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## NARCISSISTIC RIVALRY AND DIFFICULTIES IN PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONING OF YOUNG ADULTS\*

**Introduction:** Narcissism is a phenomenon that relates to both healthy and proper human functioning as well as to the area of psychopathology. This phenomenon is perceived in many different planes and perspectives. The article adopts the understanding of narcissism in the NARC model – Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept.

**Research Aim:** The aim of the research was to check how narcissism (as defined by the NARC model), in the form of competition and admiration strategies, is associated with difficulties in psychosocial functioning and behavior of young adults.

**Method:** The following study used: the NARQ-PL questionnaire in the Polish adaptation of Rogoz et al. (2016) and a questionnaire of their own authorship.

**Results:** The obtained research results and statistical analyzes confirm that there is a relationship between narcissistic rivalry and selected behavioral difficulties in young adults.

**Conclusions:** The presented research results are a strong premise for in-depth research on the relationship between individual dimensions of narcissism and behavioral difficulties in young adult Poles.

**Keywords:** narcissism, narcissistic rivalry, narcissistic admiration, behavioral difficulties, young adults

### INTRODUCTION

Narcissism is a behaviour that can be analysed on several levels. We can speak of narcissism as an element of natural human development (Kohut, 1972; Kernberg, 2022; Freud, 2012), as well as a process related to the abnormal development of the human personality – we then speak of narcissistic personality disorder (*Kryte-*

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*ria diagnostyczne...*, 2017). Narcissism is also a phenomenon considered in social terms, in which case we speak of cultural narcissism (Szpunar, 2014, 2016, 2020).

One of the first authors to deal with narcissism in a scientific way was Sigmund Freud. He presented a thesis pointing out the distinction between introversion, which is the essence of psychoneurosis, and narcissism, “being the root of mental disorders” (Pospiszyl, 1991, p. 121). According to Freud, in narcissism there is a loss of connection with the environment and a focus solely on the ego. By analysing and developing Freud’s ideas on narcissism, Fromm (2000) noted that according to Freud, “the human being remains narcissistic to a certain extent, even when he finds external objects for his libido” (Fromm, 2000, p. 59). In this sense, development can be defined as a shift from absolute narcissism to objective reasoning and objective love. “A normal, mature person is one whose narcissism has been reduced to a socially acceptable minimum, although it has not completely disappeared” (Fromm, 2000, p. 59). Fromm (2000) emphasised the importance of distinguishing between two forms of narcissism – benign and malignant – and outlined the characteristics of malignant narcissism.

Views on the importance of overcoming “primary narcissism” as a fundamental stage in a child’s social development and the danger of the emergence of “secondary narcissism” were developed by Freud. She believed that the first years of a child’s life are crucial for the development of socialisation features. She considered the first year of a child’s life to be the most important. If the child is not under adequate maternal care during that time and the person caring for the child displays ambivalent attitudes towards them, the most important stimulus in human development for the transition from the “narcissistic libido” to the “object libido” will be missing. According to Freud, “there will be no gradual transition from total self-centredness to a relationship with another person at the cost of giving up many of one’s own pleasures” (2012, pp. 26–28). The author points out the significant role of parents as people helping with the child’s normal development in terms of passing through the natural developmental stage of narcissism.

Whereas Kernberg (1974) introduced the interesting concept of “malignant narcissism”, a situation where primitive aggression is combined with a pathological sense of self-glorification. According to Pospiszyl (1991), the malignancy of narcissism should be understood in this view as a particularly difficult situation that significantly obstructs social contacts. Aiming to normalise the concept, Kohut (1972) stated that narcissism is a normal, human dimension of personality. In his view, the quality allows the individual to maintain their individuality and is an important and indispensable component of human development.

The term is used in many different, sometimes mutually exclusive senses, depending on the theoretical orientation of the author (Reber, 2000). This situation creates a wide area for discussion. Jagiełła (2007) points out that in the colloquial sense, narcissism means exaggerated self-love. However, it is not only self-love that

constitutes the essence of narcissism, but also features of larger social structures, institutions, organisations and even culture. “Narcissism encompasses a wide range of different behaviours and manifestations. From a barely marked characterological style [...] to profound personality disorders of the narcissistic type” (p. 125).

