

THE ULTIMATE MASQUERADE: PREVALENCE OF NARCISSISM IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the prevalence of narcissism in young adult university students. It was hypothesized that men will score higher than women on narcissism (H1), there will be a difference in grandiose narcissism between men and women (H2) and there will be a difference in vulnerable narcissism between men and women (H3). Cross-sectional research design was utilized and a sample of 400 participants (M=200, F=200) was recruited through multistage sampling that were aged 18-25 years old (M=20.5 years old). The Five Factor Narcissism Inventory-Short Form (FFNI-SF) was utilized to measure the variable of narcissism, its types and traits. Descriptive analysis, cross-tabulation analysis and independent t-test analysis were done to classify the demographic variables, evaluate the prevalence of narcissism and gender differences with respect to narcissism and its types respectively. The findings of this research conclude that the prevalence of narcissism in university students is 13.8%, with men showing higher prevalence rate (17.5%) than women (10%). No significant gender difference was found with respect to the score on narcissism, but men scored significantly higher than women on grandiose narcissism while women scored significantly higher than men on vulnerable narcissism.

Keywords: prevalence, FFNI, grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, gender differences

INTRODUCTION

The population of university students comprises individuals, currently enrolled in a university in order to pursue higher education and are mostly young adults (Buchanan, 2011). Young adulthood is a unique developmental period that occurs between the ages of 18 and 25 years (Higley, 2019). During the developmental stage of young adulthood, individuals partake in crucial developmental tasks that aid in self-discovery and the establishment of their identity (Bonnie et al., 2015) and experience the most significant number of normative changes in their personality (Roberts et al., 2006). A meta-

analysis revealed that narcissism is rapidly increasing in university students as compared to other age groups (Twenge et al., 2008). An analysis of data collected from university students using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) revealed that one-third of the sampled college students tended to answer most questions in a narcissistic manner, with two-thirds scoring higher than average on narcissistic traits (Twenge & Campbell, 2010). Moreover, multiple researches show that narcissism is found to be higher in young adults as compared to old adults (Davis et al, 2020; Weidmann et al, 2023). Considering the empirical evidence and scientific literature that

suggests narcissism being comparatively higher in young adults and university students, the present study selected young adult university students as the target population for the respective research.

Narcissism

The term 'narcissism' originally stemmed from the Greek mythology and later on, morphed into a prominent term of psychoanalysis. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book III, Narcissus was a handsome young man who was cursed by the gods to fall in love with his own reflection as a penalty for rejecting the love of a nymph known as Echo.

Narcissism is a behavioral tendency characterized by self-centeredness, lack of genuine concern for others' needs, viewing others as objects for manipulation (Ellis et al., 2019) and a heightened sense of entitlement (Lyons, 2019). Narcissism can be viewed from three different perspectives—the self, the interpersonal, and the strategies for self-regulation. Narcissistic individuals regard themselves as unique and possess the desire to have power and control over others. Being very low in empathy, they are willing to manipulate people for achieving their goals, which ultimately accounts for their exploitative interpersonal relationships. Narcissistic individuals employ many strategies in order to maintain their grandiose self-views and actively seek attention and praise from those around them (Campbell et al., 2011).

Narcissism has a negative correlation with the quality of interpersonal relationships and mediates the role between empathy and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Khodabakhsh & Besharat, 2011). Narcissists' behavior is predicted by dispositional impulsivity (Vazire & Funder, 2006), their meta-perceptions are less biased than their self-perceptions (Carlson et al., 2011) and they impose perfectionistic expectations on others and project an image of perfection to gain admiration from others (Sherry et al., 2014). Young adults exhibit slightly higher levels of narcissism compared to middle-aged adults. (Weidmann et al., 2023).

The distinction between trait narcissism and pathological narcissism (narcissistic personality disorder) has been a prevalent controversy in

research. When normal or adaptive narcissism becomes extreme and results in impairment, it can develop into pathological narcissism. (Miller et al., 2017). The body of research in social-personality studies focusing on narcissistic traits in non-clinical settings provides valuable insights and significantly enhances the comprehension of pathological narcissism (Cain et al., 2008).

Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

Multiple studies have reported that narcissism is further divided into two subtypes—grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism (Wink, 1991; Dickinson et al., 2005; Pincus et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2011; Zajenkowski et al., 2018). Apart from a mutual propensity towards aggressive interpersonal behavior, both forms of narcissism exhibit very little similarities in the context of personality traits and psychopathology.

