Moral Grandstanding as a Narcissistic Intrinsic Satisfaction

Bir Narsisizm Öz Tatmini Olarak Ahlaki Duyarlılık Gösterisi

Ⓘ Gamze Şen[1], Ⓘ Elif Manuoğlu[2]

[1]Manisa Celal Bayar University, Manisa
[2]Palacky University Olomouc, Olomouc, Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to define the concept of moral grandstanding and discuss its antecedents, motivations behind it, and implications. Moral grandstanding is described as contributing to moral discourse to persuade others that one is morally respectable. Individuals who value their moral standing are more concerned about their own self than the topics that they claim to discuss. Therefore, it is likely that individuals who perform moral grandstanding may be high on the narcissistic personality trait. Although moral grandstanding can bring about reputation and fame to individuals, it can be associated with society contribution in some cases. While advertising their prosocial behavior, individuals' true motivation may not be obvious. Thus, it is essential to understand their actual motivation for the behavior in question as well as their level of narcissism in order to understand whether the behavior is considered as an example of moral grandstanding. Pathological narcissism and the intrinsic-extrinsic motivation concept of self-determination theory were used to extend the current understanding of the moral grandstanding concept in the present study. Lastly, the real-life implications of moral grandstanding were discussed with reference to current issues like the ongoing pandemic.

Key words: Moral grandstanding, motivation, aspirations, narcissism, social media

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi kavramını tanımlayarak bu davranışın öncüllerini, altında yatan motivasyonları ve sonuçlarını tartışmaktır. Ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi, bireyin başkalarını ahlaki açıdan saygın olduğuna ikna etmek için ahlaki söyleme katkıda bulunması olarak tanımlanmıştır. Ahlaki konumlarına değer veren bireyler, tartıştıklarını iddia ettikleri konulardan çok benlikleri ile ilgili kaygılara sahiptir. Bu nedenle ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisinde bulunan bireylerin narsisizm kişilik özelliği bakımından yüksek olması da muhtemeldir. Çeşitli hayat amaçları açısından değerlendirildiğinde ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi bireylere itibar ve ün kazandırabilir ve toplum katkısı ile ilişkilendirilebilir. Bireyler, toplum yanlısı davranışlarının reklamını yaparken gerçek motivasyonları belirgin olmayabilir. Dolayısıyla söz konusu davranış için bireylerin gerçek motivasyonunu ve narsisizm düzeyini anlamak, söz konusu davranışın ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi adı altında değerlendirilip değerlendirilmeyeceğini anlamak açısından önemlidir. Ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi kavramı ile ilgili mevcut anlayışı geliştirmek amacıyla bu çalışmada patolojik narsisizm ve öz-yönetim kuramının içsel ve dışsal motivasyon önermesi kullanılmıştır. Son olarak, devam eden pandemi gibi güncel meselelere atıfta bulunularak, ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisinin gerçek hayattaki etkileri tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ahlaki duyarlılık gösterisi, motivasyon, yaşam amaçları, narsisizm, sosyal medya

Introduction

The world literature has only recently paid close attention to moral grandstanding (MG), a concept that is formerly known as virtue signaling (Tosi and Warmke 2016). Considering the motivation behind it, Tosi and Warmke (2016) later renamed the concept "moral grandstanding" (Levy 2021). The concept has not been clearly defined in the Turkish literature, which led us to believe our focus on it will serve as pioneer work. This study aims to define the concept, examine the internal or external sources that conform people to behave in a particular manner, and their possible consequences. The concept of MG is defined as "to be overly sensitive about situations that concern the society, to exhibit overly sensitive attitudes" in this study (Cokol 2020). In our study, expanding on the basic motivations that direct individuals to behave in this way was planned in addition to strengthening our conceptual understanding to facilitate a multidimensional understanding of the concept. We attached priority to providing a solid theoretical understanding to better understand the motivations. Then, inspired by Tosi and Warmke (2016), who presented the concept in a scholarly form, its direct relationship with narcissism will be examined. Considering MG's relationship with social desirability, it is aimed to examine its

relationship with the variables of social media, narcissism, and fame or status-seeking. The transformation of a process that starts as a behavior to display moral sensitivity into a narcissistic self-satisfaction tool with motivations constitutes the main framework of the study."

Conceptual Basis of Moral Grandstanding

The concept of MG has been colloquially referred to as "performative wokeness" (Gray 2018) in English and has been academically referred to as "moral grandstanding" (Levy 2020) or "virtue signaling" (Tosi and Warmke 2016). In the Turkish colloquial speech, the concept has been referred to as "*duyar kasmak*", with the Z generation's use of the word *kasmak* when describing "caring too much about something, spending effort and time for something important, falling on it" as a manifestation of linguistic degeneration and recently combining it with the word "*duyar*" (Cokol 2020).

