

Development of the Narcissism Spectrum Scale

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Introduction

- The Narcissism Spectrum Scale (NSS) is a new scale developed to measure previously ignored domains of trait narcissism including healthy narcissism and narcissistic deficits.

- Data from three samples are used to demonstrate the scale measures extreme, healthy, and deficient narcissism reliably and that scores for each of these domains are associated with expected psychiatric symptoms, attitudes, and life history data.

- The newly developed NSS demonstrates promise as a novel measure useful in distinguishing problematic extreme narcissism from the healthy desire to feel special regarding one's accomplishments and the problematic deficits of insufficient ability to enjoy earned praise.

Method

- Data from two Mturk (online) samples were collected (*N*'s of 410 and 330) to derive the scale and provide validity data presented here. Validating measures included:

- Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) is a 10 items optimism scale.

- Rosenberg's (1965) Self Esteem scale is a 10 item global self-esteem scale.

- The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well Being (WB): The WB scale (Ryff & Singer, 2006) is a 54-item scale assessing various aspects of mental health including autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, etc.

- How I See Myself Questionnaire (Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995) is a 42 trait/skill rating scale filled out for both self and partner (if in a current relationship). EFA resulted yielded three factors which appear to capture broad traits of Crankiness, Confidence, and Understanding.

- Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depression (Radloff, 1977) is a 20 item depression scale.

- State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (trait items; Spielberger, 1989) is a 20 item trait anxiety scale.

- The Young Schema Questionnaire, 3rd Edition (YSQ-3): The YSQ (Young, 2003) is a 90 item scale designed to measure 18 maladaptive core beliefs about the self and others such as expected abandonment, approval seeking, and feelings of mistrust/expectations of abuse.

- The Five Factor Model (FFM): The five broad normal personality domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were assessed using the IPIP full NEO-PI scale. Total scores are presented here.

Results

- The NSS demonstrated very good psychometric properties as a unidimensional scale, $\alpha = .89$, with each subscale demonstrating good internal consistency, α 's = .77, .85, .91. The initial sample CFA demonstrated good model fit, $\chi^2 (162) = 363.74$, $p < .001$, $GFI = .92$, $AGFI = .90$, $CFI = .95$, $RMSEA = .055$, and similar fit was found in the validation sample.

- Correlates:

- The three subscales were examined in light of maladaptive schemas, well being, and normal personality traits in order to demonstrate the initial validity of the three factors. These results are shown in Table 2.

- Each subscale has meaningful and discrepant correlations; indicating that the NSS is capturing a good range of psychological functioning.

- Also included were commonality analyses completed comparing the NSS to the NPI (using these facets from the Narcissism Personality Inventory : Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness) compared to the NSS subscales. These results indicate substantial additional variance explained by the NSS for most correlates.

Table 1. The Narcissism Spectrum Scale (NSS)

Item	Subscale
1. I find it easy to manipulate people	Extreme
2. I insist on getting the respect that's due me	Extreme
3. I'll never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve	Extreme
4. I secretly believe I'm better than most people	Extreme
5. I like to look at myself in the mirror	Extreme
6. I know there's something special about me	Extreme
7. I'm self-confident, but caring	Healthy
8. Obstacles rarely slow me down	Healthy
9. Despite setbacks, I believe in myself	Healthy
10. I press on even on challenging tasks	Healthy
11. I take more pride in my achievements when I have to work hard for them	Healthy
12. I can recognize my limitations without feeling bad about myself	Healthy
13. I'm happy to acknowledge my faults if it improves a situation	Healthy
14. Compliments make me uncomfortable	Insufficient
15. Attention makes me uneasy, even when it's positive	Insufficient
16. It's better to work behind the scenes than be in the spotlight	Insufficient
17. I have missed out on opportunities because I was uncomfortable nominating myself	Insufficient
18. I don't like to talk about myself	Insufficient
19. I feel uneasy when I'm the focus of attention	Insufficient
20. I find it hard to enjoy compliments	Insufficient

