Doing good for organization but feeling bad: when and how narcissistic employees get prone to shame and guilt

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Abstract

As competition for gaining high-profit margins and survival among organizations (in the situation caused by COVID-19) grows, the number of business scandals or unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPOB) increases simultaneously. The current study investigates the mediating role of employees' UPOB and the moderating role of organizational change between narcissism and guilt/shame. Data were collected from 272 employees of the Pakistani telecom sector using a temporally segregated research design based on three-time lags. The analysis was performed using the statistical software AMOS 20, SPSS 20, and MACRO PROCESS. The results found that vulnerable and grandiose narcissism could have an adverse impact on employees' UPOB. This type of behavior mediates the relationship between vulnerable, grandiose narcissism and guilt/shame. In addition to this, organizational change moderates the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and UPOB. Lastly, in contrast, grandiose narcissism is negatively related to guilt and shame.

Keywords Unethical pro-organizational behavior UPOB, Organizational change, Narcissism, Employee's emotion, Guilt, Shame

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to businesses, leading to high levels of uncertainty for organizational members. The pandemic has been described as a humanitarian crisis, creating challenges for business leaders and members. Organizational members have experienced changes in how firms operate, remote working, workplace safety guidelines, and restructuring, causing stress and anxiety. The economic crisis resulting from the pandemic has exacerbated concerns about competition in the US economy, with many firms struggling

financially, filing for bankruptcy, or shutting down. While some large, well-positioned firms have increased their market share, others are increasing cash reserves to acquire competitors affected by revenue declines, excess leverage, and financial distress [1]. In the tech sector, responses to COVID-19 have resulted in strong positive demand shocks for many digital economy firms as in-person interactions moved online. Social media sites saw an increase in usage, and online video and streaming services reported record growth in demand. This reinforced the advantages of the largest firms, which were better equipped to handle the surge in demand. However, the pandemic has also increased business scandals and unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPOB) [2].

Over time, the diversity of jobs has increased, and the complexity of human behavior within such positions has become more apparent. One aspect of this behavior, a novel yet common phenomenon termed unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPOB), has been identified

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by researchers. The phenomenon has succeeded in attracting behavioral academicians and researchers' attention because of its uniqueness. According to Kleiman [3], unethical practices flourish in the highly competitive environment of today's business world, particularly in those organizations where the focus of attention is an outcome, and the violation of ethical codes goes unobserved.

The grandiose and vulnerable narcissism traits share an enhanced sense of entitlement and low agreeableness levels [4]. However, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists have different self-concepts. Vulnerable narcissists tend toward low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and incompetence; conversely, grandiose narcissism is related to self-assuredness, aggression, self-enhancement, dominance, and exhibitionism [5]. The past literature has highlighted negative or adverse aspects of narcissistic personalities, such as the employee's antisocial behavior [6, 7], exaggerating of leadership skills, and engaging in unethical behavior [8, 9]. The researcher has established that coworkers' behavior [10], leaders' behavior [11], and organizational identification promote UPOB [12]. However, all these studies have examined organizational factors, such as leadership factors, organizational context, and other factors related to the organization; hence, little or no attention has been paid to the role of individual personality traits. As adequate literature already exists on the variables mentioned above, the current study aims to investigate the under-researched individual-level variable of narcissism and the notion of organizational change as a moderator of UPOB.

Umphress et al. [13] presented the idea of the UPOB, researchers are still reporting a lack of adequate research on UPOB; while it is not exactly a new concept, it is still comparatively new [14, 15]. Again, except for two studies, Liu et al. [16] and Tang et al. [15], when examining the cost for individuals, there is no other research on the emotional impact of UPOB available in the literature. According to Wirtz and Rigotti [17], organizational researchers have focused on grandiose narcissism, while vulnerable narcissism has been largely ignored. Wilmore [18] adds that no attention has been paid to the moderators of the relationship between narcissism and unethical behavior. Besides addressing these gaps, this research also provides evidence for a negative relationship between grandiose narcissism and employee's emotion of guilt and shame. We will further argue that vulnerable narcissism positively affects guilt and shame. Thus, the following three research questions are proposed:

1. Does grandiose and vulnerable narcissism influence guilt and shame?

2. Does UPB mediate the relationship between narcissism (grandiose and vulnerable) and guilt and shame?
3. Does organizational change moderate the relationship between narcissism (grandiose and vulnerable) and UPB?

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Trait activation theory

Trait activation theory (TAT) suggests that "employees will derive intrinsic satisfaction from a work environment where they can show their unique personality traits, and they can prove themselves." When presented with a specific situational cue, TAT proposes that individuals elicit trait behavior connected to the tasks related to the organization's job and expectations. Personality traits tend to act in a specific manner in a situation. There are cues in the situation that encourages a specific behavior's expression. In other words, TAT states that in times of organizational change, a narcissist may try not to lose their superior status and thus will exploit the situational advantage to work to their best capabilities (ethically or unethically) to maintain the organization's optimal performance level. In turn, making the best of the situation for the individual will lead to more benefits and power.

Narcissism

There are two dimensions of narcissism: one is vulnerability, and the second one is grandiosity [19]. These two concepts and their effect on other variables are opposite. Grandiose and vulnerable narcissists have different self-concepts, and as such, they impact shame and guilt differently. Compared to grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists tend toward low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and agreeableness [5]. Grandiose narcissism is related to self-assuredness, aggression, self-enhancement, dominance, and exhibitionism.

On the other hand, vulnerable narcissism is associated with low self-esteem, sensitivity, and feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. According to Miller et al. [5], grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share an enhanced sense of entitlement, antagonist, power, and low agreeableness levels that ultimately affect their decisions and behavior. However, the grandiose and vulnerable narcissist has different self-concepts that can be explained by their impact on other variables, such as shame and guilt, this is described in detail in the hypothesis section. Besides the growing competition and changing environment, one reason for their unethical behavior is the individual's narcissistic personality. Researchers have previously associated narcissism with UPOB, but very

few have empirically tested and reported on the relationship [20].