According to the Turkish Language Association, *duyar* is an expression of an emotion and is used as an adjective to describe something that "provokes rapid and powerful responses when it stimulates the body". The word "kasmak" is used metaphorically to mean "keeping under pressure". In this sense, the word is also used as an idiom in Turkish: *kasıp kavurmak* (to wreak havoc in English) meaning (1) to oppress or persecute a community by coercion or abusive behavior (e.g., Two rogue children have wreaked havoc); (2) to impress, to rule (e.g., There is a frost that is wreaking havoc outside.); (3) to cause a lot of damage, to destroy (e.g., He did a lot of damage to the environment, he raged with anger, he broke hell loose.).

The phrase "*duyar kasmak*" has been recently used in the daily discourse and evoked reactions due to the way it is used. In its basic sense, the verb "kasmak" metaphorically expresses "forcing oneself on a subject, spending a lot of effort on that subject". Therefore, for example,

1) "*takipçi kasmak*" has come to mean "to care about gaining followers, the number of their followers, and to resort to various ways to increase the number of their followers",

2) "*oyun kasmak*" has come to mean "to exert too much effort to play a game,

3) "*seviye kasmak*" has come to mean "to try and level up in a game" or "to raise the average grade point, to attach too much importance and exert effort for it.

As exemplified by its various uses, "*kasmak*" means "to push the limits for a purpose, to spend effort and strength". However, the expression "*duyar kasmak*" has come to mean something completely different, implying "exhibiting or staging insincere sensitivity". The problem with the expression seems to arise from the misuse of the words "*duyar*" and "*kasmak*". With the misuse of the words, the expression has come to mean "forcing oneself to be emotional and sensitive." As such, the expression has been criticized in many regards from the deterioration of language to

the loss of social consciousness. However, the expression has been widely adopted in many areas. In summation, "*duyar kasmak*" has come to mean gaining an indirect gain (reputation, status, likes, etc.) by insincerely appearing morally superior or, in other words, more sensitive than others.

According to Kurt Baier (1965), "Moral speech is often quite disturbing. Can one's moral level be graded by moral accusations, expressing moral anger, making moral judgments, moral rebukes, and the effort to justify oneself? Above all, who could enjoy such conversations?" Raising these questions, he was the first to express discomfort with the concept, seemingly taking a stance against moral sensitivity but actually pointing to a different kind of pleasure. A column in The Guardian declared the concept to be "out of control" (Shariatmadari 2016). In the same year, the concept was named "virtue signaling" by Tosi and Warmke (2016) to describe appearing that way insincerely to benefit from it. By virtue signaling, a member of a social group exerts an effort to appear morally superior or sensitive, which is based either on real or fake data with the goal to gain or further their prestige and status. In their recent empirical papers, Tosi and Warmke, (Grubbs et al. 2019b) later claimed that the concept of "moral grandstanding" is a better definition of the phenomenon than "virtue signaling".

When defining the concept for the first time, Tosi and Warmke (2016) used the phrase "when a person engages in moral discourse aimed at convincing others that he/she is "morally respectable", he/she turns it into a social spectacle". Correspondingly, when a person displays sensitivity, they try to elicit certain desired judgments about themselves. That is, they aim to prove that they are worthy of respect or admiration for having a certain moral quality. Tosi and Warmke (2016) characterize such displays of sensitivity under six categories:

1. Pilling on: It is defined as the serial repetition of a condemnation that has already been made by previous commentators to be seen as a respected member of the group or to prove that they are more respected than others. For example, in regard to the commentaries on minimum salary, they would repeat the same opinion using different sentences such as "A salary below X amount should not be accepted by no means. I think the amount is already the bare minimum" against someone who defends the view. Here, when left with the opportunity to show their righteousness and views that they believe to belong to the "right" side, they will continue expressing the same opinion until they feel acknowledged by everyone or cannot be objected to.

2. Ramping up: When (only) being recognized for being on the "right" side is not enough, some or all members of the group may try to outdo their predecessors by demonstrating a stronger reprimand than previous commentators. In doing so, they seek recognition for being more morally serious and sensitive than others. For example, in opposition to someone defending the need for a minimum wage of X amount, someone who ramps up will claim that suggesting a minimum

wage below 3X amount was not acceptable and even voicing a wage below that amount involved pre-acceptance of poor salaries, thus appearing more sensitive than others.

3. Trumping up: Another way of showing superior moral seriousness and sensitivity is to identify a moral problem that others cannot see. This can lead to an exaggerated display of sensitivity, claiming to see a moral problem when there is none. For example, in the continuation of an opinion advocating for animal rights, someone might say "What about the hungry and thirsty children living on the streets?" to move the subject to another medium while implying that others have not realized it.

4. Excessive Outrage: Sensitivity demonstrators may try to show their moral seriousness by disproportionately displaying anger at any actual crime in the face of the event. For example, they may argue that those who do not agree with them are traitors and there is no other explanation for their disagreement.

5. Claims of Self-Evidence: Demonstrating an exaggerated sensitivity to appear morally respectable by being viewed as more morally understanding or sensitive. For example, posting: "I recently saw a stray dog and I couldn't stand it, so I covered it with my fur coat, #theyareinnocentsouls."

