

Narcissism and Its Association with Neurotic Tendencies Among Students at University Technical Education Colleges in Jordan

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Abstract

The goals of this research are to determine the degree of narcissism among students at Jordanian university technical education colleges, investigate the connection between narcissism and neurotic tendencies among the study participants, and determine whether there are differences in the subjects' levels of narcissism based on the gender variable (male versus female student group). Additionally, the study's psychometric and demographic variables will be used to predict the levels of narcissism and neurotic tendencies. A total of (362) students participated in this study during the second semester of the academic year (2023/2024) and were selected randomly. Two scales were applied, namely, the narcissism scale and the neurotic tendencies scale. The findings revealed a medium level (68%) of narcissism among the subjects. A statistically significant and positive correlation between narcissism and neurotic tendencies was observed. Furthermore, in narcissism, statistically significant gender differences were evident. Given the literature and the study results, the researcher ultimately suggested a set of practical practices.

Keywords: Narcissism, Neurotic Tendencies, Students at University Technical Education Colleges, Jordan

INTRODUCTION

Interest in subjects like individualism, appearance, rivalry, and achievement in their academic, professional, and technical manifestations has grown recently. As the individualistic culture concentrates on the idea of the self and its aims and, consequently, the deterioration in interactions with others, this interest has contributed to the rising proliferation of the narcissistic personality type. The narcissistic personality typically develops due to the development of individualism and the growing emphasis on the ego. In contrast, the collective, participatory culture concentrates on the dynamics of the group and its interests (Stone, 2001).

Narcissistic personality disorder, however, appears to be receiving little attention in the psychological literature; in fact, a few research on the subject of narcissism mainly examined patients receiving hospital treatment. Several clinical experts have observed that the number of patients needing treatment for narcissistic personality disorder is rising despite the lack of research on the condition's prevalence. The American Psychiatric Association believes that 1% of the world's population suffers from narcissistic personality disorder, while the percentage of psychiatric patients who frequent clinics is suggested to be between 2-16% (Dobbert, 2007).

Narcissism is mainly associated with some personality traits and unacceptable behavior patterns. For example, narcissists tend to be more willing to seek revenge, less willing to forgive, more angry, more impulsive, more anxious, and more aggressive. When frustrated, they tend to exhibit sadistic responses (Besser & Hill, 2010).

Fascalini (2004) contends that it is now evident that pathological tendencies in cultural societies have contributed significantly to the expansion of narcissistic personality disorder. Twenge and Campbell's (2009) findings support the idea that narcissism is increasing more quickly in American society. According to the study's findings, narcissism and other traits are positively and significantly correlated, which suggests that narcissism is becoming more prevalent among first-year students at American universities. This research aims to examine the level of narcissism and its correlation with psychological and demographic variables by identifying narcissism and its link with neurotic tendencies among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Advancement in social change patterns requires strengthening individuals' personalities by embracing new and different directions of socialization and organizing experiences. It is known that the narcissistic personality arises as a response to the psychological effects that prevailing social changes have had on personality types. This raises questions: Has narcissism become more prevalent in societies? Have individuals become unable to form affection and intimacy and build close and strong relationships with others? Have they become self-centered, characterized by neurotic tendencies, and have a desire to exploit others to achieve their personal goals?

Even though the subject of narcissism has received considerable attention from researchers in the modern era, it has not received sufficient attention in Arab societies and developing countries, especially in Jordan. Therefore, the researcher hopes this study will serve as an addition to enriching the psychological literature in Arab and Jordanian countries.

QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study was to identify the degree of narcissism and reveal the connection between narcissism and neurotic tendencies in students at Jordanian university technical education colleges. This study specifically aimed to address the following hypotheses:

1. What is the level of narcissism among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan?
2. Is there a significant correlation between narcissism and neurotic tendencies among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the students at university technical education colleges in Jordan for narcissism attributable to the gender variable?

OBJECTIVES

This study sought to determine the degree of narcissism among students at Jordanian university technical education colleges, as well as to highlight differences in narcissistic degrees among college students and the connection between narcissism and neurotic tendencies among the sample. It also aims to detect differences in the degrees of narcissism among participants according to the gender variable and predict narcissism and neurotic tendencies through the study's psychometric and demographic variables.

THEORETICAL AND OPERATIONALLY DEFINITIONS

Narcissism: is an attribute of personality associated with a sense of grandeur and an unwavering desire for power and dominance over individuals around them. It also goes hand in hand with an inflated sense of self-importance, a lack of empathy for others, and using others to further one's agenda (Ongen, 2010).

