

# A Study of Narcissistic Traits and its relationship with Expressions of Aggression among Indian Men

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**Abstract-** This study aimed to investigate the relationship between expressions of aggression and trait narcissism. A sample of 100 Indian men, aged 20-30, completed standardized measures of narcissistic traits and anger expression. The study explored the potential correlation between narcissistic traits and aggression expressions, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. The findings of this study showed a positive correlation between narcissistic trait and with hostility, verbal aggression and physical aggression. This will contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics between narcissistic traits and aggression expression in Indian men, with implications for mental health and social relationships.

**Aim:** The aim of the present study is all about learning if there is any relationship between the various expression of aggression viz. physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility in Indian men with narcissistic traits. **Methods:** Quantitative data was collected from 100 males of India aged between 20-30 years, using standardized psychometric questionnaire: The Narcissist Personality Inventory-40 by Raskin and Terry (1988) and The Buss and Perry Aggressive Questionnaire (1992).

**Results:** The correlation analysis indicates that for the present sample, there is a strong positive correlation between narcissistic traits and hostility, verbal aggression and physical aggression (0.269, 0.261 & 0.258). In the other hand, a weak positive correlation exists between narcissistic traits and anger (0.179).

**Key words:** Narcissistic traits, Verbal aggression, Physical aggression Anger, Hostility

## INTRODUCTION

Narcissism is used in the concept of personality trait in psychology where it is defined by an inflated sense of

self-love, a continuous desire for admiration, arrogance, and fantasies of unlimited power and success. Narcissistic personality disorder is a formal mental health condition with persistent narcissistic traits that significantly impact the quality of life. Cultural shifts, individualism and promotion give rise to narcissism tendencies, exacerbated by social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Drawing from Greek mythology, narcissism can be connected to an inflated sense of self-love, admiration and power, as exemplified by the story of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection in the water, became obsessed with that, spent all day long looking at it which caused his death too soon. The myth of Narcissus serves as a cautionary tale about vanity, self-love, and the consequences of excessive pride.

Studies of narcissism as potentially adaptive and existing in the community often utilize the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) as the preferred index of Narcissistic traits. Raskin and Terry (1988) theorized subclinical style of narcissism is identified by a grandiose sense of self or superiority, dominant, entitlement and antagonist interpersonal style, vanity, exploitativeness, authority, exhibitionism and self-sufficiency.

Studies have also shown that excessive parental concern (Helicopter parenting) or neglect can be responsible for developing narcissism in early childhood (Campbell, Brunell & Finkel, 2006; Kernberg, 1975). Research indicates that parental narcissism is associated with increased narcissistic traits in offspring (Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006). Additionally, parental modeling of narcissistic behaviors can shape children's perceptions of

interpersonal relationships and self-worth (Barry et al., 2007).

Pathological narcissism is considered a form of the “Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)” as mentioned in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Rosenfeld (1964, 1971) and Kernberg (1984) mentioned pathological narcissism as the centre of the aggressive drive and aggression.

H.Kohut (1972) postulated that individuals with narcissistic traits are more engaged in either by shamefaced withdrawal as a flight reaction in terms of responding to narcissistic injury or showing narcissistic rage as a fight reaction. He referred to that as they are motivated strongly to express the need for revenge or undoing a hurt against the shame provoking events, their narcissistic rage can possibly turn into self-destructive impulses and also suicide. It becomes problematic when narcissistic traits become exaggerated, inflexible, or impair functioning, leading to narcissistic personality disorder (NPD).

Narcissism and aggression are closely related. Individuals with narcissistic traits try to maintain their overrated self-image and aggression as their defence mechanism. They are incapable of maintaining long-term relationships and they can cause psychological as well as physical harm. Sigmund Freud (1931) believed that libidinal narcissistic personality types consist of greater amount of aggression. His view on narcissism was vehemently upheld the belief that those with narcissistic personality disorder had not adapted to their libido and sex drive, which should get focused outward to have healthy relationships. Those with libidos turned inwards are primarily focused on the self and will likely experience difficulties in relationships and relating to the external world.

High level of narcissistic traits can be related to criminal behaviours also (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Aggression becomes a “death drive” when associated to a primary and predominantly destructive motivation that aims at eliminating representations of both significant others and the self (Kernberg, 2009).

