Vivien Höflinger, Marion Büttgen*

No Benefits for Paradox Personalities? Narcissism and Humility in New Work Careers**

Abstract

Remarkable contributions have already been made to narcissism and its particular influence on career success, yet the literature to date does not capture the potential impact of paradoxical personalities, especially when considering the role of humility as a complement to a multifaceted constellation of characters. This gap finds additional relevance in light of recent changes in today's world of work in terms of flexibility and complexity. Therefore, our study examines the relationship between narcissism and humility with objective and subjective career success in new work settings. The research is based on dyadic data from 398 cross-industry U.S. professionals in 199 pairs. Hypotheses are tested using hierarchical moderated multiple and logistic regression analyses. As expected, the interaction between narcissism and humility showed negative effects on a leadership position, project responsibility, and salary. Considering new ways of working in a three-way interaction with narcissism and humility, the effect turned positive for salary. Thus, in the new world of work, the humble narcissist is successful in material terms. Surprisingly, no relations to subjective career success were evident. Our findings contribute to the literature on new ways of working, career success, and paradox personalities by showing that although humble narcissists may generally experience lower levels of career success, they rather succeed in new working environments.

Keywords: paradox personality, narcissism, humility, new ways of working, career success
(JEL: J24, M20, M13)

Introduction

Career success has long been at the core of academic discussions in managerial psychology research, remaining a key topic in contemporary literature (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017). Furthermore, personality has been identified as an essential predictor of work and career success (Semeijn et al., 2020; Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys, 2013). Previously, not least triggered by severe scandals in the business world, the negative sides of personality, especially Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and

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narcissism – known as the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) – have become central to investigating the relationship between personality traits and career outcomes (LeBreton et al., 2018; Lee & Ashton, 2014). However, despite its adverse characteristics, narcissism separates itself from the triad, as it is perceived as the least negative of the three components (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012) and has even been positively associated with career success outcomes (Spurk et al., 2016; Wille, De Fruyt, & De Clercq, 2013).

Working conditions are constantly changing and have recently undergone another shift through digital transformation (Timonen & Vuori, 2018), resulting in new work settings characterized by more variability in location and timing (Gerdenitsch et al., 2015; Kok et al., 2014). This new flexibility in the job environment based on freedom and mutual trust is collectively referred to as *new ways of working* (NWW) (Kok et al., 2014; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). To respond to the increasingly volatile, global, and competitive organizational settings as well as to the growing demands on employees, scholars have gradually begun adopting a paradox perspective (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Waldman et al., 2019; Zhang & Han, 2019). Paradoxes comprise conflicting yet interconnected elements that coexist and endure over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and the expanding body of paradox theory research has allowed a new understanding of organizational challenges (Waldman et al., 2019).

Considering personality level, individuals can truly possess paradoxical character traits that enable teams and supervisors to meet structural and contradictory demands simultaneously (Zhang et al., 2015). For instance, managers, in times of flattened hierarchies, are somewhat equal to their followers but are still expected to lead them. A construct that is repeatedly considered when looking at paradoxes in the workplace is humility (e.g., Owens et al., 2015). Leadership research indicates that narcissism and humility can coexist in harmony (Liu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). They appear contradictory and incompatible but can promote beneficial outcomes, such as firm innovation or followers' job performance (Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). A famous example of this opposing personality combination is Steve Jobs, who was considered a narcissist but seemed to be balanced by a certain amount of humility (Owens et al., 2015).

Strong research efforts have already been made concerning narcissism and its effects on career success. Still, the literature to date does not shed light on the potential impact of paradox personalities on career success, especially the role of humility as the counterpart of a multifaceted character constellation. This gap in today's literature is additionally relevant regarding organizations' recent shift toward new work settings. Thus, this paper sets out to answer the question ‚*Do paradox personalities, in particular narcissism and humility, succeed in new work environments*?'.

The present study contributes to three literature streams. First, we contribute to the literature on paradoxes in the workplace by extending the pure leadership context

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and including the broader workforce perspective. The positive outcomes of the portrayed paradoxical personalities have previously been observed only at the top management level (e.g., Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). "Yet our study results revealed for the broad workforce that humble narcissists are generally less successful in their careers. However, and second, responding to previous research calling for more studies on NWW (Gerards et al., 2018), our study contributes to current research by showing that the working environment represents a relevant contextual factor impacting employees' careers. In a modern working environment, the humble narcissist can indeed be successful. We therefore demonstrate that the outcomes of humble narcissism change within NWW. Third, by including a greater variety of indicators for both objective and subjective success, the present study contributes to the broader discussion on the complexity of what career success actually means and which aspects need to be considered.

