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## **Narcissistic Personality Disorder Among Youth: Causes, Implications, and Interventions**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) among youth is an increasing worry in modern society, hurting people's social, academic, and psychological well-being. The purpose of this study work is to investigate the causes, manifestations, implications, and interventions linked with NPD among young people. This research uses psychological literature, empirical investigations, and clinical observations to shed light on the developmental roots of NPD, as well as its impact on interpersonal interactions, academic achievement, and mental health consequences. Furthermore, it investigates therapeutic and preventive approaches for youth with NPD, emphasising the need for early detection and personalised treatments for effective treatment and long-term well-being.

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### **Introduction :**

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V), narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is one of the Cluster B personality disorders along with Antisocial Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Histrionic Personality Disorder<sup>1</sup>. According to the DSM-V, a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning in early adulthood, characterizes NPD<sup>2</sup>. However, not everyone who is narcissistic suffers from NPD though the characteristics of a narcissist are very similar to NPD. For instance, narcissists can be characterized by being excessively focused on having their own needs met as they are egocentrically focused<sup>3</sup>. Personality Disorder (NPD) is a complex and multifaceted mental health condition characterised by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a constant need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. While traditionally associated with adults, there is growing recognition of NPD among youth, with manifestations often emerging during adolescence and early adulthood. The prevalence of NPD among youth raises significant concerns because of its potential long-term impact.

NPD stands out among personality disorders due to its distinctive features and impact on individuals and society. Individuals with NPD often exhibit a range of behaviours and attitudes that can disrupt interpersonal relationships, impair functioning in various domains, and contribute to significant distress and impairment. Moreover, the prevalence of NPD appears to be on the rise, with increasing recognition and awareness of narcissistic traits in modern society.

Despite the growing interest in NPD, numerous questions remain unanswered, and gaps in knowledge persist. The complex interplay of genetic, neurobiological, psychological, and environmental factors contributing to the development of NPD requires further exploration. Additionally, the effectiveness of existing treatment approaches for NPD and the impact of cultural and societal factors on its expression warrants deeper investigation. By delving into the intricacies of NPD, researchers and clinicians can gain a better understanding of this disorder and develop more targeted interventions to address its challenges.

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### **Narcissism**

(Formal, disapproving) the habit of admiring yourself too much, especially your appearance.<sup>4</sup> (psychology) a condition in which somebody is only interested in themselves and what they want, and has a strong need to be admired and a lack of understanding of other people's feelings.<sup>5</sup> Narcissism

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<sup>1</sup> American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Cramer, P. (2010). Young adult narcissism: A 20-year longitudinal study of the contribution of parenting styles, preschool precursors of narcissism, and denial. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 45(1), 19-28.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2010.11.004>.

<sup>4</sup> "Oxford Learner's Dictionary". [oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com). Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/narcissism>

<sup>5</sup> "Oxford Learner's Dictionary". [oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com). Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/narcissism>

is intense self-involvement to the point where a person disregards the needs of those around them. While everyone exhibits occasional narcissistic behaviour, real narcissists routinely disregard people or their feelings. They also don't realise the impact their actions have on others.<sup>6</sup> It refers to a personality trait or pattern characterized by a heightened sense of self-importance, a strong need for admiration and attention, and a lack of empathy for others. The term originates from Greek mythology, where Narcissus was a young man who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water and was unable to tear himself away. The cause of narcissism isn't known. But it can be linked to our:

- Environment: Your parents may have given you either too much adoration or too much criticism that didn't match your actual experiences and achievements.
- Genetics: Narcissism may be linked to your inherited characteristics, including certain personality traits.
- Neurobiology: The connection between your brain, behaviour, and thinking<sup>7</sup>.

### *Types of Narcissism*

There are two types of narcissism that narcissistic behaviour can fall under. The two types can have common traits but come from different childhood experiences. The two types also dictate the different ways people will behave in relationships.

#### **1). Grandiose Narcissism**

People who exhibit this behaviour were most likely treated as superior or above others as children. These expectations can follow them throughout adulthood. They tend to boast and be elitist. Those with grandiose narcissism are aggressive, domineering, and overestimate their status. They are overconfident and lack sensitivity<sup>8</sup>.

#### **2). Vulnerable Narcissism**

This behaviour is typically the outcome of childhood neglect or abuse. People who exhibit this behaviour are far more sensitive. Narcissistic behaviour helps them avoid feeling inadequate. Even though they alternate between feeling inferior and superior to others, they are angered or nervous when others do not treat them as if they are unique<sup>9</sup>.

