



Narcissism, Self-understanding and Anxiety among Youth

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Abstract: Narcissism can be said to be the inability to grasp and understand others feeling and disregarding their emotions while only thinking about themselves. Self-understanding refers to how well one knows about themselves and can understand their feelings, emotions, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, behaviour, and so on. An intense sense of unease, dread, or fear is called anxiety. The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between, narcissism, self-understanding and anxiety among youth as well as gender differences in all three. Data was collected from youth that is, 16 to 25 years

(N=100; 50 male 50 female) in offline mode by using the scales related to all three variables. The finding revealed that there was non-significant negative relationship between narcissism and anxiety. There was non-significant positive relationship between narcissism and self-understanding. There was significant negative relationship between self-understanding and anxiety among youth. There were significant gender differences found in narcissism, and self-understanding, while non-significant in anxiety among youth.

Keywords: Narcissism, Self-understanding and Anxiety.

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Introduction:

In today's world where everyone talks about self-confidence and importance of talking positively about one's own self, we also find people who brag about themselves whilst belittling others. Although it is important to admire yourself or have high self-esteem, it is equally important that we take constructive criticism positively so that one can work on their overall development and betterment. Keeping oneself in high regard or prioritizing oneself should not become a cause of demeaning others as it would gradually turn into arrogance and result in lack of empathy. It is important for us to have self-insight so that we can understand ourselves properly and know our strengths and weaknesses in a rational way. We live in a society and humans are often considered as social beings, we interact with each other and rely on one another to a great extent, when we start to see ourselves as superior beings, disregarding others we slowly and gradually start to lose these social relations. People need to remember that just as us others to have thoughts and feelings that matters and should be considered as well.

"Narcissism is an epiphenomenon, arising due to various combinations and constellations of underlying traits and motivations. Although the underlying motivations and their behavioural outcomes are heterogeneous, the common core of narcissism is typified by a tendency for these individuals to be entitled, arrogant, self-centred, and vain, using their considerable social potency and tendency towards exploitative behaviour to leverage themselves into positions of authority or social prominence" (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015).

The term "narcissism" was developed by Sigmund Freud, who did so from a psychological perspective (Freud, 1991). It has since been developed and modified to the point where it is now included in the DSM-5 classification under the heading of personality disorders. Although the name narcissism is not contemporary; rather, it has its roots in Greek mythology.

The river god Cephissus and the nymph Liriope are the parents of Narcissus, according to Greek mythology. His attractiveness made him stand out. The blind seer Tiresias informed Narcissus's mother that her son would live a long life—as long as he never saw himself, according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book III. But when he turned down the nymph Echo's or, in a previous incarnation, the young man Ameinias's love, the Gods took vengeance upon him. After falling in love with his own reflection in a spring and committing himself, the flower that carries his name bloomed where he passed away (Freud, 1991).

Narcissists are well-known, and the term "narcissist" is frequently used to describe those who seem overly self-assured. Because of their excessive self-admiration, they often have a strong desire for affirmation, power, and attention and find it difficult to accept criticism. But once in control, they could put more of an emphasis on stifling criticism and promoting themselves, and their lack of empathy makes them less dependable. To become well-known and attract attention from others, they employ audacious and deceptive social attention tactics (Miller et al., 2021; Cratsley, 2016)

There are two types of narcissism often talked about, **grandiose narcissism** and **vulnerable narcissism**.

Grandiose narcissist are people who are exaggerated, extraverted, possess high self-esteem,

domineering, attention-seeking, skilled in interpersonal relationships, and charming, but they are also aloof, aggressive, possess a strong sense of psychological entitlement, lack genuine empathy, and can be haughty or grandiose (Wright et al., 2013).

Vulnerable narcissist are individuals who exhibits aggressive behaviour, believes that the world is biased against them, has a high psychological entitlement but poor self-esteem, and experiences depression and anxiety (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016).

Although there are many different ways to be a narcissist, they are always characterized by a sense of entitlement, social competition, and a need for social approval. Narcissism is more appropriately defined as an appetite for recognition or adoration, a need to be the centre of attention, and an expectation of preferential treatment that reflects a perceived higher status. It does not always imply an excess of self-esteem or insecurity. Remarkably, studies reveal that a large number of extremely narcissistic individuals are willing to acknowledge that they are more self-centred. It should come as no surprise that relationships in the romantic, family, or professional spheres can suffer from excessive narcissism.

Self-understanding, in easy day to day language means to understand about one's own self, it refers to knowing oneself, including one's identity, capabilities, and beliefs.