Operationally, the score obtained by respondents on the narcissism scale comprises six dimensions: power, condescension over others, sense of superiority, exhibitionism, exploitation, and lack of empathy.

Neurotic tendencies: It is an unstable and severe emotional trait that makes the individual prepared and predisposed to develop neurotic symptoms of a negative behavioural and cognitive nature to stimuli in extreme pressure situations (Nash, 2010).

Operationally, it is the score obtained by the respondents on the neuroticism scale regarding its overall significance.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The generalization of the results in the current study is limited to a sample of students from university technical education colleges in Jordan during the second semester of the academic year (2023/2024). The generalization of the results is also limited to the study tools, which are the narcissism scale and the neuroticism scale, as well as their psychometric properties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Narcissism

In psychological literature, the notion of narcissism is approached in three different approaches. First, from a dynamic and descriptive viewpoint that sees narcissism as self-love and self-indulgence. Second, from an evolutionary perspective, regards narcissism as the stage that comes before object love. Thirdly, narcissism is viewed from a diagnostic perspective as a personality disorder, such as sociopathic personality disorder (SPD), borderline personality disorder (BPD), or narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) (Kantor, 2006). According to Kernberg (2004), there are two complementary parallel levels of definitions for narcissism, making it a complex notion. As noted by Kernberg (2004), there are two complementary parallel levels of definitions for narcissism, making it a complex idea. The analytical theory, which describes narcissism as an investment of libido in the ego, is followed in the first level. Kernberg highlights the complexity of this definitional level, which gives us models of unconscious psychological processes that help us understand the observed clinical phenomena. The set of clinical signs and symptoms that identify individuals with disordered self-esteem regulation constitute the second level of the concept of narcissism.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is defined in the DSM-1V as a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy. He has a grandiose sense of self-importance, is immersed in fantasies of unlimited success, and believes he is special and unique. He has a sense of superiority, is exploitative in his interpersonal relationships, and finally displays arrogant and condescending behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2004).

However, the positive concept of narcissism is demonstrated by what Pincus and Ansel (2009) stated when they said that narcissism cannot be defined as the ability of an individual to maintain a positive image of himself through various processes aimed at organizing the field of self and conscience. Narcissism serves as a motive, whether clearly or implicitly, to enhance the self through experiences that the individual gains from his social environment.

Some scholars believe that there are two types of narcissism in adulthood: Adaptive narcissism and Maladaptive narcissism. Adaptive narcissism demonstrates positive traits such as ambition. It is linked negatively and significantly with anxiety and positively and substantially with the mechanism of denial. In contrast, maladaptive narcissism is correlated with aggression and deviant behaviour positively and significantly (Cramer, 2011). The relationship between these two types of narcissism is less precise compared to other personality disorders such as obsessive, paranoid, and schizotypal.

Neurotic Tendencies

Diverse psychological philosophies present differing viewpoints regarding the causes of neurotic behaviors. According to analytical theory, people's neurotic tendencies are a façade they use to hide their underlying uneasiness and worry. According to behavioural theory, people who are mismatched with their surroundings are more likely to exhibit neurotic tendencies. Cognitive theory identifies neurotic tendencies as malfunctions in coordinating cognitive structures that result from incorrect information processing and selection patterns. Neurotic tendencies continued to be viewed as a personality trait and are linked to psychological illnesses, especially depression, and anxiety, until Eysenck confirmed that individuals having high degrees of neurotic tendencies do not necessarily imply that they suffer from neurosis, but rather that they have the ability or readiness to suffer from neurotic emotional problems. (Nash, 2010).

Eysenck supposes that individuals who obtain high scores and levels on neurotic tendencies scales tend to set goals that exceed their abilities, and their level of assessment of their performance is low and negative (Van der Zee et al., 1999). The distinctive features of neurotic tendencies include insomnia, moodiness, inferiority, nervousness, and susceptibility to excitement. People who obtain high scores and levels on the dimensions of neurotic tendencies complain of psychosomatic symptoms and indicators such as digestive disorders, headaches, and sleep disturbances (Taylor et al., 1996). Macri and John (1992) suggested that neurotic

tendencies are one of the personality traits that exhibit hostility, frustration, deprivation, low self-esteem, vulnerability, and severe negative emotions.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Numerous earlier research has examined students' neurotic and narcissistic tendencies within various contexts. Kubarych, Elizabeth & Austin (2004) examined narcissism and the five personality factors among (338) male and female students studying at Scottish University. A negative and significant correlation between narcissism and both neuroticism and agreeableness was found. Also, a positive and significant correlation between narcissism extroversion and openness to experience was observed. Lee and Ashton (2005) investigated the relationship between narcissism and the five personality factors in university male and female students (n=164). The findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between narcissism, neuroticism, extroversion, and openness to experience.

