



Understanding narcissistic spending: The connections between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption

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The present study explored potential factors that may mediate the relationship between narcissism and conspicuous consumption, as the underlying reasons for this connection remain uncertain. Specifically, we investigated the following variables as potential mediators of the links between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption: consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, consumer sexual signaling, and need for social status. In a sample of 2,944 Israeli community members, our study revealed that extraverted, antagonistic, neurotic, and communal narcissism frequently exhibited positive indirect connections with conspicuous consumption through these mediating factors, with the most robust associations often being observed for antagonistic narcissism. However, a clear departure from this pattern became apparent when the anticipated mediation of the connections between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption via the need for social status did not unfold as predicted. In contrast, extraverted, antagonistic, and communal narcissism exhibited negative indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through the need for social status. Collectively, these findings indicate both commonalities and distinctions in how narcissistic personality traits are associated with conspicuous consumption via specific mediators. The discussion delves into the significance of these outcomes in shedding light on why conspicuous consumption holds allure for individuals with narcissistic tendencies.

Keywords: narcissism, conspicuous consumption, materialism, need for uniqueness

The concept of *conspicuous consumption* pertains to the extravagant flaunting of material goods and opulent items as a way to indicate social standing and elicit admiration from others (Mason, 1981). It has frequently been posited that displays of conspicuous consumption would be particularly attractive to narcissistic individuals, given their desire to command attention and elevate their status and influence in comparison to others. Consistent with this idea, previous research has shown that individuals with narcissistic personality traits display a clear tendency for engaging in conspicuous consumption which includes preferences for buying luxury goods (e.g., Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Neave et al., 2020; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017; Sedikides et al., 2018) and wearing fashionable clothes (e.g., Vazire et al., 2008). These results suggest that the goals, desires, and motives of narcissistic individuals may manifest in their consumer behaviors (Sedikides et al., 2018). For example, the tendency for narcissistic individuals to engage in self-enhancement and focus on issues surrounding social comparison may impact their purchasing decisions.

Despite the clear association between narcissism and conspicuous consumption, the specific reasons for this connection remain unclear. Nevertheless, Sedikides and Hart (2022) have put forth some potential mechanisms that could offer insights into the connection between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. Our objective in this current study was to investigate the mechanisms proposed by Sedikides and Hart (2022) to ascertain whether they play a mediating role in explaining the relationships between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption. To be more precise, we explored whether narcissistic personality traits exhibited indirect connections with conspicuous consumption through the following mediators: consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, consumer sexual signaling, and need for social status (the proposed model is presented in Figure 1).

The link between narcissism and conspicuous consumption

Narcissism is a multifaceted construct that encompasses a range of characteristics including an excessive preoccupation with the self, a heightened sense of grandiosity and entitlement, a constant need for admiration and validation, and a lack of empathy toward others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissistic individuals endeavor to create an image of themselves as unique, accomplished, and significant, em-

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ploying a wide range of self-regulation tactics. These strategies encompass behaviors such as boasting about their achievements and trying to connect themselves with individuals of high social status (e.g., Campbell, 1999). Another self-regulatory strategy used by narcissistic individuals is to display expensive and luxurious products, which serve as signals of status and sophistication (e.g., Richins, 1994). This aligns with research showing that narcissism is linked to a preference for pursuing wealth and social status over affiliation and communal endeavors (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Consistent with this pattern, narcissistic individuals tend to prioritize material possessions and have high economic aspirations, emphasizing financial goals such as prestigious employment (e.g., Brunell et al., 2008) and high standards of living (e.g., Cisek et al., 2014).

Narcissistic individuals show a clear tendency to engage in conspicuous consumption (e.g., Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Neave et al., 2020; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017; Sedikides et al., 2018; Vazire et al., 2008). Although the reason for this connection remains unclear, it has been argued that conspicuous consumption involves symbolic value which allows narcissistic individuals to enhance their status, gain admiration from others, and bolster their self-esteem (e.g., Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides & Hart, 2022). In essence, expensive and luxurious products allow narcissistic individuals to provide signals to others about how they want to be perceived (e.g., *"I am someone who deserves to have the best"*). Based on the ideas presented by Sedikides and Hart (2022), we examined the following potential mediators of the associations that narcissistic personality traits had with conspicuous consumption: consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, consumer sexual signaling, and need for social status.