According to Lowen (2013), narcissism is both a psychological and a cultural condition. In analysing the phenomenon of narcissism, he considered both its individual and cultural aspects. Lowen states that the manifestations of narcissism at the individual level are personality disorders connected to giving too much attention to one’s own image at the expense of one’s own “self”. According to the author, the narcissist lacks poise, dignity, self-expression, integrity, which he refers to as the “true values of the self” (p. 11). “When wealth becomes more important than wisdom, publicity – more important than dignity, and success – more important than self-respect, the culture begins to be all about »image« and thus cannot be described as anything other than narcissistic” (p. 11). Lowen draws attention to the very important contemporary issue of the predominance of publicity and external image over a person’s intrapsychic life, which is also increasingly discussed in publications on the phenomenon of narcissism.

Gościaniak and Mocek (2008) point to three main areas of the meaning of narcissism: a) in a genetic sense – a stage in the development of a person’s life, b) in a clinical sense – a disease entity, c) in terms of social relations – a certain dominant character attitude. Olchanowski and Sieradzan (2011) point out that narcissism in this third sense refers to a way of keeping relations with others or an overdeveloped sense of self-worth. Szpunar (2014) proposes that this third pillar of understanding narcissism should be referred to as cultural-social narcissism. The author attempts to capture the process of transition from individual narcissism to cultural narcissism: “the cultural-social framing of narcissism transmits this concept from an individualistic understanding into the realm of the collective and the culture it generates” (Szpunar, 2014, pp. 107–108). McCrae, who is a human personality researcher, pointed out that culture can shape personality, but personality can also shape culture. In this context, McCrae and Costa (2005) provoke a discussion on possible interpretations of the relationship between personality traits and culture and global historical events. Szpunar (2014) points out that, in this context, it is difficult to determine what is primary, whether disturbed individuals shape the narcissistic culture in their own image or whether the narcissistic culture forces individuals to conform to its rules and thus creates patterns of narcissistic behaviour.

Johnson (2022), in creating the concept of character styles, introduced the notion of a false *self*, which is, in his theory, characteristic of narcissism. “Although the term narcissism in the colloquial sense is a representation of a selfish attitude, in the case of narcissistic personality disorder in the form of character neurosis or character style, the exact opposite is true. In response to early trauma, the narcissistic person has buried their true self-expression and replaced it with a highly de-

veloped, compensatory false self” (pp. 203–204). The author points out that a false self is created as a result of people becoming what others expect them to be. Much of the pathology is the result of self-rejection. Johnson (2022) distinguished narcissism in a narrower sense. In his view, it is an adaptive pattern in which integrity and self-esteem are important issues, while at the same time there is no issue of security. He called this pattern “pure” or “narrow” narcissism and distinguished it from narcissistic adaptations that overlap with other character structures (p. 205).

Back et al. (2013) point out that narcissism is a contradictory phenomenon in which opposing mechanisms are at work. Narcissistic people’s charisma and self-confidence can give them great energy, but their aggressiveness and lack of empathy hinder their development and cause discouragement in social relations (p. 1013). The model created by Back et al. (2013) is a proposal intended to synthesise and explain the processes underlying narcissism. The NARC (narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept) model (Back et al., 2013) is an alternative to the narcissism model, which was derived from the NPI questionnaire (Rogoza et al., 2016). Rogoza et al. (2016) point out that this model assumes that the overarching goal of narcissism is to maintain a grandiose self-image. Two social strategies achieve this goal: the tendency to obtain social recognition by means of self-enhancement (admiration strategy) or the tendency to prevent social failure by means of self-protection (competition strategy). Both pathways consist of distinct affective-motivational, cognitive and behavioural components (Back et al., 2013; Rogoza et al., 2016, p. 413). Back et al. (2013) believe that many of the most persistent paradoxes about narcissism can be resolved by trying to understand two different but positively related dimensions of the trait: narcissistic admiration and rivalry. They express the belief that this differentiated view allows for a better understanding of narcissism and its forms (p. 1014).

Earlier models explained the complexity of the processes involved in narcissism by complex self-regulatory processes (Campbell and Campbell, 2009; Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001). A model of processing by Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) conceptualised narcissism as a consequence of dynamically linked affective and cognitive intrapersonal processes and interpersonal strategies used to gain and maintain a favourable view of the self. According to this model, narcissistic people are characterised by a grandiose but vulnerable sense of self-worth, which causes them to constantly seek external admiration. They also tend to have negative opinions about others and their efforts to be admired are often unsuccessful, as their egocentric behaviour “leads in the long run to rejection and interpersonal failure” (Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001, p. 187).

The concept of narcissistic admiration and rivalry is based on the assumption that the narcissist’s overriding goal is to maintain a grandiose self. They try to achieve this through two distinct social strategies: the tendency to approach social admiration through self-promotion (assertive self-enhancement) and the tendency to fail

through self-protection (antagonistic self-protection). These two strategies are conceptualised as activating distinct affective-motivational, cognitive and behavioural pathways: admiration and rivalry. This version of the narcissism model distinguishes two positively related but distinct dimensions of narcissism: admiration and rivalry.