Guilt and shame

Guilt is defined as "regret that arises from anticipation, instigation or association with a negative event" [21]. It prompts people to become accountable for an action that violates accepted standards of conduct or social norms and values; in other words, it responds to an adverse event from the past. Shame states that the deprecation or criticism of oneself prompts a person to fear the possibility of others' contempt. It is a reaction to the entire sense of self. It is assumed to encourage people to change their evaluations because it results from inconsistency between attitude and behavior. According to Bland et al. [22], guilt is an emotion that is the cause of tension in which a person experiences worry, apprehension, and yearning for the repairment of the behavior as this behavior espouse violation of moral standards. However, the experience of guilt is mostly far less painful than feelings of shame because of the latter's adverse effect on a person's conscience. Guilt can be unbearable, but people who experience guilt tend to focus on their offense and think about how they could have behaved differently or more appropriately. According to Ferguson et al. [23], shame is an emotion that encourages feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, and the desire to maintain distance from others.

Organizational change

Senior [24] divides change management literature into three categories. The first change category is characterized by frequency, rate, and occurrence. In the second category, change is characterized by scale; the last category is how change unfolds. In the current research, organizational change focuses on the frequency of change or occurrence rate. The organization is referred to as the frequency of change. Employees' perceptions regarding how frequently or regularly change occur in an organization are called "frequency of change." It is considered a discrete or non-routine event when change is less frequent. On the other hand, if the difference is regular, it indicates a lack of stability and gives a sense of turbulence within an organization [25]. According to Berger and Bradac [26], uncertainty, ambiguity, and insecurity are unfavorable. These are motivators to get involved in coping strategies to reduce these perceptions. These strategies are not always ethical.

Unethical pro-organizational behavior

Unethical pro-organizational behavior comprises "actions intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct" [13, 27]. This definition incorporates two components. First, unethical pro-organization behavior is unethical and violates basic social values, norms, and teaching, including the law. The second component focuses on the individual's intentions or aims to do an unethical action. UPOB is under-examined in the workplace, and a scarcity of literature is available that reports the antecedent and outcomes of UPOB. In past literature, many scholars from the business ethics domain have investigated UPOB and its impact on other variables [12, 13]. Scholars have argued that the sole motive of a person is self-interest who commits unethical behavior [28]; however, research on UPOB disclosed that workers frequently take part in this behavior to benefit their organization or their fellow employees [13]. According to Chen et al. [29], even though there is enough research available on the antecedents of UPOB, less is known about its effects on the organization's employees. Researchers have long reported that narcissism and UPOB are associated, but very few have empirically tested and reported on this phenomenon [30].

Narcissism, guilt, and shame

Miller et al. [5] explain that grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share an enhanced sense of entitlement, antagonist, power, and low agreeableness levels that ultimately affect their behavior and emotions, such as shame and guilt. However, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists have different self-concepts, so they impact shame and guilt differently. The psychological literature explores moral emotions and personality traits (grandiose and weak) and their crucial role in unethical and antisocial behavior, e.g., UPOB. People who act in a manner inconsistent with their moral principles and values may feel negative emotions such as guilt, rage, and aggression.

Krizan and Johar [31] argue that it is the narcissistic vulnerability of people that drives them to feel aggression, anger, and in some cases, hostility, fueled by shame-proneness. Therefore, the past literature provides enough evidence that supports our argument that vulnerable narcissism is positively related to shame [32]. From the previous literature, it is clear that narcissistic individuals, particularly the grandiose subtype, are negatively related to two emotions: guilt and shame [33].

Narcissists with a grandiose sense of self do not consider themselves liable for any negative or adverse emotions related to their behavior, such as shame and guilt. Narcissistic individuals have high self-esteem (grandiose), which is why they do not make themselves accountable for any negative emotion; on the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem feel the opposite. Poless et al. [34] contend that grandiose narcissists are usually

less likely to be attracted to shame-proneness (negative self-evaluations). Many other scholars revealed the same about grandiose narcissists, i.e., that they have high self-esteem and are less likely to feel guilt [34, 35]. According to Raskin and Terry [36], grandiose narcissists do not tend to feel guilt due to their high sense of entitlement.

TAT states that in times of organizational change, a narcissist may try to avoid losing their superior status and thus will exploit the situational advantage to work to their best capabilities (ethically or unethically) to maintain the organization's optimal performance level. Maximizing the situation in this way will bring that individual more benefits and power. When presented with a certain situational cue, TAT proposes that individuals elicit trait behavior related to job tasks and organizational expectations. Personality traits have the propensity to act in a specific manner in a situation that illustrates the direct link between them. There are cues in the situation that encourage a particular behavior's expression. Based on arguments from the literature above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1(a)   Grandiose Narcissism has a negative impact on guilt.

H1(b)   Grandiose Narcissism has a negative impact on shame.

H1(c)   Vulnerable Narcissism has a positive impact on guilt.

H1(d)   Vulnerable Narcissism has a positive impact on shame.

Narcissism and UPOB
The literature demonstrates that narcissistic individuals are frequently over-optimistic about their abilities and have a desire to prove themselves superior to others [37]. First, overconfident individuals such as narcissistic are more likely to indulge in UPOB because of their unrealistic beliefs that such actions are permissible for an organization's future positive performance [38]. Moreover, these beliefs could encourage them to think organizational progress is worth putting earnings management and possible detection at stake. Secondly, narcissists strive to attain high rank through unethical conduct as they have a high sense of achievement. According to Bogart et al. [39], narcissistic individuals continuously work in ways that can be ethical or unethical to prove themselves to others or themselves. As Andreassen et al. [40] state, these individuals tend to take bold actions to remain in the spotlight, such as fabricating organization

performance or altering or forging company financial reports to make them attractive to investors. It is proven in the past literature that managers are more likely to take part in unethical behaviors involving higher-level narcissism that applies to both the vulnerable and grandiose types [41]. Therefore, considering their tendency to engage in unethical behavior, for instance, if narcissists have to perform unethical conduct to benefit their company and themselves, they are more like to exploit such situations. They are driven to pursue their own self-centered goals and objectives. Based on TAT, plus the assumptions and arguments from the literature above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2(a)   Grandiose Narcissism has a positive impact on unethical pro-organizational behavior.

H2(b)   Vulnerable Narcissism has a positive impact on unethical pro-organizational behavior.

Unethical pro-organizational behavior and emotions
Scholars argue that guilt frequently arises when someone perceives that their conduct has violated social norms and set standards [42]. Aquino and Reed [43], in their research on behavioral ethics, suggest that most people struggle to be ethical and act according to social norms. Consequently, unethical behavior jeopardizes this self-image; this notion is proven in the self-conscious emotion's literature [44]. Certainly, scholars propose that people typically experience a feeling of guilt after their unethical behavior [45].