Grandiose narcissism is primarily characterized by traits associated with grandiosity, aggression, and dominance. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism is marked by a defensive and insecure form of grandiosity that actually conceals feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and negative emotions (Miller et al., 2011).

Narcissistic grandiosity involves the use of maladaptive self-enhancement strategies and display of arrogant, conceited, and coercive attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, narcissistic vulnerability is characterized by a dysregulation in self, emotions, and behavior when the ego is confronted with any threat (Pincus & Roche, 2011). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as different expressions of the same phenomenon. The display of grandiose or vulnerable narcissism at a subclinical level depends on intro-/extraversion, a fundamental personality trait. However, at high levels of narcissism, grandiosity is more likely to coexist with vulnerability, which indicates a transition to pathological narcissism. (Jauk et al., 2017).

The individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism tend to overestimate their abilities. On the other hand, individuals with vulnerable narcissism possess a more realistic self-assessment of their emotional capabilities (Zajenkowski et al., 2018; Nagler et al., 2014; Petrides et al., 2011).

Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism have also been referred to as overt and covert narcissism respectively. Similar to covert narcissists, individuals scoring high on Vulnerability-Sensitivity display defensiveness, hypersensitivity, anxiety, and social reserve. On the other hand, those scoring high on Grandiosity-Exhibitionism exhibit behaviors akin to overt narcissists, demonstrating self-confidence, aggression, showiness, self-centeredness, and a lack of regard for others' needs (Wink, 1991). Besides exhibiting overtly, highly positive sense of self, narcissists also possess covertly fragile and vulnerable sense of self. The latter rely on seeking validation and affirmation from their social environment and relationships to maintain their sense of self-worth (Morf, 2006).

Individuals with grandiosity-related manifestations of narcissism have been described by terms including malignant, overt, oblivious, thick skinned, special child, manipulative, arrogant, and psychopathic. Alternatively, individuals with more vulnerability-related manifestations are described by terms such as craving, covert, hypervigilant, thin skinned, shamed child, compensatory, and shy (Miller et al., 2017). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism have different underlying causes. Grandiose narcissism is associated with slightly more permissive parenting, while vulnerable narcissism is linked to more controlling or inconsistent parenting (Miller et al., 2017). Unduly protective parenting by father during childhood is associated with both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in men. Alternatively, cold parenting and induction of guilt by mother may cultivate specific traits of vulnerable narcissism in women (Green et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The most widely used system for describing personality traits today is the Five Factor Model. This model categorizes personality into five broad dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). High score in neuroticism indicates a person who is anxious, insecure and easily unnerved. Extraversion describes

individuals as outgoing, talkative, fun-loving, and affectionate. Openness to experience reflects originality, independence, creativity, and willingness to take risks. Agreeableness portrays individuals as kind-hearted, trusting, and polite. Conscientiousness signifies a person who is diligent, hardworking, and organized (Mandrekar & Sarwate, 2021).

Some studies explain grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in relation with the Five Factor Model. Grandiose narcissism is defined by low Neuroticism, high Extraversion focusing on agentic aspects, and a presence of Antagonism traits while vulnerable narcissism is characterized by high levels of Neuroticism and Antagonism, along with low levels of Extraversion (Miller et al., 2011). Antagonism, the low pole of Agreeableness, references traits related to immorality, combativeness, grandiosity, callousness, and distrustfulness and is a core feature of narcissism (Lynam & Miller., 2019). Akin to this, another research presents the findings that grandiose narcissism is primarily related to low agreeableness and extraversion while vulnerable narcissism is related to neuroticism (Allroggen et al., 2018). Grandiose narcissism is positively associated with extraversion and imagination while vulnerable narcissism is negatively associated with extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability (Zajenkowski et al., 2016).

Gender Differences

Multiple research studies have been conducted to determine gender differences in narcissism. Men tend to score higher on narcissism than women (Grijalva et al., 2014; Anwar et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2018; Kallay et al., 2021; Hassnain et al., 2022; Weidmann et al., 2023). In terms of the Big Five traits, it is possible that these gender differences emerged based on differences in extraversion and agreeableness (Weidmann et al., 2023).

