I can, you can, I can more: narcissism and power

Abstract

Objective: The relation between narcissism and power is analyzed in a sample of Business Administration students from a state university in Bahia, Brazil.

Method: The theoretical-empirical approach was adopted, in the light of the Upper Echelon Theory. A self-reported questionnaire was applied to 161 students from the 7th and 8th semesters. Descriptive statistics, the Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests, Correlation and Logistic Regression were used.

Results: The evidences appointed that students with narcissistic traits agreed less, despite demonstrating high agreement levels for self-sufficiency, authority, exploitativeness and vanity. As to the search for power, the students also presented lower motivation, despite evidencing attitudes of persistence, self-confidence and independence. The higher the levels of narcissism, the greater the search for power, even though the means used for this search do not cover the common benefit for the company and for co-workers. The male sex presented high motivation for power.

Contribution: In the academic context, these findings arouse the discussion between power and narcissism, permitting further understanding about the implications of the themes in business education. This permits interfering in the education of future managers, as their decisions will influence the financial statements and will affect the users of this information.

Key words: Narcissism; Power; Business; Upper Echelon Theory.

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1. Introduction

Power, its relationships and effects in the organizational environment gain academic relevance to the extent that they address stimulating themes, involving, among other elements, subjectivity, such as the personality intrinsic in managers and future managers' attitudes in the work environment. In that sense, the aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between narcissistic personality traits and the search for power in Business Administration students from a state university located in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

Studies on the non-pathological branch of narcissism inform that the managers who exhibit these traits tend towards attitudes of grandeur, need for domination, feeling of superiority and high self-esteem (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploration, vanity and sense of entitlement are the distinct factors identified in managers who exhibit narcissistic traits (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Power ambition, excessive self-confidence, insensitivity and devaluation of other people's work to impede that someone else stands out more distance talented employees, sometimes entailing low organizational performance levels. Managers with narcissistic traits reach power and take up important functions in the organization but make decisions to their own advantage, without concern with the long-term consequences of their actions (Lubit, 2002; D'Souza & Lima, 2015; D'Souza & Jones, 2017).

Nevertheless, the need for power, according to McClelland and Burnham (2003), is a natural leadership trait in the organizational context. Making things happen requires power. This need expresses the desire to influence or control, to be responsible and have authority over others in order to reach leadership positions, accompanied by prestige and reputation (Matias, 2010).

Power derives from the manager's need to influence people, without dictatorial and impulsive characteristics, in an impacting and strong manner, driving the group towards the desired results. A disciplined power that targets the organizational benefit is welcome, mainly when used to achieve corporate goals. On the other hand, some leaders also use the power for their own benefit, to the detriment of the organizational benefit (Maner & Mead, 2010). In that sense, the motive for this study is established by relating the narcissistic traits and the motivation for power. Verifying the extent of the relationship between these two themes and its implications in possible future managers' professional practice is stimulating.

As the theoretical framework, this study rests on Hambrick and Mason (1984) and Hambrick's (2007) Upper Echelon Theory, which reveals that characteristics such as personality, values, age, job in the company, experience, education, socioeconomic background and financial position are considered important and complex and permit a psychological perspective on human attitudes and behaviors. Hambrick (2007) highlights that the idea of this theory is expressed in two interconnected parts: a) business executives act based on their customized interpretations of strategic situations; and b) these customized interpretations occur in function of the executives' experience, values and personalities.

This theory has been the focus of studies and has served as the background in research on personality and the strategic decision process (Papadakis & Barwise, 2002; Abatecola, Mandarelli, & Poggesi, 2013), personality, strategic flexibility and performance (Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010), personality traits and earnings management decisions (D'Souza, 2016), personality traits and opportunistic decision taking (D'Souza & Lima, 2015), personality traits and the maximization of corporate earnings (D'Souza, Lima, Jones & Carré, 2019), narcissistic traits and strategy and performance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007).

In that context, this study will discuss the non-pathological branch of narcissism in the light of the Upper Echelon theory and its relation with power, searching for evidence for the following inquiry: **What is the relationship between the narcissistic personality trait and the search for power?** This research is theoretically justified because it expands reflections on the theme and promotes interdisciplinarity between the knowledge areas of Business Administration and Psychology. As Malvezzi (2007) argues, these areas are complementary and defined by certain foci of interest – whereas the former focuses on the individual's impact on the company, the latter has the company's impact on the individual as its focus.

Lecturers can enhance interdisciplinarity in their teaching practice based on subjects in the curriculum matrix of the Business Administration course, such as: Organizational Behavior, Organizational Behavior Management or Organizational Psychology, focusing on the student's education for analytic skills of the psychosocial dimensions and the relationships established inside organizations among individuals, groups and in the organizational dynamics, emphasizing the intervention and understanding of the professional world. Another subject that should be highlighted is Organizational Decision or Decision Taking Analysis, which studies the behavioral, cognitive and ethical aspects in the decision process and this issue in the business context.

