

## Narcissism, Aggression and Personality Traits among Individuals

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### ABSTRACT

The study aims to understand and form an association between Narcissism and aggression as personality traits and to find the common personality traits among narcissistic and aggressive individuals. The study was conducted on 100 participants, with 51 male and 49 female subjects. They were given a set of questionnaires, each measuring Narcissism, Aggression and different personality traits. After scoring the Person, correlation suggested that different personality traits were commonly correlated between individuals with narcissistic and aggressive characteristics. The research also finds an association between various factors that are measured in the subscales of the narcissism and aggression questionnaires.

**Keywords:** *Narcissism, Aggression, Personality Traits*

The origin of the word Narcissism goes way back to Greek mythology about a young boy named Narcissus because he fell in love with his own image that was reflected from a pool of water and was obsessed with it to such an extent that he spent days and nights looking at it and eventually died after some months. Narcissism is often used in Personality psychology to define a personality type that is often socially disruptive and is characterized by a lack of empathy, grandiose sense of self, egotism and a sense of entitlement; such individuals are often preoccupied with power, prestige and vanity. Although subclinical Narcissism is a trait that can be found in otherwise normal people, high levels of similar traits can form into a pathological disorder called narcissistic personality disorder. Subclinical Narcissism is not pathological in nature, but it has got some offensive behavioral traits that are highly socially unacceptable such as Exhibitionism, Entitlement, Exploitativeness, Superiority, Authority, and Self-Sufficiency and Grandiose Self-Views. Narcissism has long been considered as a negative trait of the personality by social psychologists and therefore has only become more competitive than before. Individuals with traits of Narcissism often end up using aggression as a defense mechanism to maintain their highly overrated self-image and often end up having trouble maintaining their long-term relationships. Aggression can be termed as feelings of apathy and of anger that often result in hostile or violent behavior accompanied by a readiness to confront and attack an individual. It is overt or covert in nature and often has an intention of inflicting harm on an individual, and it can result in both physical and psychological harm. Therefore, it is highly important to understand the common traits of personality that are involved in a narcissistic and aggressive individual for both research and treatment purposes.

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### LITERATURE REVIEW

Human aggression has been widely accepted as a personality characteristic, and it has been assumed since traditional times that aggressive individuals have overly high or positive self-esteem (Baumeister, Smart and Boden, 1996; Kernis et al., 1993). Conventional notions have been challenged by (Baumeister et al., 1996) in the threatened egotism theory that suggests that aggression is more common in individuals with high self-esteem, particularly with those individuals that have an overly positive self-view. It is commonly seen in those that have fragile and unstable self-esteem (Bushman and Baumeister, 1998). Narcissism has always been a construct of high importance among psychologists, and it has been conceptualized as a subclinical and often normal style of personality characterized by a grandiose sense of self or superiority, entitlement, dominant and antagonist interpersonal style, authority, vanity, self-sufficiency, exploitativeness and exhibitionism (Raskin and Terry, 1988).

The complex nature of Narcissism and its concept has led researchers to examine any sort of association between aggression and Narcissism. The Authority and Self-sufficiency factors were “adaptive” in nature because they were associated with desirable mental health variables, whereas both exploitative and entitlement factors are “maladaptive” in nature because they are associated with mental health factors that aren’t so desirable.

There are numerous studies supporting a relationship between Narcissism and aggression. It has been proposed by Salmivalli (2001) that the characteristics of exploitativeness and lack of empathy in narcissistic individuals often motivate them to use aggression for the sole purpose of constructing a grandiose self-image. There are two forms of aggression; proactive and reactive aggression. Proactive aggression refers to a purposeful act of aggression that is enacted in response to anticipation of getting some reward, whereas Reactive aggression is defined by an automatic emotional response that is often a result of loss of self-control. Salmivalli also hypothesized that Narcissism is closely related to proactive aggression.

The Self-regulatory model by (Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001) has stated that the sense of self in narcissistic individuals is not only unstable but also highly vulnerable. The model suggests that narcissistic individuals are constantly concerned about maintaining their inflated self-esteem, and so when they are faced with an ego threat, these individuals use aggression as a mechanism in order to re-established their self-esteem and remove the threat. This makes aggressive reactions by narcissistic individuals an adaptive mechanism to regulate their moods and behavior.