Several studies have been conducted to determine gender differences in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Females score higher on vulnerable narcissism but no gender difference was found in the case of grandiose narcissism (Green, 2020). Contradicting these findings, other studies reveal moderate gender differences favoring men on grandiose

narcissism, but no difference or near-zero differences were found to favor women on vulnerable narcissism (Grijalva et al., 2014; Altmann & Roth, 2024), scores on both grandiose and vulnerable scale were found to be higher in males than females (Arnold, 2022), men score high on grandiose narcissism and women score higher on vulnerable narcissism (Casale et al., 2019). It can be concluded that the research on

gender differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism is scarce and depicts a dichotomous pattern.

Literature Review

This section provides the review of the previous research in regard to the prevalence of narcissism and gender differences of the narcissistic features especially the grandiose and the vulnerable narcissism.

Authors	Year	Method/ Design	Main Findings
Qadir et al.,	2019	Cross-sectional research design was used with 1145 participants.	The findings revealed that the prevalence of narcissism is higher in men (47.4%) compared to women (43.6%).
Watson et al.,	1987	The research design was correlational and a sample of 203 students was used.	The findings revealed that narcissism was more prevalent in men than women.
Hassnain et al.,	2022	Cross-sectional research design was employed with a sample of 385 students.	It was found that males score higher on narcissism than females. Similarly, hostilities were 3.42 times at higher risk of narcissism, and the last exam percentage was significantly associated with narcissism score.
Weidmann et al.,	2023	Cross-sectional research design was utilized in this study.	The results showed that younger adults score higher on narcissism than older adults. Moreover, men scored higher on narcissism than women.
Sharma et al.,	2018	Cross-sectional research design was used with a sample of 200 participants.	The results revealed that men tend to be more narcissistic than women. Also, men tended to be more exploitative than women.
Qadir et al.,	2019	Cross-sectional research design was employed and a sample of 1145 participants was utilized.	It was deduced that men score higher on narcissism than women.
Anwar et al.,	2016	Correlational research design was used. And the study utilized a sample of 155 university students.	The findings showed that narcissism is positively associated with aggression, whereas self-esteem is negatively correlated with aggression. Moreover, Men scored significantly higher on narcissism than women.
Grijalva et al.,	2015	A meta-analytic review	The findings showed that men were comparatively more favored on grandiose narcissism than women but men and women showed no difference on vulnerable narcissism.
Arnold et al.,	2022	A cross-sectional research design was employed.	The study found that there is no significant link between experiencing a

		The sample was comprised of 1082 adolescents.	traumatic life event and any form of narcissism. However, it did reveal gender differences in narcissistic traits. It found that score on both the grandiose and vulnerable scale was higher in males than females.
Paulhus & Williams	2022	Research design was correlational and had a sample of 245 undergraduate psychology students.	the results revealed that men scored higher than women on all three traits of the Dark Triad. It was also revealed that, in non-clinical samples, members of the Dark Triad share a common trait of disagreeableness.
Green et al.,	2020	Quasi-Experimental Design was used and a sample of 328 participants was utilized in the study.	The findings revealed that women scored high on vulnerable narcissism but no gender differences were found in grandiose narcissism. Moreover, it was revealed that recalling an overprotective father predicted both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in men while recalling a mother who induced guilt induction and love withdrawal fosters traits of vulnerable narcissism in women.
Allroggen et al.,	2018	A cross-sectional research design was used with a sample of 136 participants.	The findings revealed that vulnerable narcissism in adolescents is associated with Neuroticism, only small correlation is observed between grandiose narcissism and Extraversion, low Agreeableness, and Openness to experience. Contrary to this, in young adults, there is relationship between grandiose narcissism and low Agreeableness and a relationship between vulnerable narcissism and low Agreeableness and especially Neuroticism. However, there are no relevant differences between adolescents and young adults regarding the relationship between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and personality traits.
Jauk et al.,	2017	Correlational design was used and a sample of 1006 participants was the part of the study,	The results showed that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are different manifestations of the same phenomenon and at high levels of narcissism, narcissistic grandiosity is followed by narcissistic vulnerability.