Need for uniqueness

Sedikides and Hart (2022) argued that the need for uniqueness may be one factor that plays a pivotal role in the connection between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. Narcissistic individuals tend to exhibit a strong desire for individuation and positive distinctiveness. This narcissistic desire to stand apart from others – and above them – may promote conspicuous consumption behaviors, leading narcissistic individuals to seek out and pay a premium for unconventional, scarce, and personalized products (e.g., Neave et al., 2020). Additionally, those high in narcissism are inclined to opt for expensive products found in prestigious retail outlets rather than more affordable alternatives (Naderi & Paswan, 2016). In essence, conspicuous consumption may provide narcissistic individuals with an avenue to experience a sense of uniqueness. This possibility has received some initial support because the need for uniqueness has been found to mediate the association that narcissism has with conspicuous consumption (Neave et al., 2020).

Materialism

Narcissistic individuals often manifest a heightened propensity for materialistic values (e.g., Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017) which manifests in various ways, including a height-

ened value being placed on financial success (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). It appears that the acquisition of material possessions becomes a tangible means by which narcissistic individuals can signal their status to others and garner admiration from those around them. That is, narcissistic individuals tend to prefer products that involve symbolic value (e.g., fashionable) over those with utilitarian value (e.g., practical; Cisek et al., 2014). As a result of these findings, Sedikides and Hart (2022) proposed that materialism could potentially act as a mediating factor in the link between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. This proposition arises from previous research demonstrating a positive correlation between materialism and conspicuous consumption (e.g., Velov et al., 2014). In fact, there is already some support for the idea that materialism mediates the association that narcissism has with the preference for luxury goods (Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017).

Approval seeking

Sedikides and Hart (2022) have also recognized the desire for approval as an additional factor that could serve as a potential mediator in the connection between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. Narcissistic individuals often exhibit a heightened desire for external validation and admiration from others in order to bolster their self-esteem (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2008; Zeigler-Hill & Vrabel, 2023). In this context, the acquisition of luxurious items could be viewed as a means for narcissistic individuals to elicit admiration and validation from the social environment. Consequently, the need for approval may act as a bridge between narcissistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption, as the pursuit of conspicuous consumption behaviors can be driven by the narcissist's relentless quest for external affirmation and acknowledgment of their perceived exceptionalism. Consistent with this possibility, certain aspects of narcissism have been linked with attitudes about money and luxury products that are driven by concerns about the approval of others (Ng et al., 2011). However, approval seeking has been shown to play a relatively small role in the relationship between narcissism and conspicuous consumption (Neave et al., 2020).

Material meaning

Meaning in life is often considered an important aspect of psychological functioning and there are many pathways for deriving a sense of meaning (e.g., interpersonal relationships, personal growth; Arndt et al., 2013). For narcissistic individuals, one of the avenues frequently used to derive meaning for their lives is the pursuit of materialistic goals (e.g., financial success, acquisition of expensive products; Abeyta et al., 2017). For example, narcissism is positively associated with meaning derived from situations involving extrinsic goals (e.g., focusing on the financial benefits of education) rather than intrinsic goals (focusing on personal fulfillment that may go along with education; Abeyta et al., 2017). These findings align with Sedikides and Hart's (2022) proposal that the inclination to find significance in material possessions could potentially mediate the link between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. This is be-

cause material belongings may serve as a tool for narcissistic individuals to validate their self-esteem and assert their superiority.

Consumer sexual signaling

One function of conspicuous consumption is to serve as a sexual signaling system in which individuals can display their economic resources in order to enhance their desirability as a mating partner (Sedikides & Hart, 2022). For instance, men tend to exhibit behaviors associated with conspicuous consumption more frequently when they prioritize short-term romantic relationships as opposed to long-term commitments (Lycett & Dunbar, 2000). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that conspicuous consumption can enhance the perceived mate value of men in the context of short-term mating (Sundie et al., 2011). Narcissism has been found to be linked to an interest in short-term mating (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2017), which led Sedikides and Hart (2022) to suggest that issues surrounding short-term mating – including the use of consumer choices as a sexual signal – may mediate the association between narcissism and conspicuous consumption.