Diverse emotions have been studied in organizational behavior, such as guilt and shame. Guilt prompts people to become answerable for their wrong conduct that violates set standards or social norms and values, for example, UPOB, in response to an adverse event from the past. Shame is assumed to inspire a person to change their perspective about themselves because it results from inconsistency between attitude and behavior representing UPOB. There is an association between these two emotions, guilt and shame, and UPOB, illustrating that, for instance, if a person perceives their act to have violated accepted standards of conduct or social norms and values, they may experience some guilt or shame within themselves. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3(a)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior has a positive impact on guilt.

H3(b)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior has a positive impact on shame.

Mediating role of unethical pro-organizational behavior

Compared to grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists incline toward low self-esteem, incompetence, and agreeableness [5]. Zeigler-Hill et al. [46] state that the association between grandiose narcissism and self-esteem is more multifaceted than vulnerable narcissism. Weiss and Miller [47] investigate the prominent five personas, and their research findings prove that grandiose narcissists best fit the two manifestations in the category of disagreeable extra. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists come under the category of disagreeable neurotics. Two emotions, shame and guilt, are depicted by a sense of distress and personal experience resulting from personal transgressions.

There is a direct association between narcissism and UPOB. Chatterjee and Hambrick [48] found that narcissistic leaders are more consistent in undertaking UPOB regarding strategic decisions, but there may be inconsistencies in their performance delivery. The past literature illustrates that a person with a narcissistic personality is likelier to indulge in unethical activities to accomplish their objectives and fulfill their targets [49]. Such acts reinforce their grandiose self-image to maintain their inflated ego [37]. Rijsenbilt and Commandeur [38] found a positive association between narcissism and propensity toward fraud and deception in business matters for the business's success. However, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists' reactions toward shame and guilt are different due to two other traits. Grandiose narcissists are usually less likely to be attracted to shame-proneness (negative self-evaluations) and less likely to feel a sense of guilt because of their high self-esteem [34, 35]. According to [50], grandiose narcissists do not tend to feel guilt due to their high sense of entitlement. They will not consider themselves accountable for any negative emotion related to their behavior, such as guilt. In other words, grandiose narcissists are positively associated with UPOB [41]. Still, they do not feel shame and guilt because of their high sense of entitlement and self-righteousness [34]. UPOB negatively mediates the relationship between grandiose narcissists and shame and guilt.

However, a vulnerable individual who happens to experience shame due to UPOB has low self-esteem [31]. Vulnerable narcissistic individuals have guilt and shame-proneness due to UPOB [51]. Consequently, guilt and shame are two emotions that result from UPOB, illustrating that if a person considers that their actions in the workplace violated accepted standards of conduct or social norms and values, they may experience guilt and shame within themselves. Guilt and shame have been considered feelings evoked by individuals' ethical or non-ethical behavior [52]. Therefore, in the case of vulnerable people, they feel shame and guilt after analyzing UPOB as an act that disturbs accepted standards of conduct. Therefore, based on the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4(a)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior acts as a mediator among the association of grandiose narcissism and guilt.

H4(b)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior serves as a mediator among the association of grandiose narcissism and shame.

H4(c)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior acts as a mediator among the association of vulnerable narcissism and guilt.

H4(d)   Unethical pro-organizational behavior acts as a mediator among the association of vulnerable narcissism and guilt.

The moderating role of organizational change

The more frequent variation is in an organization or business, they comparatively less likely it is to be active and efficient [53]. Employees' perceptions regarding how frequently or regularly change occurs in an organization is referred to as "frequency of change" [25]. Expectations of change cause psychological uncertainty in employees regarding the possible loss of their position and available resources and rewards [54]. This uncertainty regarding the security of their current position and future role may encourage them to indulge in behaviors that are not necessarily ethical [55]. Berger and Bradac [26] explain that uncertainty, ambiguity, and insecurity are not considered favorable in workplaces. These are motivators for getting involved in coping strategies to reduce these perceptions. These strategies do not always adhere to ethical standards.

Organizational change is the same for all employees, but variation is perceived differently and varies from person to person. According to Raskin and Terry [36], narcissists are grandiose and vulnerable because of their high sense of entitlement, power, and authority. They perceive changing situations differently from others. They want the best for the organization, they will do anything ethical or unethical to achieve this. Based on TAT, the grandiose narcissist may not want to lose their superior status and position during organizational change. Thus, they will exploit the situational advantage to work with the best capabilities (ethically or unethically) to maintain high organizational performance. Vulnerable narcissists also follow in grandiose narcissists' footsteps because they work for the utmost favor of their organization no

Khawaja *et al. Future Business Journal*   (2023) 9:38

Page 6 of 16

matter what and will work with excellent capabilities (ethically or unethically). Hence, making the best of the situation will lead them to acquire more advantages and power. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5(a) Organizational change moderates the association between grandiose narcissism and UPOB such that the associate strengthens when organizational change is high.

H5(b) Organizational change moderates the association between vulnerable narcissism and UPOB such that the association strengthens when organizational change is high (Fig. 1).

Methods

Data collection and participants

IT and telecom companies are operating in a highly competitive environment due to rapidly changing and uncertain market conditions. As superior competitive advantage ensures the firm's sustainability [56], employees sometimes adopt unethical behavior to complete tasks and cope with the competition. Besides the growing competition and changing environment, one reason for their unethical behavior is the individual's narcissistic personality. Researchers have been associating narcissism with unethical pro-organizational behavior, but very few have empirically tested and reported the relationship [20]. Hence, to fill this research gap, the current study investigates the mediating role of employees' UPOB and organizational change's role as a moderator between narcissism and guilt/shame.

A temporally segregated research design of a three-time lag was conducted, and convenience sampling was used to gather data from IT/ telecom sector employees in Islamabad/Rawalpindi. Time lagged was adopted to control common method biases that may occur when related variables are measured using common criteria, the same time and are self-reported [57]. Hence, a gap of fifteen days between each measurement point was kept, where respondents were asked about organizational change, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism at time-period 1 (TP1), unethical pro-organizational behavior at time-period 2 (TP2), and guilt and shame at time-period 3 (TP3). To match the participants' responses at T1, T2, and T3, they were asked to write their names, cell numbers, or ID numbers at each survey. Participants were ensured about their responses' confidentiality and anonymity.