Significance of the Study

The present study aims to examine the prevalence of narcissism as well as the gender differences in overall narcissism, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism so that the conflict presented regarding the gender disparities in the prior research studies can be

explained. Moreover, this research is driven by the goal of compensating the gap in indigenous research as the literature review rendered only one indigenous study regarding prevalence of narcissism (Qadir et al., 2019) and no indigenous research was found regarding grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

Numerous researches have distinguished between trait narcissism and pathological narcissism (narcissistic personality disorder). They highlight characteristics like grandiosity, callousness, entitlement, exploitativeness, non-compliance, assertiveness, exhibitionism and risk taking. Traits associated with vulnerable narcissism like negative affectivity and introversion are majorly absent from these explanations (Miller et al., 2019). This inconsistent pattern is in alignment with the DSM V-TR diagnostic criteria for NPD that emphasizes grandiosity, need for admiration, sense of entitlement and lack of empathy emerging in early adulthood but doesn't account for vulnerable narcissism. Moreover, the most widely used instrument in assessing narcissism is Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Schmalbach et al., 2020) and it is only limited to providing insight into grandiose narcissism. Controversies in the field of narcissism can be addressed by recognizing the difference between the two types of narcissism and that both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism can be pathological when they cause distress or impairment, despite the perception of grandiose narcissism as normal and vulnerable as pathological. The lack of psychological distress and higher self-esteem in grandiose narcissism should not automatically indicate normalcy. Also, narcissism should be assessed by using tools such as FFNI to get an examination of the subtypes (grandiose and vulnerable) too (Miller et al., 2015). So the upcoming research studies should consider these reservations. (Miller et al., 2017)

Keeping these shortcomings in view, the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory-Short Form was employed in the present research study, which not only provides scores for grandiose narcissism, but also provides scores of vulnerable narcissism that are consistent with expert ratings (Miller et al., 2014).

The current study is socially significant because it bridges this void in indigenous literature by providing novel findings which can be utilized for understanding and raising awareness about the two distinct forms of narcissism. Additionally, it is also followed by a prominent clinical significance. Both types of narcissism including grandiose and vulnerable narcissism can become pathological if they

cause distress or impairment (Miller et al., 2016). Therefore, this research's aim to study narcissism at trait level can also help in explaining the pathological form of narcissism with comprehensive scores regarding its prevalence in both men and women.

Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of narcissism in young adults.
- To explore the gender difference in narcissism, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism.

Hypotheses

H1: Men will score higher on narcissism than women.

H2: There will be a difference in grandiose narcissism between men and women.

H3: There will be a difference in vulnerable narcissism between men and women.

Method

In this section, the research design, sample size and sampling strategy, participant characteristics, measures, and procedure employed in the current study are discussed.

Research Design

The cross-sectional research design was employed in this research study to assess the prevalence of narcissism in young adults.

Sample Size and Sampling Strategy

The sample for the present study comprised of young adult students from both public and private (two private and two public) sector universities of Lahore. The sample size was evaluated using G-power software. The obtained sample size was $n=400$ (200 men and 200 women). Multistage sampling was utilized for the study. The selection of universities and their respective departments was done using simple random sampling. Moreover, the participants for the study were approached through convenience sampling.

Participant Characteristics

Inclusion Criteria

- Participants must be currently enrolled in a university.

- Participants must be young adults aged between 18-25 years old.
- Both men and women will be included.

Exclusion Criteria

- Participants diagnosed with any physical or psychological illness.

Measures

Demographic Sheet

A demographic sheet was used to obtain general information about the participants including their name, age, gender, education level, family type, employment status and monthly family income. It was utilized for record keeping only.

Five Factor Narcissism Inventory- Short Form (FFNI-SF; Lynam et al. 2014)

