

Association of Pro-social Behavior with Agentic and Communal Narcissism among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Narcissism is widely regarded as unfavorable in terms of its potential to benefit others. The objective of this study was to examine the role of narcissism in promoting prosocial behavior. This study aims to explore the association between agentic and communal narcissism among individuals, as well as their link with prosocial conduct among young individuals. This study employed a cross-sectional technique and a correlational design to investigate the relationship between communal narcissism, prosocial tendencies, and narcissistic personality traits. Data was obtained from a sample of 250 participants using the Communal Narcissistic Inventory (CNI), Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM), and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The results of the study shed light on the fact that both grandiose and non-pathological narcissism are positively linked to pro-social behaviors. Additionally, there are connections between communal narcissism and non-pathological narcissism with self-reported altruistic pro-social activities.

Keywords: Prosocial Behavior, Communal Narcissism, Agentic Narcissism, Young Adults.

INTRODUCTION

People with narcissism are regarded to be attention-seekers who are overconfident and lacking in empathy (Morf, Horvath & Torchetti, 2011). The intention behind pro-social action is to assist others. Pro-social activity in narcissists should be regarded as an abnormal act because narcissists are supposed to be focused on personal aims. (Carlo & Randall, 2002). Laymen and researchers equally find narcissism interesting to study and know about. People, other than the clinical population, who score high on narcissism consider themselves exceptional beings or champions. According to their perception, the world would have been a far better place if it were run by them with the help of their exceptional abilities of leadership, outstanding power, higher expertise, and intellect, which reflect their agentic narcissist tendencies. Some people have different opinions about themselves (Cai, Kwan, & Sedikides, 2012). They consider themselves holy people or glorified souls. They claim that through their acts of care, benevolence,

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and pro-social behavior the world and its inhabitants could be flourishing and peaceful if they were to govern the world (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012). People with elevated agentic narcissism score high on agentic aspects of narcissistic personality like intellect, supremacy, desirability, and extraversion. They, on the other hand, score low on communal spheres e.g., sociability, cooperation, trustworthiness, agreeableness. The studies conducted both in Western and Eastern cultures produced almost similar results regarding this very topic (Back, Schmuckle, & Egloff, 2010; Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Hepper, Sedikides, & Cai, 2013).

Agentic narcissists gratify their motivation for power, magnificence, esteem, and privilege through the agentic sphere or means. While the people who are elevated on communal narcissism fulfill their motives through public domains (Gebauer et al., 2013). Paulhus (2002) explains through the Agency-communion Model that individuals high on communal narcissism proclaim their supremacy in the communal sphere by amplifying their prosocial qualities e.g., the extent of their supportive and compassionate deeds and understanding of the public welfare dialogues about humanitarianism. These tendencies are commonly practiced worldwide especially both in the West and East (Gebauer et al., 2012).

Any behavior that is done for the benefit of others and society is considered pro-social behavior. Such actions include collaboration, obedience to social norms and state rules, giving supportive hands and donations, and relieving others all are different forms of prosocial behaviors (Carlo & Randall, 2002). Mostly helping behavior is observed in the presence of reward materially or non-material, but there is also another form of prosocial behavior where the helper apparently does not expect or want any reward most appropriately termed as altruistic behavior (Eberly-Lewis & Coetzee, 2015). Altruistic behavior is characterized by self-sacrifice helping. Prosocial behavior can be seen in our day-to-day life, homes, markets, streets, or more formally in our working environment and organizations (Cheshure, Zeigler-Hill, Sauls, Vrabel, & Lehtman, 2020). Actions like giving way to an ambulance, or comforting a grieving person are kind of informal prosocial behavior. Helping a co-worker accomplish a task or working for additional hours to help the team achieve a goal and meet a deadline are examples of formal prosocial behaviors (Batson & Powell, 2003).

A trait of the personality is narcissism, illustrated by exaggerated self-worth and comparatively minimal compassion for others (Miller & Campbell, 2008). Studies have shown a high level of narcissism linked to heightened and a pretentious image of oneself of having exceptional intellect and conviviality instead of attributes like amiability and decency which are communal traits in nature (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Paulhus & John, 1998). Strong and rich literature is available on the influence of narcissism on interpersonal relations. Individuals with heightened narcissism are unable to establish lasting close relationships due to their self-centered and intimidating tendencies when it comes to comparisons and competition (Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006). However, there are insufficient investigations carried out regarding narcissism and its connection with helping behavior.

A considerable positive link between narcissism and antisocial behaviors was discovered in early investigations, therefore, it was assumed that narcissism has nothing to do with prosocial behavior or that a negative relationship exists between the two variables. This misconception for long restrained researchers from studying the possible positive connection between these variables scientifically. Here it is essential to clear that antisocial and prosocial behaviors are not exactly the opposites of each other, instead, prosocial behavior is more social and a normal phenomenon we learn throughout our process of socialization. Helping behaviors occur due to several reasons including egoistic helping to claim or attain reward and altruistic helping characterized by self-sacrificing (Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008). So, one must not assume every helping behavior is for reward or due to altruistic reasons only.

