptions of female accountants exhibit a weaker relationship between Narcis and LMX than males. This conclusion is evidenced in Figure 1.6 and Figure 1.7. The correlation between Narcis and LMX for males was -0.565 (see Figure 1.6) and for females was -0.407 (see Figure 1.7). There is a significant difference between these two groups of accountants at the .05 level of significance. Even though the relationship between Narcis and LMX for females is significant and negative, the relationship is significantly less than males. It is the authors' assumptions that this difference may be explained by the fact that females value more highly the interpersonal relationship between their bosses than do males. Therefore, the fact that females have a narcissistic boss does not have the same degree of negative effect on leader-member exchange (relationship between them). Consequently, because females value the relationship with their boss more than males value this relationship, it does not "bother" females as much if their boss is narcissistic as it does males. Another assumption by the authors' is that males are more competitive; therefore, having a narcissistic leader negatively influences the relationship between leader/subordinate (LMX) to a larger degree than it does with females.

**Figure 1.6**  
**Bootstrapping Results with SmartPLS for Males only**



**Figure 1.7**  
**Bootstrapping Results with SmartPLS for Females only**



**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

As previously stated, narcissism is a psychiatric disorder that affects professionals in many areas. This paper focused on narcissism and the effect it has within the accounting profession on

job satisfaction as related to gender perception. The theory of leader-member exchanged (LMX) is shown to play a significant role in the relationship between narcissistic leaders and employee job satisfaction. Likewise, the question is are there differences in perception between genders in measuring this relationship on job satisfaction? Additionally, does narcissism have a greater effect on job satisfaction with or without LMX moderating between the two?

Consequently, the authors answered the major research question: Do gender differences exist with regard to perception on how leader-member exchange (LMX) and narcissistic leadership affect employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession? The answer is “yes” between LMX and narcissistic leadership because the only path that had a significant difference in regard to gender perception was from narcissistic leadership to leader-member exchange. Males have a higher, negative perception between the two variables indicating they are more affected by narcissist leadership. These results may be because of their competitive nature, while females value a strong leader and are less troubled if that leader is narcissistic.

The following are the findings on the four hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction within the accounting profession.*

In regard to hypothesis 1, there was no significant difference in perception between genders in regard to the direct relationship of narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession.*

In regard to hypothesis 2, there was no significant difference in perception between genders in regard to leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession.

*Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to narcissistic leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX) in the accounting profession.*

In regard to hypothesis 3, there is a significant difference in perception between genders in regard to leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX) in the accounting profession.

*Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the perception of males and females in regard to how leader-member exchange (LMX) mediates between narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession.*

In regard to hypothesis 4, since there is a significant difference in hypothesis 3, there is a significant difference in the perception between genders in regard to how Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) mediates between narcissistic leadership and employee job satisfaction in the accounting profession. Even though LMX mediates the relationship between narcissistic leadership and job satisfaction for both males and females, the degree of mediation for males is significantly greater than for females.

In regard to hypothesis 3 and 4, the coefficient for males was significantly greater with a negative coefficient of -0.565 while females had a negative coefficient at -0.407. This implies that males are more troubled by having a narcissistic leader than are females, again possibly because males are more competitive while females value a strong leader, despite the fact that they may be narcissistic. Another thought by the authors on the subject is that perhaps females do not communicate difficulties to leaders in as vocal a manner as males would communicate.

Being influential is the essence of leadership, and managerial effectiveness is strongly determined by one's ability to influence others, whether they be subordinates or superiors, or even peers. (Himanshu, 2009). Therefore, in regard to being an effective leader, communication is essential, and various styles exist among men and women. Women are better listeners and are more empathetic. When decisiveness is important, men generally are more effective. Men also tend to be better at monologue while women are better at dialogue (Goman, 2016). Other communication strengths for women include the ability to read language and the ability to detect nonverbal cues. They have good listening skills and display more empathy, while men have a very commanding physical presence and display "power" while at the same time being direct and to the point in their conversations. Weaknesses in communication for women are that they can be too emotional, often won't get to the point in a conversation and are not authoritative enough. Communication weaknesses for men are that they can be too blunt and direct, oftentimes too confident in their opinion. They also are not empathetic enough and are often insensitive. (Goman, 2016). Therefore, communication styles, as well as empathy may play a role in explaining these differences in perceptions regarding narcissistic leadership. This observation could be a possible source of future research.

Samier & Atkins (2010) have explored destructive narcissism and how to prevent it within the educational arena. Menon & Sharland (2011) cite that the current college generation exhibits a sense of entitlement and high levels of narcissism. That generation will soon become the leaders in our world, whether it be in business or other areas. Lubit (2002) says that narcissism has become a "significant problem for organization", (p. 127). Of interest is that Baird (1980) notes that students majoring in business tend to be more academically dishonest than majors in other areas. Amernic & Craig (2010) have added to the literature by writing on the relationship between accounting and personality disorders and have cited narcissism; however, there appear to be few published studies solely on the topic of narcissism and accounting (Amernic & Craig, 2010). Additionally, little research exists on the negative effects on employees pertaining to how they are treated by organizations (Gibney, Zagenczyk, & Masters, 2009). It is also noted by the authors that gender topics seems to be prevalent in the news media and literature at the current time; therefore, this study should fill a "gap" in the current research available regarding narcissistic leadership and the effects on employee job satisfaction as it is perceived between genders.

In regards to practice, leadership within the accounting world may have a significant impact on the long-term success of the organization. This success may be linked directly or indirectly to the level of employee job satisfaction. As the authors have previously discussed, there are numerous effects of narcissism within the business world, some of which are lack of job satisfaction, an abnormal imbalance of work and social life, and a loss of identity of employees of identity (Godkin & Allcorn, 2011; Koprowski, 1981; Lubit, 2002; Kernberg, 2008). The understanding of how male and female employees differ in their perception of working relationships may give significant insight to accounting firms on how to attract and keep productive employees that contribute to the future success of the firm.

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