

Narcissism and its Relations with beliefs about body appearance and personal characteristics among elite body builders

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find the relation of narcissism and beliefs about appearance among elite body builders. This research was a descriptive one and the statistical population composed of elite body builders group, the professional athletes participated in country championship competitions. The research samples were 43 elite body builders which randomly selected. The research tools were Ames, Rose, and Anderson (2006) narcissistic personality inventory and Spangler (1999) beliefs about appearance scale. The data were analyzed by the descriptive and person's correlation coefficient. According to the results the mean score of narcissism ($27/37 \pm 3.19$) and beliefs about appearance ($38/62 \pm 19.80$) among elite body builders. Based on the results the narcissism scores were higher in professional bodybuilders and this means that they are considered as narcissistic individuals. There was not significant difference in narcissism and beliefs about appearance scores among elite body builders according samples' individual characters (age, job, education, marriage state). There was not significant correlation between narcissism and beliefs about appearance scores among elite body builders. By considering the research findings authorities with the help of psychologists can design and implement educational and treatment programs to prevent and control narcissism behaviors among body builders.

Key words: narcissism; beliefs about appearance; athlete; body building

Introduction

Character is a certain patterns of behavior and ways of thinking which indicates one's adjustment to environment. Social character of each one involving gestures and visual modes, the overall mood and reactions to threatening situations and observed attitudes and many others of his reactions. However, character also has private and non-obvious aspects such as fantasies, thoughts and experiences (Samadi, 2012). Narcissism is one of the oldest concepts in psychology and nowadays is considered as a disorder in clinical level and as a personality trait in non-clinical level. The term narcissism denotes an excessive degree of self-esteem or self-involvement, a condition that is usually a form of emotional immaturity (Brittanica, 2011). The Harvard Mental Health Letter reflected that "Narcissistic personalities need to feel unique. They rely upon an unrealistic view of their talents. In their eyes, their problems and needs, like their gifts, are extraordinary and deserve priority. They demand attention and admiration and expect special favors as a right" (Harvard Health Publications, 2004, p. 1). Narcissists were so obsessively enamored with themselves, their appearance, their intelligence, their status, and

absolutely everything about themselves that they cared nothing about anyone or anything else (Carlsen, Roddy, 2012). Some scientists consider narcissism as a consequence of contemporary era life style and condition of industrial life, and also a means to avoid the stress and anxiety of modern life (Hamzavi, Ghorbani, 2007). Narcissistic personality is a character disorder and is apart from mental illness. In addition, many people are with narcissistic traits but are not considered as clinically narcissistic person and having narcissistic traits does not mean that the person is a narcissistic one (Twenge, 2009, p 23-22).

Recently, narcissism defined in a way that it also covers the healthy narcissism. Narcissism can be considered as a continuum that ranges from pathological narcissism to healthy narcissism. This continuum starts with self-esteem at one end and leads to the degenerative depression at the other end (Peyvasteghar, Yazdi, Mokhtari, 2012). Narcissism is associated with positive and negative effects. Some positive outcomes are including reducing depression, extraversion, and better performance among others, on the other hand, excessive self-confidence and lack of empathy are some of narcissism negative consequences (Mohammadzadeh, 2009, Frederick Rhodewalt, Madrian, Cheney, 1998). Researchers assume that childhood experiences such as too easy parents and spoiled growing, extra encouragement, and lack of realistic reactions may have role in emergence of narcissistic personality disorder (Haseebi, 2013). Narcissistic athletes are the people who admire themselves physically and mentally, see themselves above, expect continuous appreciation, interest and approval, they will meet exclusive of interest wherever they go and think that they deserve the superior place. Narcissism may sometimes affect the performance of the athletes positively (Calum, Woodman, Chin Wei, Hardy, Ntoumanis, 2011). Narcissistic athletes themselves feel valuable, and their admiration for others to gain advantage depends on the capabilities of reveal themselves. The most important thing for a narcissistic athlete is to win. They also apply for unethical behaviors in order to acquire the targeted objective. The athletes having narcissistic features are more successful in individual sports rather than the team sports. The narcissism types seen in athletes are divided in danger less and pathological: in danger less narcissism, athlete's own struggle, and the resulting object is something that at the end of occupation and in pathological narcissism, Its object is not created or produced by the athlete, it is the thing owned by him (Unsal, Soykan, 2013).