The NARC model suggests that there are apparent differences between people not only in their general tendency to maintain a sense of general grandiosity of self but also in the ease and strength with which they do so, when activating narcissistic self-improvement and self-protection, respectively. Both strategies serve a common purpose – maintaining a grandiose self. Individual differences in admiration and rivalry should be positively related. However, due to the distinct dynamics triggered by each narcissistic strategy, they are not interchangeable.

The NARC model goes beyond previous models of the narcissism process (e.g. Campbell and Campbell, 2009; Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001) by classifying the plurality of narcissistic self-regulatory processes into two coherent and distinguishable sets of processes. The NARC model also differs from the approach of Brown et al. (2009) in three respects: it covers a broader range of narcissistic aspects (including cognitive aspects), includes a distinction between a) intrapersonal and interpersonal and b) assertive and antagonistic aspects, and goes beyond the description of individual aspects of narcissism by drawing attention to deeper motivational determinants.

The admiration strategy is related to striving for uniqueness (affective-motivational component), which is based on a sense of one's own greatness, and this is reinforced by grandiose fantasies about oneself (cognitive component), while it is realised through charming behaviour (behavioural component). Rogoza et al. (2016) point out that “the effects of choosing this strategy can be the attainment of desired social status, praise, attractiveness or being chosen as a leader, making this strategy the adaptive face of narcissism” (p. 414).

The rivalry strategy is related to defending one's status through the desire to rule over others (affective-motivational component), which is based on the concentration of thoughts around the devaluation of the status, achievements and prestige of others (cognitive component), these in turn can lead to irritation, hostility and consequently even aggressive behaviour (behavioural component). According to Rogoza et al. (2016), choosing this strategy can result in “rejection, unpopularity and lack of trust from others, relationship breakdown and criticism, making this strategy the disadaptive face of narcissism” (p. 414).

In the NARC model, narcissism is described in process terms, which implies that a person with narcissistic traits will choose one of the above-discussed action strategies, based on their assessment of the situation, but with a view to protecting a grandiose self-image. “The effect of choosing one strategy may result in social potential (ego-enhancing) or social conflict (ego-threatening), which will secondarily reinforce the chosen strategy of action” (Rogoza et al., 2016, pp. 414–415).

## RESEARCH PROBLEM AND GOAL

The primary aim of the study was to examine whether and how the difficulties in psychosocial functioning observed in young people are related to indicators of narcissism.

Difficulties in psychosocial functioning is an umbrella term which, for the purposes of this research, refers to problems experienced by young people in their everyday functioning. These include difficulties in the area of broader mental well-being, sleep difficulties, use of substances, difficulty concentrating, stress, fatigue. The survey questionnaire featured a question in which difficulties in psychosocial functioning were listed and the respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 the extent to which they had experienced these difficulties. This provided information on the extent of these difficulties in the respondent group.

The strategies of admiration and rivalry are theoretical constructs extracted from the NARC theoretical model. These became the basis for understanding narcissism for the purposes of this study. The admiration strategy is more social in nature, linked to the element of uniqueness combined with good social skills, i.e. the “charming narcissist”. In contrast, the competitive strategy manifested in a person’s behaviour is less social in nature. More often, it is associated with devaluing others, being hostile towards others and focusing on one’s own prestige and achievements. Empathic behaviour is the least evident in this strategy.

The following research questions were used to obtain an answer for the set research objective:

1. Do indicators of narcissism show a link with difficulties in young adults’ psychosocial functioning and how?
2. What relationship structure can be distinguished between the variables of narcissism and difficulties in psychosocial functioning?

Hypothesis 1: Narcissism traits show correlation with selected difficulties in young people’s psychosocial functioning.

Hypothesis 2: There are correlational links between the traits of narcissism and difficulties in psychosocial functioning in young people.

## METHOD AND SAMPLE

An original survey questionnaire and the NARQ-PL questionnaire were used to carry out the planned research. The questionnaire was translated into Polish by the team of Rogoz et al. (2016). The original NARQ questionnaire consists of 18 test items. Respondents answer the questions using a 6-point Likert scale: from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). The Polish adaptation study was conducted on a large population of adult Poles; it is externally relevant, reliable and shows

a stable factor structure. The authors of the Polish translation of the scale note that the NARQ questionnaire may be a promising tool for assessing narcissism (Rogoza et al., 2016).

