Personality and Individual Differences 73 (2015) 12–16

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

The Grandiose Narcissism Scale: A Global and Facet-Level Measure of Grandiose Narcissism

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 8 November 2013
Received in revised form 2 May 2014
Accepted 28 August 2014
Available online 1 October 2014

Keywords:
Narcissism
Grandiose narcissism
Narcissistic Personality Inventory
Scale development
Personality assessment
Factor analysis
Reliability

ABSTRACT

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) is the primary measure of grandiose narcissism (GN) despite possessing numerous limitations. Here we present a new 33-item measure of GN called the Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS) that exhibits a reproducible seven-factor structure that maps on to Raskin and Terry's (1988) seven factor model. GNS subscales exhibit high reliability, with several being substantially more reliable than their NPI counterparts. As a full-scale, the GNS correlates with other variables in a way that is consistent with the theoretical portrait of GN. Additionally, two of the GNS subscales (entitlement, exploitativeness) are shown to uniquely predict independent measures of entitlement and exploitativeness, suggesting good subscale validity. Cumulatively, the GNS represents a viable complement or alternative to the NPI.

1. Introduction

Research on narcissistic personality relies almost exclusively on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) as the primary or only measure of narcissism (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). Although other measures of narcissism exist, most measure uniformly unhealthy forms of narcissism, such as pathological narcissism (Pincus et al., 2009). Few options outside of the NPI are available to researchers who study grandiose narcissism (GN) – a type of narcissism characterized by generally positive intrapersonal functioning (e.g., high self-esteem) and negative (especially long-term) interpersonal functioning (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Twenge, 2011).

The NPI functions well as a global measure of GN – it is highly reliable and provides good content coverage of the construct (Miller, Price, & Campbell, 2012) – but significant problems arise when researchers attempt more nuanced facet-level examinations of GN. Numerous factor-analytic studies of the NPI have been published over the past 30 years. One of the earliest and most influential of these studies (Raskin & Terry, 1988) revealed seven factors underlying GN (i.e., authority, self-sufficiency, vanity, superiority, exhibitionism, entitlement, exploitativeness). Most of these factors reflect theoretically uncontroversial facets of GN (although, the inclusion of authority has been debated; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Miller & Campbell, 2011) and together they paint a portrait that is consistent with classic and contemporary theoretical descriptions of GN (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Freud, 1914; Horney, 1939; Millon & Davis, 1996; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Reich, 1972). It is also one of the most empirically defensible factor solutions in terms of model fit (Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008). Unfortunately, several of these factors' corresponding subscales exhibit consistently low reliability (e.g., Corry et al., 2008; del Rosario & White, 2005; Foster & Campbell, 2007).

Several attempts have been made to address issues of subscale reliability, but none have, in our opinions, been entirely successful. For example, Corry et al. (2008) proposed a two factor model (leadership/authority, exhibitionism/entitlement) that exhibits good subscale reliability, but lacks coverage of seemingly critical facets of GN, including superiority and exploitativeness. Other proposed models offer somewhat more expansive coverage of the construct, but continue to exhibit poor subscale reliability (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2011, three factor solution includes an entitlement/exploitativeness subscale with $\alpha \sim .40$). In short, none of the published factor models of the NPI offer both comprehensive coverage of the construct and reliable facet-level measurement.

One way to solve the problem of unreliable facet-level measurement is to develop measures that are purpose-built to reliably measure specific GN facets (Brown et al., 2009). Indeed, several

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.08.042
0191-8869/

of these measures now exist (e.g., the Psychological Entitlement Scale; Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). For researchers interested exclusively in the facets of GN, this approach may be most appropriate. However, for researchers who are also interested in the global construct of GN, this approach may prove to be inefficient and even impractical. Thus, we think there is a need for an instrument that efficiently, comprehensively, and reliably measures GN at both the global and facet levels. Although the NPI meets this first objective (efficiency), it does not meet the second and third (at least, not concurrently). We are skeptical that resorting NPI items into new subscales will solve these problems and thus we decided instead to develop an entirely new measure of GN.