6. Moral Perceptiveness: It can be explained using an implicit analogy. The person exposed to the display of sensitivity can see how an action or claim is false or true. However, a morally sensitive person may imply that those who do not have this capacity are morally incompetent. Thus, while they raise themselves above others with moral ostentatiousness and gain respect, they devalue others in the face of society. For example, to devalue the sensitivity of animal rights activists they may say "They don't take care of their children at home. Take care of your own home/family first."

Tosi and Warmke (2016) claim that the effects of MG will have negative repercussions on social moral discourse in three areas comprising (1) increased cynicism, (2) outrage exhaustion, and (3) group polarization. According to this view, the display of sensitivity can trigger moral cynicism, which can lead to skepticism and disappointment about the sincerity of people's contributions to moral discourse in the long term (Andersson 1996). Their insincerity in their claim to draw attention to injustices will appear as a display of sensitivity, which can turn sensitivity into a performance stage where similar discourses are stacked on top of each other and cannot go beyond that stage. Ramping up, trumping up, and excessive outrage also devalue moral discourse through undermining moral condemnation and moral language. Insincere and exaggerated displays of sensitivity might emerge due to forgetting about the actual discourse, which should have been a respectful discussion about revealing and explaining the morally problematic features of a situation. Excessive outrage outshines people's behaviors and beliefs and appears in a flash (Tosi and Warmke 2016, 2020a). As people stir up the same idea even when not opposing each other's views, and

as discourses pile up, group polarization may occur, as defined by Sunstein (2002), and members of the group may tend to shift towards more extreme viewpoints (Grubbs et al. 2020).

As defined by Tosi and Warmke (2016), MG performers act "as if" with the intention of deceiving others to attract attention to or declare their moral leadership, even in the case of the most harmless acts or against cultural values. Piling up the display of sensitivity, that is, the repetition of something that has been said before to demonstrate one's participation in what one believes to be true occurs in this situation. This may alienate people who could benefit from sensitive discussions. The claims of self-assertion can be so repulsive that they can hinder real debates (Tosi and Warmke, 2020a).

Furthermore, this public display of morality is motivated "significantly by the desire to elevate one's status or rank" (Grubbs et al. 2019b). This desire appears to be a more demanding motivation than "moral dignity" as proposed by Tosi and Warmke (2016) when renaming the concept from "virtue signaling" to "moral grandstanding" (Levy 2021), which inspired us to examine the motivations behind MG.

Theoretical Overview of Motivations

Self-Determination Theory (Self-Determination Theory (SDT); Deci and Ryan 1985, Ryan and Deci 2017) is a well-grounded theory of motivation and examines the underlying causes and purposes of human behavior. Motivation is an informative concept that is related to the direction, energy, and stability of behaviors and intentions (Ryan and Deci 2000). According to the SDT, the motivations of individuals differ not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality, and a fundamental distinction is made in theory between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Basically, if an activity or behavior is done to obtain a tangible reward, it is done with extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation exists only if the behavior is done when the activity is interesting or enjoyable and satisfaction is naturally provided by the activity. When individuals have intrinsic motivation, they have an intrinsic tendency to learn and master, and communicate with their external environment in a way that reflects this. When they have extrinsic motivation, they generally behave to achieve certain results through various "instrumental activities" (Ryan et al. 2021). Therefore, the behavior itself is the goal in intrinsic motivation while the behavior in extrinsic motivation becomes a tool for obtaining concrete rewards. Realistically, however, the ratio of intrinsically motivated behavior to extrinsically motivated behavior is low. Therefore, the SDT puts emphasis on the internalization process and defines various extrinsic motivations to conceptualize this process along a continuum (Ryan and Deci 2000). The theory posits that motivation is not a stable personality trait and behaviors performed with extrinsic motivation can be internalized. Internalized behaviors are more deeply grounded and owned by the individual. As a result, the individual becomes more attached to the behavior and the values within the behavior.

Types of extrinsic motivation or behavioral regulations suggested

by the theory are important to better understand the processes that are involved in the internalization of the behavior. These behavioral regulations are classified depending on the amount of autonomy (more or less). External regulation is the first behavioral regulation and the least autonomous form of behavioral regulation. The behavior in question is entirely carried out due to external pressures (Deci and Ryan 2000, Ryan and Deci 2000). For example, an individual who makes a public donation on social media after being told to do so is directed by external sources. The individual will stop engaging in this behavior when the situation that dictates it is removed. The second type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation. Although the autonomy of these behaviors, which are controlled by external mechanisms, is greater than external regulation, individuals still perform behaviors to avoid guilt or shame or to gain pride. For this reason, still, a tangible reward is at stake (Deci and Ryan 2000, Ryan and Deci 2000). Returning to the previous example, individuals who want to be seen as sensitive by donating may feel proud of their behavior. As a result, they may see themselves as superior and more virtuous than others. Therefore, individuals with this behavioral regulation may be more likely to engage in MG. A more autonomous form of behavioral regulation, in identified regulation, the individual has understood the personal importance of behavior and has begun to internalize the behavior (Deci and Ryan 2000, Ryan and Deci 2000). This behavioral regulation becomes especially important in behaviors that require hard work and perseverance and are naturally unsuitable for intrinsic motivation (e.g., volunteer work). Therefore, at this stage, the individual's donation behavior should not be evaluated only within the framework of MG. Finally, integrated regulation is the behavioral regulation with the highest level of autonomy after intrinsic motivation. Integrated regulation involves the full alignment of the identified arrangements with the self. That is, the behavior in question is integrated with other aspects of the self and is fully accepted (Deci and Ryan 2000, Ryan and Deci 2000). As a result, the individual will now donate wholeheartedly and participate in different behavioral activities in the next stage, rendering MG unlikely.