The research group consisted of 102 people aged 19–26, who were studying at various faculties at several universities, including the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, the Catholic University of John Paul II in Lublin and the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. There were more women than men in the study group (92 people – 90% and 10 men – 10%). The participants in the study gave consent to participate. The study took into account the applicable ethical standards for the conduct of scientific research. The survey was conducted in an online format. The selection of the group was purposive and random. Details of the age of the respondents by gender are provided in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Age of respondents: number and percentage*

Age in years	Female	Male
19	15 (14.7%)	2 (2%)
20	19 (18.6%)	2 (2%)
21	29 (28.4%)	3 (3%)
22	17 (16.6%)	2 (2%)
23	7 (6.8%)	1 (0.98%)
24	3 (3%)	–
25	–	–
26	2 (2%)	–

Source: Author's own study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

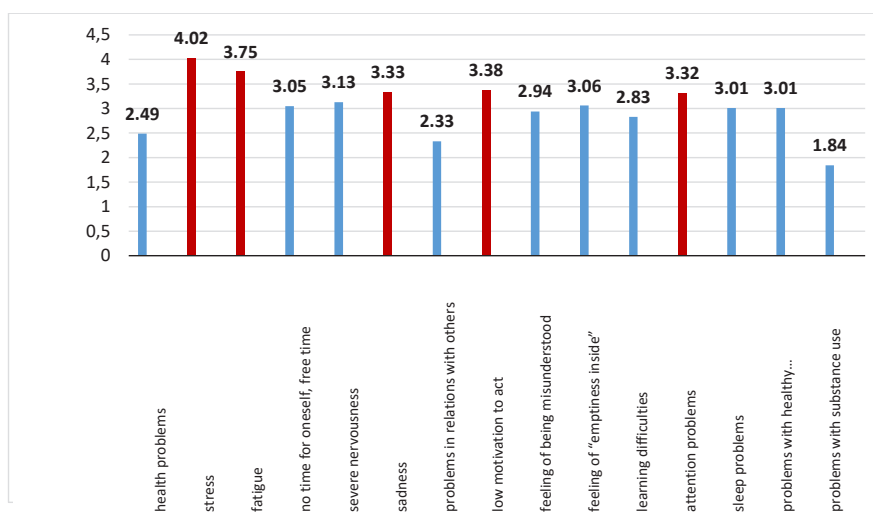
Using the SPSS software, descriptive statistics of the variables (narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry) and the behaviours and attitudes most characteristic of the subjects were established. A correlation analysis of the variables included in this study was then carried out. A *k*-means analysis was used to group cases according to the variables: narcissistic admiration and narcissistic risk into two clusters. The analysis was performed using the non-interaction classification method. A principal-axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation was then applied. In the next step, logistic regression and path analysis were carried out.

## RESULTS

The first stage of data analysis involved establishing descriptive statistics relating to the variables studied and establishing correlational links between the variables analysed. Based on the survey questionnaire used, data were collected on difficulties in psychosocial functioning of young adults. A question was asked to identify the most characteristic problems of the people surveyed.

Figure 1.

*Average scores for difficulties in psychosocial functioning of young people*



Source: Author's own study.

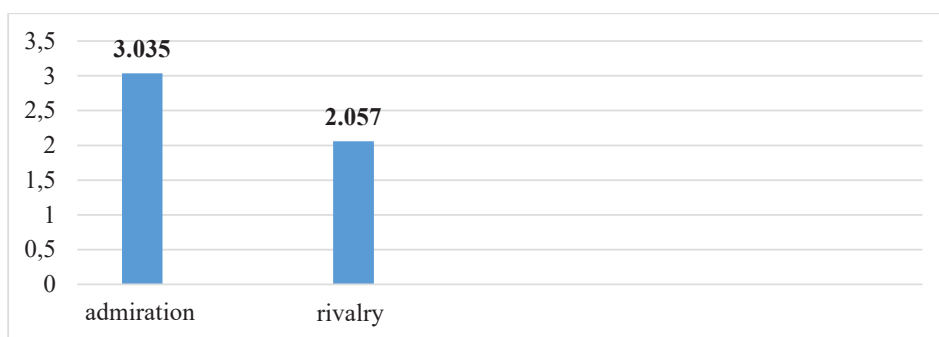
The results of the study indicate that, at the level of mean scores, the most common problems and behaviours of the young people surveyed relate to: experienced stress ( $M = 4.02$ ), fatigue ( $M = 3.75$ ), low motivation to act ( $M = 3.38$ ), sadness ( $M = 3.33$ ) and attention problems ( $M = 3.32$ ) (see Figure 1) (cf. also Kurtyka-Chałas, 2021).