Need for social status

Narcissism is strongly intertwined with concerns regarding one's social status (e.g., Grapsas et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2018, 2019). Although the need for social status was not explicitly identified by Sedikides and Hart (2022) as a potential mediator of the connection between narcissism and conspicuous consumption, they noted the role that issues concerning status may play in this association. We decided to include the need for status in the present research because conspicuous consumption may allow individuals an opportunity to signal their status to others.

Multidimensional view of narcissism

Recent years have seen a growing consensus that narcissism is a complex, multi-faceted construct, as opposed to a singular and uniform concept (e.g., Miller et al., 2021). One multidimensional model of narcissism argues that it is characterized by three basic traits (e.g., Crowe et al., 2019; Weiss et al., 2019): *extraverted narcissism* (exhibitionistic and self-assured), *antagonistic narcissism* (defensive and aggressive), and *neurotic narcissism* (distressed and desperate for approval). Research that recognizes the multifaceted nature of narcissism has started to address the conflicting trends observed in this area of the literature. For instance, the grandiose facets of narcissism often exhibit largely positive attitudes toward wealth and the consumption of luxurious items (e.g., seeing them as a means to assert dominance over others), whereas the vulnerable facets of narcissism tend to have more ambivalent associations with wealth and luxury goods (e.g., viewing them as desirable but also a source of anxiety and concern; Ng et al., 2011; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017). These findings underscore the importance of distinguishing between different aspects of narcissism when examining its relationship with conspicuous consumption.

Communal narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012) – which involves seeking admiration and praise for self-perceived altruism and selflessness – is not included in the trifurcated model of narcissism, but this form of narcissism has garnered significant attention during the past decade. Incorporating communal narcissism alongside extraverted, antagonistic, and neurotic narcissism may be crucial for a comprehensive understanding of narcissistic personality traits and their implications. While extraverted, antagonistic, and neurotic have received considerable attention due to their more disruptive manifestations, communal narcissism represents a distinct and relatively understudied facet of narcissistic personality. Including communal narcissism in studies alongside the more traditional narcissistic dimensions is essential as it broadens our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of narcissism and its diverse behavioral outcomes. Moreover, the unique focus of communal narcissism on seemingly prosocial traits, such as generosity and kindness, offers valuable insights into how narcissistic individuals may engage in conspicuous consumption as a means of showcasing their perceived communal virtues. Thus, considering communal narcissism alongside other narcissistic traits has the potential to enrich our understanding of the connections between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. For example, someone with a high level of communal narcissism may especially enjoy an activity such as participating in a charity auction because doing so would allow them to purchase special products while also receiving admiration for their generous donation to a charitable cause.

Overview and predictions

Our aim was to investigate the relationships between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption. Our hypothesis was that extraverted, antagonistic, neurotic, and communal narcissism would all demonstrate positive connections with conspicuous consumption. In addition, we expected the positive associations that the narcissistic personality traits had with conspicuous consumption to be mediated by the mechanisms identified by Sedikides and Hart (2022): consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. We also included need for social status as a potential mediator given the important role that it has for understanding narcissism (e.g., Grapsas et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2018, 2019).

METHOD

Participants and procedure

The study included 3,262 members of the Israeli community who volunteered to participate by responding to requests distributed through flyers in public areas and postings on various social media platforms. All of the questionnaires used in the present study were administered in Hebrew after being translated from the original English versions using the back-translation method. We excluded data for 318 participants due to reasons such as them failing two or more attention checks or having invariant response patterns (i.e., selecting the same response for a large percentage of the

Table 1. Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Extraverted Narcissism	—										
2. Antagonistic Narcissism	.36*	—									
3. Neurotic Narcissism	-.07*	.03	—								
4. Communal Narcissism	.47*	.23*	-.11*	—							
5. Consumer Need for Uniqueness	.19*	.43*	-.03	.29*	—						
6. Materialism	.22*	.41*	.23*	.09*	.20*	—					
7. Approval Seeking	-.10*	.27*	.45*	.04	.17*	.31*	—				
8. Material Meaning	.41*	.44*	.03	.32*	.26*	.51*	.22*	—			
9. Consumer Sexual Signaling	.13*	.29*	.10*	.08*	.14*	.42*	.24*	.33*	—		
10. Need for Social Status	.45*	.36*	.31*	.40*	.19*	.37*	.24*	.44*	.26*	—	
11. Conspicuous Consumption	.19*	.50*	.04	.23*	.53*	.43*	.39*	.44*	.47*	.27*	—
<i>Mean</i>	3.49	2.43	3.13	4.09	2.43	2.81	2.55	2.90	2.76	4.72	2.06
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	0.53	0.49	0.68	0.95	0.88	0.61	0.50	0.76	1.00	1.12	0.72