In a sense, individuals engaging in MG try to persuade others to reach favorable judgments about themselves through the exhibition of moral discourse. From this point of view, we can claim that these people have extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation. The underlying reason(s) for their behavior is introjected regulation, and individuals want to gain praise, respect, or admiration as a result of MG. As mentioned, introjected regulation is the least autonomous behavioral regulation after external regulation. Similarly, introjected regulation emerges, especially if behaviors such as claiming to draw attention to injustices, trying to draw attention to the problems of immigrants, and criticizing animal activists take place in the public domain (for example, social media). The examination of the motivation behind them reveals that individuals who perform MG pretend to behave in a particular manner. In the same vein, the motivation to increase status or degree for engaging in MG (Grubbs et

al. 2019b) strengthens the claim that MG is an extrinsically motivated behavior (introjected regulation). However, it should be noted that, here, MG is a possibility, and we cannot know the exact reason(s) underlying the behavior without the individual's self-declaration.

In line with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, SDT also classifies aspirations as intrinsic or extrinsic (Kasser and Ryan 2001). Meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contribution are intrinsic aspirations while wealth, fame, and image are extrinsic aspirations. Intrinsic aspirations are consistent with the growth tendencies inherent in humans and are also linked to intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic aspirations, on the other hand, are less consistent with human nature because they are highly influenced by the dominant culture. In addition, obtaining social status symbols and receiving positive evaluations and feedback from others are also common goals of individuals with extrinsic aspirations. Therefore, these individuals may engage in behaviors to increase their wealth and fame (Kim et al. 2003). In line with this view, if individuals obtain self-interested outcomes from the results of their "pro-social" actions, their actions are ultimately "impure" and selfish actions (Andreoni 1990).

For example, a behavior performed to contribute to society is intrinsically motivated. From this point of view, a MG behavior that is performed with the desire to set an example, gain prestige, or domination is actually performed with extrinsic motivation and therefore, is associated with extrinsic aspirations. The individual aims to obtain various tangible rewards through the behavior and does not engage in the behavior out of interest. This means that this behavior and the values in it are not fully adopted, and the behavior is not performed autonomously. In simpler terms, an individual has the motivation/purpose to become famous if their primary motivation for moral demonstration is the desire to be recognized as a morally respectable individual. Fame is an extrinsic aspiration and extrinsic aspirations are adopted by individuals with extrinsic motivation.

Accordingly, Tosi and Warmke (2016, 2020a) and Zeigler Hill et al. (2019) have mentioned that being perceived as a morally respectable person and the desire to increase recognition by influencing the masses are the motivations of MG. Tosi and Warmke (2016, 2020a) claimed that the demonstration of sensitivity is characterized by two main motivations. The first central feature is that the individual engaging in MG wants to be perceived as morally respectable in a matter of moral concern. In other words, their behavior is associated with dominance over others. The second feature is the desire to influence the masses, thereby increasing their recognition outside of their own group. This can be associated with prestige (Zeigler-Hill et al. 2019). As mentioned earlier, these goals contradict natural growth and development tendencies. Moreover, external regulation underlies the behaviors that are performed for this purpose, because they are performed in expectation of a tangible reward.

The stronger the extrinsic motivation and desire to be famous

or unique, the higher the individual's effort to achieve tangible outcomes. For example, an individual may exert more effort when they want to be perceived as more sensitive and respectable by a larger audience (including outgroups) compared to being perceived as morally sensitive only by their ingroup. Social media is the most visible place of such efforts. The motivations underlying the use of social media have especially been examined in recent years in light of the increase in the diversity and widespread use of social media, thus becoming more appealing to more diverse groups, (e.g., Manuoğlu and Uysal 2020, Seidman 2013, Sheldon et al. 2011). We should not underestimate the proportion of those who use social media for self-presentation.