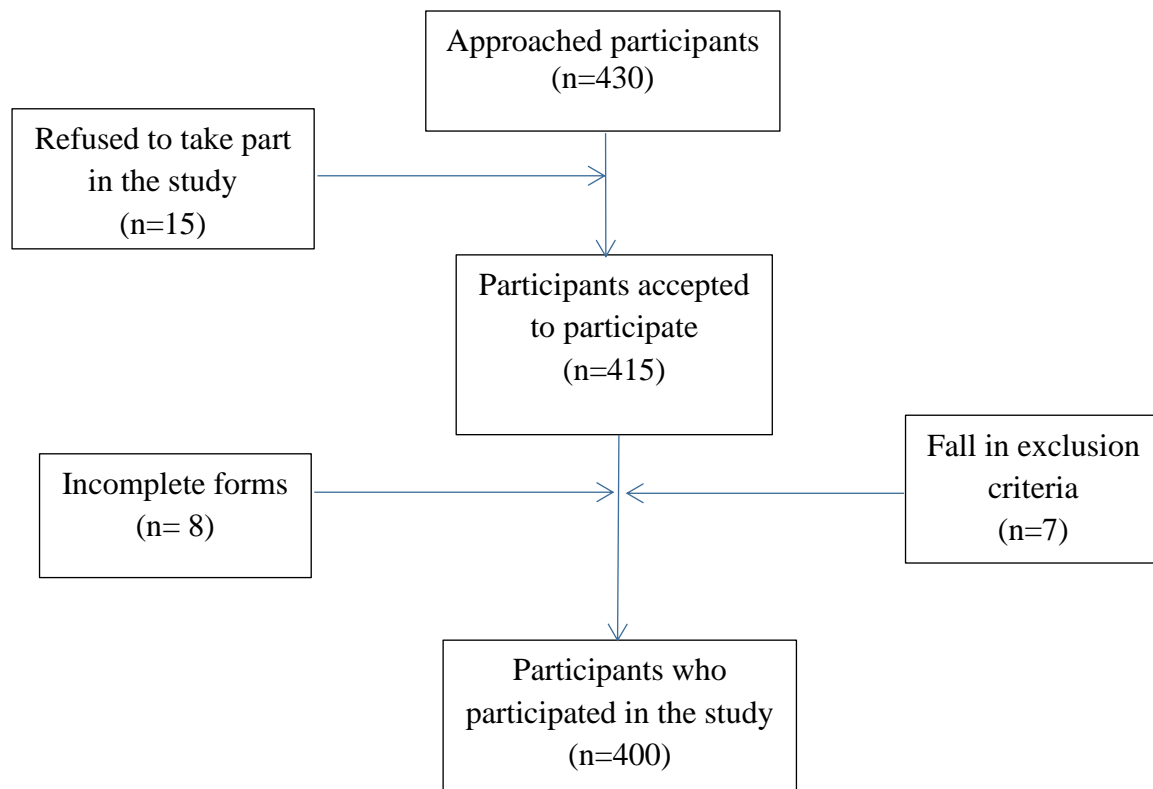
The Five Factor Narcissism Inventory-Short Form was utilized in the current study, which is a self-report questionnaire of the traits associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder and is based on the Five Factor Model. It was developed to offer a comprehensive assessment of different forms of narcissism (e.g., grandiose, vulnerable, NPD-based representations) at both a fundamental trait level and through high-order amalgamation of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. It comprises a total of 60 items and uses a 5-point Likert scale for rating (1=disagree strongly and 5=agree strongly). The FFNI-SF is a shortened form of the original FFNI which consists of 148 items. It is

comprised of 15 subscales that deal with various narcissistic traits (reactive anger, exhibitionism, authoritativeness, exploitativeness, shame, indifference, need for admiration, thrill seeking, grandiose fantasies, distrust, manipulativeness, entitlement, lack of empathy, arrogance and acclaim seeking), linked to either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism, or both.

Procedure

After conducting an extensive and thorough literature review, title for the research and its aims were discussed with the supervisor. The topic was approved by the research committee of the Centre for Clinical Psychology. After the approval, the permission was taken from the respective author to use the tool. Proceeding this, the information sheet, consent form and the demographic sheet were prepared and attached with the respective inventory, forming a data collection set. Formal permission letters were addressed to the respective institutions for the purpose of data collection. After prior selection of the universities and their departments by simple random sampling, the sample for the research study was approached through convenience sampling. The participants were properly instructed to review the information sheet, sign the consent form and then, proceed with filling out the demographic sheet and the questionnaire. The completion of data collection was followed by data entry into the SPSS software and statistical analysis of the obtained data.

Fig 1:
Recruitment of Participants during Data Collection



Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was done by utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS-25 software. Descriptive analysis was used to classify the demographic characteristics of the participants. Moreover, crosstabulation analysis, along with frequency analysis, was used to determine the prevalence of narcissism and associated gender differences. T-test analysis was conducted to find out gender differences between the scores of overall narcissism, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism individually. Moreover, separate t-test analysis was run in order to specify gender differences between the scores of each of the three FFNI factors including antagonism, extraversion and neuroticism. This was followed by another t-test analysis, which was used to assess the gender differences with respect to the 15 distinct traits of narcissism.