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## **Personality Disorder**

Personality disorders (PD) are a class of mental disorders characterised by enduring maladaptive patterns of behaviour, cognition, and inner experience, exhibited across many contexts and deviating from those accepted by the individual's culture<sup>10</sup>. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, a condition in which somebody thinks feels and behaves very differently from most other people in a way that causes them to have serious difficulties in their life and their relationships with other people<sup>11</sup>. Personality disorders are formal mental health conditions, each with a list of formal symptoms that involve behaviours, thoughts, and emotions that impact your quality of life. With a personality disorder, you typically experience emotions and thoughts that diminish your ability to: face and adapt to stress, connect and bond with other people, and effectively solve problems. Global estimates are that personality disorder affects around 7.8% of the population and pose a high burden to both the person affected and to people around them<sup>12</sup>.

### *Types of Personality Disorder*

Personality disorders typically emerge during adolescence or early adulthood and persist over time. They often cause significant distress to the individual experiencing them and can also impact their relationships and overall quality of life. There are several types of personality disorders, each with its own set of characteristic features. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), which is one of the primary diagnostic manuals used by mental health professionals, categorizes personality disorders into three clusters:

- Cluster A (Odd or Eccentric Disorders): Includes paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders, which are characterized by behaviours that are perceived as odd or eccentric.
- Cluster B (Dramatic, Emotional, or Erratic Disorders): Includes antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders, which are characterized by dramatic, emotional, or erratic behaviour.
- Cluster C (Anxious or Fearful Disorders): Includes avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders, which are characterized by behaviours related to anxiety and fearfulness.

<sup>6</sup> Jabeen Begum, Narcissism: Symptoms and Signs, *WebMD*, 2023, March 30. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs>.

<sup>7</sup> Jabeen Begum, Narcissism: Symptoms and Signs, *WebMD*, 2023, March 30. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs>.

<sup>8</sup> Jabeen Begum, Narcissism: Symptoms and Signs, *WebMD*, 2023, March 30. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs>.

<sup>9</sup> Jabeen Begum, Narcissism: Symptoms and Signs, *WebMD*, 2023, March 30. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs>.

<sup>10</sup> American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Fifth ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing. pp. 646–49. ISBN 978-0-89042-555-8.

<sup>11</sup> "Oxford Learner's Dictionary". [oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/personality-disorder). Oxford University Press, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/personality-disorder>

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte C. Van Schie and Et. Al., Narcissistic traits in young people and how experiencing shame relates to current attachment challenges, National Library of Medicine, PubMed Central, 2021 May 11. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8112045/>

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## Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a personality disorder characterized by a life-long pattern of exaggerated feelings of self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, and a diminished ability to empathize with other people's feelings. Narcissistic personality disorder is one of the subtypes of the broader category known as personality disorders<sup>13</sup>. It is frequently accompanied by other mental diseases and is associated with considerable functional impairment and psychosocial impairments. Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a complicated and frequently misunderstood mental health disorder that has a significant impact on persons and relationships. NPD, which is characterised by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a continual desire for admiration, and a lack of empathy, poses distinct diagnostic, treatment, and comprehension issues.

Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is defined in the DSM-5-TR in terms of a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, with onset by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts<sup>14</sup>. The disorder is found in 1%–2% of the general population, 1.3%–20% of the clinical population, and 8.5%–20% of the outpatient private practice population<sup>15</sup>. It is associated with increased risk and persistence of comorbid conditions, mood and anxiety disorders; alcohol and substance use disorders; suicide; and legal, vocational, relational, and marital problems. People diagnosed as having NPD experience elevated distress, cause more pain to others, and have a lower quality of life than those without the disorder<sup>16</sup>. Pathological narcissism is defined as pervasive and consistent difficulty maintaining realistic self-esteem that, at its extreme, manifests as NPD

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## Relevance of the Study

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) has long fascinated psychologists, clinicians, and researchers due to its complex and often perplexing nature. The roots of interest in NPD can be traced back to the early observations of psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, who noted the presence of grandiosity and ego-centricity in certain individuals. However, it wasn't until the formal inclusion of NPD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that the disorder gained systematic recognition and study.

Historically, NPD was considered rare and predominantly confined to clinical settings. However, with the advent of the DSM-III in 1980 and subsequent revisions, there has been an increased focus on personality disorders, including NPD, in both clinical and research domains. This shift has led to a greater understanding of NPD's prevalence, clinical presentation, etiology, and treatment options.