This study's topic seems more relevant than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic, with all its lockdown consequences, will accelerate the urgency of the issue. According to a recent study, four out of ten U.S. employees would look for another job if their employer demanded a full return to the office. The majority of the workforce would look positively on a new position that provided the same salary and the opportunity to use home office two or three days per week (Maria Barrero et al., 2021).

As diverse forms of mobile work will play a prominent role, the current results will emphasize the higher significance of specific personality traits in the new working world of today and tomorrow.

Theoretical Background

Career Success

Career success is described as "the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences" (Judge et al., 1999, p. 621, p.621). The definition differentiates between two kinds of achievements: the real and perceived ones, also referred to as objective or subjective career success respectively (Abele et al., 2011; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Objective success indicators relate to externally measurable aspects, such as salary or hierarchical status (Spurk et al., 2016). In contrast, subjective success represents "a self-evaluation of career progress" (Arthur et al., 2005, p.179), such as career satisfaction (Eisenbarth et al., 2018). Both approaches are acknowledged in career success research (Abele et al., 2011). However, (Heslin, 2005) criticized the operationalization of career success because it has been measured almost exclusively through salary and satisfaction previously. He also emphasized the need for improvements in conceptualization and comprehension for both objective and subjective success indicators.

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To address the stated criticism and represent career success in its entirety, especially in new work environments, this study includes four measures of objective career success as well as a multidimensional subjective career success scale. Objective career success consists of scientifically established indicators: *salary* (Spurk et al., 2019), *bonus* (Bal et al., 2015), *leadership position* (Spurk et al., 2016), and *project responsibility* (Abele et al., 2016). In the NWW, these classic indicators are still important, especially through project responsibility and bonuses (Mayrhofer et al., 2016). Subjective career success is often only represented through career satisfaction as an overall evaluation (e.g., Spurk et al., 2016). This sole approach has recently been reconsidered and adapted to the changing world of work via a range of indicators: recognition, quality work, meaningful work, influence, authenticity, personal life, growth and development, and satisfaction (Shockley et al., 2016).

Paradoxical Personalities: Narcissism and Humility

With the organizational setting becoming increasingly international, competitive, and vibrant, contrasting requirements have intensified (Zhang et al., 2015). Jobholders face challenges between local requirements on the one hand and the need to operate globally in a progressively multinational setting contemporaneously. Leaders must ensure decision-making control while maintaining autonomy. They are further torn between treating subordinates equally and embracing individualism. Meanwhile, individuals confront issues of balancing work and personal life or cooperation and competitiveness (Waldman et al., 2019). Scientists and practitioners are progressively applying a paradoxical lens to comprehend and clarify these emerging tensions (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015). Following a common definition by Smith and Lewis (2011) (Smith & Lewis, 2011) in the corresponding literature, a "paradox" comprises "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time. Such elements seem logical when considered in isolation but irrational, inconsistent, and even absurd when juxtaposed" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p.386). Hence, paradox theory proposes the coexistence of two opposing conditions that can promote beneficial outcomes (Eisenhardt, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017).

Following the Yin-Yang philosophy, people are able to have paradoxical characteristics, and although seemingly irreconcilable, especially narcissism and humility can coexist in harmony (Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). Narcissism encompasses grandiosity, hostility, arrogance, a dysfunctional form of excessive self-confidence, and the demonstration of importance and superiority (Back et al., 2010; Emmons, 1987; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissists see life as an arena for accomplishing admiration, status, and success, all aimed at strengthening their self-concept (Campbell et al., 2005). Nevertheless, typical attributes describing narcissistic behaviour can be positive, such as charisma and willingness to take risks (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012). Narcissists are popular at first sight (Back et al., 2010). Moreover, various narcissists' characteristics are leader-like (Grijalva et

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al., 2015), such as extraversion, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Nevicka et al., 2011). Research further indicates that narcissistic personalities manage to emerge as leaders (Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011). They are visionaries who can influence and inspire others, and their followers see them as superhuman, blindly believe, and unconditionally follow them (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

