

Relationship Quality from the Perception of Romantic Partners of Narcissists

Research Thesis

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by

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Abstract

Research has recently taken a closer look at how narcissists behave in romantic relationships.

The goal of this study was to see how relationship quality is perceived by their partners.

Participants were asked a) to rate their partners on their levels of narcissism and their impressions about how their partners seek to get their way, b) about their relationship quality, and c) about their own levels of narcissism. Results revealed that perceiving partners as scoring higher on narcissistic rivalry and vulnerable narcissism was generally associated with lower relationship quality, while perceiving the partner as scoring higher on communal narcissism and narcissistic admiration was associated with higher relationship quality. When participants reported that their partners were more narcissistic (with regard to communal narcissism, narcissistic rivalry, and vulnerable narcissism), they reported their partners used less positive means to get their way (such as using manipulation, supplication, bullying, and disengagement). These strategies, in turn, predicted lower quality relationships. These findings help shed light on why relationships with narcissists might not last.

Keywords: narcissism, partner perception, romantic relationship

Relationship quality from the perception of romantic partners of narcissists

It seems as of late that narcissism is widely discussed in everyday life, especially with regard to what narcissists are like as romantic partners. It makes one question what defines a narcissist. In this thesis, I will first start by describing three forms of trait narcissism. I will then explain what previous research has to say about how narcissists behave in relationships. While much research has examined relationships from the perspective of the narcissist, not much research has focused on the perceptions of their partners. The goal of this thesis project is to fill in this gap.

Trait narcissism is defined by the sense of entitlement, self-absorption, and lack of regard for others (Naderi, 2018). Narcissists are often described as being charming, self-assured, and popular when first meeting someone (Fatfouta, Zeigler-Hill, & Schröder-Abé, 2017). Narcissists perceive themselves as smarter, more creative, and generally superior compared to others. Though they think they are better than everyone, research has shown that their own perceptions of themselves are not always accurate (Gebauer et al, 2012). To maintain their inflated sense of self, they dominate, manipulate and are aggressive in social situations. Not only does this help them maintain their self-esteem, but it also allows them to gain power over people around them. These tactics are ways for narcissists to manage and maintain their higher sense of self. Narcissists use two different domains to maintain their self-attributions: agentic and communal. Agentic characteristics deal with independence and ability to pursue goals. Narcissists who use agentic domains are focused on satisfying themselves through social status, influence, power, and competition (Luo et al., 2014). In contrast, narcissists can also use communal domains. Communal domains focus on relationships and others. Being kind, helpful, and maintaining positive relationships are components that are attributed to the communal

domain (Luo et al., 2014). Narcissists whose focus is the communal domain are also self-motivated and experience self-enhancement by feeling more helpful and kind than others. Thus, there are two kinds of grandiose narcissism: agentic grandiose narcissism and communal grandiose narcissism. Further, there is a form of narcissism that is more fragile and vulnerable.

Most narcissism research has been done on the agentic form of grandiose narcissism, and is typically called, “grandiose narcissism.” Grandiose narcissists are known for their extroversion/outgoing personalities, their ability to manipulate others, and their interpersonal skills (Miller et. al., 2011). Other studies have found that grandiose narcissists show more aggression and dominance (Miller et. al., 2011). It can be assumed that this type of behavior from grandiose narcissists can be contributed to wanting to gain superiority and power (Drotleff & Brunell, 2020). Grandiose narcissists may think they are great at most things, but they are bad at relationships (Zeigler-Hill, 2020). Because grandiose narcissists are outgoing and charming, it allows them to enter romantic relationships with ease (Foster & Brunell, 2016). Though they do not have trouble entering romantic relationships, their relationships are often times short-lived. These short-term relationships suit grandiose narcissists due to their individualistic nature. Benefits most people enjoy in long-term relationships, like emotional intimacy, are something grandiose narcissists try to avoid. Grandiose narcissists have gone as far as to report that the idea of emotional intimacy and closeness that comes from long-term relationships is a turn-off to them (Campbell, 1999). Their avoidance of close intimate relationships plays off of their pragmatic and game-playing love styles (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002).