Ethical Considerations

- The research topic was approved by the research committee of the Centre for Clinical Psychology.
- Formal permission was obtained from the author and the authorities of relevant institutions.
- Informed consent was taken from the participants before proceeding with the research.

Results

This section provides a detailed account of the results of the current research study.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used for classifying the demographic information of the participants including age, education level, gender, employment status, family system, marital status and religion

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	200	50
Female	200	50
Education Level		
Bachelor's	348	87.0
Master's	46	11.5
Other	6	1.5
Employment Status		
Full time	9	2.3
Part time	32	8.0
Student	326	81.5
Unemployed	31	7.8
Family System		
Joint	157	39.3
Nuclear	242	60.5
Marital Status		
Single	358	89.5
Married	9	2.3
Engaged	28	7.0
Widowed	1	3
Religion		
Islam	398	99.5
Hinduism	0	0
Christianity	2	.5

The analysis revealed that the mean age of the participants is 20.5 years old (S.D=1.52) and most of them are currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree (n=348). Majorly, the participants of this study belong to nuclear family system (n=242), are single (n=358) and follow the religion of Islam (n=398).

Cross-Tabulation Analysis

The cross-tabulation analysis along with frequency analysis was used to determine the prevalence of narcissism in university students, which further explained the interaction between the categorical variables: narcissism score and gender.

Table 2
Cross Tabulation and Frequency Analysis of Narcissism Scores Above 1 SD

Score	Men (n)	Men (%)	Women (n)	Women (%)	Total (N)	Total (%)
206	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
207	2	1.0	3	1.5	5	1.3
208	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
209	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
210	1	.5	1	.5	2	.5
211	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
212	1	.5	0	0	1	.3

213	3	1.5	1	.5	4	1.0
215	2	1.0	0	0	2	.5
216	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
217	2	1.0	1	.5	3	.8
218	0	0	1	.5	1	.3
219	2	1.0	0	0	2	.5
220	3	1.5	0	0	3	.8
221	3	1.5	1	.5	4	1.0
222	0	0	2	1.0	2	.5
224	1	.5	1	.5	2	.5
226	1	.5	0	0	1	.3
227	1	.5	1	.5	2	.5
228	0	0	1	.5	1	.3
229	1	.5	0	0	1	.3
231	1	.5	0	0	1	.3
232	0	0	1	.5	1	.3
239	1	.5	0	0	1	.3
262	0	0	1	.5	1	.3
Total	35	17.5	20	10	55	13.8

The prevalence of narcissism in university students was found to be 13.8%, emphasizing that this proportion of individuals exhibit more than average narcissistic traits. Furthermore, men showed a higher prevalence of narcissism (17.5%) than women (10%), which indicates that more men scored above 1 SD i.e. above

205 (M=184, SD=21) on the FFNI-SF.

Independent Samples T Test

Independent sample t-tests were run to find gender differences in narcissism, grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, FFNI factors, and narcissistic traits.

Table 3

Independent Sample T-test Comparing Gender Differences in Narcissism, Grandiose Narcissism, and Vulnerable Narcissism (N=400)

Variables	Men (n=200)		Women (n=200)		P	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		Lower	Upper	
Narcissism	185.30	21.574	182.33	20.100	.156	-1.1340	7.06407	20.85
Grandiose Narcissism	135.51	16.734	129.75	17.379	<.001	2.4011	9.1088	17.06
Vulnerable Narcissism	49.790	8.3615	52.580	7.3020	<.001	-4.3332	-1.24679	7.850

Note: M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, p=significance.

No significant gender differences were found in narcissism. Men scored higher on grandiose narcissism while women scored higher on vulnerable narcissism suggesting gender differences.

Table 4
Independent Sample T-Test Comparing Gender Differences in FFNI factors (N=400)

Variables	Men		Women		P	95% Confidence		Cohen's d
	(n=200)		(n=200)			Interval		
	M	SD	M	SD		Lower	Upper	
Antagonism	93.935	13.548	92.105	13.226	.172	-8.0211	4.4621	13.389
Extraversion	52.975	7.7222	51.395	7.4966	.039	.08386	3.0761	7.610
Neuroticism	36.570	6.3002	37.565	5.7507	.100	-2.1808	.19081	6.032

No significant gender differences were found in antagonism and extraversion whereas men scored higher on extraversion as compared to women suggesting gender differences.

