

Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism in the Context of Romantic Relationships

Doctoral Dissertation

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Abstract

The presented project aimed to use the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN) to analyze the relationship between narcissism and functioning in romantic relationships. Narcissism is a personality trait related to worse functioning in long-term romantic relationships – lower satisfaction with the bond, difficulties in emotional regulation, and conflicting sense of self-importance. However, most of the research was focused only on one domain – of agency – in which the grandiose self might be maintained. Moreover previous studies rarely recognized two distinct self-protection strategies: avoidant and antagonistic. The CMN provides a theoretical framework to combine those issues. It assumes that manifestations of narcissism vary in terms of agency and communion, including self-enhancement and self-protection strategies for both, resembling understanding narcissism as a spectrum. Such a fine-grained approach allows to infer more generally about the relationship between narcissism and functioning in romantic relationships. The project consisted of seven studies, examining three basic research problems. The results show that (1) narcissism forms are differently related to romantic relationship quality, (2) those relationships could be explained by different mechanisms associated with the domain in which self is maintained, and (3) those relationships could be explained by differences in emotional functioning across narcissism forms. These results validate the Circumplex Model of Narcissism, showing that communion and agency have additive rather than interchangeable effects; thus, differentiating narcissism manifestations only by one of those dimensions could bring imprecise inferences about this trait.

Keywords: spectrum, agentic narcissism, communal narcissism, antagonistic narcissism, empathy, self-esteem, relationship quality, emotions

Introduction

The primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate multiple manifestations of narcissism within the context of romantic relationships, which is widely recognized as a crucial aspect of human functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Diener et al., 2000; Mikulincer et al., 2003). The research project presented herein is a direct response to the substantial conceptual advancements made in the understanding of narcissism over the past decade. Current scholarship posits that narcissism is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing diverse forms characterized by distinct approaches to constructing and maintaining self-perceptions (Miller et al., 2021; Sedikides, 2021). Given this intricate nature, it is imperative to empirically examine whether and, if so, how these various dimensions influence individuals' social and psychological well-being. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the spectrum of narcissistic behaviours and traits exhibited in romantic relationships, which represent a fundamental social context for interpersonal dynamics.

In my research program, I adopted the most comprehensive conceptualization of narcissism to date, namely the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019). This model integrates multiple theoretical perspectives on narcissism by combining the fundamental personality traits (e.g., Five Factor Model) with the influential "Big Two" domains of social functioning (Agency and Communion). By utilizing the theoretical framework provided by the CMN, I aimed to address two remaining questions regarding the diverse manifestations of narcissism. The first question explored whether communal narcissism, characterized by an individual's belief in exceptional communality, exhibited distinct associations with the quality of romantic relationships compared to its agentic counterparts (Sedikides, 2021). The second question emerged from two underlying assumptions: firstly, that narcissism is driven by dynamic self-regulation based on motives for self-enhancement and self-protection (Back et al., 2013), and secondly, that these motives can manifest in both the

agency and communion domains (Gebauer et al., 2012; Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2023). Consequently, the research project aimed to investigate whether the realization of these motives in the communion domain posed fewer challenges than in the agentic domain. As self-enhancement in the agentic domain (i.e., admiration) has shown to be less problematic in the context of interpersonal relationships (Back et al., 2013; Wurst et al., 2017) than self-protection, the same could be expected for communal self.

My dissertation is based on a series of seven studies in which I investigated the associations between different narcissism forms and the quality of romantic relationships. Throughout these studies, I examined and compared a spectrum of narcissism forms, taking into account potential factors that may contribute to variations among them, such as self-esteem, empathy, and emotional functioning. To ensure the external validity of my findings, I employed multiple research methods.

When studying narcissism, relying solely on self-reported assessments can be problematic due to individuals' biased self-presentation, particularly when the measured phenomena align with the identity goals associated with a specific narcissism form (e.g., successful interpersonal relationships for communal narcissism). Therefore, I had two primary objectives. Firstly, I aimed to examine the replicability of the detected effects across studies and methods. Secondly, I sought to address the potential impact of self-presentation biases, such as socially desirable responding, by incorporating both declarative and non-declarative response measures.

To achieve these objectives, I employed a range of research methods, including cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. I utilized self-reported data, as well as observations of behaviour, to gather comprehensive information. Additionally, I complemented self-reports with reports from romantic partners (i.e., dyads) to gain a more complete understanding of the phenomena under investigation. By adopting this multifaceted approach, I aimed to enhance

the reliability and validity of my results and gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between narcissism forms and the quality of romantic relationships.