What the practical and methodological contributions are concerned, the empirical application of this study considers the subjects involved – Business Administration students in the final semesters of their undergraduate course, and therefore probable organizational managers – as little research on the theme has been done in business education, particularly the Brazilian studies by Avelino and Lima (2017), who discuss the relation with academic dishonesty, and Lima, Avelino and Cunha (2018), who discuss academic performance.

Therefore, it is relevant to reflect on the impact of the narcissistic personality trait on the group work processes, on interpersonal relationships, on the relationship between leadership and subordinates, on productivity and on individual performance. In addition, its importance for the academic context is confirmed in view of the discussion about power and narcissism to understand its implications and nuances in business teaching. This permits interference in the education of future managers, mainly when observing that students use deliberate strategies to influence or persuade others with a view to reaching their goals In addition, it should be highlighted that the decisions these future managers make will influence the financial statements and can consequently cause losses to the accounting information users.

2. Theoretical Framework

The goal in this part is to systematize a discussion based on earlier studies in order to provide, by means of a short literature review, the conceptual bases of the search for power interwoven in narcissistic traits, aiming to verify what can affect the subjects of this research.

2.1 Power: conceptual aspects

Departing from the analysis of classical thinkers like Veroff (1955), the motivation for power derives from an interpersonal relationship, in which the execution is culturally defined by one individual who is superior among the others and who has control over the means to influence his/her subordinates. According to McClelland (1961, 1987), the need for power is an intense concern of the individual to control means to influence other people. Winter (1992) revisits the definition and argues that the motivation for power is the desire to impact on other people, to affect their behaviors or emotions, which refers to the overlapping of concepts, such as: influence, inspiration, authority, control, dominance, coercion, aggression and leadership. It is a person's ability to affect the behavior or feelings of other people.

These concepts come with a range of connotations of legitimacy, morality and imply other people's reactions. It should be highlighted that there is a difference between the definitions of power motivation and those deriving from psychological and sociological concepts, mainly concerning the role played and the status granted by power, skills to use power, feelings of power and values and beliefs in the practice of power.

What the power motivation in the organizational context is concerned, the individual seeks to exert influence, be a leader and control subordinates. Nevertheless, this power motivation originates in categories. According to French Jr. and Raven (1959), the sources of power are grouped in two categories: Organizational Power (legitimate, rewarding, coercive) and Personal Power (expertise and admiration).

Legitimate power is a person's capacity to influence the behavior of others because of his/her position within the organization. The rewarding power provides for financial gratifications, such as wage increases or bonuses, or non-financial rewards, such as promotions, favorable work assignments, greater responsibility, new equipment, compliments and acknowledgement. The coercive power imposes punishments or threats to perform the tasks. The power of expertise influences through the recognition of the manager's knowledge and skills. Finally, power can be exerted through the subordinates' admiration and respect for their leaders. Nevertheless, Lunenburg (2012) signals that the different sources of power cannot be considered totally separated from one another. Sometimes, leaders use them in various combinations, depending on the situation.

McClelland and Burnham (2003) argue that power is a great motivator towards efficient and effective management, mainly when the subordinates are influenced in a controlled manner, making them feel stronger to develop their functions. The authors developed a study among North American managers and found that the so-called institutional managers, being focused on the organization, are strongly motivated towards power and use this motivation to stimulate their subordinates to be more productive and also seek company success in general.

On the other hand, managers who are motivated by personal power seek social prestige, despite being capable of generating a greater sense of responsibility in their divisions and, above all, of creating greater team spirit. Nevertheless, they are insufficiently disciplined to consolidate the management processes in the company. If they leave the organization, the structure gets disorganized, as the subordinates are loyal to him as individuals and not to the institution.

Maner and Mead (2010) developed an experimental study among leaders to verify if they exert power for their own or for the institution's sake. The authors perceived that most leaders behaved consistently with the group's targets. When their power was weak though, due to instability within the hierarchy, the leaders with high levels of dominant motivation prioritized their own power over group objectives: they withheld valuable information from the group, excluded a highly qualified member from the group, and prevented an experienced group member from exerting any influence on a group task.

McClelland (1961, 1987), in turn, adds that the need for power is related to the political means used to achieve economic or other ends in the control of means that can be used to control individuals, particularly when the emotional reactions towards a situation of dominance are tested. The need for power reveals the persuasion, independence, self-confidence and ability to interact through contact networks, as can be observed in Table 1:

Table 1
Need for Power

Need for POWER
Persuasion and contact networks
• Uses deliberate strategies to influence or persuade other people. • Uses key persons as agents to achieve their own objectives. • Acts to develop and maintain commercial relationships.
Independence and self-confidence
• Seeks autonomy from standards and other people's controls. • Maintains his/her viewpoint towards the opposition or initially discouraging results. • Expresses confidence in his/her own capacity to complete a difficult task or to cope with a challenge.