Table 5
Independent Sample T-Test Comparing Gender Differences in Narcissistic Traits (N=400)

Variables	Men		Women		P	95% Confidence		Cohen's d
	(n=200)		(n=200)			Interval		
	M	SD	M	SD		Lower	Upper	
Acclaim	14.2	2.90	14.2	2.329	.849	-.567	.467	2.630
Seeking	4	1	9					
Arrogance	11.3	2.77	11.1	2.762	.397	-.309	.779	2.770
Authoritativeness	13.4	3.39	12.5	2.648	.003	.326	1.524	3.045
Distrust	12.1	2.84	13.3	2.656	<.001	-1.666	-.584	2.750
Entitlement	11.4	2.90	11.8	3.098	.237	-.945	.235	3.001
Exhibitionism	12.6	2.81	11.8	3.235	.007	.219	1.411	3.032
Exploitativeness	10.7	3.71	8.97	3.230	<.001	1.111	2.479	3.481
Grandiose	12.6	2.62	12.7	2.828	.687	-.647	.427	2.730
Fantasies	6	8	7					
Indifference	12.9	2.61	12.6	2.914	.321	-.269	.819	2.769
Lack of Empathy	10.6	2.91	10.0	2.754	.040	.028	1.142	2.834
Manipulativeness	12.5	2.83	11.4	2.718	<.001	.564	1.656	2.777
Need for	12.7	2.81	13.1	2.416	.106	-.940	.090	2.622
Admiration	4	3	7					
Reactive Anger	12.1	3.06	13.0	2.719	.001	-1.515	-.375	2.899
Shame	12.7	4.21	13.0	2.822	.415	-1.005	.415	3.613
	4	9	4					

Thrill Seeking	12.8	2.94	12.3	2.944	.073	-.049	1.109	2.943
	6	3	3					

Men scored higher on authoritativeness, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, lack of empathy, and manipulativeness while women scored higher on distrust and reactive anger suggesting gender differences while no significant gender differences were found in acclaim seeking, arrogance, entitlement, grandiose fantasies, indifference, need for admiration, shame, and thrill-seeking.

Discussion

The present research measured the prevalence of narcissism and the gender disparities in narcissism, grandiose narcissism as well as vulnerable narcissism. The results of the research revealed that the overall prevalence of narcissism in university students is 13.8% while the gender differences revealed that narcissism is more prevalent in men (17.5%) compared to women (10%). These results are consistent with the findings of the indigenous research (Qadir et al., 2019) which suggest that the prevalence of narcissism is higher in men compared to women. Overall the findings of the analyses revealed no significant gender differences in narcissism, men scored higher on grandiose narcissism while women scored higher on vulnerable narcissism. The results of the research studies (Grijalva et al., 2014; Anwar et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2018; Kallay et al., 2021; Hassnain et al., 2022; Weidmann et al., 2023) suggest that men score higher on narcissism than women. But the results of the current study are contradictory revealing no gender differences thus rejecting H1 [Men will score higher on narcissism than women].

However, the results of the present study correlate well with the meta-analysis by (Twenge et al., 2008) stating that on narcissism from 1992–2006, males typically scored higher than females. However, this mean difference has decreased over time. This gender difference is decreasing as women are driving higher on narcissism because women now report a generational increase in assertiveness, dominance, and agentic traits. (Twenge, 2001; Leaper & Ayres, 2007; Grijalva et al 2014). This increase in dominant and agentic traits over generations may contribute to minimal (insignificant) gender differences. The present

study found significant gender differences in grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism with men scoring higher on grandiose narcissism and women scoring higher on vulnerable narcissism. These findings are consistent with the existing literature (Grijalva et al., 2014; Arnold, 2022) favoring men on grandiose narcissism and (Green, 2020; Green 2022; Altmann & Roth, 2024) favoring women on vulnerable narcissism. So the findings of the current study support H2 [There will be a difference in grandiose narcissism in men and women] as well as H3 [There will be a difference in vulnerable narcissism in men and women]. According to (Miller et al., 2011), grandiose narcissism is characterized by characteristics related to grandiosity, aggression, and dominance while vulnerable narcissism is associated with a defensive and insecure form of grandiosity resulting in feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and negative emotions. According to the Social role theory (Eagly, 1987), the distribution of both genders into different societal roles leads to the development of gender stereotypes. Gender roles are emphasized in Pakistan with women stereotyped as homemakers while men as decision-makers and providers (Zia, 2021). Masculinity in males is associated with an unemotional attitude and aggression (Angela Ching, 2015), while high masculinity in males can lead to a higher sense of entitlement and grandiosity (Mozahem et al., 2021). Assertive behavior is more socially acceptable in males than in females (Bosson et al., 2008).). As women have to take care of children, they are supposed to be more nurturing and caring than men (Gilbert & Malone, 1995) and they are supposed to be more friendly and selfless (Ember, 1978), the most desirable traits assumed for women are warmth, sensitivity, good childcare and listening to others while the most undesirable traits for a woman are aggression, dominance, arrogance and intimidation (Rudman et al., 2012) and if they exhibit dominance or assertiveness they have to experience backlash and criticism (Association for Psychological Science, 2016). That is why