Social media offers individuals the opportunity to perform the majority of their activities in front of a large audience. In such an environment, most messages are shared after going through the social construction process. Thus, individuals can create idealized identities by presenting their selves in positive ways (Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012). This offers individuals the opportunity to present themselves how they want to be perceived by others on social media platforms. For example, by showing (e.g., like, share, or send content to others) preference for certain cruelty-free brands to gain status in a group that they would be pleased to be a member of, they try to prove that they are morally superior to people who do not use these brands and that they are similar to members of the morally superior group who use these products. This has normalized presenting a socially desirable self, especially on social media platforms, and MG may become more acceptable and typical at this rate.

Making remarkable donations to various institutions or organizations is another example of MG. By prominently making such donations on social media platforms or in offline settings, individuals might be trying to prove their moral respectability, superiority, and sensitivity. The crucial point here is the hardship in discerning whether the motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. A comparable situation applies to individuals who declare a preference for cruelty-free brands as they can consequently obtain tangible rewards such as status and fame. However, when behavior is examined in terms of other living organisms or social contribution, it is associated with positive results. The donator might be intrinsically motivated to contribute to society. Therefore, a behavior that is perceived as MG might have positive outcomes, albeit not fully knowing the motivation behind it.

As stated by Batson (2011), although actions to contribute to society are altruistic, their individual benefits might be undesirable side effects. Wallace et al. (2020) made a distinction between self-directed and other-directed MG, which acquires particular importance at this point since the individual can easily engage both in self-oriented and other-oriented MG on social media. According to this study, when a person is self-oriented, they exhibit sensitivity to gain some benefits such as prestige. This allows, for example, to improve an individual's overall profile by displaying sensitivity on social media, which makes the person feel good about themself. When other-oriented, however, MG

is defined as a display of sensitivity that focuses on channeling the opinions of others in one direction and aims to establish dominance. In this case, the MG serves to direct the masses about a subject or situation and determine the direction of the moral right through a display of sensitivity on social media, and in this respect, it makes them feel respected. The examination of the common features of self-oriented and other-oriented responsiveness behavior reveals two features:

(i) Intentionally public (for example, using a social network so that the display of MG is widely visible to others),

(ii) Intentionally designed to indicate an individual's sensitivity.

These behaviors performed on social media, in which both extrinsic motivation and extrinsic aspirations are at the forefront, strengthen the claim of the emergence of MG. However, the best source to learn the true reason behind the behavior will be the individuals themselves.

Moral Grandstanding and Narcissism

Narcissism is a multifaceted phenomenon referring to a normally distributed personality trait that is characterized by greatness, need for admiration, and the lack of empathy (APA, 2013). Within its broadly defined structure, it has two basic forms, namely grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. As the first form, grandiose narcissism is closely linked to arrogance, jealousy, power-seeking, aggression, and dominance while vulnerable narcissism is characterized by hypersensitivity to criticism, low tolerance for criticism of others, and shyness. A grandiose narcissistic person is more likely to conceal their vulnerability and regulate their self-esteem at the societal level through openness to self-improvement and denial of weaknesses compared to a vulnerable narcissistic person (Dickinson and Pincus 2003, Miller and Campbell 2008, Russ et al. 2008, Wink 1991).

Back et al. (2013) described two different but related strategies of grandiose narcissism, namely, narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry, both serving to maintain a grandiose self-belief. Accordingly, as Tosi and Warmke (2016) argue, the prestige fantasies and efforts to establish superiority in MG in pursuit of status, fame, or admiration by devaluing the opinions of others can turn into contemptuous tendencies towards others and manifest as narcissistic aggression (Grubbs et al. 2019a).

Narcissism is probably the most prominent personality trait to drive status-seeking impulses (Zeigler-Hill et al. 2018). In the context of individual differences, status-seeking motives are closely related to certain personality traits. For example, extraversion is strongly associated with status-seeking, and a greater level of status-seeking motives is reported in people with higher levels of extraversion (Neel et al. 2016). Similarly, studies have robustly shown that narcissistic traits such as grandiosity and authority are related in various ways, especially with the desire to seek status (Lange et al. 2019, Zeigler-Hill et al. 2019). Recent evidence has also linked status-seeking with motivations to display moral sensitivity (Grubbs et al. 2019a).

The pursuit of social status is generally understood as an important aspect of narcissism and is probably a defining feature of a highly narcissistic person's approach to life (Zeigler-Hill et al. 2019). For example, research on narcissism has revealed it to predict narcissistic entitlement, which is a key aspect of most conceptualizations (Grubbs and Exline 2016, Krizan 2018, Krizan and Herlache 2018). It is argued that this need for justification is mainly driven by the desire to have more status and associated benefits (Lange et al. 2019). Similarly, narcissistic adoration and rivalry are linked to status-seeking, but each predicts the modalities of such seeking differently (Zeigler Hill et al. 2019).

Narcissistic adoration is mainly linked to the need to be unique. Hostile narcissistic competition is apparently related to anxiety about one's own (socially low) status and hostility towards others. While narcissistic admiration reflects the extent to which the individual believes he is special and wants to be liked, narcissistic rivalry reflects how much the individual wants to be better than others (Back et al. 2013). Accordingly, the goal of narcissistic adoration is social recognition. According to Tosi and Warmke (2016), its central feature "prestige" can be associated with narcissism's need for prestige. Narcissistic competition is motivated by social prestige and directing the masses. Regarded as an environmental feature, "dominance" can be associated with narcissism's desire for recognition. Thus, narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry are possibly closely related to extrinsic motivation and extrinsic life goals as mentioned in the previous section.

