

The two faces of narcissism and how they use tactics of self-presentation

Abstract

Vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, while sharing the same narcissistic core, differ in how they manifest themselves in the social world. In this paper, self-presentation tactics use was looked at in terms of likeliness of utilization of tactics by grandiose and vulnerable narcissists, controlling for extraversion and neuroticism. Recognizing narcissists' self-presentation can not only help with differential diagnosis and treatment but can also provide answers for the validity of grouping these two constructs together. Firstly, to establish a reliable and representative sub-clinical sample, 192 participants were gathered, looking at the effects of extraversion and neuroticism on vulnerable and grandiose narcissism. Extraversion positively correlated with grandiose narcissism, and negatively with vulnerable narcissism, which is consistent with prior findings. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that narcissism is only a mediating factor of tactic use, and that personality traits are the predictors of assertive and defensive tactics. Ingratiation, intimidation, entitlement, excuse, justification, disclaimer, and apology tactics were chosen for this paper. The results by and large confirm previous findings, assertive tactics were used by grandiose narcissists, assertive and defensive tactics correlated positively with vulnerable narcissism. Importantly, no direct association was found between extraversion, neuroticism, and the measured tactics. This contrasts with the idea that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism is the same maladaptive trait presented differently on account of differing underlying personality traits. Nonetheless, the results highlight an important aspect of these personality styles, namely their choice of appearance to others.

Keywords: Narcissism, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Self-presentation

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1. Theoretical Background

1.1 Narcissism

Narcissism, stemming from the Greek mythological character Narcissus, is an ancient concept of a person being overly obsessed with himself. Narcissus could be described as an emotionally distant, self-absorbed, overly self-loving individual, who only realized his unparalleled beauty when he looked at his reflection in a lake. His mother tried to protect him from realizing his magnificence, but when he went to get water from a lake after fighting off Echo, he, for the first time in his life, saw himself. He mistakenly thought that Echo's repetitive words of admiration had come from the water's surface. He stayed there day and night adoring himself, until the Gods turned him into a flower (Fry, 2019). The biggest change from mythology to science is that while Narcissus was the most beautiful mortal, the same cannot be said for anyone. Having said that, the modern terminology for narcissism adopts, necessarily changes, and improves this concept of self-absorbedness. Freud was one of the first psychologists to write a comprehensive psychological work on narcissism. He adopted Paul Nacke's definition of "*the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated*" (Paul Nacke, 1899 as cited in Freud, 1914). Freud distinguished two stages of narcissism, that of primary narcissism in infancy, and secondary narcissism. More important for our discussion is the secondary narcissism stage, where the interest of the ego trumps that of the object-relations. Heinz Kohut (1977) adapted narcissism to contemporary psychology and was the main reason for the recognition of narcissism as a personality disorder.

Recent scientific discourse made a split in sub-clinical narcissism, leading to two new concepts, grandiose and vulnerable (Wink, 1991). Several studies tried to show similarities and differences, concluding that differences in extraversion and neuroticism might lead to different manifestations of the narcissistic personality regarding subclinical samples (Czarna et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2017b; Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2019). Narcissism went from being viewed as a personality disorder to a personality type with maladaptive to pathological outcomes, which includes Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) (Raskin & Hall, 1979). This change is especially present within the inventories and surveys used. This paper is interested in only the sub-clinical narcissistic individuals.

Narcissism could have been evolutionarily useful (Czarna et al., in press). Yet, most of the current research does not conceptualize narcissism as an adaptive temperament, especially in the case of vulnerable narcissism. At the time of writing, an evolutionary perspective on vulnerable narcissism was not found. Narcissism is mostly viewed as a personality style created from parental attitudes and cultural tendencies toward individualism, and while certainly, those environmental aspects play a significant role in the creation of narcissists, biology and genes seem to play a role as well (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015). Holtzman and Strube (2012) view narcissism as adaptive for short-term mating strategies and dominance. When the typical population tries to achieve a long-term mating strategy, it would be viable for some to opt for different routes. This is an example of balancing selection (Nettle, 2006). If the trait is heritable, then short-term strategies such as one-night stands, serial monogamy, polygamy, and even rape could lead to a selection for the narcissistic genes (Bushman et al., 2003). Buss and Shackelford (1997), among others, found evidence for this hypothesis. When talking about dominance, narcissists' pride helped them climb the social ladder, which led to more mating potential, thus more reproductive success (Tracy et al., 2012). The reason why only a small percent of people are narcissists is that there is a limiting factor on the number of narcissists in a given population, it being parental investment. If the majority of a tribe engages in only short-term mating (STM), then the next generation would have no paternal protection and resources. Looking at genetics and epigenetics, no one gene and no amalgamation of genes were found to be the cause of narcissism. Still, genetic background is likely, as Coolidge et al. (2004; as cited in Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015) found through twin studies that narcissism is heritable, only the magnitude is unknown.

Narcissism as a concept is deeply intertwined with self-esteem, but what differs between self-esteem and narcissism is that the first measures self-believed adequacy, while the second measures self-believed superiority. Sometimes narcissism is conceptualized as pathologically high self-esteem, other experts view it as a skewed or distorted self-esteem-like self-evaluation (Jordan et al., 2003). There is a scientific divide when modeling narcissism regarding their self-esteem, while the psychodynamic mask model views it as masking low self-esteem, the self-presentation of narcissists posits high self-esteem (Kuchynka & Bosson, 2018). As self-esteem is not a definite indicator of narcissism, narcissists can have genuinely high or low but faked to be high self-esteem. There is no consensus on this 'masking' effect, however, it is important to keep in mind when

looking at self-presentation tactics, that the tactics used can either be due to low or high self-evaluation.