Ames, Rose, and Anderson (2006) conducted a study examining narcissism and personality traits among university students. A total of (776) male and female students participated in the study. It was revealed that narcissism, neuroticism, and agreeableness are negatively and significantly correlated. A positive and significant correlation was observed between narcissism, extroversion, and openness to experience, conscientiousness. The differences in narcissism were due to the gender variable favoring males. In a study performed by Miller and Campbell (2008), they examined narcissism and personality traits among a sample of male and female university students (n=271). Two inventories were used to measure narcissism: the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and the second is the Personality Disorder Questionnaire (PDQ), which includes (9) items measuring narcissism. The findings showed differences in narcissism attributable to the gender variable favoring men. Additionally, a positive and significant correlation was found between narcissism, measured by the NPI and PDQ. In contrast, a negative, significant correlation was evident between narcissism measured by NPI and PDQ.

Pincus and Ansel (2009) conducted a study on constructing a scale for narcissism and verifying its psychometric properties on (776) male and female university students. The study revealed seven factors for the scale as a result of factor analysis: pathological self-esteem, exploitativeness, grandiosity, and fantasies of grandeur. , undervaluing others, self-concealment, and self-sacrifice (Entitlement Rage, Exploitative ness, Grandiose Fantasy, Self-sacrificing Self-enhancement, Contingent self-esteem, Hiding the self, Devaluing). The results of the study also revealed differences in narcissism attributable to the gender variable, favoring female subjects.

Lutens (2010) examined narcissism and personality traits among a subject of (253) male and female students studying at the University of North California. The findings revealed that the level of narcissism was less than average. Additionally, a negative and significant correlation between narcissism and neuroticism was found, and a positive and significant correlation with extroversion and a positive and significant relationship between narcissism and age. Nevertheless, no differences were observed in narcissism attributable to the gender variable.

Maples et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine narcissism and neuroticism among a sample of female university students consisting of (158) students. The results of the study revealed a negative correlation between narcissism as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Neuroticism and a positive correlation between abnormal narcissism as measured by the Narcissism Scale. Hypersensitive and neuroticism, and a correlation between authority and neuroticism. The results did not reveal a relationship between superiority and neuroticism.

This research is similar to the previous research in that it employed a similar methodology and utilized the same study population, sample, and tool for the relevant topic. Due to the limited prior research on the subject, the breadth of the current study, and the fact that Jordan has both dependent and independent variables, which permits more research in this area, this study begins with this reality.

There is some disagreement in the findings of earlier studies regarding narcissism and its correlation with neurotic tendencies in students at university technical education colleges. However,

This research is similar to the previous research in that it employed a similar methodology, the study population, sample, and tool for the subject of the current study. Regarding narcissism and its correlation with neurotic tendencies among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan, there is considerable disparity in the findings of earlier research. This study begins with this reality since there aren't many prior studies that address the topic and scope of the current study.

METHODOLOGY

The study procedures include a description of its approach, population and sample, tools, variables, and the statistical processing methods used to process its data.

Approach

A descriptive analytical approach was followed in this research as it best fits the study's objectives and the variables and data employed. This approach typically goes beyond simply gathering descriptive information on the study's topic and instead diagnoses, analyses, connects, and interprets that information to conclude the phenomenon under investigation.

Population and Sample

The population of the current study comprises all students in university technical education colleges in Jordan during the second semester of the academic year (2023/2024), while the sample consisted of (362) students (male,128; female, 234) students chosen randomly and classified according to their responses to the demographic variable (gender). Table (1) shows details about the demographic distribution.

Table 1. Distribution of subjects by the demographic variable (gender)

Demographic Variable	the Number	Percentage
Gender		
male	128	35 %
female	234	65 %
Total	362	100 %

Instruments

1. Narcissism Scale

In this research, Judeh Scale (2012) was employed, which includes (36) items addressing the following sub-dimensions: Authority (6) items, Superiority (6) items, Entitlement (6) items, Exhibitionism (6) items, Exploitation (6) items, The sixth dimension is Lack of empathy also including (6) items. It should be noted that psychometric verification of the validity and reliability of the scale was performed on the target sample.

Judeh (2012) confirmed the validity and reliability of the scale used. She determined the validity by calculating the internal consistency of the scale as a whole and its sub-dimensions, and the result ranged between (0.437 - 0.628). She also calculated the validity through the reliability of the arbitrators, so the agreement rate reached (86%).