Tosi and Warmke (2016) have associated status-seeking motivation, which is the intersection of the needs for prestige and dominance, with the grandiose dimension of narcissism. However, the literature converges on the idea that a strong desire for social status is central to narcissism and can actually create coherence between narcissistic personality traits that are both grandiose and vulnerable (Grapsas et al. 2020, Mahadevan et al. 2016, Zeigler-Hill et al. 2019). Unlike vulnerable narcissism, the high vindictiveness of grandiose narcissism was positively associated with one's perception of their status. Accordingly, individuals who are high in grandiose narcissism generally perceive themselves to have high status, but those with high vulnerable narcissism could not, despite their wishes and hopes to have so (Grapsas et al. 2020, Zeigler-Hill et al. 2019).

Mahadevan and Jordan (2022) stated that a strong desire for status can be a functional common point underlying the grandiose and vulnerable expressions of narcissism, and the two dimensions are combined with the desire for status. However, while individuals with high grandiose narcissism see themselves as having achieved status successfully, those with high vulnerable narcissism cannot despite their desire to have so. As explained by Grapsas et al. (2020) and Zeigler-Hill et al. (2019), the association of narcissistic admiration with the perception of achieving high status through competitive self-development can underlie this phenomenon. However, when faced with threats to status in competition, individuals with grandiose narcissism act using an active self-presentation strategy while vulnerable narcissism act to avoid failure. This is attributable to vulnerable narcissism's lower perception of status gain. However, the discourse on MG in the literature has mainly focused on grandiose narcissism and neglected the vulnerability dimension to a large extent.

In their meta-analysis in a sampling-based study with more than 12,000 participants, McCain and Campbell (2018) revealed a small to moderately positive association between grandiose narcissism and social media use. The relationship between vulnerable narcissism and social media use has not been studied in depth. According to McCain and Campbell's meta-analysis (2018), in a few studies to date, vulnerable narcissism has been very limitedly associated with social media use, except for status update frequency. However, this is a rather top-down view of the results. From a theoretical perspective, the results on vulnerable narcissism fit both self-enhancement and adaptation models in social media. In this study, social media use was evaluated in terms of sharing frequency and selfies with regard to the self-development theory. These behaviors have been recognized as potential self-improvement pathways. However, the study did not focus on moral discourses and the content of sharing. Considering the features of moral sensitivity discourses such as prestige, dominance, status, prestige, and the desire for recognition, there may be differences between the grandiosity and vulnerability dimensions of narcissism in the way a person presents themselves on social media. This can lead us to a deeper understanding of the relationship between narcissistic status-seeking and social media to examine the concept of sensitivity display.

Moral Grandstanding, Social Media, and Narcissism

The pursuit of fame and status is an innate human drive to improve one's rank, position, and relative position among others (Cheng et al. 2013). The status drive can be viewed in a variety of contexts including the workplace (Loch et al. 2001), social media settings (Nesi and Prinstein 2015), and even leisure pursuits (Walasek and Brown 2015). Today, the ways of self-expression and communication skills are significantly diversified. Social media has become a primary stage for conveying opinions to large audiences, expressing oneself, and affirming an individual's position within a status system. Social media provides an environment that encourages comparison in many areas because users constantly receive information about others, what they are doing, and how they present themselves (Niesiobędzka and Konaszewski 2021). In addition, since online interaction does not require people to face the people to whom they present their opposing views, it provides a means of self-expression through indirect communication, making it easier to shift to social extremism and to express politically different views more fanatically than face-to-face interaction (Barnidge 2017). In the case of narcissism, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide the perfect setting for status building activities. Creating an idealized self through explicit and implicit cues provides ample opportunities to include

the most relevant information about oneself as well as the most attractive profile photo and other published photos (Marshall et al. 2020, Niesiobędzka and Konaszewski 2021). In recent years, the most obvious indicators of status have been the products a person owned. The need to be unique, show status, and be similar to other important people by owning certain products on social media is accepted as an important indicator of narcissistic status-seeking (Amaldoss and Jain 2008, Chaudhuri and Majumdar 2006, 2010, Kastanakis and Balabanis 2012, 2014, Niesiobędzka 2017, Tsai et al. 2013). Studies have revealed that owning certain products and displaying this ownership on social media are ways of gaining narcissistic status. On the other hand, gaining a discursive superiority through moral demonstration can also provide a similar status but with a lower cost. It is an important indicator of narcissistic status-seeking, having a sensitivity that no one else has, being different and special in this respect, being similar to respectable people, and, in some cases, being more morally righteous without the need to stage a material show and, instead, displaying moral sensitivity. This tendency to seek status seems to manifest itself in behaviors that emerge in the context of public discourse (Grubbs et al. 2019a).