Narcissistic studies with aggression in adolescents suggest that few individuals that overestimate their self-perception and competencies are likely to be more aggressive. (Boivin et al., 1989; David and Kistner, 2000; Hymel et al., 1990; Patterson et al., 1990). Salmivalli et al. (1999) found that certain characteristics in an individual like defensive egotism, attention-seeking, difficulty in accepting criticism and highly positive self-evaluation are highly related to bullying among adolescents.

There have been studies that directly examine the association of Narcissism with conduct problems and unemotional traits in a sample of 98 adolescents with an age range of 9-15 years (Barry et al., 2003). They showed that high scores on Narcissism predicted greater conduct problems.

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There were also studies that showed a relationship between Narcissism and depressive symptoms. Calhoun et al. (2000) found a negative correlation between NPI authority and superiority factor with stress, anxiety, depression.

Further, the results of a study by Bushman and Baumeister (2002) compared narcissism scores of violent and nonviolent offenders revealed that Narcissism is a variable to predict violence. Washburn et al. (2004) suggest that Narcissism has been a protective factor for aggression, violence and Barry et al. (2007) argued that Narcissism was related to delinquency, overt and relational aggression and antisocial behavior.

Research on personality has been as vibrant as ever, and its relationship with personal, social and emotional constructs is of great importance. It has been observed that subclinical Narcissism has been an important area of research because of the share it plays in the establishment of the unholy trinity of the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and (Jonason & Webster, 2012). The triad includes subclinical Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Subclinical Psychopathy. The individuals with these characteristics have manipulative interpersonal skills that are harmful in long-term relationships.

Psychologists often see Narcissism as a personality trait existing in the population at a subclinical level. Such borderline Narcissism is not considered a pathological disorder by clinicians. Kohut (1966, 1968, 1971, 1972), like Freud (1914/1991), wrote extensively on Narcissism and concluded that it is a healthy part of the development of an individual and is neither pathological nor obnoxious in nature.

Paunonen and Ashton (2001) believe that the Big Five Factor captures the major behaviors and elements of all individuals. (Pope & Bierman, 1999; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; and Loeber, 1990) has shown that aggression often contributes significantly to failure, delinquency, substance abuse etc.

According to (Chaves 2006; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011; Ferreira, 2011; Kristensen, Lima, Ferlin, Flowers, & Hackmann, 2003), the study of aggressive behaviors have increased in the past few years and has attracted interest in many fields.

The General Aggression Model proposed by Anderson and Bushman (2002) explains personality to be a key factor in understanding the specific personal factors that influence aggressive behaviors. Aggression and violence are often misunderstood and are considered to be synonymous with each other, but it has been explained by (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) that aggression is any behavior directed towards another person with an intent of harm, whereas violence is a subtype or a part of aggression that is directed towards another person to cause some serious extreme harm. In its full sense, all type of violence is aggression, but aggression isn't violent every time it occurs.

According to the research conducted by (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & Richardson, 2004; Jones et al., 2011; Jovanovic, Lipovac, Stanojevic, & Stanojevic, 2011; Lee & Egan, 2013; Miller, Zeichner, & Wilson, 2012), it is seen that agreeableness factor of personality is often associated negatively with aggression. The theory hypothesized by Sharpe and Desai (2001) also suggests that neuroticism is has a strong connection with aggression. Conscientiousness is negatively correlated with aggression (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998).

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The Narcissistic Personality Inventory was developed by Raskin & Hall (1979) based on the DSM-III criteria of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. This is the most widely used scale to research in a particular domain. It measures Narcissism as a continuous scale, and there is no cut-off score above which a person can be considered as a clinical narcissist.

The Big Five Factors of Personality has been replicated in many cultures and has been found to be universally accepted and proven to be appropriate for representing personality constructs.

### ***Statement of the problem***

Subclinical Narcissism is often taken as an important aspect of development, and a part of a healthy personality and aggression is often associated with individuals with narcissistic traits. Such individuals are mostly preoccupied with their self-image and, in the presence of a threat, use aggression as a defense to maintain their overly high self-esteem. Such individuals have problems in maintaining their long-term relationships, and therefore this study is seeking to understand the association of Narcissism, aggression and the common personality traits among these individuals to understand the way they function.