Source: Adapted: Winter (1992); McClelland (1961, 1987).

Matias (2010) developed a study among accountants in the state of Minas Gerais, using, among others, the characteristics of the need for power listed above, and perceived that they were hardly willing to influence or persuade people when defending their viewpoints and when defining business relationships, despite acknowledging the confidence in their abilities to complete difficult tasks and cope with challenges.

In the same perspective, Lima Filho (2013) developed a study of 851 professionals registered in the Regional Council of Business Administration and 207 Business Administration students from public and private higher education institutions (HEI) in Salvador, Bahia, and perceived that men are more prone to the need for power when compared to women, who evidenced greater proneness towards accomplishment in the professional sphere.

Based on the literature review, in the next part, the narcissistic characteristics and their relations with power in the organizational context will be discussed.

2.2 Narcissism: characteristics and relationships with power

Imprecision exists in the scientific midst about the origin of the term "narcissism", particularly due to the fact that there is no clear division between studies as to the first mention of the Narcissus myth and the creation of the term. Nevertheless, there is almost a consensus that Narcissism was initially highlighted by Ellis (1927) when the author mentioned the legend, formulating the expression *Narcissus-like* with connotations of autoeroticism, love of oneself and one-s physical traits, based on the Greek legend of Narcissus – the character that fell in love with his own reflection in the water and died because of the impossibility to consummate that love (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Guimarães, 2012). Hence, Paul Näcke received the merit for the creation of the term in 1899. That author considered individuals who fall in love with themselves to be narcissistic, linking notions of perversion to the term (Guimarães, 2012).

At the time, narcissism designated "[...] the conduct in which the individual treats his own body in the same way as the body of a sexual object is commonly treated, that is, he looks at it, touches it and caresses it with sexual pleasure until reaching full satisfaction through these acts" (Freud, 1914/2010, p. 10). Freud (1914/2010, p. 10-11) analyzed narcissism as a dimension psychological condition, dissociated from something perverted, not as a clinical or subclinical personality trait, but as the "[...] is the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a portion of which we justifiable attribute to each living being". The author considered self-love, selfishness and the ability to maintain any information or feeling that could reduce one's sense of self at the unconscious level as a narcissistic process or condition.

For a long time, narcissism was considered a mere personality disorder and a focus of clinical diagnoses. The trait was discussed in the clinical sphere until, after the publication of Raskin and Hall's (1979) *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* (NPI), the social and subclinical analysis of this personality trait became possible (Furnham; Richards & Paulhus, 2014; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), which is the current adopted in this study.

After several empirical applications of the NPI, Raskin and Terry (1988) identified seven factors correlated with the narcissistic personality construct, which are: authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity and entitlement. Narcissistic individuals exhibit feelings and attitudes of omnipotence, aiming to exploit the others and to feel entitled to rights and privileges in relation to those individuals. They are vain, intolerant to criticism, because they consider to be self-sufficient and extremely vain (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Arjoon (2010) found that narcissistic individuals are selfish, exaggerated in displaying their own talents and skills; they lack empathy, despite being enchanting and extroverted, but need power and attention. They demonstrate an invasive pattern of grandeur, suggesting that this is the most noteworthy characteristic of narcissists.

In an investigation of narcissistic traits in the organizational midst, Maccoby (2004) perceived that leaders with this trait attempt to exert control over others. Being sensitive to criticism, they experience some difficulty to exert leadership and acknowledge errors, mainly due to a strong need to compete and come out as the winner in decision processes.

In this particular aspect, Campbell, Goodie, and Foster (2004) guarantee that narcissistic leaders exhibit excessive confidence in the decisions they make, due to their keen self-improvement and confidence in their own skills to perform and judge tasks. They face difficulties to acknowledge low performance and negative results in the company they manage. They act for their own benefit and are exceptionally encouraged by social compliments (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), but also exhibit cognitive elements such as intelligence, creativity, competence and leadership skills (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; John & Robins, 1994).

When making decisions, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) who score high on narcissism perform better on management decision tasks in environments with a low reward threshold when compared to individuals with lower narcissism scores. On the other hand, managers with high scores of this personality traits perform worse on management decision tasks in environments with a high reward threshold (Dworkis, 2013).