Grubbs et al. (2020) aimed to examine how individual differences in the desire for status that exaggerate the group norm or go beyond the norm function. According to this study, some people seem to be inclined to use their moral discourse (i.e., public debates that evoke moral rights, moral principles, moral ideals, and moral practices) as a way of achieving higher status or position in the eyes of others. Both a philosophical study (Tosi and Warmke 2016, 2020a) and an empirical review (Grubbs et al. 2019a) have argued that moral discourse to seek status will mediate this (Tosi and Warmke 2020a). Those who show sensitivity aim to gain an implicit gain (prestige and dominance) beyond the purpose of sensitivity itself by talking about morality, politics, or other important issues (especially in environments such as social media where they will interact) to improve their position or status in society (Tosi and Warmke 2020b; 2020c). Social media allows individuals to quickly gain social recognition and social status and verify their self-image with large audiences. It also provides full control over their self-image by filtering the information they want to disseminate about themselves. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies are well aware of the features of social media that facilitate strategic self-presentation. Studies have revealed a positive relationship between narcissism and the intensity of social media use (Davenport et al. 2014, Moon et al. 2016, Ryan and Xenos 2011, Singh et al. 2018, Taylor and Strutton 2016).

Seeking prestige is a way of seeking status and a type of social status that is associated with being knowledgeable, talented, or somehow influential (Cheng et al. 2013). Narcissistic individuals, with a similar motivation to gain status, are more likely to view social media as an important source of information about themselves. As Carpenter (2012) shows in his study, it is important for them to know if someone has said something about them on Facebook. Consistent with the broader conceptualization of status-seeking, a type of sensitivity display is characterized by a desire to gain respect or admiration from others (e.g., "My beliefs must inspire others"). This display of sensitivity is generally more associated with the desire for prestige and is well predicted by narcissistic extraversion (Grubbs et al. 2019a). The desire for prestige is similar to an external life goal of being famous, and introjected regulation is likely to dominate this goal. Therefore, narcissistic extraversion is seemingly associated with behavioral adjustments with low levels of autonomy.

The display of sensitivity may also be motivated by a desire for status that results in dominating others. Here, the performers embarrass, hurt, or otherwise abuse potential rivals or ideological opponents (for example, "When I share my beliefs, I do so in the hope that people other than me will be ashamed of their beliefs"). Much like the more general striving for status through dominance (Cheng et al. 2013), this expression of sensitization seems to be motivated by a desire to assert one's rank or power over another or to elevate oneself by humiliating others (Tosi and Warmke 2016). This form of sensitivity is especially associated with more aggressive tendencies, and it is believed to be strongly predicted by narcissistic hostile attitudes (Grubbs et al. 2019a). This aspect of sensitivity can be manifested by greater engagement in hostile social media behavior in discussions about politics (for example, by posting messages or posts only to embarrass or anger the original author of the post).

Khalis and Mikami's (2018) studies have associated the greater acceptance of peers in a face-to-face context with less narcissistic self-presentation on Facebook. Similar to the need for acceptance, appreciation, and approval in regard to self-worth in narcissism, philosophical studies examining the display of sensitivity have suggested that, motivated by attention and praise seeking, sensitive individuals tend to set extreme moral and political positions to differentiate themselves from others (Tosi and Warmke 2016, 2020a). The desire for status that is associated with the display of sensitivity might lead people to express increasingly extreme political and moral views as a way of appearing more virtuous, respectable, or admirable than others in their group. People who display sensitivity aim to "elevate" their ideological position (or at least their public presentation) to impress others or appear superior to others. While seeking status, individuals might take increasingly extreme positions within their group as a way of asserting themselves as a moral example. In short, the motivation to show sensitivity on social media is probably related to the need for narcissistic status and the adoption of more extreme ideological positions (Grubbs et al. 2019a).

Reflections on Clinical and Daily Life

Narcissism is a direct result of a lack of self-expression or discomfort. Thus, it can only be resolved with unconditional acceptance of all aspects and levels of the self. When a person can reveal themselves as they are, that is, when they self-actualize, they will consciously identify with the most authentic and true

nature of their selves. However, simply put, narcissism involves identifying with relatively superficial aspects of the self as opposed to being aware of one's identity. The identification with the superficial aspects of the self leads to a feeling of alienation. The realization of one's truest and deepest nature is the solution to alienation and narcissism (Almaas 2000). On the contrary, MG is an attempt to bring fame and status to narcissism with an artificial, unrealistic, and insincere sensitivity. Therefore, MG prevents the individual from being aware of their truest and deepest nature. When narcissism and MG coexist, the sense of alienation can go deeper and become stronger.

