

Relationship between Narcissism and Emotional Competence: A Review

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Abstract

Narcissism is a condition in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotion as well as the emotions of others. This research paper aims to review that Narcissism and emotional competence are not inconsistent with each other. Researches show that narcissist have an increased ability to recognize the emotions and can manipulate the emotions of others for their own benefit. Emotional recognition abilities can be associated with desirable and undesirable traits. Prior researches on this topic has produced inconsistent findings. This paper attempts to resolve these inconsistencies and provide a new dimension by supportive researches that narcissist are high in emotional competencies.

Key Words: Narcissism, Emotional Competence.

Introduction

Narcissism is an inordinate fascination with oneself admiration of one's idealized self image and attributes. This includes quibbling and pretentiousness. The term originated from Greek mythology, where the young Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water. Narcissism is a concept in psychoanalytic theory, which was popularly introduced in Sigmund Freud's essay on Narcissism. Narcissism is a factor in trait theory. It is one of the three dark triadic personality traits. Except in the sense of primary Narcissism or healthy self love narcissism is usually considered a problem in a person's or group's relationship with self and others.

Narcissist hate criticism, they prefer guilt over shame. They are openly shameless. Their thinking is distorted and they often use projection on others. A narcissist usually bloat their sense of self importance by humiliating and showing ignominy to others. A narcissist usually take advantage of others without caring for emotions of others. Narcissist do not recognize social boundaries and consider others as enlargement of them.

Emotional Competence involves accurate emotion perception using and regulating emotions appropriately and understanding and communicating them effectively (Salovey and Mayer 1990). The term implies an ease around others and determine one's ability to effectively and successfully lead and express. Some scholars define these competencies more broadly to also include social and relationship skills ("social intelligence") and aspects of psychological wellbeing (Perez et al. 2005). Trait model says that emotional competencies include skills like empathy, social skills and competitiveness. In simple terms according to trait model emotional intelligence encompasses behavioural dispositions and self perceived abilities. A person high in emotional intelligence usually has better social relations, do not deviate from social norms, has better work performance at work, has high level of life Satisfaction and better psychological wellbeing.

Relationship of Narcissism with Emotional Intelligence:

The central feature of narcissism is unusual sense of pomposity. It is characterized by egocentricity, flaunt of beauty or power and continuous self absorption by fantasies of unlimited success. If faced with criticism, the narcissist exhibits resentment, embarrassment, disgrace and distress. Because a narcissist is self occupied, they fail to understand and recognise the emotions of others. They have an exaggerated sense of privilege expecting that the world owes them without assuming their reciprocal duties and responsibilities. At times a narcissist may use wrong ,corrupt and immoral methods to take advantage of others . In their social relations a narcissist usually oscillates between glorification and enormous devaluation of the other person. For their selfish gains a narcissist can at times sexually compromise at any level

This paper aims at presenting a different aspect of narcissist in respect to their emotional competencies. A narcissist is high in emotional recognition abilities and therefore they manipulate others for their own interest. A series of studies and researches support this idea.

Review of Literature

The vast majority of research to date has examined more desirable correlates of emotion recognition capacities, such as higher dispositional empathy. Davis and Kraus (1997). In the current research, we examine the relationship between aspects of personality trait and one form of emotional competency. According to some scholars emotional competencies can be channelled anti socially and may create manipulative senses or behave sinfully and lead to a bad end. Salovey and Mayer (1990). Some other researches link high trait to excessive self glorification or pride. Petrides (2010). Hall et al.(2009) is of the opinion that most of the researches have neglected this darker side of emotional competencies.

Researches done by Paulhus and Williams (2002) indicate that forensic patients scoring high in psychopathy also score high on emotional intelligence. Pham et al.(2010) say that narcissist are able to identify and recognize emotions and then they manipulate the person as they see themselves excelling in emotional competencies. They do not use these emotional recognition skills for compassionate purposes but they may instead use these skills to manoeuvre others.

Though researches indicating this facet of narcissist are few. Sutton et al.(1999) concluded that children who score high on bullying others also score high on “theory of mind” tests assessing their ability to imagine others perspective and feelings.

Cote et al.(2011) reported that people scoring high in emotional regulation also scored high on Machiavellianism or Shrewdness.

There has been limited research on the extent to which people scoring high in narcissism are better to use emotional information and then manipulate others. A narcissist is better in recognising emotion recognition skills. But sometimes a narcissist may magnify their emotion recognition abilities. (Ames and Kammrath 2004).Narcissism consist of various other traits, some in large number like (preemptiveness, attention seeking and exploitative) while some traits are less in number like (autonomy, pride, predominance, leadership)dysfunctional aspects. Raskin and Novaeek(1989) reported that people who score high on the exploitativeness factor of narcissism find it easy to control others and take advantage of others.

A recent study by Wai and Tilipoulos(2012) reported that narcissist has an increased ability to read particular emotions more efficiently like anger but are not able to identify happy sad or fearful expressions. Austin et al (2007) introduced the concept of “Emotional Manipulation” as the management of others and their emotions. Emotional skills are intentionally used to achieve a desired outcome. Jones and Paulhus (2011) reported that narcissist have a exploitative social style at the expense or disregard of others welfare.

Conclusion:

It is a well established fact that emotional intelligence trait is conducive to mental health and inversely related to psychopathology. Narcissism is associated with better emotion recognizing abilities. Being efficient in reading the emotions of others could imply a sense of empathy and caring but a narcissist usually use this ability to manipulate the emotions of others for his own benefit. Good emotion recognition abilities could lead people to develop bad motives, because they can see weak points of others more clearly and easily. Lack of empathy is a diagnostic feature of narcissism (APA,2000) which was found in many studies (e.g. Banks,2008; Ghorbani et al.,2010).

This research paper reviewed researches which indicated that narcissist do not consider others perspective though they have the ability to read and identify the emotions of others but because they are incapable of doing it. Besides emotional Competence a narcissist had high social skills which help in making first contact, starting conversation with others and making positive first impression. Using these skills a narcissist pursue their grandiose goals and assume optimal conditions for further exploitation of social situation (Morf and Rodewalt 2001).

We can conclude by suggesting that people should not assume that someone who can easily read their feelings always has their best interest at heart.

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