1.2 Similarities between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism

The narcissistic core defined by the trifurcated model is self-centered antagonism, which can be found in vulnerable and grandiose narcissism alike (Weiss et al., 2019). What stands out in narcissistic individuals compared to other dark triad traits is that narcissists tend to manipulate less than Machiavellians and are less antisocial and impulsive than psychopaths (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Even though these personality traits differ in some sense, they all fit the description of disagreeable and manipulating, with correlations between types ranging from 0.25 to 0.5 (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Narcissistic tendencies result in admiration seeking, and to justify their high self-esteem, they seek self-improvement. Other shared commonalities are social disregard and self-centeredness. Both of them were found to be low on agreeableness, measuring with the big five factors (Miller et al., 2017a).

1.3 Grandiose Narcissism

High entitlement, grandiosity, superiority, assertiveness, capability, image-orientation all describe grandiose narcissists (Pincus et al., 2014). These individuals do not think that they are role models necessarily, just that they are better, so they should be at the top of any hierarchy they engage in (Hart et al., 2017). As they are entitled, they will tend to exploit people, exhibit themselves, so become socially active and seek admiration. They are high in positive affect and well-being (Sedikides et al., 2004). Because they are exploitative and high in self-esteem, which is important to climb the social ladder, they are likely to achieve the goals set in their minds, confirming that they are great. Sedikides et al. (2004) defined grandiose narcissism as the successful one, as it manages to achieve what its high self-esteem entails. Another reason of success would be that they do not seem to be affected by shame (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001 as cited in Czarna et al., in press).

Grandiose narcissists are expected to be, and in all of the found studies, it is the case, extraverted (Back et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2014). Both aspects of extraversion, namely assertiveness and enthusiasm, can be found in them. Socially dominant and goal-oriented fits the

description of grandiose narcissism, however, sociability, the ability to make and keep affectionate relationships, does not (Czarna et al., 2016).

There have been many studies showing that higher self-esteem than what would be appropriate or ‘correct’ is neither beneficial nor self-defeating from a holistic personal standpoint, but higher self-esteem can theoretically create drive and motivation (Baumeister et al., 2003). This illusion can create a feedback loop of achieving something out of reach, then internalizing that achievement to one’s self-esteem, so the next goal will be bigger than the previous. In most people the gap between ‘earned’ and ‘believed’ self-esteem is smaller than in grandiose narcissists, nevertheless, grandiose narcissists are again and again found in high positions in political and business life (O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021).

1.4 Vulnerable Narcissism

It has been mentioned that vulnerable narcissism is the lesser-known form of narcissism. This does not mean that it is more scarce in the population, the discrepancy is mainly due to vulnerable narcissists’ introverted character and insecurity (Miller et al., 2017b). We were not able to find data on the prevalence of each, so numerical support for this is missing, however, research found that from an evolutionary perspective, grandiose narcissists have an advantage that vulnerable narcissists do not, so, if this trait is heritable and can be selected for, grandiose narcissists should outweigh vulnerable narcissists. Vulnerable narcissists report adverse childhood experiences, however, no study looked at if these experiences were subjectively emphasized or closer to objective traumatic events (Miller et al., 2017b). These past occurrences likely resulted in attachment difficulties, which in turn can increase neuroticism. Miller et al. (2017b) found that vulnerable narcissism greatly overlaps with neuroticism in negatively relating to extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, self-esteem, and entitlement domains, but not with some aspects of agreeableness. Vulnerable narcissists were less agreeable, trusting, straightforward, and modest (Miller et al., 2017b). Interestingly, both vulnerable narcissism and high neuroticism related similarly to affect and personality disorders, except for psychopathology (Miller et al., 2017b).

Campbell et al. (2004) defined vulnerable narcissists as the failed group. The fact that they cannot achieve what their self-concept demands is a big part of why vulnerable narcissism cannot be thought of as evolutionarily adaptive.

Hypersensitivity, the biggest reason for their ‘failed’ status, means that vulnerable narcissists do not handle criticism well, they are insecure, vulnerable, and hostile toward others

(Czarna et al., 2019). The speculative reason is that while being socially withdrawn, individuals cannot show their perceived talents, which creates a separation from their possible superiority and others' perception of them, it being that they have no proof of their ability. Vulnerable narcissists are high in negative emotionality and can develop symptoms of anxiety and depression (Czarna et al., 2018). This led to some hypotheses putting vulnerable narcissism closer to borderline personality disorder than grandiose narcissism (Miller et al., 2010).

Regarding the before-mentioned self-enhancement seeking, in some cases of vulnerable narcissism, this drive can turn into a demoralizing and debilitating attitude, where the individual does not engage in new experiences for being afraid of failure, thus realizing that he/she is not as great as imagined. Pincus (2014) showcases interesting case studies regarding the subject. Social anxiety, aggression, antisocial behavior, and a closed environmental 'bubble' can be results of this perfectionist or grandiose thinking.