Our measure, the Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS), was designed to reliably and validly measure GN at both the global and facet-levels. At the facet-level, the GNS was designed to replicate Raskin and Terry's (1988) seven NPI subscales, consisting of authority (preferring to be in charge), self-sufficiency (preferring to do things on one's own rather than in groups), superiority (belief that one is better than others), vanity (strong focus on physical appearance), exhibitionism (acting in ways that grab others' attention), entitlement (belief that one is deserving of special treatment), and exploitativeness (willingness to take advantage of others). As noted earlier, most of these subscales represent theoretically uncontroversial facets of GN. All of them (including authority) represent traits and proclivities that have long been components of the theoretical description of GN and its theoretical ancestors, such as phallic and elitist narcissism (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Freud, 1914; Horney, 1939; Millon & Davis, 1996; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Reich, 1972). Given these facts, we concluded that the seven subscales derived by Raskin and Terry (1988) were both theoretically justifiable and provided comprehensive coverage of the construct of GN (Miller et al., 2012).

2. Study 1: Scale construction and examination of psychometric properties

We wrote a pool of 35 items that tapped into the seven hypothesized factors (5 items per factor). We examined the psychometric properties of these items and submitted them to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to test whether they loaded onto their respective factors. We also examined the reliability of the full-scale GNS and putative subscales and compared them to their NPI counterparts.

2.1. Methods

2.1.1. Participants and materials

A sample of 1017 college students (*M* age = 20.27; 62% female) completed the GNS and NPI. The GNS consisted of 35 items (see Table 1) each responded to using a Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). The NPI consisted of 40 pairs of statements that differed in terms of how narcissistic they sounded. Participants selected the statement that best described them and received one point each time they selected a narcissistic statement (*M* = 15.95, *SD* = 6.88).

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Exploratory factor analysis

We submitted the 35 GNS items to an EFA (principal axis factoring, promax rotation). The resulting scree plot showed a distinctive pattern whereby there was a drop in eigenvalue between the seventh (1.02) and eight factors (.78) and an approximate straight-line path between factors eight through 35, suggesting the presence of seven distinguishable factors. These seven factors cumulatively accounted for 61% of the variance. Examination of the pattern matrix revealed factor loadings largely consistent with the hypothesized factor structure (see Table 1). There were, however, two problematic items. SUP4 ("I'm a superior person") cross-loaded on the entitlement factor and ENT4 ("I expect people to bend the rules for me") cross-loaded on the exploitativeness factor. These 2 items were culled from the GNS, leaving 33 items.

2.2.2. Item-total correlations

All of the remaining 33 items correlated positively and significantly with both the full-scale score ($rs > .26$; $M = .45$) and their respective subscale scores ($rs_{authority} > .62$; $rs_{self\text{-}sufficiency} > .50$; $rs_{superiority} > .47$; $rs_{vanity} > .58$; $rs_{exhibitionism} > .58$; $rs_{entitlement} > .48$; $rs_{exploitativeness} > .55$). Based on these results, we decided to retain all 33 items.

2.2.3. Reliability estimates and comparisons

The GNS and each of its subscales exhibited high levels of reliability (full-scale = .91, authority = .87, self-sufficiency = .76, superiority = .78, vanity = .86, exhibitionism = .86, entitlement = .76, and exploitativeness = .85). Notably, all GNS subscales outperformed their NPI counterparts, several by large margins (full-scale = .85, authority = .73, self-sufficiency = .36, superiority = .58, vanity = .68, exhibitionism = .65, entitlement = .52, exploitativeness = .56).

3. Study 2: Confirmatory test of hypothesized GNS factor structure

After identifying and culling two poor performing items, the 33-item GNS and seven subscales exhibited promising psychometric properties. In Study 1, we examined the GNS factor structure using EFA, which was appropriate considering it was an initial test and we intended to use the results to guide culling decisions. The purpose of the present study was to conduct a confirmatory test of the hypothesized seven factor structure.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and materials

A sample of 980 college students (*M* age = 20.32; 61% female) completed the GNS (*M* = 114.66, *SD* = 22.32). The GNS again exhibited good reliability for both its full-scale ($\alpha = .91$) and its seven subscales ($\alpha s > .76$).