At time 1, 425 questionnaires were circulated comprising questions on demographic variables, organizational change, grandiose, and vulnerable narcissism. However, we received 87% usable responses, i.e., 372. After a period of fifteen days for time 2, participants who provided comprehensive responses were requested to fill the second survey comprising questions or items on unethical pro-organizational behavior. But, 318 usable responses were received, and the response rate this time is 85%. For the third time, respondents who participated first and second were asked about guilt and shame; and 287 responded. Lastly, using SPSS, outliers were identified, and 15 responses were deleted, making a total of 272 (response rate of 64%) usable data. Demographic statistics reveal that 228 (84%) males and 44 (16%) females participated. A total of 171 (63%) respondents were of age group 20–30, and 99 (36%) respondents were of age group 31–40. About 51% of them had bachelor's degrees, whereas 43% were master's or higher degree holders.
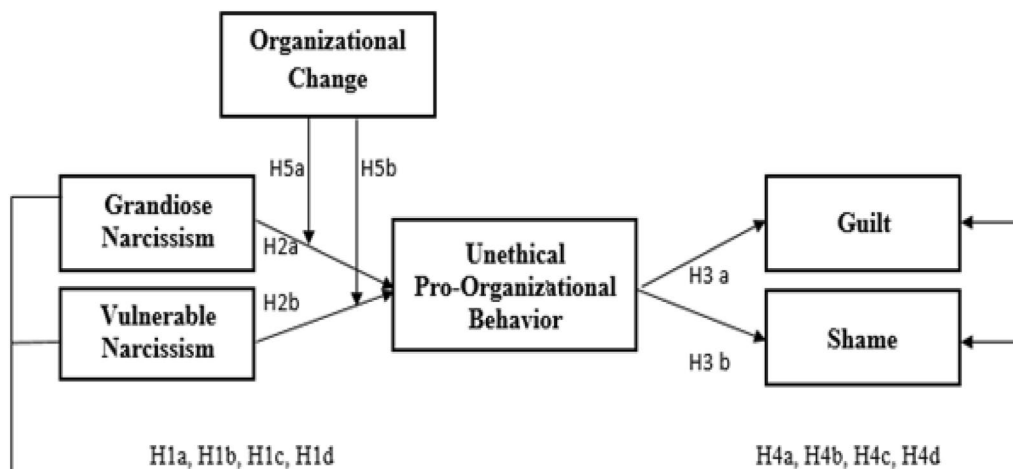

Fig. 1 Theoretical framework

Khawaja *et al. Future Business Journal*   (2023) 9:38

Page 7 of 16

Study measures

In Pakistan, the corporate sector's official language is English. Previous studies were also conducted in Pakistan using an English survey [58, 59]. Therefore, this study survey was conducted in English to collect responses using a 5-point Likert scale.

Narcissism

Grandiose Narcissism was measured using a shorter version scale (Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13) NPI-13 with 13 items established by Gentile et al. [4]. Sample items include: "I like having authority over other people," "I am a born leader," and "I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve." Vulnerable Narcissism was measured using a 10-item scale (Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HNS-10)) developed by Hendin and Cheek [51]. Sample items include: "I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people" and "When I enter a room, I often become self-conscious and feel that the eyes of others are upon me." Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism was measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Organizational change

This moderating variable was measured with the help of a six-item scale developed by [60] with response options on a scale from 1 = decreased to 5 = increased.

Unethical pro-organizational behavior

UPOB was measured with the help of **a** six-item scale developed by [13]. Sample items include: "If it helped my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good." Participants' responses were gathered using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Guilt and shame

Guilt was assessed using a 4-item scale developed by Harder et al. [61]. Respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they felt "mild guilt," "worry about hurting or injuring someone," "intense guilt," and "regret." Shame was measured using four items scale developed by Harder and Lewis [61]. Respondents were asked about their experience with respect "being embarrassed," "feeling ridiculous," "self-consciousness," and "feelings of blushing." Both guilt and shame.

Control variables

Past studies reported the influence of gender and age on guilt and shame [62, 63]. Therefore, by using the one-way analysis of variance technique, the relationship was checked. It was found that gender and age have an insignificant influence on both dependent variables; hence, no demographic variable was controlled.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Using SPSS, missing data analysis and outlier detection technique was performed, while AMOS was used to conduct measurement model evaluation through CFA. At the start, when the initial measurement model evaluation was performed, required results were not found, i.e., low factor loading and low fit indices; so, problematic items were deleted, and the model was re-tested. Hence, considering the procedure mentioned above and guidelines, four grandiose narcissism items and two vulnerable narcissism items were removed from the current study. The result of the final Six-factor model is given in Table 1, depicting: RMSEA = 0.07; GFI = 0.803; NFI = 0.845; CFI = 0.909; AGFI = 0.744; i.e., within the acceptable range suggested by Diamantopoulos and Siguaw [64]. Besides, as suggested for discriminate validity, full

Table 1 Confirmatory factor analysis

Model	χ^2	Df	χ^2 / Df	CFI	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RMSEA
M0: Six-Factor Model (GN, VN, OC, UPOB, G, S)	1432.834	568	2.523	0.909	0.803	0.744	0.85	0.07
M1: One-factor model (GN, VN, OC, UPOB, G, S)	2170.448	583	3.723	0.815	0.699	0.637	0.76	0.100
Time 1								
M2: Three-factor model of Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism and Organizational Change (GN, VN, OC)	383.958	191	2.010	0.965	0.897	0.851	0.933	0.06
M3: One-factor model by combining Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism and Organizational Change into one-factor (GN, VN, OC)	1008.789	194	5.200	0.850	.749	0.643	.823	0.124
Time 2								
M4: two-factor model of Guilt and Shame (G, S)	92.658	17	5.45	0.949	0.929	0.849	0.93	0.06
M5: One-factor model	377.708	18	20.98	0.757	0.710	0.421	0.75	0.272

n = 272, where, GN = Grandiose Narcissism, VN = Vulnerable Narcissism, OC = Organizational Change, UPOB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, G = Guilt, S = Shame

measurement models of the current study, i.e., six factors *(grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and organizational change, unethical pro-organizational behavior, guilt, and shame)* three-factor *(grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and organizational change)* and two-factor model *(guilt and shame)* were compared with their respective one-factor model, see Table 1. The multiple factor model results depict higher results for fit indices than their respective one-factor model, confirming the study variables' discriminant validity.