The analysis of the results indicates that there are correlational links between the two strategies of narcissism: admiration and rivalry and difficulties in young people's psychosocial functioning (Table 2). The admiration strategy shows negative correlations with: lack of time for oneself and one's passions, problems in relations with others, low motivation to act and learning difficulties. The negative correlation means that the higher the level of a person's admiration strategy, the lower the difficulties in the abovementioned areas. In contrast, a competitive strategy is positively correlated with: health problems, relationship problems, learning difficulties, attention problems, difficulties with healthy eating



and problems with substance use. Positive correlations mean that the higher the competitive strategy a person manifests, the more often they experience the aforementioned difficulties. The correlations obtained are at the low correlation level, indicating the existence of clear but small relationships. However, they are statistically significant and can therefore form the basis for an in-depth analysis of the data.

Figure 2.  
*Average results for admiration and rivalry strategies*



Source: Author's own study.

The mean scores for the admiration and rivalry strategies indicate higher mean scores obtained in the sample group for the admiration strategy ( $M = 3.035$ ) than for the rivalry strategy ( $M = 2.057$ ) (see Figure 2).

Further data analysis was carried out using principal axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation. The principal axis method does not require meeting assumptions about the normality of distribution. The good-fit test  $KMO = 0.826$  indicates a good fit of the model to the data, Bartlett's test of sphericity shows a statistically significant result  $\chi^2(105) = 579.79$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , which also supports a good fit of the model.

Through these analyses, it was possible to identify three factors (Table 3). The total variance explained is 45.41%. The factors are orthogonal, their indices were created using the Anderson–Rubin method, which ensures that the variables are not correlated.

Table 2.

*Correlations between admiration and rivalry strategies and young adults' behaviour (Spearman's rho)*

Behaviour and difficulties of young people	Admiration		Rivalry	
	Correlation coefficient	Relevance (bi-lateral)	Correlation coefficient	Relevance (bi-lateral)
Health problems			.274**	0.005
Lack of time for oneself, leisure time (interests, hobbies)	-.227*	0.003		
Problems in relationships with others	-.329**	0.001	.202*	0.041
Low motivation to act	-.241*	0.015		
Learning difficulties	-.235*	0.018	.220*	0.026
Attention problems			.305**	0.002
Difficulties with healthy eating			.310**	0.002
Problems with substance use			.235*	0.017

Source: Author's own study.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 3.

*Factors extracted through statistical analyses*

Factor	Total explained variance								
	Initial own values			Sums of squares of charges after separation			Sums of squares of charges after rotation		
	Total	% of variance	cumulative %	Total	% of variance	cumulative %	Total	% of variance	cumulative %
1	5.325	35.498	35.498	4.852	32.348	32.348	3.268	21.789	21.789
2	1.808	12.052	47.549	1.307	8.712	41.060	1.824	12.159	33.948
3	1.227	8.180	55.730	0.653	4.354	45.414	1.720	11.467	45.414

Source: Author's own study.

The factors identified have their specific characteristics, which are detailed in Table 4. The following behaviours were included in the first factor: a feeling of being misunderstood, a feeling of "inner emptiness", attention problems, sadness, relationship problems, learning difficulties, sleep difficulties. When looking at the characteristics of the behaviours covered by this factor, it is not difficult to link

them to the behavioural characteristics observed in people with depression. This factor was given the working name of “depressive behaviour”.

The second factor covered the following experiences: stress, fatigue, severe nervousness, lack of time for oneself, leisure time (hobbies, interests). This factor was called “emotional behaviour”.

The third factor included: difficulties with healthy eating, health problems, difficulties with substance use. This factor was called “healthy functioning difficulties”.

Table 4.  
*Characteristics of the 3 individual factors*

	Factor		
	1	2	3
feeling misunderstood	0.835		
low motivation to act	0.687		0.440
feeling of “inner emptiness”	0.681		
attention problems	0.607		0.442
sadness	0.596	0.417	
problems in relationships with others	0.569		
learning difficulties	0.515		0.507
sleep problems	0.390		0.311
stress		0.741	
fatigue		0.708	
severe nervousness		0.528	
lack of time for oneself, leisure time (hobbies, interests)		0.349	
difficulties with healthy eating			0.553
health problems			0.479
problems with substance use			0.421

Source: Author’s own study.

Another important area of analysis was social behaviour, also diagnosed on the basis of questions in the survey questionnaire. Finally, one factor was obtained through analyses – principal axis method without rotation  $KMO = 0.639$ , explained variance 24.97%. It successfully combined four variables connected with

culture: going to concerts, going to the theatre, reading favourite books, going to the cinema. This factor was called “social behaviour”.