Buss and Perry (1992) revealed four factors of aggression which were namely Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Hostility, and Anger. According to them Physical and verbal aggression, which involve hurting or harming others, represent the instrumental or motor component of behaviour. Anger, which

involves physiological arousal and preparation for aggression, represents the emotional or affective component of behaviour. Hostility, which consists of feelings of ill will and injustice, represents the cognitive component of behaviour.

This research sheds light on the narcissistic traits and its relationship with different expressions of aggression as well.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the present study is to understand and learning the relationship between narcissism and various expression of anger. In this following section, a detailed review has been provided the different types of researches that have been conducted around the world to explore the link between narcissism and aggression.

Studies have shown that narcissistic individuals who are in their adolescent periods are more likely to be aggressive as they overstated their self-perception and competencies (Boivin et al., 1989; David and Kistner, 2000; Hymel et al., 1990; Patterson et al, 1991).

In the spouses’ ratings of aggression, it has been revealed that the grandiosity-exhibitionism component of narcissism was vitally related to that but the vulnerability-sensitivity component was not (Wink, 1991). From these results, Bushman et al. (2009); Wink, (1991) concluded that aggression is significantly associated with grandiose narcissism as they hold high expectations of their acceptance by others and deliberately act aggressively to maintain their exaggerated view of the self.

Individuals with narcissism expect to be catered to and when their demand is not meet they may become furious potentially resulting in a criminal act (APA, 1994).

Baumeister et al. (1996), Baumeister and Boden (1998) investigated the link between narcissism and reactive aggression through the concept of threatened egotism. They discovered a significant relation between them as aggression serves as a defensive response when the highly favourable self-view is challenged by less favourable external appraisals.

Several studies supported their notion and mentioned narcissistic traits are related to aggressive behaviour like administering more aversive tones, or giving negative verbal feedback after rejection or receiving negative feedback (Bushman and Baumeister, 1998;

Stucke and Sporer, 2002; Twenge and Campbell, 2003).

Baumeister, Smart and Boden (1996); Kernis et al. (1993) suggested that human aggression has been widely acquired attention as a traditional personality character and thus it can be assumed a connection between excessively high or positive self-esteem with aggressive individuals.

Hart & Joubert (1996) investigated the relationship between narcissism and hostility. They found that men with high narcissism scored higher on total hostility, assault, suspiciousness and negativism and women with high narcissism scored higher on total hostility, assault, negativism and verbal hostility. They postulated that narcissistic individuals may experience situational interpersonal frustration as they perceive rejection or criticism from others.

Bushman & Baumeister (1998) found that those people with having heightened positive self-view and threatened egotism are more likely to be aggressive as they commonly have fragile and unstable self-esteem. Salmivalli (2001) investigated relation between narcissism and aggression. Results found that narcissistic individual with the characteristics of exploitativeness and lack of empathy are often used aggression for constructing a grandiose self-image.

The Self-regulatory model by Morf & Rhodewalt (2001) suggested that narcissistic individuals are very concerned about their exaggerated self-esteem which is highly vulnerable. So, they use aggression in order to defeat others to remove threats and re-established their self-esteem. Thus, these aggressive reactions become an adaptive mechanism to regulate their moods and behaviour.

Warren et al. (2002) showed a positive correlation between narcissistic personality disorder and engaged in violent crimes.

Studies have shown that narcissism traits were correlated with self-reported proactive aggression (Washburn et al., 2004, Seah and Ang, 2008, Fossati et al., 2010, Lobbestael et al, 2014).

In a study of Buffardi, L. E., & Campbell, W. K. (2008), it has been seen that how people with narcissistic tendencies use Facebook. They found that these individuals post more often, share more about themselves, and use attractive profile pictures. Interestingly, strangers who viewed these profiles were able to identify the narcissistic users. This study

revealed how social media can provide clues about personality traits like narcissism.

A Turkish study by D.E. Öngen (2010) showed that exhibitionism as the maladaptive factor of narcissism was the positive predictor of physical aggression, anger and hostility.

On the other hand power as the adaptive factor of narcissism is related with physical aggression, verbal aggression and anger.

