

Narcissism

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Miller and Campbell (2008) try to conceptualize narcissism. Despite the long history of interest about the topic, there is no universal consensus about the concept. Narcissism only emerged as a mental disorder when DSM-III was published in 1980. According to the Manual, narcissism is characterized by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration and lack of empathy.

Menon and Sharland (2011) report in their article, that narcissism is correlated with lower levels of intimacy, increased willingness to exploit others and to some extent Machiavellianism. They tend to have a highly positive self-concept. They try to bolster this self-view by self-regulating behaviour, such as trying to gain attention or trying to be entertaining and colourful. Research results suggest that narcissists have positive self-view regarding status, intelligence or dominance. They have a desire for power and therefore they seek leadership positions.

Delic et al. (2011) use diagnostic criteria from DSM-IV to present narcissism. DSM-IV highlights grandiose sense of self-importance, along with the need of admiration from others, arrogance, entitlement, lack of empathy, envy and the tendency to exploit others. These characteristics form two clusters, an intrapersonal and interpersonal one. (It is important to note that narcissism can manifest only in an interpersonal context, but it has intrapsychical aspects as well.) Narcissists have an extraverted and non-agreeable attitude, they tend to be more aggressive and have a strong desire for power and dominance, while they are less communally oriented. They overestimate their positive influence in a group, like to impress others, they do not care much for modesty and approval seeking, and instead of that, they

prefer self-enhancement statements. They also confirm Machiavellianism; it is in accordance with their exploitative and manipulative behaviour towards others. Lack of empathy is considered as a diagnostic criterion for narcissism, but the cognitive aspect of empathy might be there, the affective side is missing or they are not motivated to feel compassion toward others.

According to Andreassen et al. (2012), the definition of narcissism has changed since the classic conceptualization of Ellis, according to whom narcissism can be seen as a tendency for the sexual emotions to be lost and almost entirely absorbed in self-admiration. Contemporary definitions are based on certain core symptoms, e.g. inflated sense of self-importance, entitlement, and preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, believing in their uniqueness, a tendency toward interpersonal exploitation, requiring admiration, and lack of empathy, envy and arrogance.

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Hill and Lapsley (2012) originate the construct of narcissism from the essay of Freud in 1914. They also suggest the lack of empiric research of the subject despite a long-standing interest in the topic. Narcissism is considered a fundamental developmental experience of adolescence.

Historically, Gerson (2011) demonstrates the myth of Samson in his essay, which is an archetype of the destructive narcissism. He has unique power and is alienated because of the use of his power. The tale of Samson is tragically depicting the quest for dominance and omnipotence.

Various authors and reports suggest the importance of narcissism in normal human development. Andreassen et al. (2012) are of the opinion that a certain degree of narcissism is healthy and a prerequisite for self-enhancement, self-confidence and assertion.

According to the self-psychology of Kohut, narcissistic illusions can sustain psychological growth, which is particularly important meeting the challenges of adolescence. These illusions can take two forms, can be grandiose, when the individual's exhibitionism, ambition and assertiveness are the main features or the individual can idealize figures and goals. These figures represent role models. Although there is a debate over the existence of the various types of narcissism, empirical evidence seems to corroborate it. Normal narcissism is associated with subjective well-being and counterindicates the effects of sadness, depression and anxiety. Psychology traditionally suggests that narcissism is part of a defensive, compensatory stance. Hill and Lapsley (2012) suggest that narcissism is part of the separation-individuation process in psychological development, therefore it must be considered as different from the clinical conceptualization in adolescence. Adolescent narcissism takes the form of omnipotence, uniqueness and indestructibility. The positive connection between narcissism and well-being exist only in case of overt narcissism, but there is also a covert form characterized by hypersensitivity, increased anxiety and timidity. Covert narcissism still harbours visions of grandiosity as well. Overt form of narcissism is associated with the feeling of omnipotence, while covert form with the feeling of personal uniqueness.

Narcissism is considered adaptive in some ways in the social-personality literature. The confusion surrounding narcissism stems from the psychodynamic theory, because of the difficulty of operationalizing key constructs. At least two concepts emerged, the dominant and

relatively high-functioning person and another reflecting a borderline personality. This divergence resulted in a clinical construct acknowledging both perspectives but favouring the latter. Narcissist individuals are very sensitive to injury and their self-esteem is very fragile, but this kind of fragility does not appear in diagnostic criteria.

The social-personality literature suggests a different picture where narcissism is not necessarily pathologic. It associates narcissism with well-being and high self-esteem. However, this approach consists elements of the clinical diagnostic criteria as well, like fantasies of success, desire for admiration and entitlement. (Miller, Campbell, 2008)

Narcissistic attitudes seem to be pervasive, they can be found not only in social behaviours, but in academic behaviours as well. Narcissists often feel they are special and the world owes them something. (Menon, Sharland, 2011)

Delic et al (2011) report a visible rise in narcissism levels over generations, which indicated an increasing interest in research of the topic. To get what they want, narcissists have good interpersonal skills, high levels of social and emotional intelligence. In a situation when someone is in need of help and most people would feel obligated to help, a narcissist would only help if this kind of behaviour was in accordance with his selfish goals. They do not consider others' perspectives, mainly because of their lacking motivation to do so. Narcissist individuals are able to understand and predict other people's behaviour. They are successfully making first contact, join social interactions, start conversations and make positive first impressions. These skills allow them to pursue grandiose goals and further exploit others in social situations. Narcissists have the ability to understand, perceive, label, express and

manage other people's emotions just like their own. They are using their high level of emotional intelligence to manipulation and exploitation however.