In contrast, the concept of humility originated in theology and philosophy (Owens et al., 2013) and is characterized "by low self-focus, genuine appreciation of others, accurate perspective of one's place in the world, and openness to new ideas" (Summerell et al., 2020, p. 2, p.2). Honesty-humility is also known as the additional sixth factor of the HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2005), an extension of the Big Five. It has also been positively related to the willingness to admit wrongness (Fetterman et al., 2019) and prosocial behaviour (Aghababaei et al., 2014). Humble individuals see their counterparts as important sources of learning by reflecting on themselves and being transparent about their strengths and limitations (Owens et al., 2013). Humility also includes gratitude (Emmons, 2007), the capability to admit one's mistakes, limits, and imperfections (Tangney, 2000), and sharing the spotlight (Davis et al., 2010). Ironically, high levels of humility in self-reports indicate a lack of humility (Davis et al., 2011; Davis et al., 2010). Considering the aforementioned description of humility, this trait appears rather incompatible and conflicting with narcissism. One might doubt the existence of humble narcissists and even think that it is an oxymoron. However, the literature has provided strong evidence that contradictory attributes can coexist (Zhang et al., 2017). In previous studies, weak negative or insignificant correlations between humility and narcissism provide empirical proof that this paradox personality combination may, in fact, exist (Liu et al., 2021; Ou et al., 2014; Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). Moreover, humility can enhance the potentially positive effects of narcissism and mitigate negative outcomes; studies in leadership literature have shown that narcissism and humility can appear simultaneously and favour positive effects, e.g., more productivity and higher creativity (e.g., Ou et al., 2014; Owens et al., 2015). The consideration of the coexistence of the two contrasting traits is based on studies showing that multiple self-concepts can exist simultaneously and be evoked contextually (McConnell, 2011). For example, an individual may be outgoing at home but shy at work. Hence, humble narcissists are assumed to adapt to situations and behave accordingly (Zhang et al., 2017).

Paradoxical Personalities and Career Success

Personality essentially shapes one's behaviour in the workplace and has proven to be a significant predictor of work and career success (Semeijn et al., 2020; Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys, 2013). Looking at the paradox personality combination of narcissism and humility in the workplace, outcomes have been described consistently as beneficial, yet these results have only been reported in the upper management context so far (e.g., Zhang et al., 2017). To understand the stated

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research outcomes of humble narcissism in leadership literature, the distinction between *leadership emergence* and *leadership effectiveness* should be mentioned when considering management qualities and particularly successful leaders (e.g., Grijalva et al., 2015): the former focuses on the process of people who are seen as leaders in others' perceptions, while the latter represents the actual performance of a leader in achieving goals. The effects of humble narcissism in top management might rather be counted as *leadership effectiveness,* such as firm innovation (Zhang et al., 2017), follower job engagement, and job performance (Owens et al., 2015). However, the present study investigates several indicators of objective and subjective career success, such as salary or project responsibility. These may precede leadership and could, therefore, more likely be associated with *leadership emergence*. Thus, humble narcissism might be beneficial for an organization when one has already reached the top management level (e.g., Zhang et al., 2017), yet the question arises whether these effects are easily transmissible to the broader workforce.

Considerable research efforts have already been made on narcissism and its impact on career success. Individuals with pure narcissistic characteristics tend to attain higher hierarchical and financial achievements (Wille, De Fruyt, & De Clercq, 2013). More recently, (Paleczek et al., 2018) showed that narcissism positively predicts leadership position and salary. Additionally, previous research has indicated a positive relationship with the objective career success indicator salary but no relation to subjective success (Bruk-Lee et al., 2009; Spurk et al., 2016). A possible reason for these non-existing effects on subjective criteria could be that narcissistic employees believe that they deserve a better workplace than they actually have (Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015; Mathieu, 2013). Altogether, narcissists feel that they have a right to succeed, they seem to have more confidence to overcome challenges in their careers, and they are more committed to proactively promoting and handling their careers (Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015). They can also demonstrate greater work investment and can achieve career success in terms of objective criteria, but they seem to have no relationship with subjective indicators.

Narcissists possess a pompous self-view (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and feel they are superior to others (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This characteristic likely assists in salary negotiations or in attaining project responsibilities. Contrarily, humble individuals embody a self-view that believes a power greater than the self exists (Ou et al., 2014). They do not attempt to under- or over-represent themselves because they embrace a balanced perception by correctly evaluating their own strengths and restrictions (Morris et al., 2005; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018). Regarding objective career success aspects, pure narcissists have already proven to be successful. We suppose that people with both narcissism and humility cannot assert themselves well in situations where a pronounced narcissistic self-view might take them further. In contrast, when it comes to the evaluation of one's own career and achievement, the humble self-view could help to assess in an adequate and positive manner.

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Taken together, we presume the combination of humility and narcissism will not be beneficial in terms of objective criteria. In contrast, we expect that through humility, the effect of narcissism on subjective career success becomes not only apparent but also positive. Hence, we assume:

Hypothesis 1: The interaction of narcissism and humility is negatively related to objective career success, namely (a) leadership position, (b) project responsibility, (c) salary, and (d) bonus but is positively related to (e) subjective career success.