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) by Back et al. (2013) postulated that grandiose narcissism is based on two-dimensional construct. First, by being self-confident and charismatic, narcissists reach out for admiration to maintain their grandiose self-view (Admiration). When they feel their grandiose self is being threatened, their behaviour turns disagreeable and aggressive (Rivalry). Both, Admiration and Rivalry, Have the overarching goal of maintaining a grandiose self.

Studies have investigated that Narcissists are more aggressive and violent than others in various driving situations (Bushman & Thomaes, 2011; Rasmussen, 2016).

In a recent study of Sophie L. Kjærvi & Brad J. Bushman (2021), they investigated the link between narcissism and both aggression and violence by analysing 437 studies involving more than 123,000 participants. They found that narcissism is related to a 21% increase in aggression and an 18% increase in violence. It has also been found that individuals with high narcissism can be aggressive without being provoked and it was linked to aggression before it turned into pathological levels (e.g., narcissistic personality disorder).

#### Indian Study:

In the recent study by Sneha Doshi (2022) it has been found that there is an existing relationship with narcissistic and aggressive traits among individuals. The results suggested that there is a positive correlation between Leadership/Authority and verbal aggression and Grandiose/Exhibitionism subscales of narcissism and the subscales of Entitlement/Exploitativeness with physical aggression.

Based on this survey of literature, the current study attempted to delineate the relationship between narcissistic traits and various expression of anger among Indian males.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To understand the relationship between narcissistic traits and expression of aggression.

Objectives:

1. To assess the relationship between narcissistic traits and expressions of aggression among Indian men.
2. To understand the variation of expression of aggression among men.

Hypothesis:

Null hypothesis (H0) – there is no significant relationship between Narcissistic traits and particular expressions of aggression namely physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility of Indian Men.

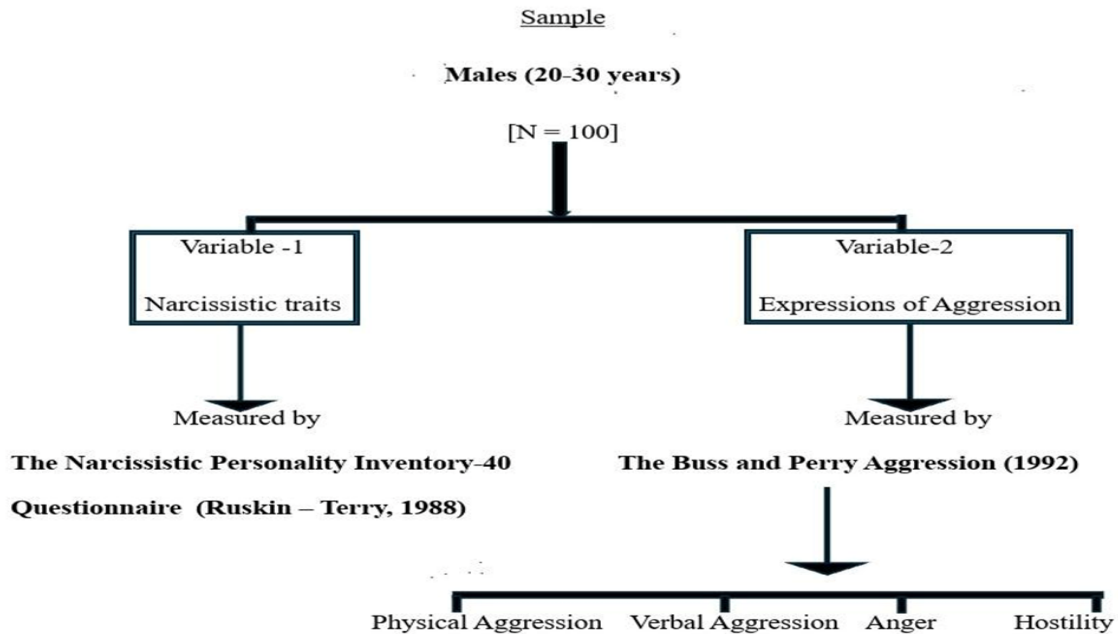
Plan of work:

- Variables:
1. Narcissistic trait- Raskin & Terry (1988) described narcissitic traits as the motivation in terms of the need to be loved, as well as strivings for self-sufficiency and for perfection; and a constellation of attitudes that may characterize a person’s relationships with others. This constellation includes exhibitionism, feelings of entitlement involving the expectation of special privileges over others and special exemptions from normal social demands, a tendency to see others as extensions of oneself, feelings and

thoughts of omnipotent involving the control of others, an intolerance for criticism from others that involves the perception of criticism as a demand for changing oneself, a tendency to be critical of others who are different from oneself, suspiciousness, jealousy, and a tendency to focus on one’s own mental products.