The Extended Agency Model can aid in making predictions regarding when and why narcissistic people might act prosocially. This paradigm contends that narcissism dampens the rewards from communal experiences, such as feeling warmth and connection with others, while intensifying the gains from agentic situations, such as having high positions and authority. Such a system would result in a greater emphasis on achievement, power, and attention and a lesser emphasis on caring for others. According to Campbell and Foster (2007), such a system results in a constant desire for narcissistic esteem (i.e., pride and dominant feelings), which can be satisfied in several ways, such as by boasting, flaunting, or attracting attention. This model predicts that more narcissistic individuals will be more inclined to participate in prosocial acts to gain attention or praise, such as by giving when others are present.

Many people give to those in need just because they can. However, because more narcissistic individuals emphasize their own interests over those of others, they are less likely to find it vital or satisfying to take care of others' needs (Konrath & Tian, 2018). More self-serving prosocial activities are directly linked to narcissism. For instance, more narcissistic individuals were more likely to claim that they volunteered in open spaces where others could see them and that they volunteered on the spur of the moment when they could gain something in return, such as a favor returned, attention, praise, a line on their resume, or some other reward (Eberly-Lewis & Coetzee, 2015). Since there hasn't been much study on the connection between narcissism and prosocial behavior, our goal was to conceptually reproduce and expand on these findings. Additionally, there was a propensity for more narcissistic individuals to participate in emotional prosocial actions, suggesting that more narcissistic individuals are more willing to provide a hand when they notice obvious signs of discomfort. Future studies should investigate this unexpected discovery in more detail. According to other studies, those who score highly on the narcissistic exploitativeness scale are better at identifying the unpleasant emotions that other people experience (Konrath, Corneille, Bushman, & Luminet, 2014).

According to this definition, narcissism develops typical intrapersonal (self-serving biases) and interpersonal (self-promotion) techniques by placing a higher value on agency (status, power) than communion (warmth, connection) (Kauten & Barry,

2016). It stands to reason that persons who put agentic concerns first would be strategic helpers who only lend a helping hand when doing so could benefit themselves in some way, such as by obtaining immediate gratitude or by receiving something intangible, like attention, which is a significant source of narcissistic esteem. Thus, prosocial activities that are observed by others should be more common among narcissists, increasing their likelihood of earning praise or attention. In contrast, those who place a higher value on social issues, such as empathic individuals, appear to be more motivated by others' needs while making decisions to provide a hand.

The topic is quite intriguing, but only a small number of studies have been done on it up to this point. This is obvious from the review of the relevant literature. In addition, our day-to-day activities and the process of socialization all play a part in the development of narcissism and self-love, as well as the sensation of pride and confidence in one's own identity and the traits that they possess. The findings of earlier studies suggested that narcissism relates to an individual's tendency to engage in antisocial behavior, which is detrimental on both the individual and the societal level. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the good qualities, such as prosociality, that are associated with narcissism in individuals. This study may add to the body of knowledge regarding the probable connection between narcissism and prosociality among young people. Among other possible contributions, this study may.

Objectives

1. To obtain the relationship between agentic and communal narcissism with prosocial behavior.
2. To explore the difference between male and female in terms of narcissism and prosocial behavior.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive correlation between communal narcissism and prosocial behavior.
2. People who score high on agentic narcissism will score low on prosocial behavior.
3. People who score high on communal narcissism will score high on prosocial behavior.
4. Females will score high on communal narcissism and prosocial behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study was based on a correlational design.

Sample

To determine the sample size G Power calculator indicated a total of 188 participants. However, we gathered information from 250 young adults, ranging in age from 18 to 25. Young adulthood is defined by the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine as being between the ages of 18 and 25 (up until the age of 26). Samples were taken using a purposive sampling strategy.

Instruments

Communal Narcissistic Inventory (CNI) (Gebauer et al., 2012) is a 16-item survey in which the respondent rates the statements (such as "I am the best friend someone can have") on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The *CNI* has three subscales: Entitlement, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Authority. The *CNI* was validated as a measure of communal, rather than agentic, characteristics of narcissism in several investigations.

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (short form) The original 40-item *NPI* was developed by Raskin and Terry in 1988. The *NPI*; 16 items are drawn from across the dimensions of a 40-item measure by Ames et al in 2006. The 16-item measures the Agentic Dimension of Narcissism.

Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) was developed by Carlo and Randall (2002). Individual traits of various prosocial behaviors among late teens are measured by it. Participants are asked to respond to each of the 23 items on the *PTM* on a scale from 1 (does not represent me at all) to 5 (describes me significantly), for example, "I get the most satisfaction from helping others when it is done in front of others."

Ethical Considerations

The participants in the study provided their written, informed permission.

RESULTS

Table 1 Frequency and percentage of participants (N=250)

Variable	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
Age		22.42	4.96
Gender	Male	83	33.2
	Female	167	66.8

Table 1 shows that the mean age of the population was 22.42, and the standard deviation was ± 4.96 . The majority (67%) were female participants.