In the next step of the analyses, a linear regression was performed with the data split according to narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. This division was made possible through the use of the NARQ-PL questionnaire, which allows the data to be captured in these two categories of narcissism. Table 5 presents a model which was found to be statistically significant  $F(4,94) = 3.23$ ;  $p = 0.016$  and allows 8.1% of the variance to be explained.

Table 5.  
*Linear regression model for narcissistic admiration*

Model	Non-standardised factors		Standardised factors		
	<i>B</i>	Standard error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Relevance
(constant)	3.035	.075		40.311	.000
Depressive behaviour	-.185	.076	-.233	-2.442	.016
Emotional behaviour	-.100	.076	-.126	-1.324	.189
Difficulties with healthy functioning	-.086	.076	-.108	-1.136	.259
Social behaviour	.191	.097	.188	1.965	.052

Source: Author's own study.

The *social behaviour* factor is positively related to narcissistic admiration  $\beta = 0.19 = p = 0.052$ , while the *depressive behaviour* factor is negatively related to narcissistic admiration.

The next step was to try to isolate a model for narcissistic rivalry. It was possible to obtain a statistically significant model  $F(4,97) = 3.23$ ;  $p = 0.019$ , which explains 7.7% of the variance (Table 6).

Table 6.  
*Linear regression model for narcissistic rivalry*

Model	Non-standardised factors		Standardised factors		
	<i>B</i>	Standard error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Relevance
(constant)	2.058	.074		27.939	.000
Depressive behaviour	.086	.074	.111	1.159	.249
Emotional behaviour	-.025	.074	-.032	-.340	.735
Difficulties with healthy functioning	.245	.074	.316	3.307	.001
Social behaviour	-.026	.095	-.026	-.273	.786

Source: Author's own study.

The *difficulties with healthy functioning* factor is positively associated with narcissistic rivalry  $\beta = 0.316$ ;  $p = 0.001$ .

Table 7.  
*Categories of narcissism*

Narcissism	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid	Cumulative percentage
Low narcissism	31	30.4	30.4	30.4
High rivalry, low admiration	20	19.6	19.6	50.0
High admiration, low rivalry	25	24.5	24.5	74.5
High narcissism	26	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's own study.

The subjects were fairly evenly divided into four categories of narcissism (Table 7): low in both categories, high rivalry and low admiration, low admiration and high rivalry, high in both categories. Intergroup comparisons by ANOVA and the Kruskal–Wallis test did not yield significant results. Only for the *difficulties with healthy functioning* factor was there a result of  $p = 0.068$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Gabriel test (liberal, for unequal groups) indicated a difference between the high rivalry, low admiration and low admiration – high rivalry groups  $p = 0.063$ . The averages are shown in Table 8.

Table 8.  
*Average scores of distinguished groups in terms of narcissism*

	N	Medium	Standard deviation
Low narcissism	31	-0.04	1.09
High rivalry, low admiration	20	0.38	0.93
High admiration, low rivalry	25	-0.39	1.07
High narcissism	26	0.13	0.76
Total	102	0.00	1.00

Source: Author's own study.

This result confirms that the *difficulties with healthy functioning* factor is specifically related to narcissistic rivalry.

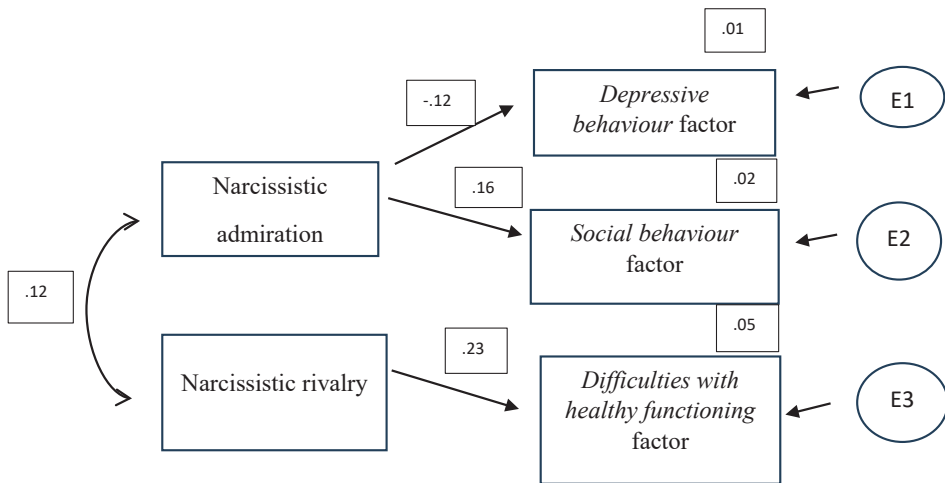
The results of the research and statistical calculations presented here produced data that clearly indicate that the following problems/difficulties are positively as-

sociated with narcissistic rivalry: difficulties with healthy eating, health problems, difficulties with substance use. Through factor analyses, they formed the factor: “difficulties with healthy functioning”.