Paradox Personalities, New Ways of Working, and Career Success

As aforementioned, the way we work is steadily transforming. The impact of information and communication technology is changing the working environment, resulting in more flexibility in where and when to work (Gerdenitsch et al., 2015; Kok et al., 2014). Regulated and controlled work structures, rigid hierarchies, and a predetermined presence are increasingly becoming relics (Chudzikowski, 2012; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). A concept that comprises these changes is entitled *new ways of working* (NWW) with its three key characteristics (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012): (a) timing, (b) place, and (c) new media technologies. The recent literature review by (Renard et al., 2021, p. 9) on NWW provides a commonly used definition stating that "NWW allows workers to choose when and where to work while using ICT to be available anywhere and anytime". In contrast to traditional nine-to-five employment, individuals achieve more autonomy in choosing their self-determined working time. Additionally, they also have a variety of options for where they work – be it at the office, at home, on the plane or elsewhere. Finally, this temporal and geographical flexibility is alleviated by the usage of media technologies, such as videoconferences or emails (Gerdenitsch et al., 2015). NWW represents a fairly young concept, and multiple authors state that the scientific literature on NWW remains scarce (Gerards et al., 2018). While few dimensions of NWW have been investigated separately, e.g., employee worktime control, workplace flexibility or telecommuting, less empirical work has been conducted on NWW as a whole (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kotera & Correa Vione, 2020; Nijp et al., 2012; Schmoll & Süß, 2019; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). NWW is believed to enhance work autonomy (Van Steenbergen et al., 2018) and to increase work engagement through effective and efficient communication (Gerards et al., 2018; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). So, the concept has been associated with positive outcomes, but little consideration has been given to individual differences. Existing research has highlighted the importance of individual differences implying that some are more able to cope with transition processes to NWW compared to others (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018).

In a new work environment based on freedom and mutual trust (Kok et al., 2014), narcissists cannot possibly succeed with their manipulative and exploitative

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character. Further, considering narcissism and their preferred work environments, it becomes apparent that narcissists clearly favour hierarchal structures due to the perceived opportunity to reach the top (Zitek & Jordan, 2016), whereas today's work setting is characterized by flattened hierarchies (Volmer & Spurk, 2011). For both objective and subjective career success criteria, we expect that individuals with high narcissism will not succeed. Thus, we postulate:

Hypothesis 2: In the NWW environment, narcissism is negatively related to objective career success, namely (a) leadership position, (b) project responsibility, (c) salary, (d) bonus, and (e) subjective career success.

People with paradoxical personalities offer the opportunity to generate new approaches (Waldman et al., 2019). Reflecting on the upcoming paradoxes of the NWW, we assume that paradoxical personalities are able to deal with contradictory challenges and surroundings with the flexibility of when, how, and where to work. Again, in a new work environment based on freedom and mutual trust (Kok et al., 2014), humility seems to be the ideal companion for narcissism. Because of their self-awareness of playing a smaller part in a greater reality, humble people carry a perspective that is increasingly necessary when working with different parties inside and outside an organization (Morris et al., 2005; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018). The tempering nature of humility is thereby needed to handle a narcissist's way in new work settings. Thus, we expect that the negative effects of narcissism in new work settings can turn positive when humility is present contemptuously. In conclusion, referring to the described need for humility in the changing organizational environment, we expect the effect of humble narcissism to be positive for both objective and subjective career success there. We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: In the NWW environment, the interaction of narcissism and humility is positively related to objective career success, namely (a) leadership position, (b) project responsibility, (c) salary, (d) bonus, and (e) subjective career success.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Dyadic data collection was performed online using a US-based panel provider (www.survata.com) during a six-week period. In exchange for financial compensation, 426 participants in 213 dyads joined the study, whereas 14 dyads (28 participants) were excluded due to careless check measures and missing data. The final sample comprised 199 dyads (398 participants) consisting of 63.3 % of females and an average age of 41.94 years (*SD* = 12.63). The participants were jobholders from different industries in the U.S. The majority worked in education and training (29 %) and healthcare (27 %).

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Each dyad consists of two persons: person A and person B. Here, person A is the main subject, and person B is the assessor. The sole function of person B is to assess person A in terms of his or her personality traits. So, the focus of this study was placed on person A as the main subject of each dyad. Person A and person B were asked to describe their relationship with each other.