Narcissistic leaders conduct the business to achieve glory, applause and power (Maccoby, 2004). They hold grand beliefs, characteristic leadership styles and are generally driven by their needs for power and admiration, instead of being empathetically concerned with the institutions and the members they lead. Narcissists also have charisma and great vision though, which are vital for effective leadership (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). They worship self-esteem and exhibit a desire to obtain social status and power, without concerns with the wellbeing of others (Brunell, Gentry, Campbell, Hoffman, Kuhnert & DeMarree, 2008). They are driven by the intense need for power and prestige and, in many contexts, gain leadership positions (Stein, 2013).

When they can take risks with other people's money, narcissists bet without minding losses (Jones, 2013). Lubit (2002) adds that narcissistic leaders are interested in increasing their power, adopting an authoritarian and hardly participatory leadership style; therefore, they do not delegate tasks to those subordinates with some level of independence and knowledge, so as to maintain themselves at a threshold that reveals them as the best within their activity areas in the company.

When comparing the behavior of individuals with traits of narcissism, psychopathy and machiavellianism with risky business conducts, Crysel, Crosier, Webster and Gregory (2013) proved that narcissism was the most consistent personality trait related to behavioral risk tasks, being considered the "common thread" for risk behaviors. The study also demonstrated that, when they feel threatened, narcissists choose to make more money in the future. In the same perspective, Jones and Paulhus (2011) investigated 142 undergraduate students and perceived that narcissism was associated with functional impulsiveness, suggesting that narcissistic impulsiveness involves risk, although with a low level of social commitment.

Brunell, Staats, Barden and Hupp (2011) proved a positive relationship between narcissism and academic dishonesty, motivated by the need for exhibitionism by reflecting the narcissists' desire for admiration and their need to demonstrate superiority over others. To be successful and impress other people academically, they are willing to cheat in order to facilitate their way to the top, heading towards power.

Therefore, this result also demonstrates that the narcissists' ambitions lead to fraud in the academic environment, motivated by the lack of guilt and by their immoral behavior. In the same perspective, Avelino and Lima (2017) investigated 201 Brazilian students and the results appointed their proneness to narcissistic characteristics, such as the need to impress others positively, the unbridled search for pleasure and the unrelenting search for success and power. In the same sense, D'Souza and Lima (2018) studied narcissism among other traits and perceived that the 1404 Brazilian Accounting students were more prone to insist on getting the respect they deserve and liked to meet important people.

Power, prestige and status are aspects narcissistic individuals desire and attract attention to research in the organizational and educational context, aiming to verify students' attitudes and behaviors when in professional practice.

In an analysis of a sample of 63 Business Administration students for example, Carroll (1987) observed a positive and significant relationship between narcissism and power motivation. In that segment, Macenczak, Campbell, Henley and Campbell (2016) investigated 267 undergraduate and graduate business students at a university in the Southeast of the USA and perceived that, the higher the narcissism score, the greater the desire for power.

Based on the literature review on power motivation and narcissistic traits and their interrelations with other variables that can influence the research model presented, we intend to empirically test the following research hypotheses:

- **H1**: A significant and positive correlation exists between the narcissistic personality trait and the search for power.
- **H2**: The higher the narcissistic personality trait scores, the greater the students' proneness to seek power.
- **H3**: Male students are more prone to seek power than female students.

H3 was formulated based on the research by Watson, Jones and Morris (2004) involving 418 foreign higher education students. Among other findings, the authors perceived that male students exhibited higher scores on narcissistic traits and power-prestige to seek money.

It is important in this topic to make a difference between attitude and behavior, elements that are influenced by individual personality. According to Kanaane (2010), behavior is the individual's reaction and response to a given stimulus, being determined by the set of environmental (acquired) and hereditary (genetic) characteristics, absorbing the pressure exerted by the midst. Attitude, then, is seen as an evaluative reaction and can be positive or negative in the course of the individual's life experience. Thus, attitudes are not always reflected as behaviors, mainly because the individual does not always act on actual impulses.

Hence, this study is more attitudinal than behavioral, as the essence of the data collection instrument is to reveal the agreement by means of the Likert scale. Agreement indicates a predisposition but not an action. As Pasquali (1996) argues, the goal of the Likert scale is to verify the subject's agreement level with a range of assertions that express something favorable or unfavorable in relation to a psychological object, as will be detailed in the methods section, which presents the research design and the relation between the research variables.