1.5 Extraversion

Extraversion is arguably the most documented facet of the Big Five. Extroverted, as opposed to introverted, people are more socially engaged, impulsive, and higher in self-esteem (McCabe & Fleeson, 2012). McCrae and Costa (2003) found that extraversion comprises of six subcomponents: gregariousness or the affect toward companionship, assertiveness, warmth, excitement-orientation, positive affect, and activity. It is sometimes useful to look at the dichotomy of introversion-extraversion in terms of internal-external reward orientation. Introverts seek pleasure from their internal milieu in the non-biological sense, meaning that to experience joy they themselves are a good enough stimuli creator and do not need the social environment to be content. Extroverts, on the other hand, seek novelty, not just in social and communicational aspects, but in a general sense. They are adventurous, sometimes understimulated in a habitual environment, and thus more impulsive to stimulate themselves (Helmers et al., 1997). Extraversion can be a cause for grandiosity rather than vulnerability in narcissists (Kaufman et al., 2020).

Previous studies found that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are on opposite sides of the extraversion scale, grandiose being the more social, extroverted, and vulnerable being the introverted side (Kaufman et al., 2020). Some hypothesized that this is the only difference between the two narcissism constructs, and the reason that they had not correlated well with each other is because extraversion manipulates how narcissistic behaviors can manifest (Jauk et al., 2017). The thought process behind it is that, while both of them are self-centered and with high self-esteem,

grandiose narcissists can make these characteristics more easily known because they use social behaviors for their gain. It is in their toolset to be assertive. Vulnerable narcissists, on the other hand, do not possess these tactics because they are introverted, which leads them to be defensive and less likely to show narcissistic tendencies. Because intro-/extraversion is less contingent on the environment and more on genetic background, that will inevitably shape what can be conceptualized as a 'general' narcissistic trait (McCartney et al., 1990 as cited in Jauk et al., 2017). The behaviors of parents or other forms of caregivers can lead to the child developing narcissistic traits (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977 as cited in Jauk et al., 2017). There is no consensus on the matter, likely candidates are overvaluation and coldness (Brummelmann et al., 2015; Otway & Vignoles, 2006 as cited in Jauk et al., 2017). The main issue with this idea is that in clinical samples, so in individuals with diagnosed narcissistic personality disorder, both aspects of narcissism show up, regardless of social inclination. Nonclinical samples show that these two constructs are unrelated, although extraversion and neuroticism can mask the underlying relationship (Jauk et al., 2017).

1.6 Neuroticism

Neuroticism is a reliable and valid construct that has been used for decades. It is stable over time, matches the self-assessment survey scores with outside perceptions and measures, and is significantly genetic (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). Individuals low in neuroticism are less likely to be depressed, lead less stressful lives, and have more life satisfaction. Neuroticism correlates the most with personality and mood disorders, including borderline personality disorder, forms of anxiety, and depression (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). The construct is thought of as a combination of vulnerability, anxiety, hostility, self-consciousness, and depression-proneness. It is a dispositional trait, the higher an individual's score, the higher his or her negative affect. They are more fearful, have poor stress management, and generally have a lower quality of life, meaning that due to higher stress and fear levels, they will be more occupied with their emotions and solving them than with their marriages, work, and social life (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017).

Neuroticism, imagined as emotional stability or instability also distinguishes the two faces of narcissism. For the same reasons as mentioned above for extraversion, neuroticism might lead to a bifurcation from the narcissistic personality. Emotionally stable subjects are grandiose narcissists, unstable ones are vulnerable, by and large (Czarna et al., 2019). Internalizing symptoms, instead of externalizing them like in grandiose narcissism, is another reason for fewer

diagnoses. Others suggest that emotionality is stable in vulnerable narcissists but negative (Miller et al., 2017b). Other big five factors did not explain the differences as well, disagreeableness was found in both forms, openness and conscientiousness had no effect. DeYoung approached neuroticism with having two factors, volatility and withdrawal (2007). Volatility is emotional stability-instability, impulse and anger control. Withdrawal is the side of neuroticism described by depression, anxiety, and negative affect (DeYoung, 2007). While this study does not use this method, it is important to keep in mind the different aspects of neuroticism that can come into play when measuring narcissistic people. High levels of neuroticism can lead to utilizing more defensive measures like excuses, justification, self-handicapping, disclaimers, and apologies.

The five-factor narcissism inventory is a self-report measure that combines the clinical and community questionnaires of narcissism and the five-factor model (Glover et al., 2012). The Big 5 traits were changed in a way to detect pathological personality traits, creating a spectrum of pathological-healthy-pathological. The inventory can model the differences between subclinical and clinical personalities regarding vulnerable and grandiose narcissism this way. It contains 15 scales based on the five-factor scales (e.g. reactive anger, shame, indifference, and need for admiration as components of neuroticism), and the predetermined combination of them creates the scores for vulnerable and grandiose narcissism (Miller et al., 2013). For reasons of survey length and a focus on only community samples, however, it was not used as a measure of personality.

1.7 Self-presentation

Self-presentation is inherently a social phenomenon. Through the acts seen by others can we shape the perception that we create. Self-presentation includes assertive and defensive behaviors to use for a persona that an individual wants to show (Lee et al., 1999). Socially desirable behaviors are the biggest and most common tool, but if one strays from that, usually there is a hidden or not-so-hidden reason. Strategies revolve around a desired image, e.g., being loveable, an induced emotion, e.g., sympathy, an applied behavior to achieve the image, e.g., complimenting others, and a risk of not achieving the effect, e.g., being seen as a ‘suck up’ (Lee et al., 1999). Individuals mostly unconsciously mitigate this risk-reward ratio, but manipulation requires conscious planning.

Self-presentation tactics are specific forms of impression management with ritualized applied-behavior/desired-image pairs (Leary et al., 2015). It is important to mention that these

tactics are naturally occurring and are without ill intent in most cases. They do not necessarily steer away from the person's real identity; it just allows for presenting it in the social world.