In the case of narcissistic admiration, there are no such clearly defined conditions. Narcissistic admiration is negatively affected by behaviour: feeling of “inner emptiness”, sense of being misunderstood, sadness, low motivation to act, problems concentrating, sleep problems. Through factor analyses, they formed the factor: “depressive behaviour”. Narcissistic admiration is also positively conditioned by the “social behaviour” factor: “I go to concerts”, “I go to the theatre”, “I read my favourite books”, “I go to the cinema”.

The analyses show that certain behavioural problems are clearly associated with narcissistic rivalry, while narcissistic admiration characterises people with low levels of problems and who are culturally engaged. What emerges is a picture of narcissistic rivalry as a “dark force” and, on the contrary, narcissistic admiration as a constructive force. The dimensions of admiration and rivalry correlate positively at the weak trend level  $r = 0.181$ ;  $p = 0.069$ . The direction of influence, whether behaviours and attitudes influence narcissism or *vice versa*, is problematic. In the pathway analysis, the direction of influence was reversed.

Figure 3.  
Path analysis



Source: Author’s own study.

The model (Figure 3) is a good fit  $\chi^2(6) = 6.12$ ;  $p = 0.410$ , AGFI = 0.939, RMSEA = 0.014. Only the effect of rivalry on the healthy functioning difficulties factor is statistically significant  $\beta = 0.23$ ;  $p = 0.023$  (Admiration – depressive behaviour

factor:  $\beta = -0.12$ ;  $p = 0.259$ ; Admiration – social behaviour factor:  $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $p = 0.118$ ). This result can be seen as a definitive confirmation of narcissistic rivalry with selected behavioural problems.

## DISCUSSION

Research to date has attempted to combine a variety of variables related to the issue discussed. For example, Kernberg (1974, 1984) already distinguished between well-functioning narcissists, who are inclined to present themselves to boost their ego, and malignant narcissists, whose paranoid tendencies can lead to aggressive and antisocial behaviour. Brown et al. (2009) revived this idea, highlighting the important role of two specific aspects of narcissism: the intrapsychic aspect (admiration) and the maladaptive interpersonal aspect (competition). The results of the study showed that admiration had a stronger relationship with the leadership/power aspect than rivalry, while rivalry had a stronger relationship with exploitation. Admiration also had clearer links with self-absorption/self-love and superiority/arrogance, as well as pompous exhibitionism (Brown et al., 2009). Admiration was found to be negatively correlated with neuroticism and positively correlated with extraversion and openness, while competition was positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness. The data suggest that the established characterisation of narcissists as unpleasant extroverts (Paulhus, 2001) is due to two distinct narcissistic pathways, one of which (admiration) is associated with extroversion, assertiveness and the other (rivalry) has some characteristics of typical narcissistic behavioural dynamics (e.g. a tendency towards anger). The results of the studies discussed indicate similar relationships between the social behaviour factor and narcissistic admiration, which show a positive correlation.

The results regarding self-esteem are even more pronounced. Admiration is positively correlated with self-esteem, while rivalry is negatively correlated with self-esteem. This is an unusual pattern of results, as admiration and rivalry are positively correlated. Admiration is conceptualised as a source from self-improvement strategies, characterised by self-admiration and assertive action. Rivalry, on the other hand, is seen as a mechanism driven by a defensive tendency towards self-protection. Its antagonistic nature leads to social conflicts that accompany threats to ego (Back et al., 2013). Research indicates that both strategies (admiration and rivalry) are positively correlated with pathology. However, the rivalry strategy shows stronger links with pathological narcissism. Pathological grandiosity includes traits such as dominance, assertiveness, aggressiveness and arrogance (Back et al. 2013). It has also been debated whether the negative consequences of narcissism, such as aggression, can be explained by the lack of self-control in

narcissistic people (i.e. their impulsivity; cf. Miller et al., 2009; Vazire and Funder, 2006). It seems that this hypothesis is true for the dimension of narcissistic rivalry, but not for narcissistic admiration. The results presented in this article show similarity in the correlation between narcissistic rivalry and the use of substances, which can be linked to impulsive behaviour and loss of behavioural control.