The study on NPD is also influenced by broader societal trends and cultural phenomena. With the rise of social media and celebrity culture, there has been growing concern about the prevalence of narcissistic traits and behaviours in modern society. The portrayal of narcissism in popular media, coupled with societal values emphasising individualism and self-promotion, has prompted questions about the impact of cultural factors on the expression and recognition of NPD.

Despite breakthroughs in research on NPD, many questions remain unresolved. The cause, influence, and implications of NPD among youth, for example, are still being debated, as is the prevalence of NPD among youth, how this trait influences the youth, how influential characters with NPD traits impact the youth, and how these influences disrupt peacebuilding and lead to conflict among youth. Furthermore, the study of NPD qualities in people throughout history and now, as well as how they influenced the brains of young people, resulted in violence and conflict, and the consequences. narcissistic traits are on the rise among youth in contemporary society, with factors such as social media, celebrity culture, and societal emphasis on achievement and success contributing to the phenomenon. While not all youth who exhibit narcissistic traits meet the criteria for NPD, the prevalence of such traits underscores the need for further research and intervention.

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## Causes of NPD Among Youth

Several factors may contribute to the development of NPD among youth in contemporary society. These include:

- **Social media:** Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat facilitate self-promotion, validation-seeking, and comparison with others, which can fuel narcissistic tendencies.
- **Parenting styles:** Overly permissive or authoritarian parenting styles, as well as parental overvaluation or neglect, may contribute to the development of narcissistic traits in youth.
- **Cultural norms:** Societal emphasis on individualism, materialism, and superficiality may reinforce narcissistic values and behaviours among youth.
- **Peer influences:** Peer pressure, social dynamics, and competition among peers may contribute to the adoption of narcissistic traits as a means of social validation and status.

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<sup>13</sup> Caligor E, Levy KN, Yeomans FE (May 2015). "Narcissistic personality disorder: diagnostic and clinical challenges". *The American Journal of Psychiatry*. 172 (5): 415–422. <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2014.14060723>

<sup>14</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed, Text Revision. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Weinberg I, Ronningstam E: Dos and don'ts in treatments of patients with narcissistic personality disorder. *J Pers Disord* 2020. 34 (suppl): 122 – 142.

<sup>16</sup> Igor Weinberg, and Elsa Ronningstam, *Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Progress in Understanding and Treatment*, National Library of Medicine, PubMed Central, 2022 Oct 25. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10187400/>

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## **Consequences of NPD Among Youth**

NPD among youth can have significant consequences for individuals, relationships, and society as a whole. Internally, young people with NPD may experience chronic feelings of emptiness, insecurity, and dissatisfaction, despite external validation. Externally, their behaviour may lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining meaningful relationships, exploitation of others for personal gain, and conflicts within families, peer groups, and communities. Moreover, the influence of narcissistic individuals on societal norms, values, and institutions may perpetuate toxic cultural dynamics and contribute to social division, inequality, and unrest.

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## **Influences of NPD Trait Leaders on Youth**

Throughout history, there have been individuals who exhibited traits consistent with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) and held significant leadership positions. While it's essential to approach historical figures with caution and recognize the limitations of retrospective diagnosis, some leaders have been characterized by grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy. Here are a few examples:

### ***Napoleon Bonaparte***

Napoleon, the French military and political leader who rose to prominence during the French Revolution, is often cited as displaying narcissistic traits. He had an inflated sense of self-importance, sought admiration from his followers, and showed a lack of empathy for those who opposed him. His grandiose ambitions and desire for conquest contributed to years of warfare and conflict across Europe.

### ***Adolf Hitler***

Hitler, the dictator of Nazi Germany, is another historical figure often associated with NPD traits. His extreme narcissism, characterized by a belief in his superiority and a lack of empathy for others, fueled his totalitarian regime and led to the perpetration of atrocities during the Holocaust and World War II.

### ***Joseph Stalin***

Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s until he died in 1953, exhibited authoritarian and narcissistic tendencies. He cultivated a cult of personality around himself, suppressed dissent, and showed little regard for the suffering of others, as evidenced by his purges, forced labour camps, and mass executions.

### ***Mao Zedong***

Mao, the founding father of the People's Republic of China and leader of the Chinese Communist Party displayed narcissistic traits throughout his rule. He fostered a cult of personality, sought unquestioning loyalty from his followers, and pursued grandiose schemes such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which resulted in widespread suffering and loss of life.

### ***Muammar Gaddafi***

Gaddafi, the de facto ruler of Libya for over four decades, exhibited narcissistic traits characterized by grandiosity, self-importance, and a lack of empathy. He centralized power around himself, suppressed dissent, and engaged in erratic and often violent behaviour, including sponsoring terrorism and human rights abuses.