To ensure the tool's reliability, Judeh computed the reliability coefficient by the split-half approach, resulting in a reliability rate of (0.72); additionally, the reliability rate was modified by applying the Spearman-Brown equation, yielding (0.82). Using the Cronbach Alpha method, the researcher in this study calculated the reliability coefficient and applied it to a pilot sample (n=20). The reliability coefficient reached (0.78), indicating its reliability and approving that it can be used for the purposes of this study.

2. Neurotic Tendencies Scale

In the current study, the neurotic tendencies scale was applied. This scale was obtained from the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) and translated into Arabic by Abdel Khaleq (1991). The scale comprises (23) items. The reliability of the inventory was previously calculated in the Egyptian environment, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (0.80) for the neurotic tendencies scale.

Furthermore, Al-Ansari (2002) calculated the criterion-related validity and reliability in the Kuwaiti environment, calculating the internal consistency validity and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which counted (0.88). In Syria, Radwan (2001) tested the reliability of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding (0.78)

Judeh (2009) also calculated the validity and reliability of the scale in the Palestinian environment, using criterion-related and internal consistency validity, and calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.72).

The researcher used the Cronbach Alpha method in the current study to apply the reliability coefficient to a pilot sample (20) students. The internal consistency coefficient for the scale was (0.81). Accordingly, this scale can be applied to the study sample and is suitable for scientific research.

Variables

The independent variable in this research is gender. Therefore, male and female students from technical education colleges at Jordanian University were recruited. The dependent variables include narcissism, which is represented by the responses of the respondents on the study scale "the narcissism scale." The second measure was "Neurotic tendencies," described by the respondents' responses on the study scale, which measures neuroticism in terms of its validity and reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the first question: What is the level of narcissism among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan?

Descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation) was used to calculate students' responses at University Technical Education Colleges in Jordan. Results are detailed in Table (2).

Table 2. Results of the Descriptive analysis of Students' responses at University Technical Education Colleges in Jordan on the Narcissism Scale

Measure	Subjects	Mean	Std.	Percentage
Narcissism	362	97.122	15.864	68 %

Table (2) presents the findings of the descriptive analysis. The average score of (97.122) suggests that 68% of students at Jordanian university technical education colleges exhibit narcissism. This finding indicates that the narcissistic tendencies of students are above average. This percentage is a healthy amount of narcissism that prioritizes self-worth, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

Hence, students at university technical education colleges in Jordan have a positive image of themselves, which acts as a driving force that helps them organize their emotions and self, and thus helps them confront the reality that is rife with high indicators of the era of the psychological phenomenon and the frustration, tension, and deprivation it contains. The result of this question is consistent with what Pincus et al. (2009) indicated when they referred to narcissism as the individual's ability to maintain a positive image of the self through processes aimed at regulating the self and conscience through experiences that the individual gains from his social environment. This also corresponds to what Kramer (2011) pointed out: agreeable narcissism has positive traits such as ambition. It is associated with a negative relationship with anxiety and a positive relationship with the denial mechanism. For this reason, students at the university technical education colleges have positive self-esteem that drives them and aids in self-regulation, enabling them to face the psychological phenomenon and all of its frustration, tension, and deprivation.

This result is in line with the findings of Pincus et al. (2009), who defined narcissism as the capacity of an individual to uphold positive self-esteem through mechanisms intended to control one's conscience and self through experiences derived from one's social surroundings. It is also consistent with the result of Kramer (2011) that agreeable narcissism includes positive attributes like ambition. And is connected negatively with anxiety and positively with the denial mechanism.

Hypothesis One: Is there a significant correlation between narcissism and neurotic tendencies among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan?

To verify the validity of the first hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to calculate the responses of the study subjects (students at university technical education colleges in Jordan) and the dimensions of the neurotic tendencies, as shown in Table (3):

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients for the responses of the students at University Technical Education Colleges in Jordan and its dimensions of their neurotic tendencies

Dependent variable	Narcissism	Authority	Superiority	Entitlement	Exhibition	Exploitative	Lack of empathy
Neurotic tendencies	**0.141	0.062 -	**0.174	**0.186	*0.108	0.093	*0.115

* Statistically significance at 0.05, **Statistical significance at 0.01

Table (3) reveals a statistically significant positive correlation between the dependent variables (narcissism and neurotic tendencies) among students at university technical education colleges in Jordan. This result is considered logical and inferential, given that neurotic tendencies, a state of emotional imbalance, and negative emotions such as anxiety characterize the narcissistic personality.