Previous research has shown that people can assess the personality of others quite well. For example, even complete strangers can make valid personality judgments after being shown a brief video of a behavioural sample (Borkenau & Liebler, 1993; Youyou et al., 2015). In contrast, a meta-analysis by (Connelly & Ones, 2010) showed that ratings by strangers with a restricted time of observation were significantly less accurate than those by more closely known raters. The accuracy of the rating was highest when the other raters were married or dating, followed by relatives and friends, having slightly lower accuracy and finally succeeded by work colleagues and casual acquaintances. For this reason, these relationship types were considered here. The majority were colleagues (42.2 %), followed by friends (39.7 %), partners (12.1 %), relatives (5 %), and others (2 %). Regarding the study variables, person B, the assessor, provides third-party information about the personality of the main subject (i.e. narcissism and humility). The main subject provided self-reported information about the variables of career success and NWW.

For the study, two different sets of surveys were used, one for person A and another one for person B, managed in two consecutive parts: first, a survey for the main subject and, second, one for the assessor. Person A and Person B were present to conduct the study. The procedure ensured that the respective questionnaires were completed independently. Person A and Person B did not receive any knowledge about each other's responses. The risk that shenanigans were committed to answering the questionnaires can never completely be ruled out. However, the panel provider and all participants in the study ensured that person A and person B completed their parts separately from each other. Nonetheless, to verify the quality of the data and to ensure the veracity of the other-report ratings, we also collected self-report data of the personality traits[1] which not included in hypotheses testing.

Measures

Acknowledging the existence of the common method variance and the warning regarding humility and the validity of self-reports, we chose a dyadic approach to ensure other-report ratings of both personality traits. Narcissism and humility were measured as other-report ratings by the assessor. The remaining variables were self-reported by the main subject.

1 Correlation of self-reports and other-report ratings for narcissism r =,642** and humility r =,615**.

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Regarding the measurement and analysis, both the personality traits and NWW are understood as individual-level constructs. The variable NWW describes the individual work environment in which the test subjects find themselves.

Narcissism. A short version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) (Ames et al., 2006) was used to capture narcissism. Each of the 16 items of the NPI-16 provides two statements from which the participant must select the one that best describes him or her. For the purpose of other-report ratings, the NPI-16 was adapted to assess a third person. Sample items included: "He/she likes to be the centre of attention" vs" He/she prefers to blend in with the crowd." The narcissistic statements were coded 1, and the non-narcissistic statements were coded 0, adding up to a total score between 0 and 16. Cronbach's ☋ was.867.

Humility. This construct was measured with other-report ratings of the Expressed Humility in Organizations scale (Owens et al., 2013). The scale contains nine items, for example, "This person takes notice of others' strengths," that are completed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Cronbach's ☋ was.921.

New Ways of Working. The concept of NWW was collected by using the 12-item Flexible Autonomous Work Questionnaire (FAWQ) (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2011). The FAWQ was designed to measure NWW, in which jobholders have more control over different facets of their work. It comprises four subscales, namely control over work content, time, location, and communication, which are completed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Sample items included "I can decide the content of my work," "I can decide the time slots I work in," "I can decide where I work," and "I have the feeling of being in control over the communication I have for work." Cronbach's ☋ was.914.

Objective career success. We presented objective career success in two ways: the more material indicators' *salary* and *bonus* and the more organizational indicators' *leadership position* and *project responsibility*. We assessed *salary* ("What is your monthly salary before taxes?" USD; (i.e., Spurk et al., 2016) and *bonus* ("What was your last bonus payment?" USD; (i.e., Lyness & Thompson, 2000) each via one open self-reported question. *Leadership position* ("Are you currently holding a leadership position?"; (i.e., Spurk et al., 2016) and *project responsibility* ("Are you currently having project responsibility?"; (i.e., Abele et al., 2016) are both dichotomous measures with the categories "yes" or "no."

Subjective career success. Subjective career success was collected using the Subjective Career Success Inventory (SCSI) (Shockley et al., 2016). The SCSI scale contains 24 items addressing eight dimensions that are completed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree): quality work ("...I am proud of the quality of the work I have produced"), meaningful work ("...I think my work has been meaningful"), influence ("...decisions that I have made have impacted

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my organization"), authenticity ("...I have been able to pursue work that meets my personal needs and preferences"), personal life ("...I have been able to have a satisfying life outside of work"), growth and development ("...I have expanded my skill sets to perform better"), satisfaction ("...my career is personally satisfying"), and recognition ("…my supervisors have told me I do a good job"). The eight dimensions are combined into one overall subjective career success index.