Note: * $p < .001$.

items). Out of the initial participants, the final sample consisted of 2,944 individuals (1,326 men and 1,618 women) with an average age of 30.12 years ($SD = 11.71$, ranging from 18 to 78 years). On average, participants reported 13.11 years of formal education ($SD = 2.10$), and the majority identified as Jewish (95%) and heterosexual (93%). Regarding their self-reported current economic status, 11% described it as “very good,” 46% as “good,” 36% as “moderate,” 6% as “not good,” and 1% as “very bad.” We did not pre-register this study, but the data file is available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at: https://osf.io/9xjbt/?view_only=5261409c4127400e8ac1d1d37be11e7e

Measures

Narcissism. We employed the short form of the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (Sherman et al., 2015) to assess *extraverted narcissism* ($\alpha = .75$), *antagonistic narcissism* ($\alpha = .86$), and *neurotic narcissism* ($\alpha = .80$).

Communal Narcissism. We used the Communal Narcissism Inventory (Gebauer et al., 2012) to assess communal narcissism ($\alpha = .86$).

Consumer Need for Uniqueness. We used the short form of the Consumers’ Need for Uniqueness Scale (Tian et al., 2001; Tian & McKenzie, 2001) that was developed by Ruvio et al. (2008) to assess consumer need for uniqueness ($\alpha = .92$).

Materialism. The Material Values Scale (Richins, 2004) was used to assess materialism ($\alpha = .83$).

Approval Seeking. The Martin-Larsen Approval Motivation Scale (Martin, 1984) was used to assess approval seeking ($\alpha = .77$).

Material Meaning. We used the modified version of the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) that was employed by Abeyta et al. (2017) to assess material meaning ($\alpha = .68$).

Consumer Sexual Signaling. We used a modified version of the Gift Giving Motivations Scale (Hyun et al., 2016) to assess consumer sexual signaling ($\alpha = .82$).

Need for Social Status. We used the Need for Social Status Measure (Flynn et al., 2006) to assess the need for social status ($\alpha = .71$).

Conspicuous Consumption. We used the Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale (Roy Chaudhuri et al., 2011) to assess conspicuous consumption ($\alpha = .85$).

RESULTS

The correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. To explore the relationships between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption, we conducted parallel multiple mediation analyses. Our rationale for using this approach was based on our expectation that consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, consumer sexual signaling, and need for social status would mediate the associations between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption (see Figure 1). To ensure clarity and prevent potential confusion in understanding the links between each narcissistic personality trait and conspicuous consumption, we performed separate parallel multiple mediation analyses for each aspect of narcissism.

Table 2 presents the results of these parallel multiple mediational analyses. Extraverted narcissism did not have a direct association with conspicuous consumption, but it had positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. Extraverted narcissism had negative indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through approval seeking and need for social status.

Antagonistic narcissism had a positive direct association with conspicuous consumption. Antagonistic narcissism had positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. Antagonistic narcissism also had a *negative* indirect association with conspicuous consumption through need for social status.