The adaptability of narcissism has also been addressed in literature (Campbell, 2001; Colvin et al., 1995; Kurt and Paulhus, 2008). The adaptability of narcissism was found to be moderated by situational context. Narcissism appears to be more adaptive in intrapersonal than interpersonal relationships (Campbell and Campbell, 2009).

The dimensions of admiration and rivalry are powerful moderators of adaptive narcissism. The admiration strategy is positively related to intrapsychic traits (e.g. self-esteem) and interpersonal traits (e.g. being perceived as assertive, sociable, attractive and competent) (Back et al., 2013). Rivalry, on the other hand, is associated with negative self-esteem, distrust, low empathy, being seen and perceiving others as aggressive and less trustworthy. Back et al. (2013) find that when we average the criteria of adaptability and relationship contexts, admiration seems to represent the light side of narcissism, while rivalry seems to represent its dark side. The results presented support the thesis relating to the links between narcissistic admiration and the social behaviour factor (e.g. going to the cinema, theatre, concerts, etc.).

Thus, the adaptability of narcissism may depend on a combination of the narcissism dimension and the social context (Back et al., 2010; Küfner et al., 2013). The positive relationship between admiration and rivalry can highlight the often tragic nature of narcissists' lives. Apparently, their dependence on the reinforcing qualities of having a high self-esteem (reinforced by admiration) allows them to fall into the trap of seeing the need to defend this inflated self-esteem against a hostile social environment (rivalry). The intrinsic interdependence of narcissistic admiration and rivalry may also determine the typical developmental course of action implied by an environmental factor (Campbell and Campbell, 2009).

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of our own research presented here indicate a significant link between the rivalry strategy and the factor identified in the factor analysis for the purposes of the research as *difficulties with healthy functioning*. Factor analysis and later path analysis provided data to conclude that the strategy of narcissistic rivalry is associated with behaviours such as difficulties with healthy eating, health problems and problems with substance use. The findings are in line with the data available in literature, which indicate that narcissistic rivalry is a factor with little constructive impact on individual functioning. It can be described as a “dark force” in the per-



sonality. The results clearly indicate that a competitive strategy is linked to behavioural difficulties in young adults.

The findings of the study may be of interest to practitioners (educators, therapists, psychologists, educators) working with young adults. They can be useful in the process of developing educational, therapeutic programmes for young people experiencing difficulties in psychosocial functioning.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The survey was carried out on the basis of a quantitative approach. This made it possible to determine the level of the variables studied, the relationships and the links between them, according to the assumptions made. In addition, the sample group of respondents was not large and was predominantly female. Initially, a larger number of questionnaires were collected, but after discarding incorrectly or incompletely completed questionnaires, results from 102 questionnaires were analysed. For this reason, the research results presented should be seen in terms of a preliminary analysis of the phenomenon. The results presented could form the basis for extending the study to a wider research group.

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## NARCYSTYCZNA RYWALIZACJA A TRUDNOŚCI W PSYCHOSPOŁECZNYM FUNKCJONOWANIU MŁODYCH DOROSŁYCH

**Wprowadzenie:** Narcyzm jest zjawiskiem, które odnosi się zarówno do zdrowego, prawidłowego funkcjonowania człowieka, jak i do obszaru psychopatologii. Zjawisko to jest ujmowane w wielu różnych płaszczyznach i perspektywach. W artykule zostało przyjęte rozumienie narcyzmu w modelu NARC (*Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept*).

**Cel badań:** Celem badań było sprawdzenie, w jaki sposób narcyzm (w rozumieniu modelu NARC), w odwołaniu strategii rywalizacji i strategii podziwu, łączy się z trudnościami w psychospołecznym funkcjonowaniu młodych dorosłych.

**Metoda badań:** W poniższym badaniu zastosowano: kwestionariusz NARQ-PL w polskiej adaptacji Rogoza i in. (2016) oraz kwestionariusz ankiety własnego autorstwa.

**Wyniki:** Uzyskane wyniki badań i przeprowadzone analizy statystyczne potwierdzają, że istnieje relacja pomiędzy narcystyczną rywalizacją a wybranymi trudnościami w zachowaniu młodych dorosłych.

**Wnioski:** Przedstawione wyniki badań stanowią silną przesłankę do pogłębienia badań nad relacją pomiędzy poszczególnymi wymiarami narcyzmu a trudnościami w zachowaniu młodych dorosłych Polaków.

**Słowa kluczowe:** narcyzm, narcystyczna rywalizacja, narcystyczny podziw, trudności w zachowaniu, młodzi dorośli