As mentioned before, there are two groups of self-presentation tactics, defensive and assertive. Defensive strategies include excuse-making, justification, self-handicapping, disclaimer, and apology. Assertive strategies are ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, enhancement, blasting, and exemplification. Confirmatory factor analysis by Lee et al. (1999) found that these two factors explain the data better than one factor does. In this study only seven out of the twelve were used, them being ingratiation, intimidation, entitlement, excuse, justification, disclaimer, and apology.

Narcissists are expected to use some tactics more than others, as it would fit the self-presentational goals of the individual. While grandiose narcissists were found to be indifferent to image threats and more oriented toward assertive self-presentation tactics, vulnerable narcissists are hypersensitive, meaning that they are likely to over-utilize defensive tactics compared to grandiose narcissists, but still use assertive ones (Hart et al., 2017).

Ingratiation, acts of making oneself liked to get advantages from those involved, fits the narcissistic profile, has good reliability, and was found to be correlating with grandiose narcissism in previous studies (Hart et al., 2017; Hart et al., 2021). Exploitation, an already established trait of grandiose narcissists, and goal orientation both theoretically impact ingratiation.

Intimidation, being seen as assertive, powerful, and to-be-feared, is a tactic that has good reliability, and is expected to be used by grandiose narcissists, as it is dominance-based. Hart et al. (2017) found a correlation between intimidation and grandiose narcissism. Projections of weakness and high interdependency measured by supplication do not fit the contemporary notion of either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism (Hart et al., 2021). Supplication was thus not included in the study.

Entitlement, taking the credits for achievements, was included, as previous research found a relationship between it and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS) scores (Hart et al., 2017).

Enhancement was excluded because it relates greatly to entitlement, so, to cut down the large item survey, it was not needed.

Blasting was excluded because we did not find a theoretical relationship between it and narcissism. Rather than devaluing the other, narcissists tend to overvalue themselves, so do not

need to put down others. One exception, however, would fit blasting in narcissists, this is when vulnerable narcissists are in a shame-rage state assignable to image threat. Nonetheless, it was removed.

Exemplification was excluded, consisting of behaviors of presentations of moral integrity, for reasons of unrelatedness. Narcissists, be it grandiose or vulnerable, do not have a distorted view of themselves, and they base their self-worth not on moral grounds, but on perceived ability. Instead of exemplification, they use different tactics. Research found evidence for this hypothesis (Hart et al., 2021).

From the defensive strategies, excuses, justifications, disclaimers, and apologies stayed. Excuses, denying or evading responsibility, are expected to play a role in the high self-worth personalities, as excuses would, in their eyes, diminish the perfection that they would like to achieve. It was also used in the two studies found on narcissism and self-presentation (Hart et al., 2017; Hart et al., 2021).

Justifications, justifying behaviors perceived as negative, were included for the aforementioned reason.

Disclaimer was included too. Disclaimer works as a sort of dampener for future behaviors that are possibly perceived as negative. It is similar to self-handicapping, and while self-handicapping had low reliability, disclaimers did not (Lee et al., 1999).

Apology, the last included tactic, is theoretically negatively related to narcissism. While its test-retest reliability is low, its Cronbach's α is high (Lee et al., 1999).

2. Hypotheses

Three hypotheses and a research question was formed. Detailed possible relationships between types of narcissism, personality traits and self-presentation tactics can be seen in **Table 1**.

H₁ Grandiose narcissism correlates positively with extraversion and not with neuroticism.

H₂ Vulnerable narcissism correlates with extraversion negatively and neuroticism positively.

H₃ Grandiose narcissists use more assertive tactics than vulnerable narcissists, and do not use defensive tactics, while vulnerable narcissists use more defensive tactics, while still using assertive ones.

Research question: Do extraversion and neuroticism as fundamental personality traits have an effect, through narcissism, on self-presentation tactic use? Looking at these constructs chronologically, what can be seen is that places on the extraversion and neuroticism scales solidify, then narcissistic tendencies emerge, and all these in turn impact the modes of social interaction.

Table 1

Hypotheses regarding self-presentation tactics

	Narcissism		Extraversion	Neuroticism
	Grandiose	Vulnerable		
Ingratiation	+	+	+	
Intimidation	+		+	
Entitlement	+	+		
Excuses		+		+
Justification		+		+
Disclaimer		+		+
Apology	-	-		-

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

Through online means like Facebook groups and survey sharing sites (Surveycircle, Reddit, Surveymonkey) 192 participants filled out the survey. The questionnaire ensured anonymity and there was no reward after. Of those 192, all of them were above the age of 18 and consented to take part. The substantial majority was female (M=144), 75% of participants to be exact. The remaining 25% was made up of 24% male (M=46) and 1% other (M=2). The mean age was 25.6 (SD=8.69). The sample was not normally distributed with a right skew and was only used as an analysis of collective, not individual, personality and self-presentation tendencies.

3.2 Scales

3.2.1 Narcissistic Personality Inventory

NPI captures subclinical rather than pathological narcissism, which fits the aim of the research and the size of the sample. We used the NPI for evaluating the grandiose aspect of narcissism, as it does not involve the hypersensitive aspects found in vulnerable narcissists (Raskin & Hall, 1989 as cited in Ackerman, 2011). The original 40 items were narrowed down to 25 forced-

choice measures, along the line of Ackerman's (2011) findings. It will be interpreted in terms of total scores. NPI measures leadership, confidence, assertiveness, and self-esteem all in line with grandiose narcissism, and the scale is generally regarded as reliable when measuring narcissistic grandiosity on a subclinical level (Ackerman, 2011). The three dimensions, Leadership/ Authority, Grandiose exhibitionism, and Entitlement/ Exploitativeness were not taken into account, firstly, because it is irrelevant for our study, and secondly, because of the low reliability of the Entitlement/ Exploitativeness subscale.