Grandiose narcissists are not the only ones that feel unsatisfied in the relationship; their partners also report dissatisfaction in the relationship (Brunell & Campbell, 2011). While both

partners are reporting unhappiness, the narcissist seems to underestimate their role in their partner's unhappiness (Ye, et. Al., 2016). When facing conflict in relationships, grandiose narcissists are more likely to use criticism, name-calling, and insults (Peterson & DeHart, 2014). Their reaction to conflict decreases their already unstable commitment level (Foster & Brunell, 2016). This idea that grandiose narcissists are unaware of their impact on their partners circles back to the idea that they think they are more important than those around them.

Communal grandiose narcissism (typically shorted to "communal narcissism") is characterized by the self-enhancement people feel when in a social environment (Gebauer et al., 2012). Communal narcissism differs from grandiose narcissism because they "satisfy self-motives through communal means" (Gebauer et al., 2012). Gebauer et al. (2012) suggests communal narcissists assess themselves using communal attributes, meaning they feel like they are kinder, more helpful, and excel in nurturing more than the average person. Though they think they are considerably better in this domain than are others, research shows they are no kinder or more helpful than people who are noncommunal narcissists (Gebauer et al., 2012). This idea stretches into romantic relationships as well. Due to the fact that communal narcissists consider themselves great givers, they therefore assume they are great romantic partners (Drotleff & Brunell, 2020). Drotleff and Brunell (2020) argue that communal narcissists view their romantic relationships more positively, they report more communal behaviors, more satisfaction, and more commitment toward their commitment. Little research has been done on communal narcissists making it difficult to know if their happiness in relationships is accurate. More data is still needed to understand how communal narcissists behave in relationships and how they are perceived by their partners.

Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism sound like they should be polar opposites, but they are not. They share grandiose fantasies and expectations about the self, harbor feelings of entitlement, and display a willingness to exploit other individuals for their own gain (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Much like the name suggests, vulnerable narcissists have fragile and unstable self-esteem (Miller & Campbell, 2008). Vulnerable narcissists tend to be introverted and worriers (Miller et. al., 2011). Due to their modesty, shyness, and fragile self-esteem, vulnerable narcissists strive to gain the approval of others (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Vulnerable narcissists achieve their sense of self-worth by how they think others perceive them. Having unstable self-esteem but also maintaining narcissistic entitlement can cause vulnerable narcissists to experience disappointment with unmet expectations. This can cause vulnerable narcissists to feel depressed and socially withdrawal in order to manage their fragile self-esteem (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003).

Little is known about vulnerable narcissists and their relationships. What is known about vulnerable narcissists is due to their fragile self-esteem; they have higher attachment anxiety and are more concerned about their partners leaving them (Rohmann et al.,2012, Hart et al., 2018). To combat their feelings, vulnerable narcissists will purposefully make their partners jealous. Establishing a jealous partner gives them power, control, and allows them to test their partner's love (Brunell, in press). Vulnerable narcissists hope that their partners will react to jealousy by reassuring their partners or their love and commitment, causing their self-esteem to be inflated by the approval of their partners (Brunell, in press).

Taken together, there seems to be evidence that relationships with trait narcissists are rocky. However, little research has examined the relationship from the lens of the partner. The purpose of the present study was to use the perspectives from romantic partners on the extent to

which they perceived their partners as narcissistic and how this perception related to their relationship quality. I expected to find that people with grandiose and vulnerable narcissistic partners would report lower quality relationships. Given the research examining communal narcissism demonstrated that they believe their relationships are happy, I was interested in the extent to which the partners of communal narcissists agreed that they have higher quality relationships when communal narcissists, like grandiose narcissists, perceive themselves to be superior to others. Thus, I hypothesized that though communal narcissists may perceive themselves as good partners, their relationship quality might suffer because of their more entitled and self-centered nature. In addition, I explored the tactics perceived narcissists use to get their way; this was done as an exploratory analysis.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from the Prolific platform. Of the 174 participants, 96 were females and 75 were males. Participants were required to be 18 years or older and involved in an ongoing relationship to be eligible for participation. Demographically, participants were 8.4% African American, 3.2% Hispanic, 1.3% Native/Pacific Islander, 72.9% White, 12.9% Asian, and 1.3% other. Participants were 36 years old on average ($SD=10.8$). Average relationship length was 10.93 months ($SD= 10.567$). Relationship statuses were 1.2% casually dating, 30.6% dating seriously, 64.2% married, and 4.1% other (divorced before but dating now). Most participants were heterosexual (85%) with another 2.9% gay/lesbian, 9.2% reported bisexual, and 2.9% reported other. After completion of the survey, participants were compensated \$3.