3.2. Results and discussion

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Mplus (version 7) software (Muthen & Muthen, 2011) and employed maximum likelihood estimation. The seven hypothesized latent factors were measured by their respective observed (manifest) GNS items (e.g., latent "authority" factor measured by observed items AUT1, AUT2, AUT3, AUT4, AUT5). No post hoc modifications were performed. Based on widely used guidelines (Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999), our hypothesized seven factor model exhibited acceptable fit ($X^2[474] = 1243.60$; *CFI* = .95; *TLI* = .94; *SRMR* = .04; *RMSEA* = .04, 95% CI = .038, .043).[1] Given the results from Study 1's EFA and the present study's CFA, we deemed the hypothesized seven factor structure of the GNS empirically supported.

[1] We also tested a model that omitted the facet-level factors in favor of a single "GN" factor. This model exhibited very poor fit (*CFI* = .44, *TLI* = .40, *RMSEA* = .13, *SRMR* = .13) and was thus rejected.

Table 1
Pattern matrix resulting from EFA of the 35 GNS items (Study 1).

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aut1	I like to be in charge of things		.63					
aut2	I lead rather than follow		.72					
aut3	I naturally take charge in situations		.79					
aut4	I have a take charge personality		.80					
aut5	I am a natural born leader		.83					
suf1	I don't rely on other people to get things done					.55		
suf2	When something needs to be done, I do it on my own					.61		
suf3	I get irritated when I have to depend on other people					.62		
suf4	I don't like to depend on other people to do things					.80		
suf5	I like to do things on my own.					.56		
sup1	I'm more talented than most other people							.83
sup2	I'm better than other people at most things							.75
sup3	If it's just me versus another person, I almost always win							.47
sup4	I'm a superior person						.32	–
sup5	I have more going for me than most people							.40
van1	I care about how good I look				.83			
van2	I try to look as attractive as possible when I leave the house				.69			
van3	Looking good is important to feeling good				.62			
van4	My looks are important to me.				.81			
van5	I think it's important to look as good as possible				.77			
exh1	I do things that grab people's attention			.64				
exh2	I do things that get people to notice me			.85				
exh3	I make myself the center of attention			.74				
exh4	I can be a showoff			.52				
exh5	I do things to get attention			.88				
ent1	I expect to be treated better than average						.81	
ent2	The level of treatment I expect is higher than what most other people expect						.66	
ent3	I deserve to get what I want						.50	
ent4	I expect people to bend the rules for me	.33					–	
ent5	I deserve more out of life than other people						.60	
exp1	I'll do whatever it takes to get ahead, even if it means some people get hurt	.69						
exp2	If I have to take advantage of somebody to get what I want, so be it	.84						
exp3	I can be pretty manipulative	.59						
exp4	I'm willing to manipulate others to get what I want	.86						
exp5	I've been known to use people to get what I want	.79						

Notes: Principal axis factoring extraction, promax rotation; items with factor loadings >.30 shown (– = loading <.30).

4. Study 3: Validity tests and comparisons with other measures of narcissism

Studies 1 and 2 suggest the GNS is a viable candidate measure of GN that possesses stable and reliable subscales. The present study sought to test whether total scores on the GNS predict outcome variables consistent with the theoretical portrait of GN. Additionally, we tested the validity of two of the GNS subscales (i.e., entitlement, exploitativeness). Finally, we examined how similar the GNS is to another measure of GN (i.e., NPI) and vulnerable narcissism.

According to prominent theoretical models, such as the agency model of GN (Campbell & Foster, 2007), there are several key traits associated with GN. These include an emphasis of agentic versus communal concerns, approach orientation, sense of entitlement, and inflated self perceptions (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Campbell et al., 2004; Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Brennan, 2011; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). GN is also theoretically and empirically linked to several other personality traits and individual differences, including psychopathy (in particular, primary psychopathy, which is a cold and callous attitude toward others), the big five traits of extraversion and disagreeableness, behaviors, such as aggression and interpersonal exploitativeness, and low empathy (Brunell et al., 2013; Lynam, 2011; Miller & Maples, 2011; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). We expected the GNS to correlate with these outcome variables consistent with this theoretical and empirical literature.

As noted above, we also examined two instances of subscale validity by assessing associations between the GNS subscales and two independent measures of entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004) and exploitativeness (Brunell et al., 2013). We expected the GNS subscales of entitlement and exploitativeness to uniquely predict these two outcome variables. Finally, we examined how the GNS relates to other measures of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, such as the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Pincus et al., 2009).