### ***The objective of the study***

The study aims to understand and form an association between narcissistic and aggressive traits of personality and to find the common personality traits among narcissistic and aggressive individuals.

### ***Significance of the Study***

The research will provide a framework to successfully understand the relationship between narcissistic and aggressive individuals by finding the common personality traits among them. It will also provide an understanding of the correlation between the subtests of Narcissism and aggression, making it easier to understand how Narcissism and aggression as traits are related to each other. The results will be assumed to be of importance for further research and treatment purposes.

### ***Hypothesis***

- Null Hypothesis (Ho)<sub>1</sub> - There is no relationship between Narcissism and aggression as traits of an individual.  
Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)<sub>1</sub> - There is a relationship between narcissistic and aggressive traits of an individual.
- Null Hypothesis (Ho)<sub>2</sub> - There is no relationship between narcissism and personality factors in an individual.  
Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)<sub>2</sub> - There is a relationship between narcissism and personality factors in an individual.
- Null Hypothesis (Ho)<sub>3</sub> - There is no relationship between aggression and personality factors in an individual.  
Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)<sub>3</sub> - There is a relationship between aggression and personality factors in an individual.
- Null Hypothesis (Ho)<sub>4</sub> - There is no common relationship between different personality factors of narcissistic and aggressive individuals.  
Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)<sub>4</sub> - There is a common relationship between different personality factors of narcissistic and aggressive individuals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Participants of the study***

The research consists of a total of 100 participants, with 51 males and 49 females. For the selection of the sample, random sampling was used, and the research was done on individuals that volunteered for it by using valid and reliable instruments.

### ***Data Collection Instruments***

The data was obtained by administering the following questionnaires-

- The socio-demographic form collects the socio-demographic and contact information of an individual.
- The NPI-13, The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13, is a 13-item self-report measure of trait narcissism derived from the NPI-40.
- The BFI-10, The Big-Five Inventory adapted from Rammstedt, B. & John, O. P. (2007), is a 10-item self-report measure to assess the personality factors derived from BFI (1999).
- The BPAQ, The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, is a 29-item self-report measure to assess aggression in an individual.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

The data was collected from participants that gave their consent to participate in the research. They were given a brief about the topics, objective, purpose and significance of the study. The individual was also made aware that full confidentiality will be kept of the information that is provided and that the individual can withdraw their participation at any time during the research. Following this, the questionnaire sets of The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13), The Big-Five Inventory (BFI-10), The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) with the socio-demographic and consent form were given to the subject, and the individual had to fill and mark the responses according to the instructions given.

### ***Data Analysis Procedure***

Before the raw data were scored, an effort was put to find out if there were any missing responses from in the questionnaire set of 52 items (13 items from The Narcissistic Personality Inventory, ten items from The Big Five Inventory and 29 items from The Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire) and as a result, any response sheet that had even one missing response were not included in the analysis.

Afterward, the scores for all three questionnaires were calculated.

- For The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13, the individual had to choose between a pair of attributes, the one that he/she most agrees with. Two attributes were given in each item, namely “A”& “B.” If the individual selects “A, then score 0 is given for the response,” and if the individual selects “B, then score one is given for the response.” Items 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, and 13 are reverse scored such that “A is scored with 1 and B is scored with 0.” To find the total score, sum all the 13 items.  
There are three subscales of the questionnaire, and they are scored as given below-  
To get the Leadership/Authority subscale score, sum the scores of items no. 3, 6, 9 and 12.  
To get the Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale score, sum the scores of item no. 2, 5, 8, 11 and 13.  
To get the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale score, sum the scores of items no. 1, 4, 7 and 10.