Materials

Relationship Quality Questionnaires.

Self-determined Motivation for Being in a Relationship Questionnaire (Blais et al., 1990) examined people's motivation for being in their relationship. Self-determination is the extent to which someone is choosing to be in their relationship. This measure has 18 items that are on a 7-point scale (1= does not correspond at all, 7= corresponds exactly). The self-determination questionnaire asks people why they want to be in a relationship. Each item then asks questions like, "I don't know. I don't feel like making the effort to keep this relationship together". Each question item can be categorized into six different motivations, intrinsic, identified, integrated, a-motivated, external, and introjected. Weighted scores of +3, +2, +1 were given to intrinsic, integrated, and identified motivations. Weighted scores of -3, -2, -1 were given to a-motivation, external, and introjection and all scores were combined for a total score index.

The Investment Model Questionnaire (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) was used to measure satisfaction, commitment, alternatives to the relationship, and investment in the relationship. The investment model questionnaire has 22 items that use a 7-point scale (1= disagree completely, 7= agree completely). Questions 1-7 measure commitment (such as "I want our relationship to last a very long time"), 8-12 measure satisfaction (such as "I feel satisfied with our relationship."), 13-17 measure attention to alternatives (such as "The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved with are very appealing."), and questions 18-22 measure investment (such as "I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end."). Scores are averaged for each index.

The Inclusion of Others in the Self scale (IOS) (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) was used to measure relationship closeness. The IOS uses a Venn diagram to represent partner

closeness. Seven circles changing in degree of overlap represent the closeness of two romantic partners; participants can choose 1 for zero overlap to 7 which has the most overlap.

The Influence Strategy Questionnaire (Howard et al., 1986) asks participants to think about how their partners use influencing behavior to get their way. Using a 9-point scale (1= always, 9= never) they are asked to rate how often their partners use manipulation (such as dropping hints, flattering, seducing, or reminding of past favors), bullying (such as threatening, insulting, using violent behavior, or ridiculing), disengagement (sulking, making the partner feel guilty, leaving the scene), supplication (pleading, crying, acting ill, or acting helpless), autocracy (insisting, claiming knowledge about a topic, asserting authority), and bargaining (reasoning, compromising, offering a trade-off) (Howard et al., 1986). Scores are averaged for each influence strategy.

Narcissism Questionnaires.

Perceptions of Partner Narcissism was used by asking the participant to respond to items concerning their romantic partner. Perceptions of grandiose narcissism was assessed using the short-form versions of *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ-S)* (Leckelt et al., 2018), The NARQ-S uses a 6-item questionnaire that consists of 3 rivalry and 3 admiration questions. An example of a partner-rivalry question is, “My partner reacts annoyed if another person steals the show from them”, and an example of partner-admiration is “My partner wants their rivals to fail”. Participants selected responses using a 6-point scale (1= strongly agree, 6= strongly disagree). Scores are averaged for each index.

Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS) (Hendin & Cheek, 1997) was used to measure perceptions of vulnerable narcissism. A sample statement was “My partner can become entirely

absorbed in thinking about their personal affairs, their health, their cares or their relations to others”. The HSNS has 10 items that use a 5-point scale (1 = very uncharacteristic, untrue, or strongly disagree, 5 = very characteristic, true, or disagree). Scores are averaged to create an index of partner-perceived vulnerable narcissism.

Communal Narcissism Scale (CNI) (Gebauer et. al., 2012). The CNI is a 16-item questionnaire using a 7-point scale (1= disagree strongly, 7= agree strongly). CNI questions look like, “My partner thinks they are the most helpful person they know”. Scores are averaged to create an index of partner-perceived communal narcissism.

Self-Narcissism: Participants finish the survey by completing a self-evaluation using the same narcissism questionnaires in their original form.

Procedures

Participants were asked to complete a Qualtrics survey. Survey length was predicted to last no more than 30 minutes. The average time was 19.5 minutes (SD=9.9 minutes). The survey consisted of questionnaires that assessed relationship quality, perceived partner narcissism, strategies partners use to get their way in the relationship, and self-narcissism levels.

Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s α for study measures. Table 2 shows the correlations between self-reported narcissism and reported partner-perceived narcissism. The generalization can be made that the more the participant saw themselves as narcissistic, the more they perceived their partner to be as well.

Table 3 shows correlations between perceived partner influence strategies and narcissism variables. Manipulation was associated with higher partner rivalry, admiration, vulnerable narcissism (HSNS), and communal narcissism (CNI). Higher partner rivalry, vulnerable

narcissism, and communal narcissism were associated with supplication. Bullying was associated with higher partner rivalry and vulnerable narcissism. Autocracy was associated with higher partner rivalry, admiration, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism. Higher partner rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were associated with disengagement. Bargaining was associated with lower partner rivalry and vulnerable narcissism. Higher self- admiration, and communal narcissism were associated with manipulation. Supplication was associated with higher self-rivalry and communal narcissism. Higher self-rivalry was associated with bullying. Autocracy was associated communal narcissism. Disengagement and bargaining were not associated with self-narcissism variables.

Table 4 shows the correlation between partner- perceived and self-reported narcissism with relationship quality variables (commitment, satisfaction, alternatives, investment, closeness, and reason for being in the relationship = self-determination). For partner-perceived narcissism, higher rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were associated with lower commitment. Higher rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were associated with lower satisfaction, but higher partner admiration is associated with higher satisfaction. Higher rivalry, vulnerable narcissism and communal narcissism were associated with higher alternatives. Higher rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were associated with lower investment. Higher rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were associated with lower reported closeness. Higher admiration and communal narcissism were associated with increased closeness. Higher rivalry, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism were associated with lower self-determination.

For self-reported narcissism variables, rivalry and communal narcissism were associated with lower commitment. Higher rivalry, admiration and communal narcissism were associated with higher alternatives. Higher communal narcissism was associated with lower investment.

Higher rivalry and communal narcissism were associated with less self-determination to be in a relationship.

To complete the correlation analyses, I looked at the relationship between relationship quality (commitment, satisfaction, alternatives, investment, closeness, and self-determination) and influence strategies (manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, disengagement, and bargaining). Table 5 summarizes the correlation. Commitment was negatively associated with manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, and disengagement. Satisfaction was also negatively associated with manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, and disengagement; but satisfaction was also positively associated with bargaining. Alternatives was positively associated with manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, and disengagement. Manipulation, supplication, autocracy, and disengagement were negatively associated with investment. Investment was also positively associated with bargaining. Closeness was only associated negatively with disengagement. Self-determination was negatively associated with manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, and disengagement. Bargaining was positively associated with self-determination.

In order to determine the extent to which perceived partner-narcissism predicted relationship quality variables, a series of multiple regression analyses were performed with perceived partner narcissism variables as predictors and each relationship quality variable (commitment, satisfaction, alternatives, investments, and closeness) as outcome variables. Table 6 summarizes these regression models. Higher perceived partner rivalry is associated with significantly less commitment. Higher perceived partner admiration is associated with more commitment. Low satisfaction was predicted by high perceived partner rivalry and vulnerable narcissism. High satisfaction was associated with high perceived partner admiration and

communal narcissism. Alternative was high when associated with high perceived partner vulnerable narcissism. However, there was no significant association with investment. Higher perceived partner rivalry was associated with less closeness. Higher perceived partner communal narcissism was associated with more closeness. Self-determination was associated negatively with rivalry and vulnerable narcissism, while self-determination was associated positively with admiration.

Next, a series of multiple regression analyses were computed with self-reported narcissism variables predicting relationship quality variables. These results are summarized in Table 7. High rivalry and communal narcissism were associated with lower commitment. High admiration was associated with higher satisfaction. Self-determination was associated negatively with high rivalry and communal narcissism, while associated positively with admiration.

Table 8 shows the results of multiple regression analyses of perceived partner influence strategies (manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, disengagement, and bargaining) with perceived partner narcissism variables (rivalry, admiration, vulnerable, and communal). Manipulation was positively predicted by high rivalry and communal narcissism. High vulnerable and communal narcissism were positively associated with supplication. Bullying was positively significant when rivalry and vulnerable narcissism were high. Autocracy was positively significant when associated with high rivalry. Disengagement was positively significant when associated with high rivalry and vulnerable narcissism. Bargaining had no significance in the regression.