Physical trait is one of the concepts which associate with personality during the history. With emerging new age, body appearance has become very important and body not only considers as biological but also as a product of the social and psychological mater (Raghibi and Minakhany, 2012). Beliefs about the appearance are cognitive structure and are conducted of a person's appearance attitudes in daily life (Talepasand, Bigdeli, Fallah, 2011). Based on cognitive behavioral theory, people evaluate their appearance depends on the degree of their schemas in relation to appearing. Schemas related to body image are used as cognitive patterns for assessment appearance and emotions of body image (Mohammadpna Ardakani, Yousefi, 2011). Also factors affect developing mental picture of each person's body contain a broad range of social and

cultural factors (Heider Chrodeh, Kermani, 2010). Body image is a multifaceted psychological experience of embodiment that includes one's physical appearance, body related self-perceptions and self-attitudes such as thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviors (Cash, 2004, p.12). McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004) observe that in the case of adult men the 'importance of appearance' relates not only to what one looks like, but also to their health, fitness and general wellbeing. Literature reveals that body image assessment in men relates to a desire for increased muscularity and reduced body fat (Nowell & Ricciardelli, 2008). The findings from Reddy (2013) study suggest that young men (in early adulthood) are likely to invest in appearance in order to look good but for men in their middle age and beyond functionality of body may become more salient than appearance. While younger men focus on improving appearance to gain social capital, older men focus more on fitness and health. One of the approved claims about the issue of body image in studies, suggests that people are generally relate proper appearance with good personality traits such as competence and social acceptance level (Galebandi, Afkham Ebrahimi, 2004) and when talking about the role of social and cultural factors on the formation of body image, it means the expectations which one gets from his body based on social ideals (Mokhtari Amirmajdi, et al, 2002). Also studies revealed that poor body image can be associated with improper behaviors and attitudes including eating disorders, low self- esteem (Harvard Press, 2004), reduction of enjoyment of daily activities (Liechtya, Freemanb, Zabriskieb, 2006, Frederick, Shaw, 1995), and physical changes, emotions and self-concept development (Liechty, 2004 , Davinson, McCabe, 2005).

Participation in physical activity is one of the most important methods for mental and physical development. Many studies have described and approved the beneficial effects of physical activity on mental health (Aligareh, Adelghahraman, Safari, 2012). Nowadays, bodybuilding becomes a popular sport among the youth and even middle-aged and many people are inclined toward it. Based on the findings of various studies individuals motivated differently to participate in sport clubs and exercises (Farahani, Salamat, Goodarzi, 2012). Nourbakhsh, Shafinia, Gholchinkoochi (2010) stated that usually participation motivations in sport and exercise are; increase or maintain physical fitness and health, to experience a sense of joy and happiness, being with others, improving physical appearance and social status, show off and psychological benefits (Wilson et al, 2008, Valerand & Rousseau, 2001, Conroy, Motel & Hall, 2000, Culos-Reed ,Brawley, Martin & Leary, 2002, Marquez & Mc Auley, 2001, William & Cash, 2001). Hence, the observed differences in the motives of people to participate in the exercise especially bodybuilding cause some individuals misuse some types of medicine to increase energy, muscle growth and improve appearance (Sepehri, Moosavifar, 2003), hence substances abuse and doping by athletes became problems of modern societies and as a result, multiple complications and irreversible social, economic, health, cultural and physical problems has emerged (Rahimi et al, 2009).