Study results

Table 2 illustrates descriptive statistics, correlation, internal consistency reliability and composite reliability and convergent validity (average variance extracted) of all independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables investigated in this research. As depicted Grandiose Narcissism is significantly associated with shame ($r = -0.404$, $p < 0.01$); guilt ($r = -0.546$, $p < 0.01$) vulnerable narcissism ($r = -0.463$, $p < 0.01$) UPOB ($r = 0.501$, $p < 0.01$) and organizational change ($r = 0.364$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, vulnerable narcissism is significantly associated to shame ($r = 0.526$, $p < 0.01$); guilt ($r = 0.538$, $p < 0.01$). Correlation of other study variable is also reported (Table 2). In addition, Table 2 also depicts results of Cronbach alpha (ICR) and composite reliability, which are within range [65, 66].

Hypothesis testing

The current study used AMOS to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM) for mediation analysis and SPSS—PROCESS MACRO for moderation analysis (Model 1). Bootstrapping PROCESS has been used in several previous studies published in mainstream journals to calculate the mediation and moderation analysis [67-69]. Previously, Baron and Kenny [70] suggested causal steps were considered for analysis, as they were simple to test, understand, and explain. Hayes and Preacher [71] reported that causal steps do not fulfill the statistical and philosophical need for mediation and moderation analysis [72]. Hence, indirect effects and interaction effects using the bootstrapping technique are recommended and used in the current study.

Table 3 shows the results of mediation analysis, whereas Table 4 illustrates the moderation results. First hypothesis (H1) illustrates that independent variable GN is negatively and significantly associated with guilt (H1a) and shame (H1b) with $\beta = -0.521$, $p < 0.001$, and $\beta = -0.200$, $p < 0.001$, respectively. Vulnerable narcissism is positively and significantly related to guilt (H1c) and shame (H1d) with $\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.869$, $p < 0.001$, respectively. Hence, hypothesis H1 is statistically proved. Hypothesis (H2) suggests a positive relationship of grandiose narcissism (H2a) and vulnerable narcissism (H2b) with unethical pro-organizational behavior, and the results revealed that H2a and H2b are proved with $\beta = 0.389$, $p < 0.005$, and $\beta = 0.725$, $p < 0.005$, respectively. Hypothesis (H3) states a positive relationship between unethical pro-organizational behavior and guilt (H3a), shame (H3b), and the results revealed in Table 3 the significant relationship with $\beta = 0.175$, $p < 0.05$ and $\beta = 0.515$, $p < 0.01$, respectively.

Supporting hypothesis 4b, the results revealed that UPOB mediates the association between grandiose narcissism and the dependent variable: shame. Values of the confidence interval for indirect effects show no zero between the upper and lower limit $[-0.415, -0.076]$. Similarly, hypothesis 4c and 4d, which states that UPOB act as a mediator between vulnerable narcissism and guilt (H4c) and shame (H4d), is approved; as no zero exists between the upper and lower limit of H4c $[0.070, 0.430]$ and H4d $[0.214, 0.943]$. Based on Barron & Kenny (1986)

Table 2 Descriptive, reliability, convergent validity, and correlation analysis

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Organizational change $a = 0.791$, CR $= 0.773$, AVE $= 0.597$	4.087	0.377	1					
2	Grandiose Narcissism $a = 0.862$, CR $= 0.859$, AVE $= 0.722$	2.485	0.908	0.364**	1				
3	Shame $a = 0.808$, CR $= 0.817$, AVE $= 0.737$	3.488	0.963	−0.336*	−0.404**	1			
4	Guilt $a = 0.846$, CR $= 0.863$, AVE $= 0.616$	3.299	0.796	−0.091	−0.546**	0.574**	1		
5	Vulnerable Narcissism $a = 0.878$, CR $= 0.782$, AVE $= 0.506$	3.492	0.855	−0.346*	−0.463**	0.526**	0.538**	1	
6	Unethical Pro-organizational behavior $a = 0.812$, CR $= 0.746$, AVE $= 0.546$	4.989	0.574	−0.304**	0.501**	0.541**	0.398**	0.497**	1

$n = 272$, CR $=$ Composite reliability; α $=$ internal consistency reliability; AVE $=$ Average Variance Extracted; SD $=$ standard deviation; *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$

Table 3 Mediated regression analysis results

Relationships	effect	SE	T	p
Predictors of UPOB (IV mediator)				
GN and UPOB	0.389	0.022	− 3.002	0.003
VN and UPOB	0.725	0.051	3.155	0.002
Predictors of guilt/shame (mediator DV)				
UPOB and Guilt	0.175	.709	1.200	0.030
UPOB and Shame	0.515	.972	2.768	0.006
Mediation effect of UPOB				
Direct effect without a mediator				
GN and Guilt	− 0.521	0.055	− 7.922	0.030
GN and Shame	− 0.200	0.034	− 5.178	0.000
VN and Guilt	0.302	0.067	4.911	0.000
VN and Shame	0.869	0.091	11.056	0.000
Direct effect with a mediator				
GN and Guilt	− 0.457	0.069	− 5.491	0.006
GN and Shame	− 0.020	0.048	− 0.069	0.956
VN and Guilt	0.165	0.129	1.398	0.319
VN and Shame	0.496	0.108	5.360	0.069

Bootstrap results for indirect effects

	Effect	SE	LL95% CI	UL 95% CI
Indirect Effects (GN, UPOB, Guilt)	− 0.057	0.072	− 0.199	0.026
Indirect Effects (GN, UPOB, Shame)	− 0.179	0.132	− 0.415	− 0.076
Indirect Effects (VN, UPOB, Guilt)	0.138	0.160	0.070	0.430
Indirect Effects (VN, UPOB, Shame)	0.436	0.279	0.214	0.943

n= 272, GN= Grandiose Narcissism, VN= Vulnerable Narcissism, OC = Organizational Change, UPOB= unethical pro-organizational behavior. Bootstrap Sample Size=5000. LL=Lower Limit, CI= Confidence Interval, UL= Upper Limit.