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and materials

Participants consisted of 262 college undergraduates (M age = 19.28, SD = 3.85; 75% female) who completed the GNS (M = 110.71, SD = 21.34, α = .91), the NPI (M = 15.06, SD = 6.66, α = .84) and 11 other measures. All of these remaining measures have been described in detail elsewhere and thus we provide brief overviews and relevant citations.

Agency-communion was measured using the 32-item International Personality Item Pool-Interpersonal Circumplex (IPC; Markey & Markey, 2009). Agency and communion scores were calculated using the formulae found in Markey and Markey (2009, p. 355) such that higher scores reflected higher levels of agency and communion (Ms = 0.00 and 0.00, SDs = .91 and .87, respectively).

Approach-avoidance motivation were measured using the 20-item BIS–BAS Scales (Carver & White, 1994). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores on the BAS scale (M = 38.79, SD = 6.36) and BIS scale (M = 20.73, SD = 3.86) reflected higher levels of approach and avoidance motivation, respectively.

Entitlement was measured using the 9-item Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004). Responses to items were averaged such that higher scores reflected higher levels of psychological entitlement (M = 3.11, SD = 1.28).

Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of self-esteem (M = 63.61, SD = 15.67).

Primary psychopathy was measured using the primary psychopathy subscale of the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP; Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of primary psychopathy (M = 30.04, SD = 7.69).

Big five personality traits were measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of extraversion (M = 9.28, SD = 4.09), agreeableness (M = 11.07, SD = 3.19), conscientiousness (M = 9.51, SD = 3.23), neuroticism (M = 6.82, SD = 4.04), and openness (M = 11.23, SD = 3.25).

Aggression was measured using the 29-item Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of physical aggression (M = 26.22, SD = 11.45), verbal aggression (M = 18.13, SD = 6.49), anger (M = 21.35, SD = 9.05), and hostility (M = 28.30, SD = 9.49).

Exploitativeness was measured using the 6-item Exploitativeness Scale (IES; Brunell et al., 2013). Responses to items were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of interpersonal exploitativeness (M = 11.65, SD = 7.64).

Empathy was measured using the 40-item Empathy Quotient (EQ; Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). EQ items were responded to using a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). Responses were then recoded such that a response of four received two points, a response of three received one point, and responses of two or one received zero points. Responses were then summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of empathy (M = 41.18, SD = 11.66).

Vulnerable narcissism was measured with two measures: the 52-item Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Pincus et al., 2009) and the 10-item Hypersensitivity Narcissism Scale (Hendin & Cheek, 1997). Responses to items on both measures were summed such that higher scores reflected higher levels of vulnerable narcissism (Ms = 115.88 and 27.14, respectively; SDs = 34.50 and 6.80, respectively). Note that because of experimenter error, the PNI was not included in the survey packet completed by the first 130 participants; thus, N = 132 for all analyses involving the PNI.

4.2. Results and discussion

4.2.1. Full-scale validity tests

Table 2 shows how scores on the GNS correlated with each of the outcome variables. In general, the GNS predicted outcome variables consistent with the theoretical portrait of GN. Participants who scored high on the GNS reported high levels of agency, moderate levels of communion, high approach motivation, low avoidance motivation, high entitlement, high self-esteem, high primary psychopathy, high extraversion, low agreeableness, high levels of all facets of aggression, high interpersonal exploitativeness, and low empathy. Notably, when scores on the NPI were used to predict these outcome variables, the pattern of correlations was largely the same (see Table 2).

4.2.2. Subscale validity tests

It was expected that scores on the GNS entitlement and exploitativeness subscales would share unique variance with scores on the PES and IES, respectively. We tested this using stepwise regression analysis with scores from all seven GNS subscales serving as potential predictors. When scores on the PES were used as the outcome variable, only the GNS entitlement subscale, β = .70, p < .001, R^2 = .49, emerged as a significant predictor. Likewise, when IES was used as the outcome variable, only the GNS exploitativeness subscale, iables. In general, the GNS predicted outco$^2\beta$ = .56, p < .001, R^2 = .32, emerged as a significant predictor. In contrast, when the same analyses were conducted using analogous NPI subscales, multiple subscales emerged as significant predictors of both PES (entitlement, self-sufficiency, exploitativeness, and superiority) and IES (entitlement, exploitativeness). These results offer initial evidence that the GNS subscales provide valid assessments of their purported constructs.