On the other hand, studies have indicated that show off may be a determining factor to physical activity and may affect identification, location, and training behavior of individual, it also be motivation of participation in exercise and explain the way, type and method of exercise, and will affect their effort level and performance (Boutcher, Flisher-

Curtin & Gines, 1998). The show off itself is a process through which people try to control themselves assessment by others (Leary, 1992). It means that people want to influence others perspective about themselves and as a result could affect their own social life, job and relations (Leary, 1992, Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Also Pickett, Lewis, Cash (2005) showed that the evaluation of competitive and non- competitive bodybuilders from physical appearance and its psychosocial importance varies among them and would like to make changes in their body (Nourbakhsh, Shafi-nia, Gholchinkouhi, 2010), which may cause people to act behaviors such as eating disorders, showing personality disorders, working with more and heavy loads, using anabolic steroids that could be harmful for their physical and psychological health(Martin & Leary, 2001). Finally, based on what was stated about narcissism, beliefs about appearance and body building, considering findings of different studies, the probability of variation of individuals motivates, existing different beliefs and thoughts in community about motives, attitudes and behaviors of bodybuilders, shortage of information about narcissism and beliefs about appearance of bodybuilders in various levels, also considering wide population especially the youth participation in this sport field, it seems necessary to do a study in order to clarify the status of narcissism and beliefs about appearance and their relationship among professional bodybuilders. It is also possible to use the finding of this research to identify the personality and behavioral disorders of bodybuilder individuals if there be any and do proper efforts to correct them by getting help from experts and psychologists.

The methodology of the research

The study was a descriptive one and some correlations were surveyed. The subjects of the present study were elite body builders who were participated in national championship competition in 2012 (n=43). The data gathering method was based on questionnaires which were distributed among the samples. In this study, the questionnaire of narcissism personality inventory (NPI) and beliefs about appearance scale (BAAS) were used. Narcissistic personality inventory is a widely used tool to measure narcissistic personality features in nonclinical situations and was designed in 2006 by Ames, Rose, and Anderson. The NPI questionnaire includes 16 items and higher score indicates a higher narcissism. Mohammadzadeh (2009) in a cross-sectional survey on 342 students tested this questionnaire validity and found significant correlations between narcissistic personality questionnaire scores (NPI) and MCMI-II scale ($r=0.77$).The BAAS questionnaire (Spangler, 2001) was designed to determine the intensity of body image awareness in the areas of interpersonal interactions, personal achievement, self-perception, and emotions. It provides a useful indicator of the degree to which the subject feels that appearance might affect everyday life. The questionnaire asks participants to indicate to what degree they agree with 20 statements on a five-point Likert scale from “not at all” to “extremely.” Responses to each statement are given a score from zero to four (0=not at all, 1= somewhat, 2=moderately, 3= a lot, 4= extremely). Scores from the statements were combined to provide an assessment of beliefs about appearance. High scores indicate participants who place more emphasis on appearance. The BAAS was found to be an internally-consistent, one-dimensional measure that exhibited both construct and criterion-related validity (Spangler, Stice, 2001). The internal consistency

was high in each sample with alpha levels ranging from 0.94 (n=462) to 0.95 (n=117) also test-retest reliability was established and results were (r=0.83, n=231 and r=0.73, n=117). In this study, descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies, standard deviation calculations, were used for summarizing, classification of data, and drawing the curves and from inferential statistics, Pearson correlation was used to study the relation between narcissism and belief about appearance and their subscales at $\alpha=0.05$ among professional body builders.

Results

In order to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires first Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was performed for normality of data distribution. Narcissism and beliefs about appearance scores in the body builders' group appear to be normally distributed; therefore parametric tests were used in inferential statistics.

Table 1: Normality of data distribution

		Mean	Z	P
professional body builders	narcissism	27.37	1.04	0.223
	beliefs about appearance	38.62	0.60	0.862

Based on the results, the mean of professional body builders' age was 16.20 ± 0.64 and from marriage state, most of samples were single and smaller percentage was married. Among professional body builders many of subjects were student. The evaluation of the educational status of the body builders revealed that among samples study up to diploma had the highest frequency. Also Study findings showed scores of narcissism and beliefs about appearance in professional bodybuilders group were high.

