

Research Paper

## Exploring The Relationship of Social Media Engagement and Fantasy Proneness with Narcissistic Tendencies Among Young Individuals

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### ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore relationships of social media engagement and fantasy proneness with narcissistic tendencies among the Indian young adults. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from a sample size of 190 participants by their consent. Three, standardised self-report measurements- Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHann, & Gladwell, 2013), Creative Experience Questionnaire (Merckelbach, Horselenberg, & Muris, 2001) and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988) were used to collect data for statistical analysis, the results showed a non-normal distribution; hence non parametric test was incorporated using Spearman Roh's correlation analysis. The results showed no significant relationship either with Social Media Engagement or Fantasy Proneness with Narcissistic Tendencies. The implications further extend to developmental psychology, media psychology and in clinical practices majorly for understanding modern day engagement in social media and inclination towards fantasy and other psychological traits that may relate to development of personality among youth.

**Keywords:** *Social Media Engagement, Fantasy Proneness, Narcissistic Tendencies*

Today's digital age has made social media engagement an integral part of the lives of young adults. It refers to the ways individuals interact with social networking platforms, including liking, commenting, sharing, and posting content. Extending beyond passive browsing, encompassing active participation being more than just spending time on social media platforms, it is an interactive process that shapes self-image that contributes to digital identity formation, social validation, and social perception. It is not only just about scrolling through feeds but also about seeking validation, expressing identity, and forming online connections. Simultaneously, Fantasy proneness refers to an individual's tendency to become deeply absorbed in daydreams, imagination, and mental escapism. It is often associated with vivid imagery, absorption in fictional worlds, and a preference for alternative realities. While both these factors influence behaviour, their connection to narcissistic tendencies remains an area of brooding psychological research. Narcissistic tendencies refer to behaviours and attitudes that may be occasionally displayed or situationally induced, whereas narcissistic traits are enduring personality characteristics.

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Narcissistic traits represent stable aspects of personality, deeply ingrained in an individual's behavioural patterns over time. In contrast, narcissistic tendencies fluctuate based on social and environmental conditions, such as online validation, peer interactions, or temporary self-esteem boosts. This study focuses on narcissistic tendencies, which reflect transient or reinforced narcissistic behaviours in the general population rather than clinical narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Understanding this distinction is crucial to evaluating how external influences, such as social media engagement and fantasy proneness, can modulate self-centred behaviours without necessarily defining a person's personality structure.

Limited research work has been conducted establishing the relationship between narcissistic tendencies and social media engagement, particularly. Raskin and Novacek (1991), in their dual-sample study identified that individuals with elevated narcissistic tendencies frequently engaged in daydreams involving themes of power, revenge, self-admiration, and imagined suffering. These themes were considered functional in regulating self-esteem and coping with distress.

### *Need for the Study*

The findings of the present study could contribute to personality psychology and research by expanding theories on how digital engagement and cognitive traits influence personality development and digital literacy. This can help educators and policymakers develop strategies for healthier social media engagement and mental health awareness via identifying potential risk factors for narcissistic tendencies among young individuals. Moreover, the study integrates three psychological variables that have a limited study presence, especially in the context of social media engagement with narcissistic tendencies. Social media engagement, fantasy proneness, and narcissistic tendencies have been studied independently but not in a combined framework.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Objectives*

To delineate further what exactly the study determines from this dissertation, are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between social media engagement and narcissistic tendencies.
2. To assess the association between fantasy proneness and narcissistic tendencies.

### *Sample*

The study included 190 young adults irrespective of their gender from the age range (18-25). These young adults are college going students and the study employs purposive sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, this sampling method was incorporated to ensure that the participants selected met the study's inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for the study includes participants must be- aged between 18-25 only, knows English language, at least 12th pass and the participants must have a social media account. Participants who have been diagnosed with any psychiatric illness were excluded in the study.

### *Instruments*

The different research tools used in this study and their properties are as follows-

- 1. Information Schedule:** The information schedule was begun with a request for verbal consent regarding participants' willingness to engage, which was followed by the relevant questions required for the study.

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- 2. Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ):** SMEQ is subsisted on five items report each rated ranging from 0 (not one day) to 7 (every day) on an 8-point Likert Scale having high internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from (0.82 to 0.89).
- 3. Creative Experiences Questionnaire (CEQ-25):** CEQ-25 is a brief 25-item questionnaire, where the interlocutors answer in a dichotomous (yes/no) way and for scoring, all yes responses are summed up to determine a total score where higher scores stipulate a higher level of fantasy process of an individual. The reliability in terms of internal consistency as measured by KR-20 = .68 to .77 and test-retest (6 weeks) reliability,  $r = .95$  additionally, it demonstrates concurrent validity with the initial measure of fantasy proneness ICMI and Tellegen Absorption Scale (TAS; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974) (Levin & Young, 2001/2002) used to measure absorption.
- 4. Narcissistic Personality Inventory- 40 (NPI-40):** NPI-40, the scale consists of 40 forced-choice questions divided into 2 statements. For scoring, all the scores marked as 1 and 0 between the 2 statements are added together to get a total composite score ranging between (0-40), where a higher score indicates higher levels of sub-clinical narcissism, and if the scores are above 30, it indicates concerning levels of sub-clinical narcissism. It has a good internal consistency of (Cronbach's alpha of .83), and test-retest reliability (13-week interval) of 0.81.

### Procedure

Participants received an informed consent form detailing the study's goal, procedures, risks and benefits, and confidentiality assurances. Data was collected with the researcher present, and questions or clarifications were addressed immediately to prevent confusion. Participants responded based on provided instructions without a time limit.

## RESULTS

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics were performed with the present data.

**Table 1: Depicting Mean and Standard Deviation of the Variables**

Variables	Mean	SD
Social Media Engagement	17.82	10.332
Fantasy Proneness	12.69	7.921
Narcissistic Tendencies	19.50	12.135

Normality test was performed by Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests and all the 3 variables did not follow a normal distribution.

**Table 2: Spearman's Rho Correlation coefficient analysis for Social Media Engagement, Fantasy Proneness and Narcissism Tendencies**

Spearman's rho	Narcissistic Tendencies
Social Media Engagement	0.123
Fantasy Proneness	-0.030

The results show no significant relationship either between social media engagement and narcissistic tendencies or fantasy proneness and narcissistic tendencies.

## DISCUSSION

The study's results indicated no statistically significant relationship between social media engagement, fantasy proneness, and narcissistic tendencies. It contributes by examining subclinical narcissism and its potential correlates in young adults. Results suggest narcissistic tendencies may not be driven by social media engagement or fantasy proneness alone but result from psychological, social, developmental, and cultural factors. Raskin and Novacek (1991)<sub>2</sub> founded that individuals with increased narcissistic tendencies often involve in daydreams including ideas of power, revenge, self-admiring, and imagined suffering. From the past research works, we can observe that the relationship has been identified but in the present study, no relationship was indicated. However, in this particular population, there is no significant relationship present.

## CONCLUSION

The current study sought to explore of social media engagement and fantasy proneness with narcissistic tendencies among young adults. The findings revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between social media engagement and fantasy proneness on narcissistic tendencies, individually. This elucidates that Narcissistic tendencies may exist in an individual independently of these two variables, or it can be said that narcissistic tendencies can persist in a young individual irrespective of social media engagement and fantasy proneness.

### *Limitations*

The present research acknowledges potential limitations of the study, which is a lack of a larger population with a varied geographical location.

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

The author proclaims that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to research.

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