According to psychological research, the display of MG clearly indicates individual differences, motivations, and narcissistic characteristics that underlie social discourse behaviors (Grubbs et al. 2019a). A study conducted with a nationally representative sample from the USA has revealed strong and significant links between narcissistic hostility (narcissistic antagonism) and dominance-oriented moral grandstanding motivations (Grubbs et al. 2019a; 2020). The results of a study that was carried out by Funder and Özer (2019) who examined individual differences revealed a significant relationship between narcissistic extraversion and prestige-oriented moral sensitivity motivations. Combined together, the results indicate the need to co-examine narcissistic hostility and extroversion to understand the driving force of MG. Thus, the displays of moral sensitivity will have clear implications for certain motivations of the grandiose dimension of narcissism.

Grubbs et al. (2022) examined the MG behaviors on the social media posts of narcissistic individuals. They aimed to understand how status-oriented individual differences such as narcissistic hostility, narcissistic extraversion, and moral superiority motivations longitudinally predict both behaviors and social media responses in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that status-oriented narcissistic personality traits influenced individual responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Narcissistic hostility predicted greater conflict with others on social media in regard to the pandemic. Moreover, those with high dominance motivation were more likely to appear morally sensitive and have a greater conflict with others over the pandemic. Narcissistic hostility predicted less social distancing and less proactive health behaviors (e.g., wearing masks). They observed that people who were morality-motivated by the desire to seek dominance followed the social distance rule to a lesser extent. Although showing sensitivity on social media, people with high narcissistic hostility and desire for dominance acted contrastingly in their daily lives. They reported arguing with people they deemed insensitive about the measures against the pandemic and often shared their arguments on social media. However, the same people were less likely to follow the current recommendations for healthy behavior. Although they attracted attention through MG on social media, their real-life behaviors indicated being in a reactive process. They might have lost energy and motivation to engage in MG on social media. Thus, they might have less energy and motivation for behavioral regulation

and show less compliance behavior in real-life. Therefore, it can be claimed that the real-life motivation of individuals who use MG on social media was negatively affected by the behavior in question.

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI, Raskin and Terry 1988) and the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI, Miller et al. 2013) have been widely used in the literature as measurement tools for the pathological features of narcissism. However, no study on MG has employed the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) (Pincus et al. 2009), which aims to compare and evaluate narcissism with both its grandiosity and vulnerability dimensions. Ackerman et al. (2011) showed that the Narcissistic Personality Inventory consists of three different dimensions comprising Leadership/Authority, Glorious Exhibitionism, and Authority/Abuse. The last two dimensions, particularly Authority/Abuse, are often linked to discordant outcomes. The first dimension, which is characterized by perceived leadership abilities and social power, is associated with adaptive outcomes (Ackerman et al. 2011). According to the model of the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory, narcissistic extroversion generally refers to the grandiose, assertive, and interpersonally oriented aspects of narcissism. Narcissistic neuroticism often refers to the aspects of narcissism that are characterized by shame, vulnerability, emotional investment, and a need for approval and praise from others. Narcissistic hostility refers to the antisocial, entitlement, and exploitative aspects of narcissism. While all dimensions are keys to properly understanding the full spectrum of narcissism, studies in the literature have primarily focused on the degree to which narcissistic extraversion and narcissistic hostility are related to MG-related responses. This focus derives from the links between narcissistic hostility and extroversion and status-seeking (Grubbs et al. 2019b; Grubbs et al. 2020). However, the neurotic aspect of narcissism has been clearly neglected, leading to an important deficiency in the area. This is an important obstacle in understanding the clinical implications of narcissism and handling narcissism holistically.

Conclusion

In addition to its association with tangible benefits for individuals themselves, MG is associated with genuinely pro-social outcomes in some cases. Pro-social actions are intrinsic aspirations, but, as an undesirable side effect, individuals may also gain personal benefits (becoming famous, gaining prestige) through them. When analyzed within the framework of the self-determination theory, individuals who perform MG appear insincere/ unauthentic in their behaviors since the behaviors are controlled by external/internal mechanisms and do not match the internal values of the individual. The growing prevalence of MG, especially with increasing social media use in recent years, may indicate its transformation into a narcissistic self-satisfaction tool. MG may have become a new and effective way for self-presentation, self-affirmation, and self-expression. The self-determination theory is a useful theory to study MG considering the self-related motivations behind it. However, future studies can test the claims in this study by examining MG through qualitative and

quantitative studies that also draw inspiration from the self-determination theory or different motivation theories.

Furthermore, MG is a concept that calls for an in-depth examination of survival behaviors both in online and offline settings in periods such as pandemics. Future longitudinal studies can examine the practical outcomes of the relationship between status-oriented narcissism and MG in daily life. However, directly learning their motivations from individuals themselves will yield the most accurate data in the evaluation of the behavioral outcomes of the relationships between MG, narcissism, and motivation. However, many scientific perspectives today attach less value to the concepts of self and subjective experience as subjects of scientific study (Ryan et al. 2021). However, considering the central focus of the self-determination theory on these phenomena in scientific psychology and the truly practical perspective of the theory on human behavior, the individuals themselves will prove to be a good source to identify the underlying causes of MG.

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