



Narcissistic Behaviors and Social Media Usage

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between narcissism and selfie posting and other self-promoting behaviors on social networking sites (SNS). Participants were asked questions on SNS usage such as: amount of time users spent on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram, frequency of selfie postings, Public vs Private profile, time spent editing selfies, and frequency of likes/tags/comments/hashtags/tweets. Results showed significant positive correlations between narcissism and several behaviors related to social media usage. This effect was also found to be mediated by self-interest motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Research has found significant positive correlations between **narcissism** and many self-promoting behaviors on SNS such as:

- **Selfie posting frequency**, congruent with the presentation of unrealistic, exhibitionist, self-obsession, highly inflated and self-centered views (McCain et al., 2016; Vazire et al., 2008).
- **Higher individual ratings on selfie attractiveness** (Wang et al., 2012).
- **Liking & commenting on photos** (Sheldon, 2016).
- **More time spent on SNS** (active users) (Davenport et al., 2014).
- **Number of posts, tweets & SNS updates** (Panek et al., 2013).
- **Number of friends & followers** (Bargman et al., 2011).
- Use of a **public (as opposed to a private) profile setting** (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).
- Narcissism is associated with a **need for admiration** (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

HYPOTHESIS 1

Congruent with prior research, it was predicted that selfie-posting & self-promoting behaviors on SNS would positively correlate with narcissism.



HYPOTHESIS 2

Given narcissism is associated with a desire to be admired by others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), we also predicted the relationship between narcissism and self-promoting behaviors on SNS would be mediated by self-interest motivation.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Most Ps (N=117) were students from the University of Baltimore who participated for research credit, but snowball sampling via SNS was also used. The average age was 34.3.

Materials (Online survey & the NPI-13 scale)

The questionnaire included self-reported items on the following SNS behaviors:

- Perceived length of time on SNS
- Number of SNS friends & followers
- Frequency of selfie posting, tweeting, and Facebook status updates
- Perceived selfie attractiveness
- Profile status (Private or Public)
- And the 13-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-13; Gentile et al., 2013), which is composed of paired statements. Higher scores on the scale indicated a greater degree of narcissism.

Design

A **correlational design** examined the relationship between multiple SNS behaviors and narcissism as measured by the NPI-13.

Procedure

- Participants were recruited via the University of Baltimore undergraduate research pool and through snowball sampling on SNS.
- Participants were asked to pull up their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram live feed as they answered the survey questions.
- It was hoped that this would improve the accuracy of the data by minimizing self-report error. This method was a unique contribution of this study to existing research.

RESULTS

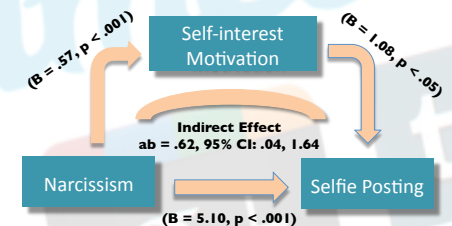
Numerous SNS user behaviors were **significantly positively** correlated with narcissism

CORRELATIONS

Variables	NPI-13
Hours per week on SNS*	.43**
Selfie-posting frequency	.56**
Tag/Comment/Like scale	.48**
Selfie attractiveness	.51**
Instagram subscale (n=89)	.42**
Followers on Twitter (n=66)	.48**
Tweet frequency (n=80)	.44**

Note. * N=115 unless stated **p < .001

MEDIATION MODEL



Public Vs Private

An independent-samples t-test examined Facebook privacy setting (public vs private) on NPI scores. Individuals with **public profiles scored significantly higher** on NPI (N = 40, M = 4.40, SD = 4.12) **than those with private settings** (N = 68, M = 3.10, SD = 2.26), $t(106)=2.14, p = 0.04$.

DISCUSSION

✓ **Confirms prior research** between **narcissism and selfie posting** (McCain et al., 2016), selfie attractiveness (Wang et al., 2012), tagging, commenting & liking (Sheldon, 2015), time spent on SNS (Davenport et al., 2014), frequency of updates & tweets (Panek et al., 2013), public profile setting (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

▪ **Limitations:** use of self-report can only be taken at face value; rarely verified and subject to self-report bias.

▪ **Future directions:** Selfie categories (Sorokowski et al., 2015); longitudinal study on the effects of users (do SNS attract narcissists or do users develop narcissistic behaviors as a result of SNS use?).