Self is what makes any individual different from others. How one behaves, their character, traits, interest, etc., is what makes any individual different from others. All these combined with one's thoughts, emotions, perceptions identifies an individual.

Self is defined the entirety of the person, including all aspects of their mental and physical characteristics, both conscious and unconscious. The term's application in psychology is broad, aside from its fundamental relevance to individual identity, existence, and experience (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

In today's busy and fast-paced world we are less capable of knowing and understanding our own self, we are slowly losing contact with our own self. It is important that we know who we are and for that it is important to first understand our own self. It is easy to say that 'I know who I am, I understand myself as well as others', but we don't really know who we are (Morin, 2011).

Self-understanding or understanding the self means to know what's going on inside of you, to have

an insight about what one excels at or is not good at, where one needs improvement, to know about their own behaviour, strengths, weaknesses, attitude, emotions, etc. (Demetriou, 2000)

Self-understanding means, gaining understanding of and insight into one's traits, including motivations, attitudes, behavioural patterns, strengths, and shortcomings. It is a complex concept and to understand it better we must know and understand the terms like- self-concept, self-image, self-satisfaction, self-realization, self-awareness, self-management, self-consciousness, self-evaluation, etc (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Ellis, 1991; Morin, 2011; Erikson, 1959 & Hosking, 1993).

Self- understanding is a dynamic, continuing process. It is moulded by one's own experiences, relationships with others, cultural influences, and introspection (Erikson, 1959).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2000), **Anxiety** is characterised as apprehension, tension, or uneasiness that results from the expectation of danger, which can be either internal or external.

It's crucial to keep in mind that anxiety and fear have the same physical manifestations, despite some definitions distinguishing between the two. Fear is defined as an emotional response to a real and conscious threat, while anxiety is defined as a fear response when reality does not warrant it. It is crucial to carefully check for the existence of anxiety because it has been estimated that between 2 and 4% of the general population exhibits enough symptoms of anxiety to be labelled as having an anxiety disorder (Trivedi & Gupta, 2010).

Anxiety is sometimes described as the psychological equivalent of physical pain. Strongly contrasting emotions are clearly difficult for the mind to handle. Repression is one mental strategy the mind employs to resolve such conflict. The mind only shuts out one aspect of the opposing feelings throughout the suppression process. The repressed material is continuously fighting to surface into consciousness when this act of repression is not totally successful. The degree of mental effort required to keep this information out of consciousness is frequently directly connected to the patient's level of anxiety. In an attempt to keep repressed material from entering consciousness, a variety of mental techniques known as defense

mechanisms are employed. These mental processes include rationalization, displacement, projection, and reaction formation (Kapur, 2020).

Numerous individuals exhibiting signs of anxiety do not pursue or wish for treatment. These individuals often see themselves as having a naturally anxious disposition and believe they will never experience any change in this regard. When asked about their anxiety, these individuals typically claim that they have always been anxious and that there has not been any recent variation in the level of their nervousness. Individuals seeking treatment for anxiety are typically those who have faced considerable functional impairment, are seeking relief from the internal tension caused by their anxiety, or both. A primary care physician can frequently manage acute anxiety situations with a strong environmental influence through the use of medications and supportive counselling. Instances of this might include anxiety triggered by job transitions, divorce, relocating, health issues, and financial strain.

Anxiety is considered a healthy emotion and is considered normal. Anxiety becomes a mental illness when people experience excessive amounts of it. Anxiety disorders are a type of mental health diagnosis that causes worry, fear, vulnerability, and apprehension. These conditions change how the affected people must act and respond to various circumstances (Kapur, 2020).

Anxiety disorder is some of the most common types of mental health disorders, also linked with long-term functional impairment and a range of adverse outcomes.

The significance attributed to the symptoms and the interpretation that the doctor assigns based on their cultural background also vary from culture to culture. In this sense, culture has an impact on the phenomenology, epidemiology, and treatment outcomes of mental illnesses, particularly anxiety disorders. In addition to reflecting the significant areas where Indian research are deficient, this study has attempted to draw attention to any such differences that may exist.

Rationale of the study: Where everyone talks about self-image, self enhancement, focusing on oneself, confidence, positivity towards self which is an essential part of personality development, but sometimes it is that in order to uplift oneself people start demeaning others which is becoming a root cause of apathy, self-centeredness, etc.

It is something that is becoming very common in today's society that is closely related to narcissism and thus being the base of our study. How it affects our understanding or if it plays a role in one's level of anxiety is a matter of study, which we intend to explore further.

People need to remember that just as us others to have thoughts and feelings that matters and should be considered as well.