Table 9 shows regression of perceived partner influence strategies (manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, disengagement, and bargaining) with self-reported narcissism variables (rivalry, admiration, vulnerable, and communal). Manipulation was positively significant when communal narcissism was high. Communal narcissism was positively associated with supplication. Higher rivalry and communal narcissism were associated with positive bullying, while admiration was associated with lower bullying. Autocracy was only predicted positively by communal narcissism.

The final regression table (Table 10) analyzes the interaction between relationship quality factors (commitment, satisfaction, alternatives, investment, closeness, and self-determination) and influence strategies (manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, disengagement, and bargaining). Commitment was negatively significant when supplication and bullying were high. Satisfaction was negatively associated when disengagement was high and positively associated when bargaining was high. High supplication was positively associated with alternatives. Investments was negatively associated with high supplication and positively associated with high bargaining. Closeness was only negatively associated with high disengagement. Self-determination was negatively associated with high supplication and bullying. Self-determination was also positively associated with high bargaining.

Discussion

Commitment, closeness, and intimacy are keys to a satisfying relationship, but research has demonstrated that narcissists tend to avoid those aspects of relationships (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). The interest of this present study was to understand how narcissists were perceived by their partners and the relationship quality of these partners. Expectations were that people who perceived their partners to be grandiose or vulnerable narcissists would

experience a lower quality relationship. In addition, I expected that communal narcissists would assume high quality relationships but did not have expectations of how their partners would perceive them. I further sought to examine behaviors in relationships, such as the influence tactics perceived narcissists use to get their way.

People who perceived their partner to have narcissistic rivalrous characteristics seemed to be less happy in their relationships. They reported feeling less committed, less satisfied, and did not have a sense of closeness to their partner. They reported having lower self-determination to maintain the relationship, meaning their motivations and reasons for staying in their relationship seemed to have more to do with pressure and control than because of love for the partner. Similar reactions occurred from partners of perceived vulnerable narcissists. Both satisfaction in the relationship and self-determined reasons for being in the relationship were lower when participants perceived their partners as being more vulnerable narcissistic. An interesting finding was that partners of perceived vulnerable narcissists reported more interest in alternatives. This interaction stands out because it is the only narcissism facet that shows attention to alternatives when partners are reflecting on their relationship quality.

Participants reported feeling they were being manipulated, bullied, controlled, and felt their partners were emotionally distancing themselves when they perceived narcissistic rivalrous traits in their partners. Manipulation, control, bullying, and pulling away emotionally are classic narcissistic strategies (Brunell, in press). Because of their motives for power (Drotleff & Brunell, 2020), it follows that narcissists would want to control and use people while maintaining emotional detachment. It seems that they might use these strategies naturally and assume that they are smart enough to use them without their partners realizing. These strategies might also

help ensure they do not develop close intimate relationships. Similar patterns for influence strategies were found when participants self-reported narcissistic rivalrous traits.

When participants perceived their partner to be more vulnerable narcissistic, they also perceived them to use more begging and disengagement strategies, a pattern which seems paradoxical. One would think the more someone begged and pleaded to get their way, the less likely they would be to distance themselves from their partner. But, in turn, vulnerable narcissists use passive aggressive tactics such as sulking and making their partner feel guilty. Perhaps they use passive aggressive ways after their begging and pleading behaviors do not work. I think this is a tactic that vulnerable narcissists use to help preserve their self-esteem. Instead of continuing to beg and plead they choose to retreat and turn inwards.

Self-reflection presented that when the participants also self-reported narcissistic rivalrous characteristics, the relationship suffered. Self-reports showed a decrease in commitment and self-determination to be in the relationship. It is interesting that self-reported and partner perceived rivalrous narcissism showed similar patterns. It seemed as if both having a narcissistic rivalrous partner and being the narcissistic rivalrous partner combines to bring the quality of the relationship down.

Even though vulnerable narcissists also perceived their partners to be vulnerable narcissists as well, it seemed that perception of the partner was related to relationship quality whereas one's own level of vulnerable narcissism was not. It was not surprising that perceiving one's partner as vulnerable narcissistic related to lower relationship quality because vulnerable narcissists appear to be negative and unhappy people. However, it was interesting that there was a null relationship between self-rated vulnerable narcissism and relationship quality even when one possesses these same traits.