women show defensive and insecure forms of grandiosity in the form of vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2011)

The Five-factor narcissism inventory allows its users to assess narcissism at the trait level (Miller et al., 2015). Significant gender differences were found in different narcissistic traits with men scoring significantly higher on authoritativeness, exploitativeness, exhibitionism, lack of empathy, and manipulativeness while women scored higher on distrust and reactive anger. In accordance with the social role theory, women trust less than men because they are more sensitive to betrayal and other social risks (Wu et al., 2020). The study (Anwar et al., 2016) suggests that males in Pakistan score significantly higher than women on authoritativeness and exploitativeness as they are the main providers. Another study (Ghani, 2011) concluded that men are more likely to exploit others compared to their female counterparts. Another study of comparison concluded that the males of the collectivistic culture scored significantly lower on cognitive empathy compared to their female counterparts (Errasti et al., 2018). Women tend to engage in relational and indirect (covert) or passive aggression compared to men who are more likely to engage in direct (overt) or physical aggression (Im et al., 2018). It is found that women report gossiping more than men (Robbins & Karan, 2019) and they use it as a sword to show passive (covert) aggression (McAndrew, 2014). No gender differences were observed in several narcissistic traits including acclaim-seeking, arrogance, entitlement, grandiose fantasies, indifference, need for admiration, shame, and thrill-seeking. Different combinations of these narcissistic traits result in three factors (i.e., FFNI factors) including extraversion, antagonism, and neuroticism. Men scored significantly higher on extraversion compared to women revealing gender differences, consistent with the findings of (Sharma et al., 2022; Jarrett, 2016) as men tend to be more gregarious (Benenson et al., 2015) and assertive (Park et al., 2016) than women. No significant gender difference was found in neuroticism which is contrary to the findings of the research literature (Weisberg et al., 2011). This insignificance can be attributed to the parenting styles that confound the

current study because several research studies (Grajo et al., 2022; Tehrani et al., 2024) have concluded those who are brought up through authoritarian parenting are more likely to have high neuroticism compared to those with authoritative parenting. The factor of antagonism, the low pole of agreeableness is characterized by grandiosity, immorality, callousness, and combativeness (Lynam & Miller, 2019) also revealed no gender differences because it is a common facet of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2011).

Conclusion

The results of the present study conclude that the prevalence of narcissism in university students is 13.8%, with narcissism being more prevalent in men as compared to women. No significant gender differences were found with respect to the scores on narcissism, antagonism and neuroticism. While men scored significantly high on grandiose narcissism and extraversion, women showed significantly higher scores on vulnerable narcissism. Lastly, men showed higher levels of authoritativeness, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, lack of empathy and manipulativeness, while women showed higher levels of distrust and reactive anger. The traits of acclaim seeking, arrogance, entitlement, grandiose fantasies, indifference, need for admiration, shame and thrill seeking presented no gender differences.

Limitations and Suggestions

- The limitations of the present study are that the sample size (N=400) was relatively smaller for a prevalence study and the demographic variable of parenting styles was not included.
- It is suggested to opt for a larger sample size so that the chances of error can be minimized and the generalizability of the results can be improved. Moreover, parenting styles should be included as a demographic characteristic in further studies of narcissism, as previous literature shows a strong correlation between both variables.

Future Implications

- Future studies should focus on the in-depth investigation of the underlying psychological mechanisms for the gender differences in narcissism.
- Longitudinal research approaches should be considered to track changes over time in the trends of narcissism; prevalence and gender disparities.
- Cross-cultural studies of narcissism should be conducted to explore how different cultural and societal norms contribute to different manifestations of narcissistic traits in both genders.

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