Objectives:

The study aimed:

1. To explore the relationship between narcissism and self-understanding.
2. To find the relationship between narcissism and anxiety.
3. To study the relationship between self-understanding and anxiety.
4. To find the gender differences in narcissism, self-understanding and anxiety.

Hypotheses:

On the basis of above objective following hypotheses were formulated:

- 1) There would be significant correlation between narcissism and self-understanding among youth.
- 2) There would be significant correlation between narcissism and anxiety among youth.
- 3) There would be significant correlation between self-understanding and anxiety among youth.
- 4) There would be significant gender difference in narcissism among youth.
- 5) There would be significant gender difference in self-understanding among youth.
- 6) There would be significant gender difference in anxiety among youth.

Method:

Samples: The convenient sampling method was used for data collection. The total number of sample included 100 youth (50 males and 50 females), from age range 16 to 25 years.

Psychological Tests used: The following psychological tools were used for the study as per the requirements:

Narcissism scale: The scale was developed by Helode, Hassan and Helode, (2008). The scale consists of 50 items, measuring narcissistic characteristics such as Authority, self sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, variety, and entitlement. It was administered on college students. The coefficients are significant at 0.01 level. It is reliable and valid.

Self understanding scale: The scale was developed by Talesara and Bano, (2019). The scale consists of 60 items which covers 5 dimensions- self image, self identity, self satisfaction, self management, and self evaluation. It was administered on B.Ed college students. The scale is reliable and valid, the coefficients are significant at 0.01 level.

Sinha's comprehensive anxiety test: The scale was developed by Sinha and Sinha, (2007). The scale consists of 90 items. There are negative as well as positive items both. It was administered on college students. The test is reliable and valid, the test were significant at 0.01 level. The concurrent validity of the test was 0.62 which is significant.

Statistical tools used: Mean, Standard Deviation, t-ratio and Co-efficient of correlation were used for statistical analysis.

Procedure of Test Administration: This study was done by using Narcissism scale given by Helode, Hassan and Helode (2008), Self-understanding scale given by Talesara and Bano, (2019) and Sinha's comprehensive anxiety test given by Sinha and Sinha (2007). For data collection few colleges and institutes in Patna were approached. The purpose of the study was explained to them and after getting the permission the test was done with the students. The students were then informed about the test and they were explained how the test would benefit them as well as us. Thus, a rapport was established. The students were assured that their answers as well as their details would be kept confidential. All three questionnaires were given together and the students completed the test in about 30-45 minutes. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire honestly. Any doubts or difficulties were resolved. After the completion of the test, the questionnaire was collected from the students and they were appreciated for their cooperation. The teachers were appreciated for their support as well. A total of 100 data were collected in which there were 50 girls and 50 boys.

Design: This was a non-experimental study so no specific design was followed. Thus, this was a field study of hypothesis testing type.

Results and Discussion:

The purpose of the study was to empirically test and assess Narcissism, Self-understanding and Anxiety among youth. The results have been given below:

Hypothesis 1: There would be significant correlation between narcissism and self-understanding among youth.

Table 1. Coefficient of correlation between narcissism and self-understanding among youth

| Variables | r | Level of significance |
|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Narcissism | 0.144 | p>0.05 |
| Self-understanding | | |

N = 100, df = 98

As evident from table1 that the obtained 'r' value is 0.144, which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The value of coefficient of correlation indicates a positive correlation in case of the two variables i.e., narcissism and self-understanding. This means that higher the narcissism, higher will be the self-understanding among the youths and vice versa. Since there is no significance, the result does not confirm the first hypothesis that there will be a significant correlation between narcissism and self-understanding.

Therefore, the hypothesis, "There would be significant correlation between narcissism and self-understanding among youth", has been rejected.

In contrast with the present finding, a study conducted by Di Pierro and Fanti (2021), it was shown that adaptive and pathological narcissistic manifestations on these aspects of the self have different characteristics. However, some of the unique characteristics for each narcissistic expression appeared to play a more significant influence than others. A higher sense and demand for uniqueness, which was mostly expressed through public exposure, was the main characteristic that distinguished adaptive and pathological narcissism. However, in the agentic realm, a sense of superiority over others was found to be crucial exclusively in adaptive narcissism. Furthermore, a continuous

sense of self and high degrees of self-authenticity were prerequisites for adaptive grandiose narcissism's self-concept. The most impaired self-concept was seen in vulnerable pathological narcissism, particularly in areas of excessive concern about other people's reactions and a sense of precarious existence.