Additionally, the results show a strong positive correlation between neurotic tendencies and superiority. This is not surprising given that an emotionally unstable person who thinks of himself as the best among others is also unable to form consensual relationships with others.

The results also suggest a positive correlation between the entitlement dimension and neurotic tendencies. This result can be explained by the high indicators of concern resulting from unrealistic expectations of special preferential treatment. The findings also show a significant positive association between exhibitionism and neurotic tendencies, which can be explained by the fact that the desire to be the center of attention for others causes a person to exhibit high levels of anxiety indicators.

Finally, the findings reveal a positive correlation between a lack of empathy and neurotic tendencies. This finding could be explained by the fact that a person with a lack of empathy also tends to be neurotic, has trouble understanding other people, finds it difficult to express their emotions to them, and refuses to accept their needs and feelings.

This result is consistent with what was stated by the American Psychiatric Association (2004), in that narcissism is a stable form of grandiosity, imagination, behavior, and the need for appreciation. In addition to being deficient in emotional understanding, the belief that one is special and unique has a sense of superiority and displays arrogant and condescending behaviors. It agrees with the result of Macri and John (1992), which exhibited an association with neurotic tendencies and personality traits that focus on hostility and intense negative emotions.

Hypothesis Two: Is there a statistically significant difference between the students at university technical education colleges in Jordan for narcissism attributable to the gender variable ?

To check the validity of the second hypothesis, means, standard deviations, and a T-test were utilized to estimate the responses of study subjects towards narcissism by the gender variable. Results are detailed in Table (4) below:

Table 4. Descriptive analysis, T-Test for the responses of the students at University Technical Education Colleges in Jordan on the Narcissism Scale by gender variable

Variables	Male		Female		T-Test	P-Value
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.		
Authority	18.12	3.71	16.94	4.26	2.59	0.01
Superiority	17.83	2.27	17.95	3.76	0.63	Non-sig
Entitlement	16.89	3.84	16.87	3.65	0.08	Non-sig
Exhibitionism	17.77	4.16	18.20	4.16	0.79	Non-sig
Exploitativeness	15.65	4.08	13.33	3.68	4.74	0.01
Lack of Empathy	13.51	3.46	12.18	3.39	3.05	0.01
Narcissism	99.77	16.52	95.47	16.9	2.17	0.05

The results in Table (4) exhibit statistically significant gender differences on the narcissism scale. It turns out that males have a higher level of narcissism than females on the total narcissism scale. This result can be interpreted by the fact that the students in Technical Education Colleges typically have a unique self-concept perspective and enjoy special characteristics such as independence and individualism compared to the female students who practice some forms of dependency.

Regarding the differences in gender on the dimensions of the narcissism scale, it is shown that there are statistically significant gender differences. The average scores of male students were higher than those of female students in the following sub-dimensions: power, exploitation, and lack of empathy. We can say that this result aligns with the prevalent societal culture in Jordan, which emphasizes male authority as essential within the family and broader society.

The findings suggest a significant gender difference in the prevalence of exploitation, with male students in the sample reporting a higher incidence than female students.

Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found in the lack of empathy, where male students showed higher average scores compared to their female colleagues, suggesting a lower level of empathy in the former group. This result is consistent with gender stereotypes, which hold that women are generally more capable of expressing their emotions and have stronger sympathetic tendencies than men. These results partially support earlier studies by Ames et al. (2006) and Miller and Campbell (2008), and they also somewhat agree with the findings of Pincus and Ansel (2009), depending on the particular sample characteristics and measuring tools used.

Recommendations

The researcher suggests that awareness lectures and media education be held to elucidate the distinctions between normal and abnormal narcissism in light of prior research, literature, and study results, as well as the current study's and its predecessors' findings. Additionally, professionals in the fields of community mental health, educational counseling, and psychological counseling should focus on creating practical counseling and psychological treatment plans that are tailored to the needs of individuals who suffer from abnormal narcissism.

We further recommend carrying out additional research and analytical studies that tackle the idea of narcissism and its correlation with other psychological and demographic factors like birth rank, academic achievement, academic average, emotional balance, academic procrastination, psychological flexibility, and psychological hardiness among college, institute, and university students. In addition, more research and comparative studies on the relationship between neurotic tendencies and narcissism should be conducted among college, institute, and university students studying human, social, and scientific disciplines. Finally, more research and experimental studies examining the relationship between neurotic tendencies and narcissism should be conducted on various segments and age groups, including children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and older people.

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