Self-reported vulnerable narcissistic traits revealed no significant association with influence strategies. Participants did not see their partners as using any particular strategy an overwhelming amount. This also could be due to the idea of vulnerable narcissists being more reserved and introspective. It could be possible that a vulnerable narcissist is not going to put in the effort to getting their way. Their partners are not doing what they want and therefore they will simply remove themselves completely.

Unexpectedly, when participants perceived their partners to have traits from the other two facets, narcissistic admiration and communal narcissism, positive relationship implications were observed. Commitment, satisfaction, and self-determination to be in the relationship were nurtured when partners were perceived to have narcissistic admiration traits. Similarly, satisfaction and closeness were associated with communal narcissism. Based off these findings, communal narcissists could be right about being thinking they are better romantic partners (Drotleff & Brunell, 2020). Something to investigate is how partners displaying narcissistic admiration and communal narcissism traits cultivate elevated relationship quality.

Participants seemed no less likely to view their partners as using any of the influence strategies when they associated narcissistic admiration traits to their partners. The other three facets showed perceived use of manipulation, supplication, bullying, autocracy, and disengagement. There was no predictable pattern for influence strategies due to the increased relationship quality reported for perceived narcissistic admiration partners. It was interesting that bargaining was not the primary strategy because bargaining involves constructive behaviors such as compromising.

Perceived communal narcissists were perceived to be more manipulative and used begging behavior to get their way. When looking at how communal narcissists feed off social

interactions, it makes sense that they would use social strategies such as manipulation to get their way. However, it was noteworthy that perceived communal narcissists were also not perceived to use more constructive influence strategies to get their way.

Narcissistic admiration self-reports demonstrated greater relationship quality. This could be due to narcissistic admiration traits making people feel more positively about other aspects of their life, increasing their relationship quality. Yet, self-reported communal narcissism showed lower commitment and self-determination to be in the relationship. This is a big contrast to how partners of communal narcissists perceived their relationship quality. This could be contributed to the idea that communal narcissists think they are great givers leading them to have a similar expectation from their partners. When their partners cannot match their grand gestures and generosity they feel the relationship quality decrease. Perhaps this causes them to be less committed.

Self-reported narcissistic admiration and its relationship with influence strategies was similar to the association between perceived partner narcissistic admiration and influence strategies. When participants themselves showed narcissistic admiration traits, they thought their partner was less likely to use bullying as an influence tactic. An interesting finding was that self-reported vulnerable narcissists did not perceive their partners to use any specific strategy; unlike what was seen when looking at strategies used when partners were perceived to be vulnerable narcissists. Self-reported communal narcissism not only had higher manipulation and supplication like the perceived partner communal narcissism, but self-reported communal narcissists thought their partners bullied more and used controlling tactics to get their way.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Future Directions

When looking at vulnerable and communal narcissism, little research has been done to further analyze how these two forms of narcissism relate to relationship quality variables. This study was one of few that was investigating the perception of the narcissist's partner. The past research had looked at how the narcissist viewed their relationship quality. Specifically, data had been collected on how grandiose narcissists view their relationships. Not only was this present study bridging a gap in narcissism research, it used a more mature sample. It is common in psychology research to see samples from undergraduate programs, resulting in young adult samples. The sample of this study was more diverse and enabled me to examine older participants in ongoing relationships. A strength in the sample was that I was able to have participants that had a wider range in age and relationship experience, unlike an undergraduate psychology sample which is typically restricted in both age and relationship longevity.

Considering this was a correlational study there was weakness in that biases were present in participants. When reflecting on their partner's tendencies they could have been using themselves as the comparison. It would have been helpful and strengthened the study to have both partners of a couple involved. Further research should investigate accessing couples and running both partners through the study. By only having half of the couple involved it limited our analysis to one side. An important analysis would be to look into why partners of narcissists stay in those relationships. My data showed that some people who have narcissistic partners reported lower relationship quality. However, no research has been done on why people are motivated to stay in relationships with narcissists.