3. Method

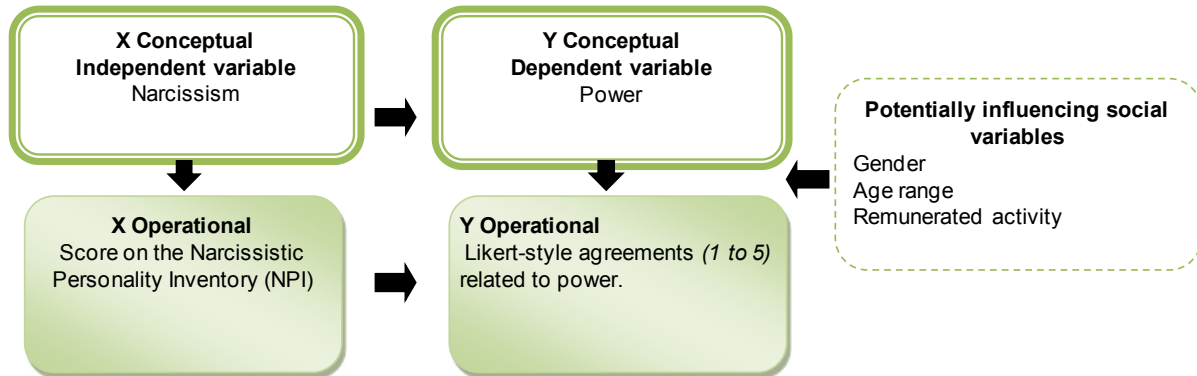### 3.1 Approach, data collection technique and research sample

The theoretical-empirical approach was chosen. The survey was used as a data collection strategy by means of a self-reported questionnaire, which was applied face-to-face and on-line in a group of 161 seventh and eighth-semester Business Administration students from a state university in the state of Bahia in 2018. The sample was selected in a population of 246 daytime and nighttime students at the institution. The advanced semesters were chosen, considering that students in that stage are already more knowledgeable on business management as most of them already possess some professional experience and have a profile that makes them more suitable to take part in business simulations, that is, to act as professional managers.

The questionnaire was elaborated based on questions related to the demographic profile, 40 assertions from the narcissistic personality inventory NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988), previously validated in Brazil by Magalhães and Koller (1994), which refer to characteristics of: Authority, Self-sufficiency, Superiority, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, Vanity and Entitlement; and 13 Likert-style agreements (1 to 5 points) indicating the search for power (Independence and Self-Confidence; Persuasion and Contact Networks), which were adapted from the study by Matias (2010). Its translation to Portuguese followed the back-translation method of the seminal study by McClelland (1961, 1987). After earlier use in different Brazilian studies, the two scales were used and adapted to answer the research problem.

In addition, it should be highlighted that the narcissistic personality measure is neither a psychological test nor is it intended to serve as a clinical diagnosis, but as an instrument to observe a psychosocial phenomenon.

3.2 Research variables, parameter setting and statistical approach

The independent variable is "narcissism", because it explains the search for power, which is considered the dependent variable in this study. The research design can be illustrated in accordance with Figure 1:

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1. Narcissism and Power

What the parameter setting of the NPI is concerned (Raskin & Terry, 1988), the assertions of the instruments were maintained, referring to narcissistic (1 point) and non-narcissistic traits (0 points). To give an example: Assertion 1: A- "I have a natural talent for influencing people" (1 point – narcissistic trait) and B- "I am not good at influencing people" (0 points – non-narcissistic trait). As the instrument consists of 40 assertions and the maximum score is 40 points, the added score derives from a quantitative variable.

To establish the high and low levels of the narcissistic trait, the cut-off point of the group in two ranges was adopted, with the low level corresponding to scores below the median and the high level to above-median scores. A qualitative variable was found here (1 for low and 2 for high). A similar procedure was adopted in the studies by Dworkis (2013) and Johnson, Kuhn, Jr., Apostolou and Hassell (2012).

About the parameter setting of the Power variable, the Likert-style attitudinal scale (1-5 points) was used. Initially, the mean was measured (quantitative variable). Then, the two ranges were cut, adopting: 1 for low disposition to seek power and 2 for high disposition to seek power, turning it into a qualitative variable. D'Souza *et al.* (2018), D'Souza (2016), D'Souza and Lima (2015) adopted this procedure for the division by levels of the Dark Triad non-pathological traits, consisting of "narcissism", Machiavellianism and Psychopathy.

It should be mentioned here that the variables gender, age range and remunerated activity were included as variables in the research model because, in the Upper Echelon theory, their potential influence on individual interpretations and choices is considered.

In the statistical approach, the following were adopted: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard deviation, maximum and minimum), aiming to summarize, describe and understand the data of the research sample; the Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis test of means, to check for differences between the variables and to test hypothesis H3, Correlation and Logistic regression to verify the relation between the variables and the event probability, also being an appropriate technique to test hypotheses H1 and H2.

4. Analysis of Results

4.1 Profile of participants

Among the 161 students, 51.6% are male, 69.6% in the age range from 18 to 25 years, 43% mulatto, 53% went to a public school in secondary education and 62.7% have current or past professional experience in management.