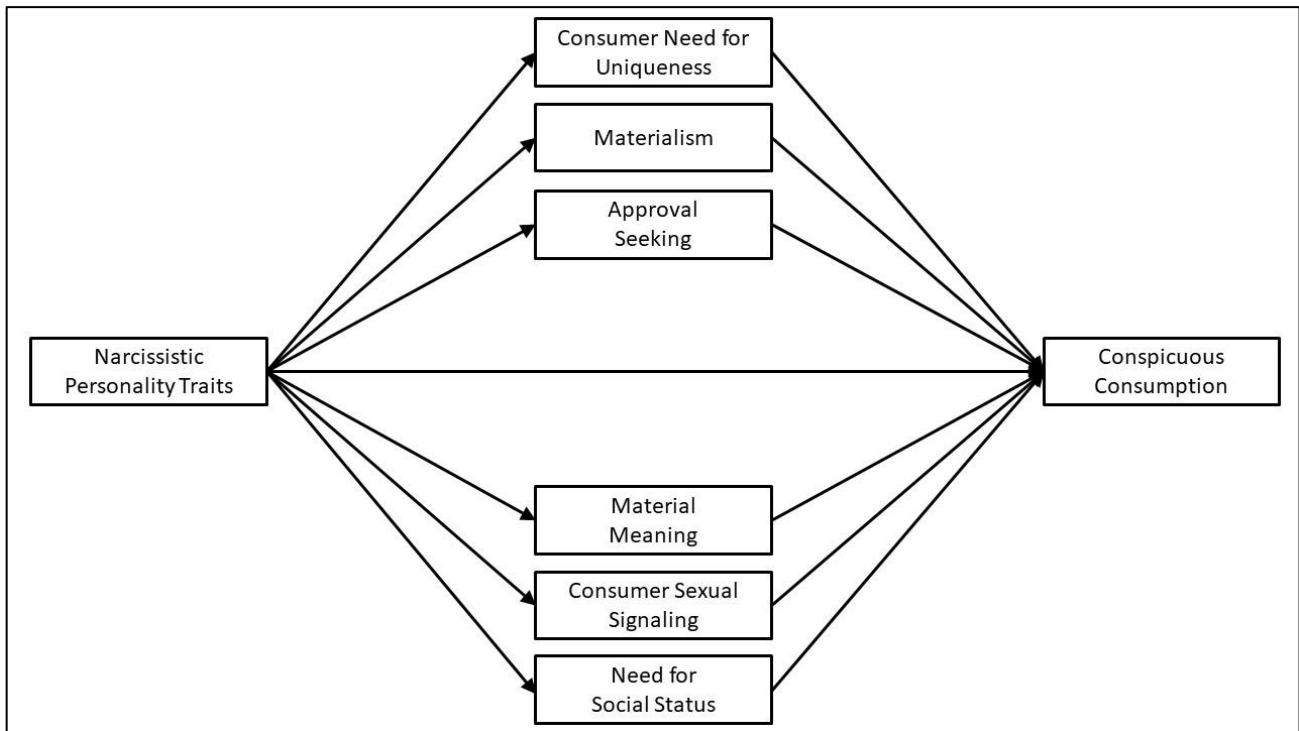


Fig. 1 The proposed mediational model in which narcissistic personality traits have indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, consumer sexual signaling, and/or need for social status.

Neurotic narcissism had a *negative* direct association with conspicuous consumption. Neurotic narcissism had positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through materialism, approval seeking, and consumer sexual signaling. Neurotic narcissism did not have indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, material meaning, or need for social status.

Communal narcissism had a positive direct association with conspicuous consumption. Communal narcissism had positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. Communal narcissism had a *negative* indirect association with conspicuous consumption through need for social status. Communal narcissism did not have an indirect association with conspicuous consumption through approval seeking.

Alternative analyses

We were also interested in understanding the unique relationships between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption. Consequently, we carried out alternative analyses wherein all the different narcissistic personality traits were simultaneously incorporated into a single model (Table 2). The results of the alternative analysis for antagonistic narcissism were largely unchanged from the original analysis with the exception that its negative indirect association with conspicuous consumption through the need for social status was not significant. In contrast, the results of the alternative analyses were at least somewhat different for

the other narcissistic personality traits. For example, the indirect associations that extraverted narcissism had with conspicuous consumption through consumer sexual signaling and need for social status were no longer significant in the alternative analysis and the positive indirect association it had through consumer need for uniqueness actually *reversed* its sign and became a negative indirect association. Neurotic narcissism had a negative indirect association with conspicuous consumption through material meaning that only emerged when controlling for the other aspects of narcissism. For communal narcissism, its indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through materialism, consumer sexual signaling, and need for social status were no longer significant when controlling for the other aspects of narcissism, whereas it had a positive indirect association with conspicuous consumption through approval seeking in the alternative analysis that did not emerge in the original analysis.