Table 2: Narcissism and beliefs about appearance scores

		Mean	SD	Min	Max
professional body builders	narcissism	27.37	3.19	20	32
	beliefs about appearance	38.62	19.80	4	77

As a results of Pearson coefficient test about identification of relationship between age of subjects with narcissism scores among professional body builders ($r=-0.03$, $p=0.98$) was not significant. Also the similar results found between age of subjects with beliefs about appearance scores among samples, it means that the relationship of age and beliefs about appearance scores in elite body builders ($r=0.08$, $p=0.65$) was not significant relations. In order to survey the differences in narcissism and beliefs about appearance scores among body builders on the bases of samples' characteristics including marriage status, occupation and education level the independent t test and (f) test were performed.

The results did not show significant differences in the level of narcissism and beliefs about appearance based on individual characteristics of the subjects in the research group. In other words, the subjects' marriage status, occupation and education level did not have a considerable impact on body builders and did not create significant differences among them. Finally, results indicated that there was not a significant correlation among narcissism and beliefs about appearance in professional body builders group ($r=0.034$, $p=0.83$).

Table 3: Differences in narcissism and beliefs based on samples' characteristics

group	variable	f	df		p
			Intra group	Inter group	
occupation	narcissism	0.08	1	31	0.768
	beliefs	0.04	1	31	0.831
education	narcissism	1.41	1	32	0.244
	beliefs	0.32	1	32	0.749

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was seen that the mean of age among body builders shows that most of the samples are young and as the personality structure develops and becomes fix in youth period, so it is to authorities and planners to prepare programs in order to fit the personality characteristics in accordance to social, cultural, and religious patterns and implement them through various channels including schools, universities, mass media, counseling centers and the Ministry of youth and Sports to prevent different characteristic disorders and bring up competent athletes from personality and psychological point of view. On the other hand it was observed that the majority of people who are active in body building are single and married ones percentage is very small, these findings considering the mean age of the subjects is reasonable.

Based on the results the narcissism scores were high in the group of professional bodybuilders and this means that they have high narcissism characters and are considered as narcissistic individuals. This finding is of importance as narcissism may introduce personal disorders and alike other personality disorders probably become a stables behavior pattern which may affect negatively many of life aspects such as social, family and work place relationships, these athletes may become narcissistic individuals and got irregular habits and do improper actions. By regarding these, in order to prevent behavior disorders of narcissism personality authorities by the help of psychologists can prepare proper educational and treating programs and through implementing those could control future problems of the society related to this matter. The study findings are in agreement with research findings of Rhodewalt, Madrian and Cheney (1998) and Twenge (2009).

The mean of beliefs about appearance in elite body builders was lower than the average, so it means that these athletes are in a good condition from beliefs about body

appearance and they satisfied with their physical appearance. This satisfaction reason is undoubtedly a desirable state of fitness, body shape and physical condition as a result of exercise and physical activity on a regular basis. The study of relations of age with narcissism and beliefs about body appearance scores among athletes indicated that there is not a significant correlation between them. In addition, the results did not show significant differences in the level of narcissism and beliefs about appearance based on individual characteristics of the subjects in study group. On the other hand marriage state, job and education degree did not make significant effects in narcissism and beliefs about body appearance scores among these athletes. In explaining this matter it can be said that narcissism and beliefs about body appearance are related to other variables in these population and maybe affected by goals, motives and environmental conditions which need to be carefully studied.

In surveying the relation of narcissism and beliefs about body appearance among professional body builders findings did not indicate significant correlation. It means that changes in narcissism are apart from beliefs about body appearance among them and increase or reduction of beliefs about body appearance is not affected by expanding or reducing of narcissism and the affecting factors on them are different. Based on these findings in order to preservation proper state among body builders, it is necessary to give them valuable information through different methods till beside progressing in physical fitness and body condition as a result of body building exercises, also progress from psychological characters.

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