Hypothesis 2: There would be significant correlation between narcissism and anxiety among youth.

Table 2. Coefficient of correlation between narcissism and anxiety among youth

| Variables | r | Level of significance |
|------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Narcissism | -0.0146 | p>0.05 |
| Anxiety | | |

N = 100, df = 98

As evident from table 2 that the obtained 'r' value is -0.0146, which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The value of coefficient of correlation clearly indicates a negative correlation in case of the two variables i.e., narcissism and anxiety. This means that higher the narcissism, lower will be the anxiety among the youths and vice versa. Since there is no significance, the result does not confirm the second hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between narcissism and anxiety.

Therefore, the hypothesis, "There would be significant correlation between narcissism and anxiety among youth", has not been retained.

In contrast with the present finding, a study conducted by Akehurst and Thatcher (2010) it was found that social anxiety is likely to arise in an exercise environment when self-presentation efficacy is low but impression motivation may be strong. However, narcissism may shield exercisers from social anxiety because it is linked to low anxiety, strong confidence, and a keenness for social appraisal.

Hypothesis 3: There would be significant correlation between self-understanding and anxiety among youth.

Table 3. Coefficient of correlation between self-understanding and anxiety among youth.

| Variables | r | Level of significance |
|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Self-understanding | -0.735 | p<0.01 |
| Anxiety | | |

N =100, df = 98

As evident from table 3 that the obtained 'r' value is -0.735, which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The value of coefficient of correlation clearly indicates a negative correlation in case of the two variables i.e., self-understanding and anxiety. This means that higher the self-understanding, lower will be the anxiety among the youths and vice versa. Since there is significance, the result confirms the third hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between self-understanding and anxiety.

Therefore, the hypothesis "There would be significant correlation between self-understanding and anxiety among youth", has been retained.

In line with the present finding, a study conducted by Nezelek (2002) examined the day-to-day relationships between self-awareness, daily events and anxiety, where it was found that the correlation between public self- awareness and good social situation was more pronounced in persons exhibiting reduced anxiety and desperation level and elevated self-esteem.

Hypothesis 4: There would be significant gender difference in narcissism among youth.

Table 4. Mean, SD, and t value of narcissism among male and female youth

| Gender | Mean | N | SD | t-ratio | Level of significance |
|---------|--------|----|-------|---------|-----------------------|
| Males | 159.96 | 50 | 24.70 | 2.41 | p<0.05 |
| Females | 147.84 | 50 | 25.52 | | |

N = 100, df = 98

Table 4 shows the Mean, SD, and t-value of male and female (youth) of narcissism. The obtained mean value of male was 159.96 and that of female was 147.84 which shows that the mean of male is higher than that of females.

The standard deviation of male is 24.70, and that of female is 25.52, which shows there is variations among the responses of the respondents. Further to test the significant difference between the

two means, t-ratio was calculated. The obtained t-ratio was 2.41, which was found to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, significant gender differences have been found and the hypothesis that "There would be significant gender differences in narcissism among youth" has been retained.

In line with the present finding, in a study conducted by Grijalva et al. (2015) they conducted a meta-analytic review where one of the study showed that narcissism is more in men than in women, but another study revealed that the observed gender differences might be interpreted as real sex differences because they were not accounted for by measurement bias.

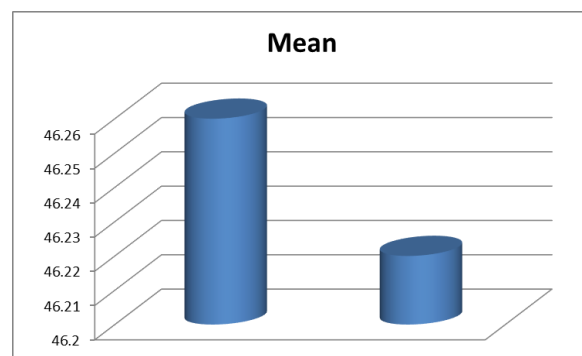


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of gender difference in narcissism among youth

Hypothesis 5: There would be significant gender difference in self-understanding among youth.

Table 5. Mean, SD, and t value of self-understanding among male and female youth

| Gender | Mean | N | SD | t-ratio | Level of significance |
|---------|-------|----|-------|---------|-----------------------|
| Males | 49.66 | 50 | 26.04 | 4.14 | p<0.01 |
| Females | 68.88 | 50 | 20.08 | | |

N =100, df = 98

Table shows the Mean, SD, and t-value of male and female (youth) self-understanding. The obtained mean value of male was 49.66 and that of female was 68.88 which shows that the mean of male is less than that of females.