DISCUSSION

The current study sought to investigate the indirect connections between narcissism and conspicuous consumption, utilizing the potential mediators outlined by Sedikides and Hart (2022). We found support for many of these potential mediators. That is, the narcissistic personality traits tended to have positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. This was especially true for antagonistic nar-

Table 2. Results of the parallel multiple mediation analyses

	Extraverted Narcissism		Antagonistic Narcissism		Neurotic Narcissism		Communal Narcissism	
	β_o	β_A	β_o	β_A	β_o	β_A	β_o	β_A
<i>Associations with Mediators</i>								
Narcissism → Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNU)	.19***	-.05**	.43***	.40***	-.03	-.02	.29***	.22***
Narcissism → Materialism (MAT)	.22***	.12***	.41***	.36***	.23***	.22***	.09***	-.02
Narcissism → Approval Seeking (AS)	-.10***	-.23***	.27***	.31***	.45***	.44***	.03	.12***
Narcissism → Material Meaning (MM)	.41***	.23***	.44***	.32***	.03	.05***	.32***	.15***
Narcissism → Consumer Sexual Signaling (CSS)	.13***	.04	.29***	.28***	.10***	.09***	.07***	.00
Narcissism → Need for Social Status (NSS)	.45***	.29***	.36***	.18***	.31***	.35***	.40***	.26***
<i>Associations with Outcome</i>								
Narcissism → Conspicuous Consumption (Total)	.19***	-.06**	.50***	.49***	.04	.03	.23***	.15***
Narcissism → Conspicuous Consumption (Direct)	.03	-.03	.15***	.14***	-.13***	-.10***	.06***	.05**
CNU → Conspicuous Consumption	.40***	.34***	.35***	.34***	.38***	.34***	.39***	.34***
Narcissism → CNU → Conspicuous Consumption	.08***	-.02**	.15***	.13***	-.01	-.01	.11***	.07***
MAT → Conspicuous Consumption	.11***	.11***	.09***	.11***	.13***	.11***	.12***	.11***
Narcissism → MAT → Conspicuous Consumption	.02***	.01***	.04***	.04***	.03***	.02***	.01***	.00
AS → Conspicuous Consumption	.20***	.23***	.19***	.23***	.25***	.23***	.20***	.23***
Narcissism → AS → Conspicuous Consumption	-.02***	-.06***	.05***	.07***	.11***	.10***	.01	.03***
MM → Conspicuous Consumption	.15***	.11***	.13***	.11***	.14***	.11***	.15***	.11***
Narcissism → MM → Conspicuous Consumption	.06***	.03***	.06***	.04***	.00	.01**	.05**	.02***
CSS → Conspicuous Consumption	.27***	.26***	.26***	.26***	.27***	.26***	.27***	.26***
Narcissism → CSS → Conspicuous Consumption	.04***	.01	.08***	.07***	.03***	.02***	.02***	.00
NSS → Conspicuous Consumption	-.05**	-.03*	-.06***	-.03*	.00	-.03*	-.06***	-.03*
Narcissism → NSS → Conspicuous Consumption	-.02**	-.01	-.02***	-.01	.00	-.01	-.02***	.01

Note: In the “original” analyses (β_o columns), narcissistic personality traits were included as predictors in separate models. In the “alternative” analysis (β_A columns), narcissistic personality traits were included as predictors in the same model. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

cissism which had the strongest connection with conspicuous consumption. Antagonistic narcissism – distinguished by attributes like arrogance, manipulation, and a deficiency in empathy – could potentially drive individuals to engage in conspicuous consumption as a strategy for surpassing others in their social environment. The materialistic orientation that is often adopted by narcissistic individuals – which seems to be driven by a desire for external validation – can lead to conspicuous consumption behaviors as they seek to display their wealth and success to others. Additionally, the need for uniqueness, often seen in individuals with antagonistic narcissistic traits, may manifest in the pursuit of distinctive and extravagant goods to distinguish themselves from others, further driving conspicuous consumption tendencies.

There were deviations from the expected pattern of narcissistic personality traits demonstrating positive indirect links with conspicuous consumption. Notably, extraverted narcissism exhibited a *negative* indirect relationship with conspicuous consumption through approval seeking, in contrast to the positive indirect relationships observed for antagonistic narcissism and neurotic narcissism. While this outcome was unexpected, it aligns with prior research indicating that individuals with elevated levels of extraverted narcissism tend to resist anchoring their self-esteem to the

approval of others (Zeigler-Hill & Vrabel, 2023). This suggests that extraverted narcissism may be characterized by a motivation to attract attention from others through conspicuous consumption rather than as a means to secure their approval. Furthermore, neurotic narcissism did not display indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through the consumer need for uniqueness or material significance, whereas communal narcissism did not exhibit an indirect connection with conspicuous consumption through approval seeking.