2. Expressions of aggression- Buss and Perry (1992) revealed four factors of aggression which were namely Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Hostility, and Anger. According to them physical and verbal aggression, which involve hurting or harming others, represent the instrumental or motor component of behaviour. Anger, which involves physiological arousal and preparation for aggression, represents the emotional or affective component of behaviour. Hostility, which consists of feelings of ill will and injustice, represents the cognitive component of behaviour.

- Sample size: 100 male participants of India are selected for this quantitative study.
- Sampling Technique: The convenient sampling technique is used to select the sample.
- Methods: The data was collected using standardized psychometric questionnaires.
- Approach: The present study is a correlational study.
- Study design: The following diagram represents the design of the present



- Inclusion Criteria:
  1. Only resident of India were included
  2. Age range :20-30 years of age
  3. Only males were included
- Exclusion Criteria:
  1. Religious factors were excluded
  2. Genders other than male were excluded.
  3. Individuals with significant neurological conditions and psychiatric illness were excluded.
- Tools:
  1. Consent Form: This form is provided to the participants to be awarded about the research and also make them assure about strict confidentiality maintenance of their personal details.
  2. Socio-demographic form: It is prepared to gather necessary information about the participants such as age, educational qualification, religion, locality, history of any past physical/psychological illness etc.
  3. Narcissistic Personality Inventory-40: It is a 40 item forced choice self -report inventory given by Raskin & Terry (1988) which is the revised version of NPI -54 (Raskin & Hall ,1979). It assesses sub- clinical levels of narcissism with a high rate of internal consistency with alphas ranging from 0.80 to 0.86 (Raskin and Terry, 1988) and excellent internal consistency  $\alpha=0.81$  to 0.91 (Brown & Tamborski, 2011; Foster, Shiverdecker & Turner, 2016, Otway & Vignoles, 2006).It is widely used for non-clinical levels of the trait narcissism, developed by Robert Raskin and Howard Terry (1988) and not intended for use in diagnosing Narcissistic personality disorder.
  4. Buss & Perry Aggression Questionnaire – It is a 29 item self-report questionnaire to assess aggression. It was developed by Buss and Perry in 1992. Test-retest reliability correlations range of this test is from .72 for the Verbal aggression subscale to .85 for Physical Aggression (Buss & Perry, 1992). In the Spanish adaptation, the alpha coefficient was .86 for Physical Aggression, .77 for Anger, .68 for Verbal Aggression and .72 for Hostility (Andreu et al., 2002).
- Procedure: Online google form were created and circulated among male participants aged between 20-30 years of India. Then the collected data was statistically evaluated using SPSSv.16.0.

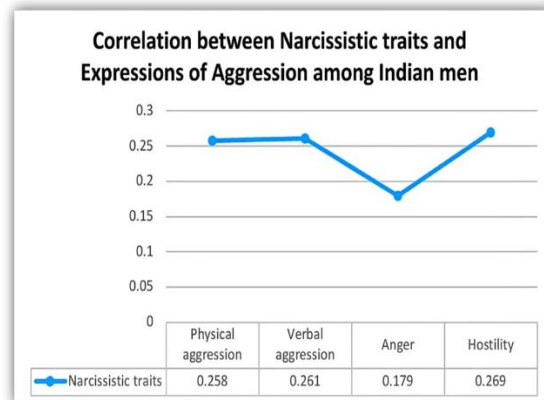
- Statistical Analysis: With the help of SPSS 16 (Statistical Package for Social Science, version 16) (Levesque 2006), the data was then statistically evaluated. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to under the relation between narcissistic traits and expressions of aggression.

Result Table

Table-1: Correlation of Narcissistic traits with Expressions of Aggression among Indian men (N=100)

Domain	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance	Remark
Physical Aggression	0.258	0.009	Significant relationship present . Null hypothesis rejected.
Verbal Aggression	0.261	0.009	Significant relationship present . Null hypothesis rejected.
Anger	0.179	0.074	Significant relationship absent . Null hypothesis accepted .
Hostility	0.269	0.007	Significant relationship present . Null hypothesis rejected.