Table 2 Reliability coefficient and Pearson correlation among study variables (N=250)

Variable	K	α	1	2	3
Communal Narcissism	16	.866	-	.22**	.433**
Agentic Narcissism	16	.651		-	.061
Prosocial Behavior	23	.834			-

** $p < 0.01$ level

Table 2 shows the correlation among study variables. The findings indicate that Communal Narcissism has a significant positive correlation with both agentic narcissism $r(248) = .22$ $p < .01$ and prosocial behavior $r(248) = .433$ $p < .01$. However, agentic narcissism has no significant correlation with prosocial behavior.

Table 3 Mean, standard deviation, and t-values for communal narcissism, agentic narcissism, and prosocial behavior of participants (N=250)

Variable	Male (n = 83)		Female (n = 167)		t (248)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
CN	88.53	11.16	86.23	12.30	1.43	.159	-.771	5.35	--
AG	6.22	2.77	4.81	2.44	4.10	.000	.732	.208	0.54
PB	71.88	13.26	73.60	12.49	-1.00	.316	-5.17	1.73	--

*CN=Communal Narcissism, AG=Agentic Narcissism, PB=Prosocial Behavior.

An independent sample t-test was used to assess the difference between males and females in terms of communal narcissism, agentic narcissism, and prosocial behavior. The findings indicated a significant mean difference between males and females in terms of agentic Narcissism ($t(248) = 4.10, p < .001$) further the result showed that the mean score of males ($M = 6.22, SD = \pm 2.77$) was higher than female ($M = 4.81, SD = \pm 2.44$). However, the difference between males and females in terms of communal narcissism and prosocial behavior was not significant.

DISCUSSION

Current research offers insights into the connections between various facets of narcissism and the inclination toward prosocial conduct among young individuals. According to the study's findings, prosocial actions were positively correlated with grandiose and non-pathological narcissism. Additionally, both communal and non-pathological narcissism showed associations with self-reported prosocial and altruistic deeds.

The links that were identified with prosocial behavior were consistent with expectations and validated the findings of Eberly-Lewis and Coetzee (2015), which stated that narcissism relates to both opportunistic and public prosocial intentions. Because persons who exhibit high levels of grandiose and non-pathological narcissism, as well as egoistic prosocial behavior, have positive relationships, this suggests that those who exhibit high degrees of these traits do so for selfish goals. Carlo and Randall (2002) claim that people participate in egoistic behavior to gain social approval, and the more obvious it is that someone is doing this through their behavior, the higher the likelihood that they are doing so. This idea is consistent with the supposed goals of people who suffer from grandiose narcissism, who may engage in a variety of behaviors (including prosocial acts, assertiveness, and aggression) to impress other people (Ding, Zhou, Zhang, & Chen, 2016). Individuals who do not suffer from a pathological form of narcissism, on the other hand, may engage in egoistic prosocial acts to improve their well-being while also seeking social recognition.

In addition, the researchers concluded that individuals who exhibit communal narcissism do not make use of a sense of power as a motivating force for self-improvement. This tendency may explain why prosocial behaviors were connected to communal narcissism in the study. According to Batson and Powell (2003), this finding is compatible with the concept of engaging in altruistic and prosocial behaviors without anticipating any personal advantage. Researchers Fatfouta (2017) and colleagues found that those who did not have a pathological form of narcissism had a similar predisposition to help others, regardless of whether they had the opportunity to achieve power.

This result agrees with the findings of the current study, which demonstrated a relationship between non-pathological narcissism and both self-centered and altruistic behaviors. Recent research conducted by Konrath, Ho, and Zarins (2016) found that individuals with non-pathological narcissism placed less importance on acting altruistically and were more likely to assist others when they were being observed. This discovery, on the other hand,

links non-pathological narcissism and altruistic prosocial behaviors, which contradicts their findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Few recommendations of the study are given below:

1. In the future, comprehension of the characteristics and indications of individual manifestations of narcissism can assist in elucidating their associations with altruistic behavior.
2. Determine why individuals with grandiose narcissism who do not have a pathological ego engage in egoistic prosocial behavior.
3. Further investigation is warranted to explore the relationship between narcissistic behavior and prosocial visibility.
4. Employ longitudinal research designs to monitor the evolution of narcissistic tendencies and prosocial behavior. This may aid in the establishment of causal relationships and the assessment of whether prosocial behavior is predicted by narcissistic traits or vice versa, thereby illuminating the dynamic nature of such behaviors.
5. Assess the extent to which prosocial behavior and narcissism exhibit transcultural consistency.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations of the study, like:

1. Social desirability and subjective behavior assessments may bias self-reports.
2. This study's cross-sectional design limits causality and narcissism and prosocial behavior research throughout time. The temporal links between narcissism and prosociality may be better explained by longitudinal studies.
3. Culture also affects narcissism and prosociality. Thus, generalizing the findings to other cultures or age groups beyond the study's age range is risky.
4. Personality, mental health, and socioeconomic background may confound results. Confounding factors should be thoroughly investigated in future studies to increase validity and reliability.

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