Control Variables. The study controlled for age, gender, age and gender of the study partner, the highest level of education, and weekly working hours. In addition, other variables were collected that were not integrated here: organizational tenure, tenure of the current position, number of previous employers, number of previous positions with current employer, number of changes associated with a hierarchical rise, salary evolvement, number of employees in the current organization, sector in which the organization operates, intention to change employer.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows the bivariate correlations between the study's control, independent, and dependent variables. Looking at the examined personality traits and career success indicators, narcissism was significantly positively correlated with leadership position (r =.313, p <.01), project responsibility (r =.319, p <.01), and salary (r =.185, p <.01). Humility showed significant positive correlations with NWW (r =.208, p <.01), leadership position (r =.105, p <.05), and subjective career success (r =.536, p <.01). No significant relationships were indicated between narcissism and bonus payment (r =.011, p = n.s.) as well as with subjective career success (r =.006, p = n.s.).

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Study Variables

	Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.	Age	41.82	12.57	1													
2.	Gender[a]	0.70	0.46	-.06	1												
3.	Age Study Partner	42.07	12.72	.91**	-.04	1											
4.	Gender[a] Study Partner	0.57	0.49	-.03	.55**	-.02	1										
5.	Education	2.67	1.24	.08	-.15*	.06	-.07	1									
6.	Working hours	43.3	54.75	.11	-.14*	.11	-.11	-.08	1								
7.	Narcissism	6.69	4.50	-.22**	-.18**	-.20**	-.02	.16*	.02	1							
8.	Humility	4.13	0.76	.01	.04	.01	.02	.07	-.02	-.06	1						
9.	New Ways of Working	3.16	1.09	-.08	-.16*	-.04	-.04	.08	-.09	.24**	.20**	1					
10.	Leadership position	0.52	0.50	-.18**	-.14*	-.20**	-.06	.23**	-.04	.31**	.15*	.39**	1				
11.	Project responsibility	0.59	0.49	-.27**	-.09	-.27**	-.18**	.28**	-.08	.31**	.09	.32**	.47**	1			
12.	Salary	5683.96	6965.72	-.13	-.16*	-.13	-.19**	.12	-.03	.10	-.03	.10	.26**	.23**	1		
13.	Bonus	3420.5	11643.19	-.08	-.21**	-.07	-.16*	.10	-.01	.18**	.03	.20**	.24**	.21**	.34**	1	
14.	Subjective Career Success	3.96	0.78	.10	-.00	.09	-.05	.12	.02	.05	.53**	.52**	.31**	.25**	.03	.09	1

[a] 0 = male and 1 = female.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

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Hypothesis Testing

To test the predicted hypotheses, we performed five sets of hierarchical moderated multiple and logistic regression analyses based on recommendations by (Cohen et al., 2013). The predictor variables were entered within four consecutive steps. Control variables (age, gender, age and gender of the study partner, highest level of education, and weekly working hours) were entered in step 1. In step 2, the main effects (narcissism, humility, and new ways of working) were entered. The two-way interaction terms (i.e., narcissism x humility, narcissism x new ways of working, humility x new ways of working) were included in step 3. Finally, the three-way interaction term (narcissism x humility x new ways of working) was included in step 4. To prevent multicollinearity between the predictor variables and the interaction terms, narcissism, humility, and new work environment were all centred by subtracting the means of each aforementioned variable from its scores (Aiken et al., 1991). The two-way and three-way interaction terms were then calculated by multiplying the mean-centred predictors.

Two-way interaction effects. As Table 2 further indicates, Hypotheses 1a–c can be supported. The interaction of narcissism and humility was negatively related to a leadership position (B = -.087, Wald = 2.913, p <.10) and project responsibility (B = -.105, Wald = 2.737, p <.10) at the 10 % level as well as to salary (β = -.139, p <.10) but showed no relation to bonus (β = -.102, p =.16) or subjective career success (β = -.031, p =.565). Considering the interaction of narcissism and new ways of working, Hypothesis 2 cannot be supported. The interaction is not as predicted negatively but is positively related to bonuses (β =.161, p <.05). No relation was apparent to a leadership position (B =.058, Wald = 1.949, p =.163), project responsibility (B = -.002, Wald =.002, p =.96), salary (β =.043, p =.564), or subjective career success (β =.038, p =.50).

Three-way interaction effects. Table 2 shows that Hypothesis 3c can be supported. The three-way interaction between narcissism, humility, and NWW is positively associated with salary (β =.194, p =.012), but no relationship was apparent with leadership position (B =.062, Wald = 1.991, p =.158), project responsibility (B = -.001, Wald =.026, p =.873), bonus (β =.089, p =.243), or subjective career (β -.035, p =.543). The significant three-way interaction is shown in Figure 1.