Table 2
Correlations between GNS, NPI, and relevant outcome variables (Study 3).

Trait	GNS	NPI
General personality (BFI)		
Extraversion	.35***	.41***
Agreeableness	−.25***	−.10
Neuroticism	−.10	−.30***
Conscientiousness	−.03	−.00
Openness	.11	.14*
Interpersonal circumplex (IPC)		
Communion dimension	.01	.08
Agency dimension	.47***	.47***
Approach-avoidance motivation (BIS–BAS)		
Approach motivation	.27***	.26***
Avoidance motivation	−.12*	−.32***
Aggression (BPAQ)		
Total	.27***	.12
Physical aggression	.26***	.20**
Verbal aggression	.31***	.18**
Anger	.18**	.04
Hostility	.15*	−.06
Additional traits		
Self-esteem (RSE)	.16**	.31***
Empathy (EQ)	−.14*	−.03
Primary psychopathy (LSRP)	.40***	.33***
Entitlement (PES)	.54***	.41***
Exploitativeness (IES)	.32***	.25***
Narcissism types		
Grandiose (NPI)	.58***	
Vulnerable (PNI)	.36***	.13
Vulnerable (HSNS)	.28***	−.02

* p < .05.
** p < .01.
*** p < .001.

4.2.3. GNS relations with other measures of GN and vulnerable narcissism

As expected, the GNS correlated strongly with the NPI, but interestingly it was also significantly correlated with both measures of vulnerable narcissism (see Table 2). Because the GNS shared variance with both measures of vulnerable narcissism in addition to the NPI, it was important to test whether the GNS measured GN separate from vulnerable narcissism. We tested this by submitting all four narcissism measures to a factor analysis (principal axis factoring extraction, promax rotation) and observing whether the GNS and NPI (putative measures of GN) loaded onto a separate factor than the PNI and HSNS (putative measures of vulnerable narcissism). This analysis extracted two factors that possessed eigenvalues >1.00 (third factor possessed eigenvalue = .43). The first factor (*eigenvalue* = 1.99; 49.63% variance) contained the GNS (*loading* = .73) and NPI (*loading* = .89). The second factor (*eigenvalue* = 1.31; 32.64% variance) contained the PNI (*loading* = .64) and HSNS (*loading* = .90). None of the scales cross-loaded at >.30. These results suggest that, although the GNS shares some variance with measures of vulnerable narcissism, it is at its core a measure of GN.

5. Summary and conclusion

The results of the present studies suggest the 33-item GNS is a viable measure of GN. It possesses seven stable and reliable factors/subscales that reflect Raskin and Terry's (1988) influential NPI factor solution. As a whole, the GNS exhibits adequate validity and correlates with outcome variables in roughly the same manner as the NPI. Additionally, two of the GNS subscales, entitlement and exploitativeness, were demonstrated to possess construct validity. Future research should continue to research the psychometric properties of the full-scale GNS and its subscales (e.g., employ item response theory). Future research is also needed to further examine the validity of the GNS subscales (e.g., test whether authority subscale uniquely predicts emergent leadership). All seven subscales exhibit high face validity and strong reliability, which is promising in terms of the likelihood of successful future validity tests.

In contrast to the NPI, the GNS exhibits significant overlap with measures of vulnerable narcissism. The results of the factor-analytic examination of the measures of GN and vulnerable narcissism suggest that the GNS is primarily a measure of GN that shares some variance with measures of vulnerable narcissism (perhaps the GNS provides better coverage of negative content than the NPI). Future research should continue to investigate links between the GNS and both GN and vulnerable narcissism. More generally, including the GNS in future studies that contrast GN and vulnerable narcissism may permit more sophisticated analytic techniques, such as structural equation modeling, to help elucidate differences between GN and vulnerable narcissism – something that has been called for extensively in the literature (cf., Campbell & Miller, 2011). It is certainly our hope that researchers will find the GNS to be a useful addition to their measurement toolboxes.

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