Grap-1: Graphical representation of relationship between Narcissistic traits and Expressions of Aggression for the present subjects. (N=100).



## DISCUSSION

In the present study, data reveals (Table 1) that men with narcissistic traits are positively correlated with hostility (0.269), verbal aggression (0.261) and physical aggression (0.258) at the 0.01 level of significance which means these factors will increase with the increased level of narcissistic traits. On the other hand, the correlational measure with Anger(0.179) indicates with increasing narcissistic traits anger also increases. In a study of Hart, P. L., & Joubert, C. E. (1996), the result has clearly shown that the males who scored higher on narcissism are also high scorer on total Hostility, Negativism, Suspiciousness, and Assault. A recent study by Sophie L. Kjærviik and Brad J. Bushman (2021) found that narcissism is related to a 21% increase in aggression and an 18% increase in violence. Individuals with high narcissism can be aggressive without being provoked, and narcissism is linked to aggression even before it reaches pathological levels, such as narcissistic personality disorder. The study suggests that narcissism is an important risk factor for aggression and violence, and understanding this link can help in developing strategies for reducing violence.

The cause of hostile behaviour for individual with narcissistic traits is due to their exaggerated sense of self-love and fragile self-esteem, which makes it difficult for them to handle criticism where they do not fulfil their expectations and thus become aggressive or defensive in order to respond. They can show hostility through expressions like verbal threatening, gaslighting, manipulating, passive aggressive compliments, underestimating, scapegoating others. In George Kelly's framework of Personal Construct Theory (1955), individuals develop personal constructs or ways of interpreting the world, and when these constructs are threatened or invalidated, it can lead to feelings of hostility-which can manifest as aggression, defensiveness, or resentment.

In the current study, it has been shown that verbal and physical aggression is the second highest expression among men with narcissistic traits (Table 1). Individuals with narcissistic traits use their voice to assert dominance through two extremes: loud and aggressive tone (yelling, screaming, raging) or complete silence and ignoring. Both tactics aim to control and manipulate others, with the tone often conveying petulance and pompousness, reinforcing

abusive behavior. This vocal strategy helps them establish power and assert their superiority over others. They experience strong negative effects (e.g., shame and anger) following negative feedback, which facilitate aggressive reactions (Krizan & Johar, 2015). The cause is quite same like hostile expression as they cannot tolerate disagreement or criticism; they are like to be engaged in physical aggression in order to defend. Lack of empathy, sense of entitlement, impulsivity, poor anger management skills, and insecurity can be the reason behind it. It is also important to know that this type of expression can be co-occurring with various mental health or physical illness conditions. Individuals can exhibit responses as per the situational factors, severity of the perceived threat and their degree of Narcissistic traits.

From a meta-analytical review given by Emily Grijalva and colleagues (2015) found that men scored higher in narcissism than women across various measures. The biological differences in hormones such as testosterone which is well-known for male hormone may be responsible for the inflated feelings of grandiosity, dominance, assertiveness, aggression which are notable characteristics of narcissism. A study published in the journal Psychological Science in 2012 by Colin G. DeYoung and colleagues showed that testosterone levels were positively correlated with self-reported dominance and narcissism in men. In a research conducted by Joshua D. Foster and W. Keith Campbell (2007), results found that men tend to exhibit more stereotypically masculine traits associated with narcissism, such as assertiveness and dominance. Sociocultural norms and values play a role in shaping narcissistic behaviour (Foster et al., 2003). There are certain conditions which are essential in developing narcissistic traits in individuals. These phenomena is known as Acquired Situational Narcissism given by Dr. R.B. Millman in late 1980s. This happened when someone suddenly gain success, fame or power which boost their self-esteem, entitlement or a sense of self-importance. It is a temporary increase of narcissism that can be persisted in terms of individual differences of priority.

Geographical location can become a significant factor in developing Narcissism among individuals. In the current study 55% of total population from urban areas.