The sample revealed 31 as the maximum and 3 as the minimum score for narcissism, 40 points being the highest possible score. As shown in Table 1, the mean was $\mu=13.68$. This result is slightly higher than the findings by Avelino (2017) in a sample of 153 Accounting students from the University of São Paulo. The author found a mean NPI score of $\mu=12.46$ and a maximum score of 30 points. Although generalization is not due, the comparison of the results suggests that the Business Administration students are more prone to narcissistic traits than the Accounting students.

The analysis of international studies showed higher NPI scores than in our study. The studies by Raskin and Terry (1988), Foster, Campbell and Twenge (2003), Miller and Campbell (2008) found scores of 15.5; 15.2; 16.4 in an investigation of Psychology students. What power is concerned, the students presented a mean agreement score of 3.557 and a maximum score of 4.692 on a scale from 1 to 5, in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	Observation	Mean	Standard deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Narcissism score	161	13.68322981	5.802394291	31	3
Mean Power	161	3.557095079	0.381019381	4.692307692	2.307692308

Source: research data.

With regard to narcissism, the students revealed lower scores for narcissistic traits – 56.5%. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the students showed to be highly prone to narcissistic traits in the analysis of the following assertions: N17 - "When I feel competent I take responsibility for making decisions" (73.3%); N10 - "I see myself as a good leader" (72%); N8 -"I will be a success" (68.3%), N35 - "I am capable of convincing people" (67.1%); N1 -"I have a natural talent for influencing people" (66.5%); and N29 - "I like to look at myself in the mirror" (58.4%). Assertion N17 refers to Self-sufficiency; N1, N8 and N10 to Authority; and N35 and N29 to Exploitativeness and Vanity, respectively. Avelino (2017) also found higher frequencies for N8, N10 and N29 in Accounting students.

Table 3
Frequencies

	Narcissism		Power	
	N	%	N	%
Low	91	56.5	87	54
High	70	43.5	74	46
Total	161	100	161	100

Source: research data.

What power is concerned, the research sample presented lesser motivation. In this aspect, it may be inferred that the Business Administration students under analysis have low disposition to: enhance the use of strategies intended to influence and persuade others; seek key persons in the academic midst as agents to achieve their own objectives. In a study of these characteristics in accountants from the state of Minas Gerais, Matias (2010) did not find any relevant disposition either.

The assertions with the highest mean score for power seeking were: P7 (μ=4.02): "When something stands in the way of what I am trying to do, I persist in my task"; P10 (μ=4.03) "The more specific my expectations are as to what I want to achieve in life, the greater my possibilities of success will be"; and P13 (μ=4.14): "I prefer to do tasks that I master perfectly and about which I feel secure".

In addition, in the analysis of the interposition between the variables "narcissism" and "power", it was observed that 26.08% of the students who scored higher for narcissism also scored higher for power seeking. Brunell *et al.* (2008) proved that power is the main factor justifying the relation between narcissism and leadership.

According to Table 4, a significant difference in narcissism is observed when power is present. Based on this finding, it can be inferred that, the higher the levels of Narcissism, the higher the levels of power seeking, supporting the study hypothesis H2. In this respect, Macenczak *et al.* (2016) observed that, when individuals with high narcissism scores rank high on the power scale, excessive confidence is significantly higher than for individuals who rank low, suggesting that there is a difference when the levels of narcissism and power seeking are high. The variables "sex", "age range" and "remunerated activity" did not show differences when Narcissism is present, which partially differs from the studies by D'Souza and Lima (2018), who found that male accounting students over 45 years of age are more prone to narcissistic traits.

The analysis of "power" with the variables "sex", "age range" and "remunerated activity" revealed the influence of the sex in power seeking. Among the 81 male students, 54.21% presented high disposition for power seeking, against 37.18% for the female sex. The studies by Watson, Jones and Morris (2004) support this finding, proving that male individuals exhibit higher Narcissism and Power scores. Based on this finding, H3 can be validated.

Table 4
Hypothesis Test

Dependent Variable	Test	Narcissism	Decision	Power	Decision
		Sig		Sig	
Sex	Mann-Whiney	.0194	No Rejection	.034(**)	Rejection
Age Range	Kruskal-Wallis	.532	No Rejection	.499	No Rejection
Remunerated Activity	Mann-Whiney	.232	No Rejection	126	No Rejection
Narcissism	Mann-Whiney	–	–	.000(**)	Rejection
Power	Mann-Whiney	.000(*)	Rejection	–	–

Obs.: (**) p < .05;(**) P<0.01

Source: research data.

The analysis of the correlation between the variables shows a significant and positive correlation between Narcissism and Power (r = 0.401, p <0.01). The findings by Carroll (1987) support this result, also evidencing a positive and significant correlation between narcissism and power, in accordance with Table 5. Based on this finding, H1 can be validated. "Power and sex" (r = 0.161, p <0.05) and "sex and remunerated activity" (r = 0.744, p <0.01) also evidenced significant and positive correlation. Therefore, these variables exert no potential influence to denote narcissistic traits and power seeking in the research sample.