The standard deviation of male is 26.04, and that of female is 20.08, which shows there is variations among the responses of the respondents. Further to test the significant difference between the two means, t-ratio was calculated. The obtained t-ratio was 4.14, which was found to be significant at 0.01 level of confidence. Hence, significant gender

differences have been found and the hypothesis that “There would be significant gender differences in self-understanding among youth” has been retained.

In line with the present finding, in a study conducted by Van Velsor et al. (1993) it was proved that gender differences do exist in evaluated self-awareness and one of its sub components, knowledge of self.

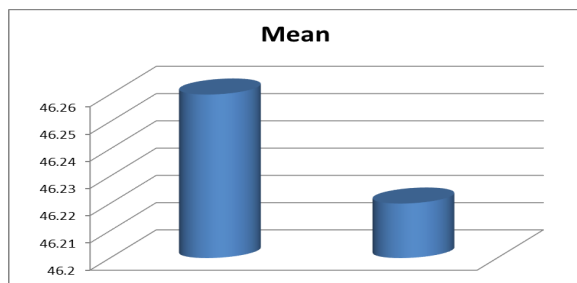


Fig. 2. Graphical representation of gender difference in self-understanding among youth

Hypothesis 6: There would be significant gender difference in anxiety among youth.

Table 6. Mean, SD, and t value of anxiety among male and female youth

| Gender | Mean | N | SD | t-ratio | Level of significance |
|---------|-------|----|-------|---------|-----------------------|
| Males | 46.26 | 50 | 29.63 | 0.007 | $p > 0.05$ |
| Females | 46.22 | 50 | 21.66 | | |

N = 100, df = 98

Table 6 shows the Mean, SD, and t-value of male and female (youth) of anxiety. The obtained mean value of male was 46.26 and that of female was 46.22 which shows that the mean of male is higher than that of females.

The standard deviation of male is 29.63, and that of female is 21.66, which shows there is variations among the responses of the respondents. Further to test the significant difference between the two means, t-ratio was calculated. The obtained t-ratio was 0.007, which was found not to be significant even at 0.05 level of confidence. The reason may be that of small sample. Hence, no significant gender differences have been found and the hypothesis that “There would be significant gender differences in anxiety among youth” has been rejected.

In contrast with the present finding, Asher et al. (2017) found that women are more likely than males to have social anxiety disorder, to have a more severe clinical presentation of the condition, and to experience higher levels of subjective suffering.

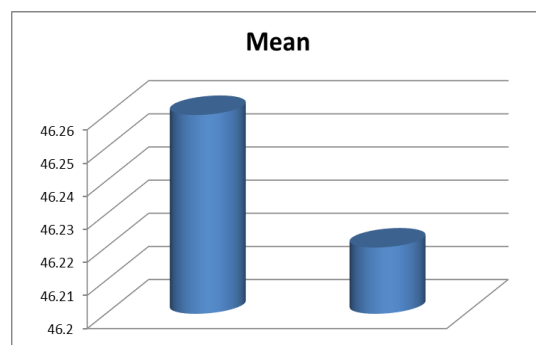


Fig. 3. Graphical representation of gender difference in anxiety among youth

Conclusion:

The above study was conducted to find the relation between Narcissism, Self-understanding and Anxiety among youth, it can be concluded that narcissism do not play a role in self-understanding and in anxiety but the direction of relationship between narcissism and other two variables can be seen up to some extent. Moreover from the results it is seen that narcissism is negatively correlated with anxiety but there was no significance. On the other hand self-understanding and anxiety are also negatively correlated. There are no such significant gender differences seen in anxiety, but according to various findings social anxiety disorder is seen to be more in female than male. Also we can see the gender difference in narcissism and self-understanding.

Since the study was done on the youth of Bihar, we can say that narcissism and self-understanding does not have any relationship with each other and same is with narcissism and anxiety. While few different studies shows that relationship exists between these variables. But these studies have been conducted outside Bihar. This result could be due to small sample size as there was time constraints and various extraneous factors affecting the samples.

This study could become a base for future researches.

Individuals can follow some suggestions for better lifestyle which might help them, hence, based on the finding few of which are:

- Accept your emotions and work on them so that you better understand yourself.
- Practice various positive attitudes.
- Practice resilience.
- Try gratitude journals.

- Be respectful of yourself as well as of others feelings.
- Practice meditation/ mindfulness for better focus.
- Try to reach out for professional help.
- Confine your worries in people who are trustworthy and wise for e.g. Family, friends, teachers, etc.

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