Table 4 Hierarchical moderated regression analysis

Predictors	Unethical pro-organizational behavior					
	R	*R*^{2}	Estimate	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Step1	0.55***	0.31***				
Constant			5.458***	0.95	3.58	7.33
GN			0.382	0.36	− 0.33	1.09
OC			0.058	0.23	− 0.39	0.51
Step 2	ΔR^2	0.009				
GN x OC			−0.162	0.08	− 0.33	0.00

n = 272, GN = Grandiose Narcissism, OC = Organizational Change, UPOB = unethical pro-organizational behavior. Bootstrap Sample Size = 5000. LL = Lower Limit, CI = Confidence Interval, UL = Upper Limit. ***$p < 0.001$

approach, similar results were revealed, i.e., full mediation was proved for H4b ($\beta = -0.020$, ns), H4c ($\beta = 0.165$, ns) and H4d ($\beta = 0.496$, ns) and H4a was rejected, as shown in Table 3 (Fig. 2).

The interaction term of grandiose narcissism and organizational change for UPOB (H5a) was insignificant ($\beta = -0.162$, $p =$ ins). In contrast, the interaction term of vulnerable narcissism and organizational change for

UPOB (H5b) was found significant ($\beta = 0.215$. $p < 0.05$). Moreover, the conditional direct effects reported in Table 5 illustrate that the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and UPOB strengthens in case of high organizational change ($\beta = 0.391$, $p < 0.05$), as compared to low organizational change ($\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, hypothesis 5b is accepted. Figure 3 shows the interaction plot.
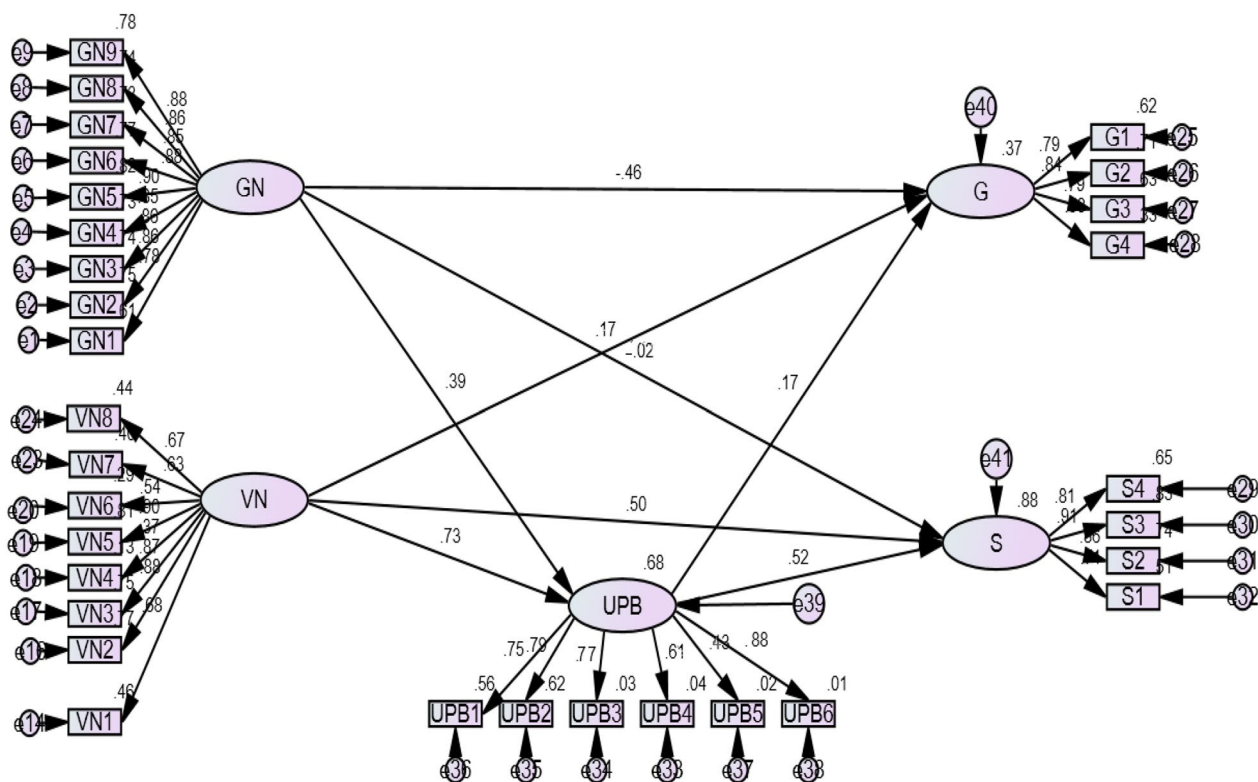
Fig. 2 Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Table 5 Hierarchical moderated regression analysis

Predictors	Unethical pro-organizational behavior					
	R	**R²**	**Estimate**	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Step1	0.56***	0.32***				
Constant			8.433***	1.361	5.752	11.113
VN			− 0.571	0.380	− 1.32	0.177
OC			− 1.104***	0.329	− 1.75	− 0.455
Step 2	ΔR²	0.013				
VN x OC			0.215**	0.092	0.033	0.397

Conditional direct effects of X on Y at values of moderator (i.e., OC) (Slope Test Results)

Moderator	Unethical pro-organizational behavior			
DTP	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
OC−1SD (− .85)	0.228***	0.049	0.131	0.325
OC mean (0.00)	0.309***	0.034	0.242	0.377
OC + 1SD (.85)	0.391***	0.048	0.295	0.487

$n = 272$, VN = Vulnerable Narcissism, OC = Organizational Change, UPOB = unethical pro-organizational behavior. Bootstrap Sample Size = 5000. LL = Lower Limit, CI = Confidence Interval, UL = Upper Limit. **$p < .01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Discussion