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Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Leadership Position, Project Responsibility, Salary, Bonus and Subjective Career Success

	Leadership position					Project responsibility					Salary		Bonus		Subjective Career Success	
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*Wald*	*p*	*Exp(B)*	*B*	*SE*	*Wald*	*p*	*Exp(B)*	*ß*	*p*	*ß*	*p*	*ß*	*p*
Step 1: Controls																
Age	.005	.026	.043	.836	1.005	-.017	.028	.384	.535	.983	-.066	.676	-.075	.637	.032	.844
Gender	-.653	.401	2.652	.103	.521	.212	.432	.241	.624	1.236	-.076	.372	-.169	.049	.062	.48
Working hours	-.001	.003	.077	.781	.999	-.003	.006	.206	.65	.997	-.032	.656	-.028	.691	.028	.704
Education	0.4	.129	9.662	.002	1.492	.582	.145	16.095	.000	1.789	.116	.106	.077	.282	.12	.101
Age Study Partner	-.044	.027	2.643	.104	.957	-0.04	.028	1.997	.158	.961	-.085	.588	-.024	.878	.058	.716
Gender Study Partner	.092	.364	.063	.802	1.096	-.975	.395	6.086	.014	.377	-.148	.077	-.074	.379	-.073	.397
R^2	.154					.263					.047		.036		.028	
Step 2: Main effects																
Narcissism (N)	.11	.042	6.833	.009	1.116	.119	.044	7.298	.007	1.126	.025	.741	.107	.162	.012	.826
Humility (H)	.329	.224	2.156	.142	1.39	.194	.239	.655	.418	1.214	-.045	.538	.013	.853	.433	.00
NWW	.745	.174	18.315	.000	2.107	.628	.178	12.47	.000	1.874	.07	.354	.14	.063	.464	.00
R^2	.358					.408					.039		.057		.502	
Step 3: Two-way interactions																
N x H	-.087	.051	2.913	.088	.916	-.105	.063	2.737	.098	.90	-.139	.059	-.102	.16	-.031	.565
N x NWW	.058	.041	1.949	.163	1.059	-.002	.041	.002	.96	.998	.043	.564	.161	.029	.038	.50
H x NWW	.044	.238	.034	.853	1.045	.402	.284	2.012	.156	1.495	.038	.603	.097	.173	-.055	.31
R^2	.381					.436					.044		.077		.506	
Step 4: Three-way interaction																
N x H x NWW	.062	.044	1.991	.158	1.064	-.01	.06	.026	.873	.99	.194	.012	.089	.243	-.035	.543
R^2	.391					.436					.071		.079		.507	

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to three literature streams. First, by extending earlier approaches in the leadership context and considering the position of the broader workforce, we contribute to the literature on paradoxes in the workplace. While positive outcomes of the paradoxical personalities have been identified only at the top managing level until now (e.g., Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017), we can nevertheless show that this phenomenon cannot be transferred to the overall career success context. As expected, the interaction of narcissism and humility proved to be not beneficial in terms of objective career success. Except for *bonuses*, the results showed significant negative relationships throughout. Unexpectedly, even though humility shows significant positive relations with *subjective career success* on its own, this effect disappears when combined with narcissism. This result seems to be reasonable when considering that humble individuals can assess their own reality accurately (Morris et al., 2005; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018) and perhaps also appreciate what they have achieved so far. Further, this essentially also fits the belief that narcissists think they deserve a better job. This overestimating self-view seems to surpass the humble character aspect and makes reasonable consideration of one's career not possible (Mathieu, 2013). Altogether, humble narcissism might thereby be beneficial for an organization when one already reaches the top management

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level (e.g., Zhang et al., 2017) but not for the individual if they are still on the career path to get there.

Second, our study contributes to the literature on NWW by showing that the working environment is a crucial contextual factor impacting an employee's career. Previous studies have called for additional research on NWW (Gerards et al., 2018). The digitization of work is currently recognized as the world's greatest social and economic trend, which will lead to a fundamental transformation of the character of work, society, and the economy in the future (Hirschi, 2018). To the best of our knowledge, no study has considered the changing working environment when exploring career success until now. We expected the interaction of humility and narcissism to be negative for objective career success and to be positive in new work settings. In fact, we showed that the outcomes of humble narcissism change when NWW come into play. In a modern working environment, the humble narcissist can be successful in terms of *salary*. Examining the new world of work further, narcissism is positively associated with *bonuses*, contrary to expectations. Consequently, it seems that narcissists are also establishing themselves well in the new working world. This might be possible due to the contextual reinforcement model of Campbell and Campbell (2009), which implies narcissists are highly adaptive in certain contexts, such as new and chaotic leadership situations (Campbell et al., 2011). Narcissists are driven to achieve success and use self-regulation strategies to enhance their self-esteem and maintain power and social status (Campbell et al., 2011), apparently also under new work conditions.