The structure of my dissertation is as follows. The first chapter provides an overview of contemporary narcissism theories that have significantly influenced the development of the Circumplex Model of Narcissism. In the second chapter, I present an overview of studies focusing on narcissism and its impact on functioning within close relationships, with particular emphasis on the role of self-views and emotional functioning. The third chapter identifies existing gaps in the field that have motivated the research program upon which this dissertation is based. Subsequently, I present the results of the seven studies conducted throughout the project, which are organized into three groups: (1) examining the general associations between different forms of narcissism and the quality of romantic relationships, (2) investigating the role of self-views in understanding this link, and (3) exploring the role of emotional functioning in relation to narcissism and relationship quality. Chapter four is dedicated to interpreting the results of the studies through the lens of the Circumplex Model of Narcissism. Concluding the dissertation, I offer general conclusions drawn from the study as well as a discussion of its limitations. Furthermore, I explore potential avenues for future research endeavours in this field, highlighting the areas that require further investigation and expansion.

1. Narcissism - Basic Theoretical Issues

Narcissism, as a psychological construct, has garnered significant attention and research over the past few decades, leading to various conceptual disagreements and controversies. These disputes encompass fundamental aspects such as the nature of narcissism (whether it is a syndrome or a personality trait), its pathological implications (whether it is a "healthy" phenomenon or a pathology), and its underlying structure (whether it represents a single construct or encompasses a range of closely related phenomena). Contemporary theories of narcissism portray it as a multifaceted and intricate psychological construct, characterized by its complexity and polyhedric nature (Miller et al., 2021; Sedikides, 2021). However, the unravelling of this complexity has been a gradual process, with researchers making progressive strides in understanding the various dimensions and facets of narcissism.

The origins of researchers' fascination with narcissism can be traced back to an ancient myth popularized by Ovid in ancient Rome, involving the Greek hunter Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection. This myth subsequently became a point of reference for the influential psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who utilized it to characterize both a developmental phase and libido-related self-love disorder (1914). This distinction heavily influenced the works of subsequent psychodynamic theorists, including Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Heinz Kohut, and Otto Kernberg. Although the psychodynamic theories themselves are challenging to empirically validate, they played a pivotal role in the initial recognition of narcissistic personality disorder in major medical classifications such as the DSM-III (APA, 1980) and the ICD-10 (WHO, 1993). The inclusion of narcissism in these official classifications propelled it into the realm of increased research attention. Consequently, a wealth of empirical evidence has emerged, illuminating the fact that narcissism is a more intricate and multifaceted phenomenon than previously believed.

Extended research on narcissistic personality has given rise to two distinct conceptualizations: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Wink, 1991). The former refers to individuals who exhibit dominant and self-assured personalities, characterized by stable yet exaggerated self-views. On the other hand, the latter encompasses individuals with more fragile and hypersensitive personalities, displaying excessive yet contingent self-views. These divergent manifestations of narcissism have paved the way for more dynamic and process-oriented conceptualizations, revealing that narcissism can be seen as a "mixed blessing" (Paulhus, 1998). Within these conceptual frameworks, the various manifestations of narcissism are understood as different formal strategies employed by individuals to construct and maintain their exaggerated self-views, depending on the specific situational context (Back et al., 2013; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and their interactions with other personality traits (Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2016). This dynamic perspective highlights the nuanced nature of narcissism and underscores the multifaceted nature of its expression.

Furthermore, researchers have explored the diverse manifestations of narcissism by examining various domains, extending beyond different forms alone. Through the lens of well-established dimensions of social perception, namely the Big Two (e.g., agency and communion, competence and warmth, masculinity and femininity), narcissism has been linked primarily with agency (Back et al., 2013; Campbell & Foster, 2002). However, it became evident that the broader phenomenon of self-enhancement is not limited solely to the agency domain. To address this inconsistency, the Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism was introduced (Gebauer et al., 2012; Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018). This model posits that narcissism is not constrained to agency. In other words, narcissism can be expressed not only through assertiveness and dominance but also through warmth, empathy, and affiliation. This expanded

perspective acknowledges that narcissism encompasses both agentic and communal aspects, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Recently, two models have emerged that aim to integrate and consolidate the key aspects from the aforementioned approaches, encompassing the dynamics of maintaining a grandiose self, the influence of other personality traits, the conceptualization of narcissism as a spectrum, and the potential for self-views to exist in both agency and communion domains. First, the Dimensional Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (D-NARQ; Grosz et al., 2022), posit that strategies utilized to maintain self-views, of narcissists (i.e., admiration and rivalry) are similar across different domains. The second model, referred to as the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019), postulates that the strategies utilized by narcissists are diverse and contingent upon both more general personality traits and the particular domain that holds centrality to their self-concept. In this model, the maintenance of self-views is understood to be influenced by a broader range of personality factors and can vary depending on whether the narcissistic focus is on agentic or communal domains.