Events related to corporate accounting scandals (such as the Enron Scandal in 2001 and the WorldCom Scandal in 2002) and billion-dollar companies' failures show changes in how businesses function. These scandals have proved that unethical acts are conducted and flourishing within such organizations and are often appreciated internally [13]. UPOB is under-examined
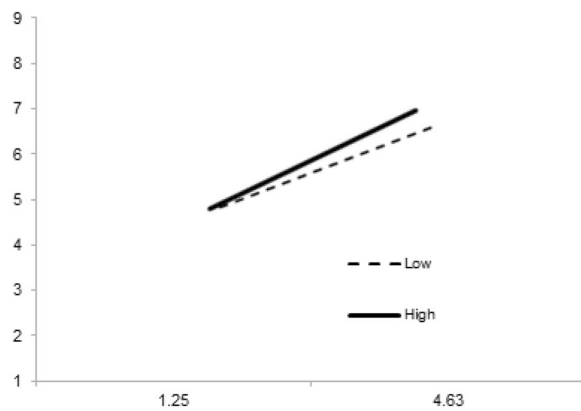
Fig. 3 Interaction Pl

in the workplace, and a scarcity of literature is available that reports the antecedents and outcomes of UPOB. Researchers have long reported that UPOB and narcissism are associated, but very few have empirically tested and reported it [30]. Hence, to fill this gap, the current study investigates (1) the association between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with guilt and shame, (2) the mediating role of UPOB between grandiose/vulnerable narcissism and guilt/shame, and (3) the moderating role of organizational change between grandiose/vulnerable narcissism and UPOB. Moderation and mediation analysis were conducted using SEM and PROCESS MACRO Model 1. Statistical results revealed that grandiose narcissism is negatively and significantly associated with guilt ($\beta = -0.521$, $p < = 0.05$) and shame ($\beta = -0.200$, $p < = 0.001$) and vulnerable narcissism is positively and significantly associated with guilt ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < = 0.01$) and shame ($\beta = 0.869$, $p < = 0.001$). Hence, hypothesis H1 (H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d) was accepted. Moreover, the statistical results presented in Table 3 reveal a significant relationship between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with UPOB, having ($\beta = 0.389$, $p < = 0.005$) and ($\beta = 0.725$, $p < = 0.005$), respectively. Similarly, a significant relationship of UPOB with guilt ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < = 0.05$) and shame ($\beta = 0.515$, $p < = 0.01$) has been reported. Hence, H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b have been proved.

The bootstrapping technique was adopted to calculate the indirect effect for mediation analysis. Based on the recommendations and techniques suggested by Preacher and Hayes [72], hypotheses 4b, 4c, and 4d have been approved. The statistical results revealed that UPOB mediates the relationship between grandiose narcissism and shame -0.179 CI $[-0.415, -0.076]$; vulnerable narcissism and guilt 0.138 CI [0.070, 0.430]; vulnerable narcissism and shame 0.436 CI [0.214, 0.943], as the "bootstrapped confidence interval" does not include Zero (as shown in Table 3). The statistical results of

the moderation analysis show that hypothesis h5b was accepted as the interaction term for vulnerable narcissism. Organizational change is positive and significant, as suggested in the literature. Moreover, the results revealed that the relationship strengthens when organizational change is high.

Theoretical implications

Our research offers several theoretical and practical contributions. We duplicate and extend past research on vulnerable and grandiose narcissism in an organizational context. First, by focusing on vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, we highlight the relevance of two dimensions of narcissism with organizational change and answer calls for investigating the two dimensions of narcissism in organizational research [37]. Second, we explore the role of vulnerable and grandiose narcissism in shame and guilt by including shame and guilt as an outcome variable. The current study results regarding organizational change's moderating role suggest that organizational change triggers vulnerable and grandiose individuals' UPOB. Further, we demonstrate the strong implications of UPOB at work by introducing UPOB as a mediator.

Practical implications

Our results offer advice for change management practitioners. They should define organizational, group, and individual goals while implementing organizational change strategies since change provokes UPOB. Also, narcissists can be very effective in their work performance. Our results encourage change management practitioners to take steps to channel narcissistic employees' capabilities to be involved in beneficial activities for organizations rather than engaging in UPOB.

There is a difference in market demands and industry dynamics. Thus, the norms and culture vary according to industry, competition, and workplace environment. The current study focused specifically on IT and telecom companies operating in a highly competitive environment. Besides the growing competition and changing environment, one reason for unethical behavior is the individual's narcissistic personality. Although researchers have been associating narcissism with UPOB for a long time [20, 73], this relationship has been underexplored. The current study provides various managerial implications for companies operating in this sector and other sectors. Employees with narcissistic traits strive to become successful and remain ahead of others; in doing so, they ignore ethical codes of conduct, leading to a toxic workplace environment. Managers should make concerted attempts to monitor employees' activities in the workplace to decrease the negative effect of narcissism and maintain an ethical corporate environment.

The prevalence of narcissism in the workplace is a growing concern, with multiple studies indicating its adverse impacts on individuals and organizations [74–76]. Research has found that about 1 in 8 employees exhibit high levels of narcissistic tendencies, which can lead to lower work performance, negative relationships with colleagues, and a toxic organizational culture [77]. Narcissistic behavior in the workplace has been found to be associated with negative consequences for both individuals and organizations. Narcissistic individuals have an inflated sense of self-importance, lack empathy, and exploit others for personal gain, often engaging in unethical behavior such as lying, cheating, and stealing [78, 79]. Narcissistic leaders can create a negative work environment characterized by fear, anxiety, and low morale, ultimately impacting the well-being of employees and the bottom line of the organization [80, 81].

Research indicates that narcissistic behavior is not uncommon in various fields, including business, politics, and entertainment [76, 82]. Studies have shown that narcissism is more prevalent in certain professions, such as finance and law-making authorities, which can be found in any organization [83]. Narcissistic behavior can manifest in various ways, such as an excessive need for admiration, a lack of empathy, and taking credit for others' accomplishments [84]. Furthermore, narcissistic individuals have been found to have lower job satisfaction and higher levels of turnover intentions, highlighting the negative impact of their behavior on themselves and their organizations [74].

Guilt and shame are important outcome variables of narcissism and unethical organizational behavior because they are associated with negative psychological and behavioral outcomes for individuals and organizations. Individuals exhibiting narcissistic traits may engage in unethical behavior to maintain their power and control over others. However, engaging in such behavior can lead to feelings of guilt and shame, particularly if they are caught or if the conduct violates their moral code [85]. These negative emotions can lead to adverse psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and poor performance [86]. In an organizational context, unethical behavior can have serious consequences, including legal and financial penalties, damage to reputation, and decreased employee morale and productivity [87–89]. Employees who engage in such behavior may also experience guilt and shame, which can lead to decreased job satisfaction and commitment and increased turnover intentions [90–93].

Furthermore, guilt and shame are also related to other work outcomes such as job performance, stress, and well-being. Employees who experience high levels of guilt and shame may have difficulty concentrating on their work, leading to decreased job performance [94, 95]. Additionally, the negative emotional impact of guilt and shame can contribute to stress and decreased well-being, which can further impair job performance and lead to absenteeism and turnover [43]. Overall, guilt and shame are important outcome variables of narcissism and organizational unethical behavior because they can have significant negative impacts on individuals and organizations and are related to other work outcomes [96].