Conclusion

This study was among the first to examine various forms of narcissism and how they pertained to relationship quality. The focus on perceptions of the partner has rarely been examined in previous research but is an important aspect to consider. Although frequently relationships among narcissists suffer, there was some suggestion that not all narcissistic relationships are poor. For example, the facet of narcissistic admiration might foster more positive relationships. This could lead to further our understanding about how narcissists function in relationships.

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Table 1.*Cronbach's α , Means (M), and Standard Deviations (SD) for study measures.*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Perceived Partner Admiration	3.672	1.123	.651
Perceived Partner Rivalry	2.241	1.101	.776
Perceived Partner HSNS	3.364	1.210	.853
Perceived Partner CNI	3.376	1.253	.941
Perceived Partner Manipulation	2.107	.809	.719
Perceived Partner Supplication	6.287	1.122	.797
Perceived Partner Bullying	5.767	1.338	.876
Perceived Partner Autocracy	3.100	1.534	.811
Perceived Partner Disengagement	3.998	1.033	.775
Perceived Partner Bargaining	5.611	1.164	.779
Self-Admiration	2.519	1.052	.772
Self-Rivalry	1.983	0.796	.527
Self HSNS	2.872	.761	.788
Self CNI	3.357	1.141	.931
IOS	5.46	1.320	---
Commitment	6.419	.991	.727
Satisfaction	5.819	1.310	.931
Alternatives	3.030	1.501	.855
Investments	5.767	.992	.701
Self-Determination	19.435	10.946	---

Manipulation	2.106	.809	.719
Supplication	1.503	.692	.797
Bullying	1.260	.587	.876
Autocracy	1.814	.953	.811
Disengagement	1.735	.858	.775
Bargaining	1.933	.998	.779

Note. HSNS = The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; CNI = Communal Narcissist Inventory; IOS = Inclusion of Others in the Self

Table 2

Correlations between perceived partner narcissism and self-narcissism

	Partner- Rivalry	Partner- Admiration	Partner- HSNS	Partner- CNI	Self- Rivalry	Self- Admiration	Self- HSNS	Self- CNI
Partner-Rivalry								
Partner-Admiration	.251**							
Partner-HSNS	.606**	.128						
Partner-CNI	.303**	.534**	.269**					
Self-Rivalry	.377*	.086	.360**	.242**				
Self-Admiration	.193*	.446**	.094	.493**	.369**			
Self-HSNS	.200*	.055	.404**	.113	.481**	.125		
Self-CNI	.283**	.399**	.205**	.694**	.209**	.618**	-	---
							0.008	

Note. HSNS = *The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale*; CNI = *Communal Narcissist Inventory*.
 ** $p < .001$

Table 3

Correlations between perceived partner influence strategies and perceived partner + self-narcissism

	Manipulation	Supplication	Bullying	Autocracy	Disengagement	Bargaining
Partner-Rivalry	.401**	.401**	.442**	.614**	.554**	-.186*
Partner-Admiration	.259**	.080	.062	.217*	.049	.087
Partner-HSNS	.295**	.492**	.387**	.438**	.481**	-.196*
Partner-CNI	.343**	.309**	.099	.252**	.115	-.038
Self-Rivalry	.122	.222**	.189**	.186	.099	.047
Self-Admiration	.264**	.123	-.002	.130	-.016	.099
Self-HSNS	.017	.148	.105	.116	.081	.013
Self-CNI	.388**	.264**	.141	.226*	.094	.021

Note. HSNS = *The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale*; CNI = *Communal Narcissist Inventory*.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Correlations between relationship quality factors and partner perceived + self-reported narcissism

	Commitment	Satisfaction	Alternative Investment	Closeness	Self-determination
Partner-Rivalry	-.376**	-.458**	.261**	-.201**	-.229**
Partner-Admiration	.047	.160*	.041	.005	.159*
Partner- HSNS	-.369**	-.498**	.363**	-.241**	-.166*
Partner- CNI	-.109	.061	.217**	-.074	.159*
Self-Rivalry	-.235**	-.087	.188*	-.139	-.022
Self-Admiration	-.123	.111	.242**	-.114	.049
Self- HSNS	-.104	-.086	.076	-.029	-.143
Self-CNI	-.223**	.007	.254**	-.189*	.064

Note. HSNS = *The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale*; CNI = *Communal Narcissist Inventory*
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Correlations between relationship quality factors and influence strategies