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Table 5
Correlation

	Sex	Remunerated Activity	Age Range	Power	Narcissism
Sex	1				
Remunerated Activity	.744(**)	1			
Age Range	.121	.028	1		
Power	.161(*)	.129	.015	1	
Narcissism	.102	.091	-.039	.401(**)	1

Obs.: (**) p< 0.01; (*) p< 0.05.

Source: research data.

Logistic regression was applied to achieve more robust results and to evidence the probability of event occurrence and identify characteristics of each group. The division of the "power" variable by level (1-high Power; 0-low Power) provided for a dichotomous dependent variable and permitted the inclusion of the quantitative independent variable (Narcissism score) and of the variables ("sex", "age range" and "length of experience"). The latter were inserted in the model because they are considered potential influences of individual interpretations and mainly because Hambrick and Mason (1984) and Hambrick (2007) consider these characteristics to be strong predictors for the purpose of personality analysis.

The Enter method was adopted in the logistic regression as all predictive variables were simultaneously included to estimate the probability of Power seeking in function of the explanatory variables – "narcissism", "sex", "age range" and "experience".

The chi-square test in Table 6 reveals that the set of variables is statistically significant for the research model. In view of this finding, it can be inferred that at least one coefficient different from zero exists at the 5% significance level, which implies that the model can accurately predict the investigation.

Table 6
Significance test of model coefficients

		Power		
		Chi-square	Sig.	Decision
	Step	24.883	.000	Rejects H0
Step 1	Block	24.883	.000	Rejects H0
	Model	24.883	.000	Rejects H0

Obs.: where p < .05 is bolded.

Source: research data.

According to the Cox and Snell test, the set of independent variables explains 14.3% of the variations in the log likelihood ratio. In the analysis of the Nagelkerke R2 test, the statistical model is able to explain 19.1% of the power seeking. The -2LL likelihood was inferior to one, suggesting that the model is fit. According to Fávero, Belfiore, Silva, and Chan (2009), the lower the likelihood, the better is the fitness of the model.

Table 7

Adjustment in the logistic regression model

	Test	Power
Step 1	Cox & Snell R square	14.3%
	Nagelkerke R square	19.1%
	Likelihood (-2LL)	197.260[a]

Obs.: estimation terminated in iteration number 4, because the parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Source: research data.

To identify if the independent variables can be used as probability estimators, the evaluation of the individual significance of the parameters and the coefficient signals was analyzed, based on Gujarati and Porter's (2011) orientations as to the importance of analyzing the expected signals of the regression coefficients and their statistical or practical significance.

The variable "narcissism" is significant and shows a positive signal, evidencing that the positive variation of this variable contributes to increasing the probability of students expressing proneness to seek power when the remaining variables remain constant. Thus, if the variable narcissism increases by one unit, the estimated logit increases by an average of 1.143, suggesting a positive relationship between power and narcissistic personality traits.
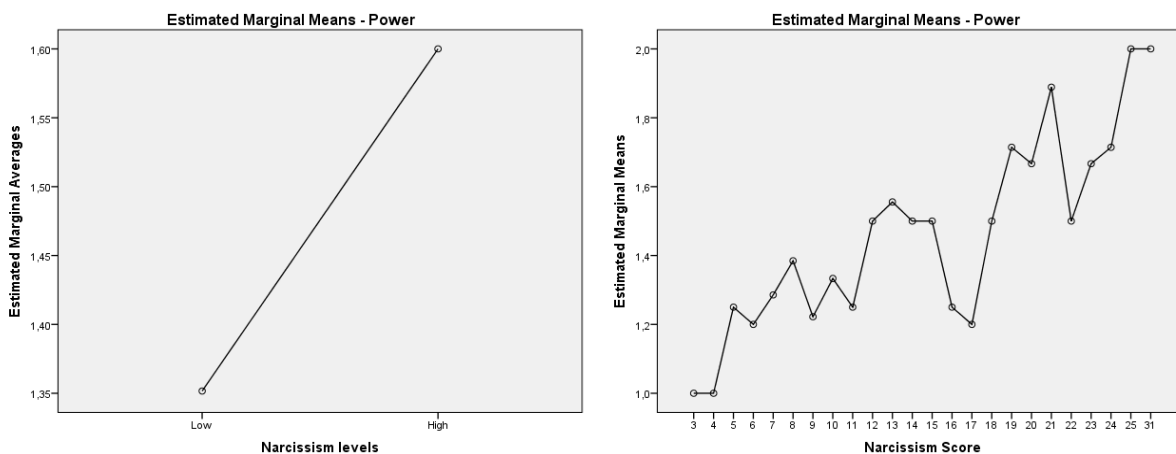
Table 8