3.2.2 Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (Maladaptive Covert Narcissism Scale)

Using the updated version of the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, Cheek et al. (2013) created the Maladaptive Covert Narcissism Scale (MCNS) with 23 items. The HSNS used the vulnerability-sensitivity dimension of Wink (1991). The new scale improves on reliability ($\alpha = .89$, from $.75$), is slightly negatively correlated with the Adaptive Overt Narcissism Scale and the Adaptive Narcissistic Personality Inventory ($-.16$, $-.11$, respectively), and slightly to moderately correlated with the Maladaptive Narcissistic Personality Inventory, Maladaptive Overt Narcissism Scale, and MMPI covert narcissism composite ($.30$, $.45$, $.65$, respectively) (Cheek et al., 2013). This scale is used to measure vulnerable narcissism, and its covariance with NPI will create the narcissistic core measure.

3.2.3 Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised

Originally, the EPQ-R consisted of not just extraversion and neuroticism, but psychoticism and lie scales as well, with a total of 100 items (Eysenck et al., 1985). Using Item Response Theory Colledani et al. (2018) managed to reduce the items to 48, while simultaneously improving reliability. Item Response Theory (IRT) is a tool used to cut down item numbers while maintaining external validity and reliability. Each dimension had 12 items, with a total of 24 questions. The neuroticism scale had a correlation of 0.7 compared to the Big Five Inventory, while extraversion correlated at 0.72 (Colledani et al., 2018). The Neuroticism dimension measures emotional stability-instability, consistent with the now more widely used Five Factor Model Neuroticism factor. Extraversion measures friendliness, and sociability, but not impulsivity scores (Rocklin & Revelle, 1981).

3.2.4 Self-Presentation Tactics Scale

Participants had to respond with the frequency of their engagement in the tactics. These include: intimidation, ingratiation, entitlement, excuses, justification, disclaimers, and apology.

Every subscale save ingratiation (which has eight) has five items. All of the included items are the original ones from Lee and colleagues' study (1985).

3.3 Data-Analytical Strategy

All of the data processing and analysis happened in Jamovi 2.2.

3.3.1 Two-factor Self-Presentation

Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis was made to confirm the expected two-factor, them being assertive and defensive, model of self-presentation. Intimidation, ingratiation, and entitlement were fitted to the first factor, excuse, justification, disclaimer, and apology to the second.

3.3.2 Correlation

After a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a correlation matrix was used to look at the relationships between the two narcissism constructs, and the Extraversion and Neuroticism of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.

3.3.3 Structural Equation Model

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used not to test the causality between self-presentation tactics and narcissism with personality variables, but to look at narcissism, controlling for extraversion and neuroticism, through the use of said tactics. To find a path for the seven tactics, we hypothesized a chronology-based model, where the two Big Five factors precede and associate with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, which then can relate to tactic use.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability

All of the observed variables had good ($\alpha > 0.8$) reliability, which can be seen in **Table 2**. The mean scores differ due to different sampling and calculating methods for each scale (Ackerman et al., 2010; Eysenck et al., 1985; Lee et al., 1999; Cheek et al., 2013).

Table 2*Reliability of measures*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's α	Shapiro-Wilk's W
Extraversion (EPQ-R E)	6.05	3.83	0.86	0.933***
Neuroticism (EPQ-R N)	6.84	3.47	0.836	0.952***
Grandiose Narcissism (NPI Vulnerable	8.47	4.77	0.816	0.948**
Narcissism (MCNS)	64.49	15.48	0.888	0.990*
Ingratiation	34.34	12.94	0.856	0.990*
Intimidation	9.92	7.37	0.908	0.707***
Entitlement	14.28	7.23	0.815	0.925***
Excuse	14.98	9.63	0.887	0.964***
Justification	20.43	9.84	0.913	0.960***
Disclaimer	22.88	10.00	0.877	0.975**
Apology	37.72	6.75	0.838	0.869***

* $p > 0.05$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.001$

4.2 Correlation

Firstly, confirming our hypotheses, grandiose narcissism was significantly positively correlated with extraversion, and vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with neuroticism (see **Table 3**). Vulnerable narcissism was in negative relationship with extraversion, meaning that high vulnerable narcissism and introversion associated with each other. Neuroticism did not, however, correlate with grandiose narcissism (for possible explanations, see the Discussion section).