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- For The Big-Five Inventory, the individual had to mark an option on a 5 point continuum scale for each item, where 1= disagree strongly, 2= Disagree a little, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree a little, 5= Agree strongly.  
Scores of items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 are reverse scored.  
The factors are scored as follows-  
To get the score of the subset extraversion, sum items no. 1 and 6.  
To get the score of the subset agreeableness, sum items no. 2 and 7.  
To get the score of the subset conscientiousness, sum item no. 3 and 8.  
To get the score of the subset neuroticism, sum items no. 4 and 9.  
To get the score of the subset openness to experience, sum items no. 5 and 10.
- For The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, using a 5 point scale, the individual had to specify how atypical or characteristic each of the following statements was in describing them.  
For each item, 1 is extremely uncharacteristic of me, 2 is somewhat uncharacteristic of me, 3 is neither uncharacteristic nor characteristic of me, 4 is somewhat characteristic of me, and 5 is extremely characteristic of me.  
Item no. 9 and 16 are reverse scored.  
The scale consists of 4 factors which are scored as given below-  
To get the Physical Aggression score, sum the scores of item no. 2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 22, 25, 29.  
To get the Verbal Aggression score, sum the scores of items no. 4, 6, 14, 21, 27.  
To get the Anger score, sum the scores of item no. 1, 9, 12, 18, 19, 23, 28.  
To get the Hostility score, sum the scores of item no. 3, 7, 10, 15, 17, 20, 24, 26.

## RESULTS

The study was done on 100 participants, out of which 49 were females, and 51 were male participants. The contributors were asked to fill up three questionnaires, The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13, The Big-Five Inventory and The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, after which the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed for necessary calculations. Scores of different factors were calculated, and then to find an association between the following factors, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was calculated, which suggested the following. The subscales of the questionnaire are denoted in the table as-

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13

- Leadership/Authority subscale - LA
- Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale - GE
- Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale – EE

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire

- Physical Aggression - PA
- Verbal Aggression - VA
- Anger - A
- Hostility – H

The Big Five Inventory

- Extraversion - E
- Openness to Experience - O
- Neuroticism - N
- Conscientiousness - C
- Agreeableness- A

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**Table 1- Pearson Correlation Coefficient of subscales of The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 and The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire**

Correlations		BPAQ				
		Total	PA	VA	A	H
NPI 13	Total	-0.113	-0.065	0.032	-0.228*	-0.088
	LA	-0.058	-0.043	0.090	-0.195*	-0.015
	GE	-0.106	-0.087	0.043	-0.141	-0.119
	EE	-0.042	0.014	-0.070	-0.088	-0.022

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

The table suggests that there is a positive correlation between Verbal aggression and the Leadership/Authority subscale and Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale. The overhead table suggests that there is a positive correlation between physical aggression and the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale. There is also a negative correlation between the Leadership/Authority subscale and Physical aggression, Anger and Hostility. There also exists a negative correlation between Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility. Similarly, the Entitlement/Exploitative ness subscale shows a negative correlation between Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ )<sub>1</sub> can be rejected, and it can be concluded that there exists a relationship between narcissistic and aggressive traits of an individual.

**Table 2- Pearson Correlation Coefficient of subscales of The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 and The Big Five Inventory-10**

Correlations		NPI 13			
		Total	LA	GE	EE
BFI 10	E	-0.003	-0.013	0.067	-0.063
	A	-0.016	0.048	0.054	-0.132
	C	-0.067	-0.065	0.233**	-0.306**
	N	0.003	0.032	-0.022	-0.001
	O	0.014	-0.011	0.006	0.029

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

From the given table, it can be seen that Agreeableness is negatively correlated with the overall score of Narcissism as well as the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale. Conscientiousness is negatively correlated with the total score of Narcissism as well as the Leadership/Authority subscale and Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale. Neuroticism is positively correlated with the overall score of Narcissism and also with the Leadership/Authority subscale. Extraversion is negatively correlated with the total score of Narcissism, Leadership/Authority subscale and Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale. It is also positively correlated with the Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale. However, Openness to experience shows a positive correlation with the overall score of Narcissism, Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale and Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale, which shows a negative correlation with Leadership/Authority subscale. There the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is a relationship between Narcissism and the different personality factors in an individual.