In addition to the potential mediators identified by Sedikides and Hart (2022), we incorporated the need for social status into the present research. Our rationale for including this variable stemmed from the growing recognition of status-related concerns as a central aspect of understanding narcissism (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2018, 2019). Contrary to our expectations, extraverted, antagonistic, and communal narcissism exhibited *negative* indirect relationships with conspicuous consumption through the need for social status. This unexpected pattern emerged despite each of these narcissistic personality traits displaying positive zero-order correlations with the need for social status, and the need for social status itself demonstrating a positive zero-order correlation with conspicuous consumption. However, when we considered the other mediators in our multiple mediation

analyses, the association between the need for social status and conspicuous consumption actually *reversed* its direction and became negative. This suggests that the conceptual meaning of the need for status may have undergone substantial changes after statistically accounting for its overlap with other potential mediators.

While the results pertaining to narcissistic personality traits exhibited numerous similarities, the divergences that surfaced offer additional evidence highlighting the significance of delineating between various aspects of narcissism. For instance, antagonistic narcissism displayed a notably substantial positive correlation with conspicuous consumption ($r = .50$), in contrast to extraverted narcissism ($r = .19$) and communal narcissism ($r = .23$), which exhibited small-to-moderate positive correlations with conspicuous consumption. Conversely, neurotic narcissism demonstrated no discernible association with conspicuous consumption ($r = .04$). Consistent with previous research (Ng et al., 2011; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017), our findings suggest that narcissistic personality traits characterized by grandiose tendencies (e.g., extraverted narcissism, communal narcissism) tend to be linked to a proclivity for engaging in conspicuous consumption, whereas traits reflective of vulnerability (e.g., neurotic narcissism) may be marked by a more ambivalent attitude toward conspicuous consumption. These results underscore the importance of discriminating among diverse facets of narcissism to attain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationships that narcissistic personality traits maintain with conspicuous consumption.

The current study provides additional insights into the interplay between narcissism and conspicuous consumption; however, future research could further build upon these findings. Subsequent investigations in the domain of narcissism and conspicuous consumption might find it valuable to center on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the mediating variables explored in this study. For instance, it is plausible that narcissistic individuals may be more predisposed to indulge in conspicuous consumption when their aspiration for a sense of uniqueness encounters frustration. Conversely, narcissistic individuals may exhibit less of an inclination toward conspicuous consumption when they perceive a positive sense of distinctiveness in some facet of their lives.

Despite several strengths in the current study, such as its multidimensional assessment of narcissism, consideration of multiple potential mediators, and a substantial sample size, it is important to acknowledge some of its potential limitations. One limitation arises from the correlational nature of the research, which precludes the determination of causal relationships between narcissism and conspicuous consumption. While we inferred that narcissism leads to conspicuous consumption through various mediators, and our findings largely supported the anticipated indirect associations, this does not unequivocally confirm the causal sequence implied by the mediational analysis. It remains plausible that alternative causal pathways exist between these variables, as suggested in prior literature. For instance, it is conceivable that engaging in conspicuous consumption may foster the development of narcissistic traits, rather than being a consequence thereof. Future research endeavors should strive to enhance our understanding of potential

causal links through the employment of experimental designs or longitudinal studies. Another limitation pertains to our focus on community members in Israel, potentially constraining the generalizability of results beyond this specific cultural context. Addressing the empirical question of how these findings might replicate in diverse global regions is important, given the significance of comprehending the interplay between narcissistic personality traits and conspicuous consumption.

Conclusion

The present study examined whether narcissistic personality traits had indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through the mediators identified by Sedikides and Hart (2022). Our results showed that the narcissistic personality traits often had positive indirect associations with conspicuous consumption through consumer need for uniqueness, materialism, approval seeking, material meaning, and consumer sexual signaling. This pattern sheds additional light on the mechanisms that connect narcissism with conspicuous consumption. Further research is needed to gain an even better understanding of this relationship. For example, it would be beneficial for future studies to examine the roles that technology and social media play in facilitating and exacerbating conspicuous consumption among narcissistic individuals, as well as the potential interventions and mitigating strategies that can be employed to foster healthier consumer behaviors and reduce the negative impacts on both individuals and society.

ACCOUNTS

There is no conflict of interest to report.

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