Table 3*Correlation matrix between Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism, Extraversion and Neuroticism*

		Extraversion	Neuroticism	Grandiose Narcissism	Vulnerable Narcissism
Extraversion	Pearson's r	-			
	p-value	-			
Neuroticism	Pearson's r	-0.227	-		
	p-value	0.002	-		
Grandiose Narcissism	Pearson's r	0.477	-0.114	-	
	p-value	< 0.001	0.117	-	
Vulnerable Narcissism	Pearson's r	-0.258	0.617	0.149	-
	p-value	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.039	-

In **Table 4**, only vulnerable and grandiose narcissism is shown by their association to the seven self-presentation tactics. Spearman's correlation was used as the scales were not normally distributed. Correlation between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism was insignificant. Regarding our hypotheses, it was correctly assumed that assertive self-presentation tactics, those ingratiation, intimidation, and entitlement were used by grandiose narcissists ($\rho=0.357$, $\rho=0.354$, $\rho=0.348$, respectively). Out of the four, justification and disclaimer were positively associated with grandiose narcissism ($\rho=0.226$, $\rho=0.194$, in order of mention). This means that for their social presentation, grandiose narcissists are likely to use both assertive and defensive tactics, but the assertive ones outweigh the latter, both in number of tactics and strength of relationship. For vulnerable narcissists, all of the tactics were used equally, except for apology, which had a negative correlation (for numbers, see **Table 4** below). Interestingly, all of the tactics had a stronger relationship with vulnerable rather than grandiose narcissism (for a possible explanation, see the Discussion section). The relationship between narcissism and the tactics change, some disappear, when put into the path model later on.

Table 4

Correlation matrix of NPI, MCNS and self-presentation tactics

		NPI	MCNS	Ingratiation	Intimidation	Entitlement	Excuses	Justification	Disclaimer	Apology
NPI	Spearman's rho	—								
	p-value	—								
MCNS	Spearman's rho	0.115	—							
	p-value	0.114	—							
Ingratiation	Spearman's rho	0.348***	0.524***	—						
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—						
Intimidation	Spearman's rho	0.346***	0.439***	0.510***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—					
Entitlement	Spearman's rho	0.335***	0.413***	0.622***	0.535***	—				
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—				
Excuses	Spearman's rho	0.135	0.504***	0.557***	0.348***	0.509***	—			
	p-value	0.063	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—			
Justification	Spearman's rho	0.240***	0.464***	0.573***	0.445***	0.545***	0.733***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
Disclaimer	Spearman's rho	0.185*	0.449***	0.510***	0.275***	0.495***	0.648***	0.661***	—	
	p-value	0.011	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
Apology	Spearman's rho	-0.004	-0.208**	-0.127	-0.324***	-0.175*	-0.214**	-0.110	0.027	—
	p-value	0.953	0.004	0.082	< .001	0.016	0.003	0.131	0.715	—

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

4.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

When looking at the expected two-factor solution for self-presentation tactics, overall, the CFA found two factors to better explain the tactics than one factor. The only difference between previous research and this paper was apology. The apology factor, while correlates with vulnerable narcissism (-.209, $p < 0.01$), does not fit into the defensive tactics by confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability analysis states that apology correlates negatively with other defensive scores, and when dropped, the Cronbach's α goes from .72 to .87. The same result was found by Lee et al. (1985) in the original self-presentation tactics research (see **Table 5**).

Table 5

Confirmatory factor analysis of assertive-defensive self-presentation factors

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	χ^2_{diff}	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Single factor	87.1**	9	9.68		0.869	0.782	0.0731	0.213
Two factor	17.7*	8	2.21	69.4	0.984	0.969	0.0349	0.0797

** p < .001. * p < 0.05

4.4 Structural Equation Model

Using robust standard error and the maximum likelihood method, a three-step model was created. Extraversion, neuroticism, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were the potential

correlates and mediators of the six remaining (apology excluded as it was not explained by any of our indicators) tactics. The model can control for inter-individual differences in both extraversion and neuroticism. The model fit was tested using the χ^2 test, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The β values can be seen in **Table 6**.

Table 6

Structural Equation Model β values

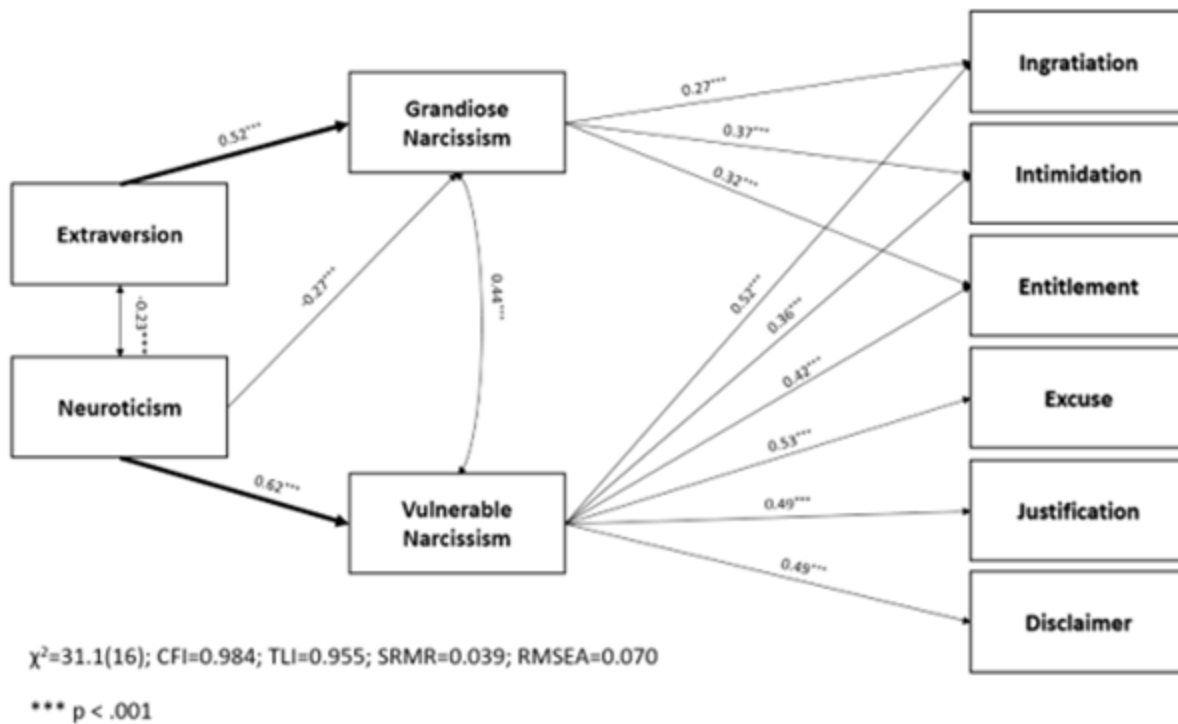
Self-presentation tactics	Grandiose Narcissism	Vulnerable Narcissism
Ingratiation	0.27*	0.52*
Intimidation	0.37*	0.36*
Entitlement	0.32*	0.42*
Excuse		0.52*
Justification		0.49*
Disclaimer		0.49*