**Table 3- Pearson Correlation Coefficient of subscales of The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire and The Big Five Inventory-10**

Correlations		BPAQ				
		Total	PA	VA	A	H
<b>BFI 10</b>	E	-0.027	0.072	-0.051	0.008	-0.132
	A	-0.164	-0.170	-0.147	-0.149	-0.073
	C	-0.018	0.027	0.013	0.042	-0.123
	N	0.155	-0.020	0.119	0.233**	0.203*
	O	0.077	0.097	0.140	0.100	-0.053

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

It can be understood from the table that Agreeableness is negatively correlated with the overall score of aggression and Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility. Conscientiousness is negatively correlated with the overall score of aggression hostility. Neuroticism is positively correlated with the overall score of aggression, Verbal aggression subscale, Anger and Hostility. Openness to experience is positively correlated with the overall score of aggression, Physical aggression, Verbal aggression and anger and is negatively correlated with Hostility. Finally, Extraversion is negatively correlated with the overall score of aggression, Verbal aggression and Hostility but is positively correlated with Anger and Physical Aggression. Therefore, the null hypothesis is disregarded, and there is a relationship between aggression and the different personality factors in an individual.

**Table 4- Pearson Correlation Coefficient of subscales of The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13, The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire and The Big Five Inventory-10**

Correlations		NPI 13	BPAQ
		Total	Total
<b>BFI 10</b>	E	-0.003	-0.027
	A	-0.016	-0.164
	C	-0.067	-0.018
	N	0.003	0.155
	O	0.014	0.077

From the table, we can understand that-

- Extraversion is negatively correlation with both Narcissism and aggression.
- Agreeableness is negatively correlated with both Narcissism and aggression.
- Conscientiousness is negatively correlated with both Narcissism and aggression.
- Neuroticism is positively correlated between both Narcissism and aggression.
- Openness to experience is positively correlated to both Narcissism and aggression.
- Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is a common relationship between different personality factors of narcissistic and aggressive individuals.

## DISCUSSION

The study’s objective was to understand and form an association between narcissistic and aggressive traits of personality and to find the common personality traits among narcissistic and aggressive individuals.

Study findings suggest that there is a significant negative correlation between the Leadership/Authority subscale and Anger where  $F(3.868)=0.05$ ,  $p=0.05$ . There also exists a



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negative correlation between the NPI-13 questionnaire and Anger where  $F(5.379409)=0.024$ ,  $p<0.05$ .

Conscientiousness is significantly negatively correlated with the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale with  $F(10.1268)=0.0019$ ,  $p<0.01$  because individuals high on conscientiousness are generally more aware of themselves and their emotions and rarely indulge in exploitative behavior.

Conscientiousness is significantly positively correlated with the Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscale where  $F(5.608647)=0.01$ ,  $p=0.01$  because they are not easy-going individuals, they take pride in their tasks, hold obligations and are diligent in nature.

Neuroticism is significantly positively correlated with Anger where  $F(5.618752)=0.01$ ,  $p=0.01$ . This can be supported by the fact that Neurotic individuals are more likely than average to experience frustration, increased sense of control leading to more anger. Another reason for the high correlation with anger could be that neurotic people, in general, have a tendency to react negatively to events in their life.

Neuroticism is significantly positively correlated with Hostility where  $F(4.220457)=0.0426$ ,  $p<0.05$ . This can be attributed to the factor that neurotic people have a tendency to become aggressive, and they get easily provoked; neuroticism is also highly linked with intrapersonal conflict and subjective states of anger.

We can also see that both neuroticism and aggression are similarly correlated with all the five factors of personality, namely, Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, Agreeableness and neuroticism because neuroticism has often been a predictor of the trait aggression. Neurotic individuals are more prone to behave aggressively when faced with adverse life events. Both aggressive and neurotic individuals tend to be more reactive to negative life events. Many a time, neurotic individuals use anger and aggression as a self-defense mechanism to maintain their ego state and give them a sense of grandiosity. On the other side, aggressive individuals tend to dominate and seek control in any relationship; they abhor submission to any individual, entity or event. They often exploit and victimize others for their own selfless needs, and similarly, even narcissistic individuals fail to understand the cost of fulfilling their own desires. Therefore, it can be seen that the traits go hand in hand and coexist together. Often neurotic individuals use aggression for self-defense, and aggressive individuals show a huge tendency towards neurotic tendencies, emotional instability and a need to act impulsively.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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