It's important to note that while these individuals may have displayed behaviours consistent with NPD, diagnosing historical figures with a mental health condition is inherently speculative and subject to interpretation. Additionally, the actions of these leaders cannot be solely attributed to narcissism, as they were influenced by a variety of historical, political, and social factors. The study of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is highly relevant to youth, especially in the context of historical aspects and present scenarios of war, as well as in the promotion of global youth-led peacebuilding initiatives. Here's why:

## ***Understanding Historical Figures and Conflicts***

Many historical conflicts and wars have been instigated or exacerbated by leaders with narcissistic traits. By studying NPD and its historical manifestations, youth can gain insights into the dynamics of past conflicts, the role of leadership in shaping historical events, and the consequences of unchecked narcissism in positions of power.

## ***Recognition of Narcissistic Traits in Modern Leaders***

In today's world, youth are exposed to various leaders and influencers across different spheres, including politics, media, and business. Understanding NPD can help youth recognize narcissistic traits in modern leaders, enabling them to critically evaluate their actions, rhetoric, and policies. This awareness is crucial for promoting informed civic engagement and holding leaders accountable for their behaviour.

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### ***Prevention of Conflict and Violence***

Narcissistic leaders often exploit nationalism, aggression, and division to advance their agendas, leading to conflict and violence. By studying NPD and its impact on historical and contemporary conflicts, youth can develop strategies to prevent the escalation of tensions, promote dialogue and reconciliation, and advocate for peaceful resolution of disputes.

### ***Promotion of Empathy and Compassion***

NPD is characterized by a lack of empathy and concern for others' well-being. By fostering empathy and compassion among youth, we can counteract the dehumanization and demonization of perceived enemies that often accompany narcissistic leadership. Empathetic individuals are more likely to seek understanding, build bridges across divides, and work towards sustainable peace.

### ***Empowerment Through Peacebuilding Initiatives***

Global youth-led peacebuilding initiatives provide platforms for young people to contribute to conflict prevention, resolution, and reconciliation efforts. By studying NPD and its implications for peacebuilding, youth can develop leadership skills, conflict resolution strategies, and resilience to counteract the influence of narcissistic leaders and promote inclusive, grassroots-driven approaches to peace.

### ***Promotion of Ethical Leadership***

Youth are the leaders of tomorrow, and studying NPD can help them cultivate ethical leadership qualities characterized by humility, integrity, and empathy. By learning from historical examples and understanding the consequences of narcissistic leadership, youth can aspire to become compassionate and responsible leaders who prioritize the well-being of their communities and strive for collective prosperity and harmony.

Studying Narcissistic Personality Disorder is relevant to youth in the context of historical aspects and present scenarios of war, as well as in the promotion of global youth-led peacebuilding initiatives. By understanding the impact of narcissistic traits on leadership, conflict, and peacebuilding efforts, youth can contribute to creating a more peaceful and just world for future generations.

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## **Interventions for NPD Among Youth**

Addressing NPD among youth requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses prevention, early intervention, and treatment strategies. This includes:

### ***Education and awareness***

Promoting awareness of NPD and its consequences among youth, parents, educators, and mental health professionals can help reduce stigma, facilitate early identification, and encourage help-seeking behaviours.

### ***Psychotherapy***

Cognitive-behavioural therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, and psychodynamic therapy are among the psychotherapeutic approaches used to address NPD among youth. These therapies aim to enhance self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation skills, as well as improve interpersonal relationships and coping strategies.

### ***Parental support***

Providing support and guidance to parents on effective parenting strategies, communication skills, and boundary-setting can help prevent the development or escalation of narcissistic traits in youth.

### ***School-based interventions***

Implementing social-emotional learning programs, peer support groups, and anti-bullying initiatives in schools can promote empathy, resilience, and positive social behaviours among youth. Narcissistic Personality Disorder among youth in contemporary society poses significant challenges for individuals, relationships, and society as a whole. By understanding the causes, consequences, and interventions related to NPD among young people, we can work towards fostering healthier, more empathetic, and resilient youth populations. Through education, awareness, and targeted intervention efforts, we can promote positive mental health outcomes and create a more compassionate and supportive society for future generations.

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## **Conclusion :**

Narcissistic Personality Disorder in youth poses considerable obstacles to both individual well-being and societal peace. Understanding the causes, manifestations, and implications of NPD in youth allows stakeholders to establish focused interventions and preventive strategies to successfully address

the issue. Early detection and intervention are critical for reducing the long-term impact of NPD on youth's social, intellectual, and psychological functioning, eventually encouraging healthy development and well-being.

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