	Commitment	Satisfaction	Alternatives	Investment	Closeness	Self-determination
Manipulation	-.294**	-.203**	.272**	-.164*	-.030	-.375**
Supplication	-.489**	-.418**	.393**	-.299**	-.146	-.558**
Bullying	-.473**	-.441**	.256**	-.106	-.106	-.544*
Autocracy	-.358**	-.440**	.255**	-.162*	-.128	-.520**
Disengagement	-.489**	-.628**	.341**	-.219*	-.245**	-.590**
Bargaining	.135	.287**	-.118	.159*	.117	.262**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Regression of relationship quality factors with perceived partner narcissism rivalry, narcissism admiration, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism.

Partner	Commitment	Satisfaction	Alternative Investment	Closeness	Self-Determination	
	β	β	β	β	β	
NARQ-	-.341*	-.371*	.087	-.151	-.368*	-.373**
R						
NARQ-	.199*	.226*	-.112	.096	.138	.192*
A						
HSNS	-.161	-.327*	.275*	-.149	-.015	-.362**
CNI	-.055	.147*	.170	-.029	.232*	-.056
R ²	.215	.385	.156	.74	.169	.434

Note. NARQ-R = Narcissism Rivalry; NARQ-A = Narcissism Admiration; HSNS = The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; CNI = Communal Narcissist Inventor; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 7

Regression of relationship quality factors and self-narcissism rivalry, narcissism admiration, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism.

Self	Commitment β	Satisfaction β	Alternative β	Investment β	Closeness β	Self-determination β
NARQ-R	-.217*	-.120	.111	-.129	.104	-.211*
NARQ-A	.112	.229*	.093	.049	.014	.248*
HSNS	-.015	-.056	.014	.026	-.194	-.047
CNI	-.247**	-.111	.172	-.192	.032	-.340**
R ²	.094	.040	.088	.048	.033	.118

Note. NARQ-R = Narcissism Rivalry; NARQ-A = Narcissism Admiration; HSNS = The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; CNI = Communal Narcissist Inventory; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 8

Regression of partner perceived influence strategies with partner perceived narcissism-rivalry, narcissism- admiration, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism.

Partner	Manipulation β	Supplication β	Bullying β	Autocracy β	Disengagement β	Bargaining β
NARQ-R	.286**	.145	.341**	.529**	.443**	-.139
NARQ-A	.072	-.127	-.025	.039	-.069	.165
HSNS	.058	.356**	.195*	.100	.233*	-.119
CNI	.202*	.232*	-.036	.050	-.049	-.053
R ²	.220	.295	.221	.390	.348	.066

Note. NARQ-R = Narcissism Rivalry; NARQ-A = Narcissism Admiration; HSNS = The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; CNI = Communal Narcissist Inventor; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 9

Regression of partner perceived influence strategies with self-reported narcissism-rivalry, narcissism- admiration, vulnerable narcissism, and communal narcissism.

Self	Manipulation β	Supplication β	Bullying β	Autocracy β	Disengagement β	Bargaining β
NARQ-R	.038	.166	.208*	.148	.096	-.017
NARQ-A	.077	-.146	-.230*	-.085	-.168	.134
HSNS	-.008	.089	.037	.057	-.059	-.013
CNI	.283**	.320**	.243*	.249*	-.179	-.065
R ²	.121	.116	.078	.081	.034	.013

Note. NARQ-R = Narcissism Rivalry; NARQ-A = Narcissism Admiration; HSNS = The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; CNI = Communal Narcissist Inventory; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 10

Regression of relationship quality factors and influence strategies.

	Commitment	Satisfaction	Alternatives	Investments	Closeness	Self-determination
	β	β	β	β	β	β
Manipulation	.004	.109	.053	-.005	.118	-.051
Supplication	-.266*	-.064	.268*	-.304*	-.057	-.251*
Bullying	-.251*	-.089	-.007	.114	.098	-.203*
Autocracy	.047	-.073	.058	-.061	-.046	-.118
Disengagement	-.174	-.515**	.096	-.032	-.285*	-.164
Bargaining	.107	.199**	-.109	.154*	.057	.253**
R ²	.324	.459	.178	.119	.074	.495

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.