* $p < 0.001$

The structural equation model (SEM) showed good fit to the data ($\chi^2 (16) = 31.1$, $p = 0.013$; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.955; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.039]. As expected, vulnerable narcissism was associated with high levels of neuroticism, grandiose narcissism with extraversion ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Vulnerable narcissism was not affected by extraversion; however grandiose narcissism was in correlation with low neuroticism ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.001$). Extraversion and neuroticism had negative interrelations ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.001$), which aligns with previous studies that found introversion as a contributive factor to high neuroticism. Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism scores covariate ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$).

Neither extraversion nor neuroticism was in connection with tactic use directly. This means that these personality traits cannot account for self-presentation tactics on their own, only through grandiose or vulnerable narcissism. When tested without narcissism scores, the relationships still did not reach acceptable significance. The possible reasons will be discussed in the Discussion section below. However, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism was associated with tactic use, which can be seen in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1
Structural equation model



There was a covariance of .44 between NPI and MCNS scores. All factor loadings are at $p < 0.001$. Grandiose narcissism correlated with the use of intimidation, ingratiation, and entitlement. Vulnerable narcissism scores were in positive relationship with the use of all of the tactics, them being intimidation, ingratiation, entitlement, excuses, justification, and disclaimer.

5. Discussion

5.1 Personality traits and narcissistic types

The relationship between grandiose narcissism and extraversion is expected and already found by others (Zajenkowski & Fronczyk, 2020). Grandiose narcissists are socially active admiration seekers; their exhibitionist nature presupposes high extraversion. Vulnerable narcissism was highly correlated with neuroticism, which agrees with prior findings. Vulnerable narcissism contains negative emotionality, insecurity and hypersensitivity, all possible correlates of low emotional stability/high negative emotionality. Additionally, neuroticism negatively correlated with grandiose narcissism, likely due to grandiose narcissists' low anxiety, self-

consciousness and vulnerability. Extraversion and neuroticism are slightly negatively correlated, an unsurprising result, as introversion is likely to co-occur with neuroticism. Interestingly, extraversion did not predict vulnerable narcissism, with a $\beta = -0.126$, $p = 0.025$ it is an almost significant measure. With a larger sample the effect is likely to be more significant.

5.2 Personality traits and self-presentation tactics

One of our hypotheses was that narcissism is only a mediator of extraversion and neuroticism, so that it is not narcissism, but personality traits, that are stronger associates of which tactic people are likely to use. The findings did not agree with this assumption, as neither extraversion nor neuroticism could account for the use in any of the seven tactics directly, nonetheless, through grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, an indirect relationship can be observed. These results lead to theorizing if self-presentation, a form of social behavior, leans less on overarching personality traits than on other factors, such as learned and ritualized behaviors, situational dependence etc. Instead of just changes, what narcissism adds to one's personality, is the more important factor. Manipulation, admiration seeking and self-centered antagonism are not on the scales of the five-factor model, but they make up the narcissistic core. Manipulation can be one reason why tactics are more often used by grandiose or vulnerable narcissists than by individuals who do not possess this maladaptive personality. Admiration seeking theoretically can affect both intimidation and ingratiation as they mold the image of the person into something to be liked, feared, or desired. Self-centeredness shares a possible positive relationship with entitlement, disclaimer and justification, because they are concerned with the preservation of the individual's image. Finally, antagonism is the antithesis of apology. There are many more possible parallels between tactics and narcissistic traits, these are just some of the possibilities why narcissism is a better indicator of them, than either extraversion or neuroticism. More research is needed to better know who uses these tactics and why.

5.3 Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism

Because there were significantly more females than males, the distribution and strength of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism differ in a way that vulnerable narcissism scores are better explained by extraversion and neuroticism, and correlate higher and more significantly with the tactics. Green et al. (2020) found that, while females are likely to be higher in vulnerable rather than grandiose narcissism, males are generally less prone to be vulnerable narcissists. This means

that a female-dominated sample will more likely have fewer grandiose narcissists. There was a high covariance ($\beta=0.44$, $p < .001$) between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as they both measure what was previously defined as the narcissistic core.

5.4 Narcissism and self-presentation tactics

Firstly, ingratiation was expected to correlate with grandiose narcissism, and a low to moderate correlation was found. Furthermore, it was found that vulnerable narcissism correlates significantly more with ingratiation than grandiose narcissism. Ingratiation as a tactic is used to by people to try to look good, either by expressing one's positive aspects or by complimenting others (Lee et al., 1985). This benign tactic works in a way to make others feel good so that they can like and then help the tactic user. Both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists use this assertive tactic as this tactic does not involve engaging in image threat. Hart et al. (2017) found no relationship between vulnerable narcissism and ingratiation, however a positive association was found with NPI scores. In their more recent work, Hart and others (2021) found no change in ingratiation use between narcissism types.