Uji, Nagata and Kitamura (2012) accentuate the importance of narcissism's functional effect, the regulation of self-esteem. To maintain self-esteem individuals take credit for successful outcomes, but blame others for unsuccessful ones. Narcissism regulates self-conscious emotions and so it maintains self-esteem. These kinds of emotions are shame, guilt, hubristic and achievement-oriented pride. Narcissists have fewer negative emotions such as guilt or shame, but emotions that are more positive connected with self such as hubristic and authentic pride.

Alvarez and Jaffe (2004) analyzed the mating habits of humans. They found evidence of the hypothesis that humans search for couples based on a "self seeks like" method. People develop a sense of beauty through imprinting mechanisms. It has a strong narcissistic component and is based on the images of the parents. Narcissistic considerations apply for situations without reproductive purposes too, such as the choice of business partners.

Fan et al. (2010) examined the psychological and neural correlates of narcissism. Narcissism is regarded as a trait of healthy personality and a prominent behaviour pattern of the Western cultures. Today, narcissism is seen as a continuum from healthy self-esteem to severe narcissistic psychopathology.

Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) stress the importance of shifting the focus of narcissism toward a personality process rather than a static individual difference. Despite the patterns of grandiosity, individuals with narcissism exhibit behavioural patterns of craving attention and

admiration. Narcissistic individuals have extremely positive yet very fragile self-views. It is a self that cannot stand on his own and needs constant reinforcement. For a narcissistic individual the others have only value in the respect to provide help to bolster their narcissistic self. However, because their lack of empathy and little concern of what others think, they often produce counterproductive behaviours preventing responses from others narcissists desire.

Sedikides et al. (2004) discuss the idea whether narcissism is psychologically healthy. Evidence suggests that normal narcissists love the self abundantly, far more than they love others. They also relish direct competition. They tend to overestimate and overrate their own contribution and attributes. Although it is a widely believed hypothesis that high levels of narcissism are psychologically unhealthy. To challenge this hypothesis, Sedikides and her co-authors suggest that agency (which is a defining dimension of normal narcissism) and communion are associated with reduced anxiety and depression, lower negative affect and higher levels of life satisfaction. Higher level of self-esteem is consistently and positively related to narcissism. Self-esteem is also associated with psychological health. Normal narcissism is also associated with psychological health benefits. High narcissists have high level of agency, but low level of communion. The results of research carried out by Sedikides et al (2004) do not confirm the common assumption that highly narcissistic individuals suffer ill psychological health based on their interpersonal deficits. They are exploitative and abrasive, but psychologically healthy, mainly due to high level of self-esteem.

Students with narcissistic traits tend to regard university as a service and expect entitlements for their payments. (Menon, Sharland, 2011) Delic et al (2012) produced research results

corroborating the assumption of negative association between narcissism and empathy and positive association between narcissism and social and emotional intelligence.

Andreassen et al (2012) examined score on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and work-related issues like the drive to work, engagement and professional position. Healthy narcissism can be productive at a workplace, but pathologic narcissism may have destructive effects. Craving for rewards and recognition as many narcissists do can be achieved by putting in extra effort; therefore, narcissism is related to workaholism and consequently a greater investment into work. Andreassen and her co-workers (2012) found a direct connection in their research between narcissism and workaholism as well as narcissism and work engagement. The latter is the opposite of burnout, and provides narcissists a sense of achievement, joy and satisfaction at work. Narcissist individuals spend more time at work or with work-related activities. They also suggest that narcissism and management positions are linked; people in these positions have a tendency to be more narcissistic.

Uji, Nagata and Kitamura (2012) found that narcissism has a direct positive relationship with both types of pride. Narcissism inhibits shame, but has no influence on guilt, which seems to be an emotion not harming self-esteem.

Wink (1991) highlights the interesting fact that the two most commonly used narcissism scales, NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory) and NPDS (Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale) do not correlate with each other. According to some opinions, NPDS anchors the maladaptive, while NPI the healthier pole of narcissism. NPI and NPDS might reflect two manifestations of the construct as well. NPDS is considered to measure general pathology and maladjustment instead of narcissism.

Using fMRI, Fan et al (2010) found a psychological and neuronal group difference in highly narcissistic subjects compared to individuals with lower levels of this personality trait. The main difference between the higher and lower level group was found in the right anterior insula, which is associated with empathy.

Morf and Rhodewalt suggest that neither a personality trait approach nor a process-oriented description is enough; the complex interconnection of both aspects is needed to understand the functioning in various psychological contexts and situations.

Buffardi and Campbell (2008) examined the association between narcissism and the use of social networking sites. Personal web pages are appropriate platform for narcissists for self-promotion. Narcissism is related to a higher number of social relations, self-promoting presentations and agentic characteristics.

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