

How Do Self-Esteem and Narcissism Contribute to Psychosocial and Academic Outcomes?

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Introduction

Research suggests that self-esteem and narcissism are distinct constructs (Pauletti, Menon, Menon, & Perry, 2012) with vastly different outcomes.

- A high sense of **self-esteem** is generally associated with positive outcomes such as relationship and job satisfaction, higher occupational status, and better physical health (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012)
- **Narcissism** is associated with arrogance, intolerance, lack of empathy, and aggression (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). There has been little research that pits narcissism and self-esteem as competing contributors to academic outcomes such as academic entitlement and college self-efficacy.

The current study examines how self-esteem and narcissism contribute to academic entitlement (specifically, one's perception of externalized responsibility, which captures an entitled lack of responsibility for one's education, and entitled expectations, which captures students' entitled expectations about professors and their course policies), college self-efficacy, and personality measures. **We focus on the following question: how do self-esteem and narcissism contribute to these outcomes relative to one another?**

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that researchers should continue to treat self-esteem and narcissism as distinct constructs with different outcomes, particularly in a college population. Self-esteem should be fostered, as it is directly associated with positive academic outcomes including increased college self-efficacy, internalization of positive academic goals, and prudence.

Alternatively, the results do not support the assumption that narcissistic individuals are inherently entitled in an academic setting. In fact, the associations seen here suggest only that narcissism is associated generally positive characteristics, such as sociability and interpersonal sensitivity. It could be that narcissists aim to garner and maintain a grandiose sense of self in more of a social setting (e.g., on social media) as opposed to an academic setting. Future research should investigate this possibility.

Methods

N = 192 (34.6% Male, 65.4% Female) college students (M age = 18.80 years old)

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale** - a 3-point scale assessing a person's sense of self-worth
- **Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-13)** - a 2-point scale assessing grandiosity in the self
- **Academic Entitlement** - 7-point scale assessing *Externalized Responsibility* and *Entitled Expectations*
- **College Self-Efficacy Inventory** - a 10-point scale assessing students' academic behavior and confidence
- **Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)** - A personality inventory that assessed a persons level of *Adjustment, Ambition, Sociability, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Prudence, Inquisitive, and Learning Approach*

Results

Self-esteem was positively associated with college self-efficacy ($b = .42, p < .001$) and the personality measure of prudence (i.e. wisdom, good judgement, and good use of reason; $b = .23, p = .007$), while it was negatively associated with externalized responsibility (i.e., entitled lack of responsibility for one's education; $b = -.21, p = .012$).

Surprisingly, narcissism was not associated with either subscale of academic entitlement. Narcissism was associated with the personality measures sociability ($b = .24, p = .004$) and interpersonal sensitivity ($b = .23, p = .008$). It interesting to note that the relationship between narcissism and interpersonal sensitivity was the opposite of what would be expected, given conventional wisdom about narcissists.

Outcomes	Predictor Variables	
	Self-Esteem	Narcissism
College Self-efficacy	.42 (.000)	-.01 (.932)
Externalized Responsibility	-.21 (.012)	.03 (.688)
Entitled Expectations	-.12 (.189)	.12 (.164)
Adjustment	-.30 (.000)	.08 (.323)
Sociability	.15 (.068)	.24 (.004)
Interpersonal Sensitivity	.03 (.753)	.23 (.008)
Prudence	.26 (.007)	.12 (.149)
Inquisitive	-.01 (.879)	.13 (.109)
Learning Approach	.14 (.093)	.09 (.292)

Note. Table entries are betas with corresponding p-values in parentheses.