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis model for the NSS

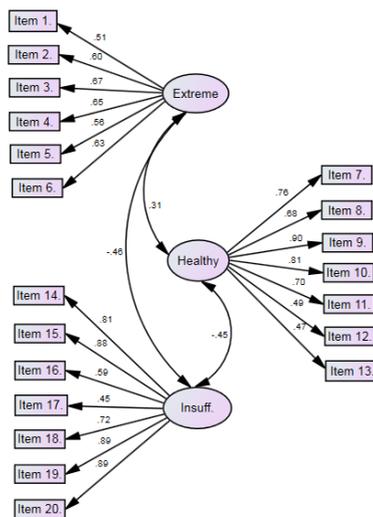


Table 2. NSS Subscale Correlates and NPI comparisons

Correlates	Narcissism Spectrum Scale			Variance Explained in Correlate		
	Extreme	Healthy	Insufficient	Unique to NSS	Unique to NPI	Shared
Optimism	0.22	0.57	-0.38	12%	3%	10%
Self Esteem	0.23	0.54	-0.36	24%	1%	15%
Well Being: Autonomy	-0.02	0.34	-0.24	8%	6%	4%
Well Being: Pos. relationships	0.13	0.50	-0.36	16%	4%	12%
Well Being: General	0.24	0.63	-0.36	28%	2%	11%
For those not in a relationship (n = 126)						
How I See Myself						
Cranky	-0.12	-0.54	0.45	17%	0%	17%
Confident	0.45	0.60	-0.49	18%	3%	37%
Understanding	0.25	0.36	-0.18	9%	12%	7%
For those in a relationship (n = 204)						
How I See Myself						
Cranky	0.07	-0.27	0.09	8%	7%	2%
Confident	0.57	0.41	-0.43	5%	11%	41%
Understanding	0.35	0.33	-0.17	8%	8%	12%
How I See My Partner						
Cranky	-0.04	-0.09	0.16	0%	1%	2%
Confident	0.30	0.32	-0.24	3%	9%	11%
Understanding	0.29	0.32	-0.18	5%	7%	8%
Young's Maladaptive Schemas (selected)						
Abandonment	0.20	-0.24	0.15	9%	5%	4%
Social Isolation	-0.07	-0.41	0.40	11%	3%	10%
Failure	-0.11	-0.40	0.36	10%	3%	6%
Dependence Incompetence	0.01	-0.39	0.23	13%	4%	3%
Entitlement	0.20	-0.18	0.13	6%	4%	2%
Subjugation	-0.07	-0.35	0.38	8%	2%	7%
Unrelenting Standards	0.35	0.14	0.05	8%	1%	8%
Entitlement	0.60	0.08	-0.20	14%	2%	26%
Approval Seeking	0.55	0.01	-0.31	9%	7%	23%
Symptom Measures						
CES-D	-0.10	-0.47	0.48	16%	3%	2%
STAI	-0.22	-0.52	0.56	20%	2%	13%
NEO-FFM (IPIP)						
Neuroticism	-0.13	-0.47	0.63	18%	3%	14%
Extraversion	0.58	0.55	-0.42	12%	5%	36%
Openness	0.07	0.18	-0.08	2%	2%	1%
Agreeableness	-0.45	0.23	-0.09	14%	8%	23%
Conscientiousness	0.10	0.53	-0.43	20%	4%	10%
Average variance explained				12%	4%	13%

Discussion

- The results from the current study provide strong initial evidence for the reliability and validity of the Narcissism Spectrum Scale.

- Those reporting high levels of problematic need to feel special tend to be entitled, approval seeking, disagreeable extraverts (consistent with general notions of problematic narcissism).

- In contrast, moderate levels of healthy narcissism are associated with many positive attributes and few indicators of psychopathology.

- Those endorsing difficulty enjoying the positive aspects of praise and attention also report notable difficulties in emotional regulation, experience less rewarding relationships, feel isolated and generally incompetent.

- The NSS was compared to the NPI and found to explain substantially more variance across domains of validation scales.

- These results are very promising and suggest the NSS fills an important gap in the conceptualization and measurement of narcissism which may be better understood along a continuum of health rather than as a discrete, pathological personality phenomenon.