Intimidation tries to make others fear the individual by implicit or explicit threats and displays of power. The results found that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism scores approximately match each other, both having a moderate correlation to intimidation. Being assertive grandiose, bossy vulnerable narcissists, this tactic can achieve its desired effect of creating a power distance between narcissists and the others. Hart et al. (2021) found that low self-esteem narcissists used intimidation more than high self-esteem ones.

Entitlement works to display the positives of the character, but not by making others feel better, like in ingratiation, but by highlighting or even overstating things that the person has done. It contains both the exaggeration of actual achievements and lying about non-existing ones. It was hypothesized that entitlement is used by both forms of narcissism, and the results agreed with it. It is important to point out that vulnerable narcissism related more strongly to entitlement. A possible reason can be that as vulnerable narcissists lack the charisma and social skills of grandiose narcissists, they have to resort to brute-forcing their superiority into others minds, while grandiose narcissists need only remind others. In previous research it was found that both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists were positively correlated to entitlement (Hart et al., 2017).

The first measured defensive tactic, excuse, was assumed to be used by only vulnerable narcissists, as grandiose narcissists do not tend to use defensive tactics (Hart et al., 2017). The

result found a strong association between vulnerable narcissists and excuse. Excuse as a tactic combines excuse making and shifting the blame to avoid being seen in a bad light and protecting their self-image against failures. Lower self-esteem narcissists significantly differed in their use of excuse making from high self-esteem ones, presumed vulnerable narcissists having the higher association. Hart et al. (2021) found that as self-esteem decreases, an indicator they used to measure vulnerable narcissism, narcissism had a stronger relationship to the excuse tactic.

Justification is closely related to excuse making, but whereas the previous was excusing mistakes, justification works to make the negative thing said or done appear as though it isn't negative. An example would be explaining why the person had to go over the speed limit because he was going to an important meeting. A strong correlation was found between justification and vulnerable narcissism, which is analogous with previous findings (Hart et al., 2017).

The disclaimer tactic works to offer explanations before acting in a negative way. This can distance the actor from the task so they cannot be evaluated negatively. As a defensive tactic, the hypothesis was that only vulnerable narcissism associated with it, and results show that is the case. This agrees with previous research (Hart et al., 2017).

Apology was the only tactic which yielded no result on its relationship with narcissism. It had a high average ($M=37.72$, max possible: 45) with a low standard deviation ($SD=6.75$). As such, the majority uses this tactic with little variation among people. For a Western, industrialized and educated sample, this measure is not able to distinguish people by their tendency to apologize. Thus, subclinical narcissism could not correlate with it.

6. Limitations

The biggest limitation of this research is the sample size and composition. Out of the 192 individuals who filled out the survey, 75% was female. The participants were mainly from the age 20-26. Due to the nature of online survey sites and the language of the survey, the sample was not majority Hungarian, although nationality was not a question. This concludes that the results are largely western, university-educated or university student females before the age thirty. As Green et al. (2020) found, females are higher in vulnerable narcissism than males, so more robust MCNS scores are likely the result of sex-imbalance.

The recommended minimum sample size for SEM is 200, our sample was below that. This has a possibility to skew the model's reliability and the result's accuracy.

The problem that stemmed from not measuring nationality was unintended, as most of the participants were expected to be Hungarian. The difficulty of finding enough English-speaking partakers from Hungary necessitated outsourcing the data-gathering.

Additionally, only seven out of the twelve self-presentation tactics were used. While the assertive-defensive distribution was considered to match the original, out of the seven just six was fitted to the SEM, only looking at half of the tactics.

The obvious improvements would be finding a larger, more equally distributed sample, including more tactics and personality traits. Other refinements include a separated analysis of people low and high in narcissism, like a bottom-20-top-20 approach, using longer extraversion and neuroticism scales and fine-tuned tactics scales. In the future, a longitudinal analysis can search for causality, starting from early childhood, ages 5 or 6, to emerging adulthood, ages 19-22.

7. Implications

As can be seen from this study, narcissistic grandiosity or vulnerability correlates with self-presentation use directly, which is an aspect of social behavior, compared to personality traits. This means that narcissism as a personality construct trumps the expected behavioral influences of extraversion and neuroticism and is the main impacting force on these types of social interactions. Future research should look at the effects of other personality traits on tactic use and do a more thorough analysis of each aspect of personality trait to better understand if personality influences directly self-presentation in any way. However, in the case of self-presentation tactic use, narcissism, either grandiose or vulnerable, related to tactic use, better than extraversion and neuroticism. This means that recognizing, diagnosing and categorizing narcissistic individuals can be made easier with the help of the self-presentation tactics. Looking at individual cases, one can determine how the particular narcissist tries to manipulate its social surroundings, and by measuring that, a clinician can identify and rectify maladaptive social behaviors. While some tactics are arguably malevolent or manipulative, like in the case of intimidation and entitlement, some can be either positively or negatively viewed, like with excuse, justification, and disclaimer, others like the apology tactic is categorized as socially benevolent. By moving the individual from using malevolent to more benign tactics, people can have healthier social lives without changing their whole view of themselves. As most narcissists do not finish therapy because they believe that

there is nothing wrong with them, practitioners can engage with narcissists for longer without confronting them about their self-image.

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