There are several factors like urbanization which promotes a competitive environment and strives for

validation and prioritisation; a culture of individualism where success is the centre of excellence; socioeconomic status and enhancement of social media for self-promotion, independent exposure and last but not the least cultural influences such as their way of value perception and different rules and regulations have a valid role in shaping Narcissistic traits among city dwellers rather than rural or terminal dwellers who do not get the modern facilities as well. In a study of China found that people live in urban areas are more narcissistic than rural areas and higher socioeconomic class has positive influence on developing narcissism (Cai, Kwan & Sedikides, 2011).

Growing narcissistic traits can become a cause for criminal behaviour where a sense of entitlement and lack of empathy fuel it. Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime, or Self-Control Theory (1990), is the basis for the connection between criminal behaviour and narcissism (William & McShane, 1999). This theory identifies that impulsivity, insensitivity, self-centeredness like certain traits find in the individuals who commit crimes.

Individuals with narcissistic traits used to ignore others feelings and think of them at the top of everything. This attitude leads to manipulative or exploitative actions which escalate behaviours like thefts, fraud or even domestic violence etc. Their heightened level of seeking validation and admiration may drive them to disregard the rules and engage in risky or illegal actions without thinking about the potential consequences for themselves and others. Convicted murderers like Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, O.J. Simpson, Scott Peterson, and Drew Peterson had shown notable narcissistic traits.

Individuals with narcissistic traits can become meta-cognitively aware about their own thoughts and behaviours. They can gain insight by recognising their narcissistic ideations like superiority, grandiosity, lack of empathy and entitlement. They can use meta-cognitive strategies like observing and adjusting with people and their perceptions without being judgemental, seeking feedback from others can give them reality checks. Cultivating insights from self-inquiry and maintaining a deeper level of understanding of intra and inter personal relations can actively foster healthier behaviour, balanced perspective and reduce Narcissistic traits. This can

also help to mitigate the factors of crime rates in society. Additionally seeking professional help from a mental health specialist and utmost willingness in changing harmful thought patterns and behaviours can alleviate the negative impact of Narcissism on themselves and others all around.

Commitment to focusing on self-wellbeing and monitoring self-perception enables individuals to manage being highly Narcissistic.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded from the present study that the trait of narcissism is positively correlated with expressions of aggression especially with verbal aggression, physical aggression and hostility among Indian men.

### Implications

This study explores the relationship between narcissistic traits and various expressions of anger, offering several implications:

1. Understanding and identifying high-risk individuals with narcissistic traits to mitigate aggression.
2. Early detection and prevention through recognizing escalating narcissistic traits and implementing preventive strategies.
3. Legal and judicial applications in cases like workplace aggression and domestic violence to improve support services for victims.
4. Tailored educational and intervention programs to raise awareness and empower individuals to deal with narcissistic behaviours.
5. Policy development focusing on crime reduction strategies addressing the nexus between narcissism and aggression.
6. Treatment approaches for individuals with narcissistic traits, promoting healthier lifestyles and risk management.
7. Insights into societal power structures, social dynamics, and interpersonal relationships, particularly among males.
8. Contribution to various fields such as sociology, criminology, public health, and psychology, enhancing understanding of human behaviour.

### Delimitations

1. The study suggests expanding the sample size for greater effectiveness.

2. It acknowledges the limited scope of participants from India and proposes including a more diverse range of participants globally.
  3. It recognizes the need for diversity in participants' gender and age groups beyond young male adults.
  4. The study proposes incorporating family history and socioeconomic backgrounds to understand the influence of parenting patterns, family history, and economic status on narcissism development (e.g. studies of Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006; Cai, Kwan & Sedikides, 2011).
  5. Interview-based research could reveal life transition incidents that may contribute to certain issues.
  6. The study suggests examining the impact of social media exposure on narcissism development and related crimes like cyberbullying (e.g. study of Buffardi, L. E., & Campbell, W. K. ,2008).
  7. Despite unequal sample sizes, the study indicates a strong positive correlation between narcissism and anger.
  8. Specific scales like the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (NGS) and others could provide more detailed data.
- Overall, despite its limitations, the study paves the way for future research by suggesting alternative methodologies and exploring related variables not addressed in this study.

#### Future Scope

- Other genders can be included in this study.
- A comparative study on degree of narcissism and various expressions of anger can be done on different socio-economic statuses, educational levels and parenting styles.
- Different criminal behaviours can be studied by using the relation between narcissism and aggression in future.

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