Logistic regression: Power and Narcissism

	Variable	Expected signal	Found signal	B coefficient	Exp(β) coefficient	Wald test p-value
Power	Narcissism	+	+	.133	1.143	.000
	Sex	+/-	+	.453	1.573	.380
	Remunerated Activity	+/-	+	.191	1.211	.720
	Age Range	+/-	+	.198	1.218	.444
	Constant	+/-	-	2.267	.072	.000

Observation 1: (***) p< 0.01

Source: research data

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the estimated marginal means of the variables "narcissism" and "power", showing that the higher the levels of narcissism, the higher the levels of power seeking. Figure 2 also reveals that higher scores of narcissism also reveal higher average power scores.

Source: research data.

Figure 2 and 3. Marginal means Narcissism and Power

Based on the presented results, the statistical techniques permitted the validation of hypotheses H1, H2 and H3, in the framework of the Upper Echelon theory, considering that subjective factors such as personality influence individual attitudes and interpretations.

5. Conclusion

Leaders who exhibit narcissistic traits seek to retain power over subordinates to feel comfortable making decisions, even if they are destructive to the company in the long run. In order to verify narcissistic traits and their relationship with power, this study applied a survey to 161 students of the 7th and 8th semesters of the Business Administration course at a state university located in the state of Bahia. Students in that course stage already have greater knowledge about business management and are closer to assuming leadership positions in the labor market.

The results show a lower prevalence of narcissistic traits, although the high agreement on Self-sufficiency, Authority, Exploitativeness, and Vanity stand out. When analyzing the power seeking, the findings indicated lesser proneness, although the students presented high concordance frequencies for persistence, self-confidence, and independence.

Of the 161 students analyzed, 26.08% presented high means of narcissism and power seeking. In this sense, it was perceived that the higher the narcissistic traits, the greater the search for power. When it comes to sex, a greater interest in power has been demonstrated in males when compared to females. A significant and positive correlation was also observed between narcissism and power, power and sex, and sex and remunerated activity. The narcissistic traits showed to be significant and positive, showing that this positive variation contributes to the increase in the probability of students expressing proneness to seek power.

These data entail the reflection that narcissism is often the driving force fueling the desire for leadership. Individuals endowed with the characteristics of a strong narcissistic personality are perhaps more willing to undertake the arduous process leading to a position of power. A central point in our argument is that the kind of behavior found in a leader will truly reflect the nature and degree of his narcissistic tendencies.

As power in organizations is reflected through authority, leadership, and obedience, leaders feel superior to their subordinates, and use that condition to emanate their power, rely only on themselves and feel self-sufficient. Nevertheless, the cult around these leaders, mainly because of their training, experience, decision-making skills, and ability to resolve organizational conflicts produces subjects with high self-esteem, who believe that they should be served, that their desires take precedence over those of others; who believe that they deserve special attention.

Thus, these results imply a closer look at the academic and professional area on the attitudes of future managers who showed a high disposition for the narcissistic traits and power seeking. Overconfidence, vanity, and excessive independence can cause a conflicting and highly competitive organizational climate, as the use of strategies to influence or persuade others can be dishonest and jeopardize business performance. The quest for power and leadership should be something natural and not corrupted by selfish attitudes and self-interest. Another point worth mentioning is the male gender, which, in addition to showing greater power seeking, also showed greater participation in the paid work environment.

In that sense, these findings permitted answering the research question and the scope of the study objective based on the Upper Echelon theory, as the individual personality influences the choices and the values. The hypotheses were not rejected, allowing the discussion and expansion of the studies on the themes. We hope that the findings contribute to the teachers, students, and coordinators' reflections in the Business Administration course, in order to perceive and try to interfere with the unwanted attitudes while still in the academic environment.

The proposal of this scientific debate can be fruitful, starting from the idea that the organizations become reflexes of their main executives, in view of Hambrick and Mason's proposal (1984), who argued that the behavioral traits deeply influence the complex choices. In addition, the interdisciplinary elaboration on this theme, in the light of the Upper Echelon theory, at the interface with the vocational education, knowledge, and competencies of students, future managers, can constitute a promising tool to improve the understanding of the dynamics of decision-making organizations.

Therefore, it is important to consider that this study is limited by the application of a self-reported questionnaire, which may result in bias in the self-description of the respondents' characteristics and thus present some bias, such as the participants' difficulty in truly revealing their proneness to the phenomenon under study.

For future research, broadening the scope of this research is suggested with a view to comparing the results among Business Administration, Accounting and Economics students. Another suggestion is to apply the research to the course coordinators and faculty members, aiming to triangulate the answers and to survey the narcissistic and power-seeking traits of all the actors involved in the academic environment.

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