According to research, the relationship between narcissism and organizational pro-ethical behavior can be moderated by organizational change. Initiatives promoting ethical behavior and values can help to counterbalance the negative effects of narcissistic leadership and foster a culture of ethical behavior within the workplace [97]. For example, changes related to a code of ethics and ethical decision-making training can mitigate the unethical behavior of narcissistic individuals. Organizational change that emphasizes collaboration and teamwork can also promote collective decision-making and ethical behavior [84]. Additionally, narcissistic leaders were found to be less likely to engage in unethical behavior when they were surrounded by cooperative and collaborative team members. Organizational change that promotes transparency and accountability can mitigate the negative effects of narcissistic leadership by encouraging ethical behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), such as helping others and going beyond job requirements [98]. These changes positively affect employee attitudes and behavior and sustainable organizational performance [99], regardless of the level of narcissistic individuals in the organization. Therefore, companies can create a more ethical and effective workplace by promoting ethical values and behavior through organizational change.

This research is relevant to the business world, as narcissistic individuals can lead to negative outcomes such as guilt, shame, unethical behavior, increased turnover, and decreased organizational performance. By understanding the role of organizational change in moderating the effects of narcissism, businesses can take steps to promote ethical and effective leadership and mitigate the negative effects of narcissism in the workplace. Initiatives promoting ethical behavior and values can create more ethical and effective workplaces that benefit employees and the organization.

Further, they should discourage competition that triggers narcissistic employees' UPOB. These employees have a high potential to prove themselves and attain their goals. Hence, on the organizational level, employee development programs such as employee coaching, mediation, or employee support programs with psychologically

trained personnel are required to cultivate the positive aspects of narcissistic employees.

Study limitations

The current research provides further avenues for researchers in an organizational context by summarizing existing works' highlights. Data were collected from information technology and telecom companies located in Islamabad/Rawalpindi for the current study. Future researchers should collect data from other industries that are more open to change or are affected by an uncertain environment to generalize the study's findings. Secondly, in the current study, we only investigated narcissism's association with guilt, shame, and UPOB; other negative personality traits can be considered in the future. Furthermore, besides organizational change, supervisor Bottom-Line Mentality can be used as a moderating variable to explain UPOB. Thirdly, because of the self-reported questionnaire, social desirability response bias might have occurred; hence, such biases should be controlled in the future. According to Blair et al. [20], literature is scarce on leadership styles and UPOB. Most studies investigate employees and UPOB, so future researchers might opt to make concerted attempts to fulfill this gap. The self-report measure of narcissism used in this study correlated with other clinical measures such as clinicians' diagnoses, personality disorders, and traits; this is another limitation of the current study, as we only investigated narcissism. Future researchers should investigate other variables too.

Conclusion

The current study investigates the mediating role of employees' UPOB and organizational change as a moderator between narcissism and guilt/shame. The results found that vulnerable and grandiose narcissism can have an adverse impact on the UPOB of the employee. Furthermore, the mediating role of UPOB between the relationship of vulnerable and grandiose narcissism and two dependent variables, namely guilt/shame, is identified. In addition to this, organizational change moderates the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and UPOB. While grandiose narcissism is negatively related to guilt and shame, organizational change negatively moderates the relationship between grandiose narcissism and UPOB.

Previous studies have examined attitudinal and situational factors. Hence, there is a scarcity of research on the role of individual personality traits. A literature review revealed a lack of adequate research on UPOB, as it is a comparatively new concept. Organizational researchers have focused on grandiose narcissism, while vulnerable narcissism has been largely ignored.

Besides addressing these gaps, this research also provides evidence for a negative relationship between grandiose narcissism and employee's emotion of guilt and shame. Further, vulnerable narcissism was found to affect guilt and shame.

Appendix A

Variable	Scale
Grandiose narcissism	I like having authority over other people
	I have a strong will to power
	People always seem to recognize my authority
	I am a born leader
	People always seem to recognize my authority
	I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me
	I like to show off my body
	I like to look at my body
	I will usually show off if I get the chance
	I like to look at myself in the mirror
	I find it easy to manipulate people
	I insist upon getting the respect that is due me
	I expect a great deal from other people
	I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve
Vulnerable narcissism	I can become entirely absorbed in thinking about my personal affairs, health, care, or relations with others
	My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by others' slight remarks
	When I enter a room, I often become self-conscious and feel that others' eyes are upon me
	I dislike sharing the credit of achievement with others
	I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people's troubles
	I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people
	I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way
	I easily become wrapped up in my interests and forget others' existence
	I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one present

Khawaja *et al. Future Business Journal*   (2023) 9:38

Page 14 of 16

Variable	Scale
	I am secretly "put out" or annoyed when other people come to me with their troubles, asking me for my time and sympathy
Organizational change	Because of the changes, my career opportunities are…
	Because of the changes, the support of my colleagues is…
	Because of the changes, my sick leave is…
	Because of the changes, my influence at work is…
	Because of the changes, the risk of losing my job is…
	Because of the changes, my well-being at work is…
Unethical pro-organizational behavior	If it would help my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good
	If it would help my organization, I would exaggerate the truth about my company's products or services to customers and clients
	If it would benefit my organization, I would withhold negative information about my company or its products from customers and clients
	If my organization needed me to, I would give a good recommendation on behalf of an incompetent employee hoping that the person will become another organization's problem instead of my own
	If my organization needed me to, I would withhold issuing a refund to a customer or client accidentally overcharged
	If needed, I would conceal information from the public that could damage my organization
Guilt	Mild guilt
	Worry about hurting or injuring someone
	Intense guilt
	Regret
Shame	Being embarrassed
	Feelings of blushing
	Feeling ridiculous
	Self-consciousness

Abbreviations

UPOB   Unethical pro-organizational behavior
AMOS   Analysis of a moment structures
SPSS   Statistical package for the social sciences
SEM   Structural equation modeling
TAT   Trait activation theory
GN   Grandiose narcissism
VN   Vulnerable narcissism
OC   Organizational change

Availability of data and materials
The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
All procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standard.

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Competing interests
I declare that there are no conflicts of interest between authors regarding the publication of this paper.

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Khawaja *et al. Future Business Journal*   (2023) 9:38

Page 15 of 16

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Khawaja *et al. Future Business Journal*   (2023) 9:38

Page 16 of 16

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