Third, this study contributes to a broader debate about what career success is and which factors need to be considered. For several decades of scientific research, career success has been measured almost exclusively through salary and satisfaction. Even though they still represent important indicators today, such attempts do not encompass the breadth of what individuals behold when they reflect on their professional lives (Mayrhofer et al., 2016). To consider NWW with all its facets and challenges, we operationalized career success extensively by adding numerous indicators for both objective and subjective success (e.g., Shockley et al., 2016). Our results indicate that the effects of humble narcissism change in terms of salary when incorporating new work settings. This may be due to different compensation systems or the way salary negotiations are conducted.

In terms of subjective career success, no relationships with a humble narcissist with or without involvement in the working environment were discernible. Non-existent effects of narcissism on subjective success have already been observed in previous studies (e.g., Spurk et al., 2016). As described above, the overestimation of a narcissist (Mathieu, 2013) appears to outshine the humble facet here and makes the reasonable consideration of one's career impossible, no matter in which environment one is working.

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Practical Implications

Although humble narcissism is considered desirable in leadership (e.g., Owens et al., 2015), our results indicate that individuals who present with both narcissism and humility do not succeed right away in their careers. However, since previous studies have shown they can be more beneficial for firms in the long run (e.g., Zhang et al., 2017), organizations might be well-advised to pay more attention to the selection of their employees and prospective managers. Management should keep in mind that humble individuals may not be as conspicuous in hiring or salary negotiations. Moreover, in new work settings, our study results revealed that a paradox personality constellation is a proven advantage. As aforementioned, the issue is more relevant than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic and its lockdowns have accelerated the urgency of this matter drastically. Firms thus need to be aware of their prevailing corporate culture, their incentive system, and their leading principles because the work environment influences what personality types are successful. Considering individuals, we expect that paradoxical personalities will be even more important and successful in the future as the business world becomes more volatile and multidimensional, and working conditions will entail contradictory challenges to fulfil. It has long been assumed that personality is stable and unchangeable, yet findings show that personality varies over the life span and that these changes are partly generated by externally triggered life events (Specht et al., 2011). To prepare for the new working world, individuals should be aware of their own personalities. They should further acquire paradoxical ways of thinking with the help of personnel development through training or coaching programs.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research has some limitations. First, the chosen cross-sectional design does not permit causality statements. Longitudinal studies are needed for further investigation into illustrating developments over time, both in personality and career success. Additionally, our study was conducted solely in the U.S. setting; however, the paradox approach originated in the Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy (Zhang et al., 2017), and most studies have actually been conducted in the Asian context (Ou et al., 2014; Owens et al., 2015). Concerning their cultural orientations, China represents a collectivist system, while the U.S. is a more individualistic society (Wang, 2014). It might therefore be of interest in future research to consider cultural aspects and social differences when examining paradoxes and career-related outcomes all over.

Additionally, other paradoxical personality constellations could be particularly relevant for an investigation in a broader career context, such as humility combined with psychopathy and Machiavellianism or even with sadism as the fourth part of the Dark Tetrad (Thibault & Kelloway, 2020). Moreover, future research could investigate how they interact in different vocational settings because narcissists, for

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example, have different preferences about where they work (Kowalski et al., 2017). Other context variables could also be used for differentiated analyses (e.g., organizational culture, company size, corporate strategy). Our research, as well as most organizational scholars, has concentrated on grandiose narcissism, while vulnerable narcissism has received little attention. Initial studies show that it proves to be a powerful predictor of individual health outcomes (Wirtz & Rigotti, 2020). It might be of particular interest to consider the multifaceted constellation of narcissism in future research, especially when examining subjective career success.

Finally, the study considered common method variance and the difficulties of self-reports using two distinct data sources and other-referent statements. Still, the question remains to what extent a single informant's rating is accurate (Davis et al., 2010). Future research might even go further and have one person assessed by several people. In addition, it might be beneficial to measure objective career success with actual objective secondary data to reduce the risk of biased results due to socially desirable or otherwise biased response behaviour and corresponding endogeneity problems. However, this raises the question of economic efficiency in scientific research.

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