Over the past century, there has been a significant evolution in the understanding of narcissism. Initially, it was described in vague terms as a disorder related to the development of life energy, or libido. However, with the advancement of empirical research, the conceptualization of narcissism has become more refined and grounded in empirical data. It is now recognized as a distinct personality trait characterized by a grandiose self-concept. This self-concept is sustained through a spectrum of forms that align with various self-motives across different domains of life. The shifting understanding of narcissism reflects a transition from theoretical speculation to evidence-based conceptualizations. This shift has enabled researchers to delve deeper into the complexities of narcissism, providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of this personality trait. In the following sections, I will delve

into these evolving conceptualizations in greater detail, outlining the key changes and advancements that have taken place in our understanding of narcissism over time.

1.1 Early Conceptualizations of Narcissism

The field of psychology initially became interested in narcissism through the exploration of auto-eroticism, which was associated with the mythological figure Narcissus from Ovid's writings, as described by Ellis (1898). The term "narcissism" was initially used similarly by Freud (1905) to describe "narcissistic libido," a condition in which the self is its own sexual object. Later, however, he used this term more nuancedly, identifying two distinct types of narcissism (1914/1955). Freud theorized that love, or libido, can only be invested in one place at a time. He posited that *primary narcissism* is a natural developmental phase in which children direct their libidinal energy towards themselves, leading to egocentric tendencies and an inability to consider others' perspectives. According to this perspective, healthy development entails learning to invest love in others (love objects) and reciprocally receive love from them. Freud used the term *secondary narcissism* to describe a condition in which individuals regress to narcissistic tendencies as a compensatory mechanism following a "failed transaction" in which love given to others is not reciprocated due to the unwillingness or incapacity of the love object. Consequently, the individual redirects their investment of love back onto themselves, regressing emotionally to a previous stage characterized by self-idealization and egocentrism.

In a similar vein, Karen Horney (1939) separated the term *narcissism* from (healthy) self-esteem, suggesting that the first is unrealistic self-inflation, while the other is more grounded and evidenced by facts. Her conceptualization of narcissism differed from Freud's, however. She saw it as a defensive mechanism resulting from *insufficient* love, including self-love. In other words, self-inflation, or grandiosity, is protective of vulnerability. Erich Fromm also challenged Freud's notion of self-love and love for others as mutually exclusive (1947).

Like Horney, Fromm believed that narcissism stems from an inability to love oneself or others effectively. He considered narcissism as one of the non-productive interpersonal orientations, specifically the extremely withdrawn type (Fromm, 1974/1992, p.228). According to Fromm, narcissistic individuals perceive themselves as the sole significant entities, while the rest of the world holds varying degrees of insignificance. Furthermore, others may be perceived as threats to their self-created illusion of perfection. Consequently, narcissists often respond with anger or rage, which can be linked to a sense of superiority complex (Kohut, 1972). Fromm's concept of a "personality marketplace" aptly captures his understanding of narcissism. It revolves around the desire to conform and fit into a particular group or culture, leading individuals to present superficial aspects that align with the valued characteristics, rather than expressing their true selves. Narcissists, with their idealized yet fragile self, fear "not being bought" or, in other words - being accepted by others. This paradoxical situation results in narcissists isolating themselves in grandiosity while simultaneously striving for acceptance and conformity to social norms.

Two influential conceptualizations of narcissism that significantly shaped psychodynamic theories on the subject were proposed by Kohut and Kernberg, offering distinct perspectives on its aetiology (Russell, 1985). Kohut, akin to Freud, regarded narcissism as a normal developmental phase (Kohut, 1966). According to Kohut, during childhood, a child idealizes someone else, typically a parent, and strives to emulate them, leading to the formation of a grandiose self-concept. Over time, this grandiose self becomes integrated into the individual's personality. In adulthood, narcissism manifests as a rigid, childlike means of regulating self-esteem, with individuals relying on others to manage threats to their identity and alleviate anxieties. In Kohut's view, narcissists treat others as sources of self-regulation and expect them to be unconditionally supportive and admiring, just as a parent would for a child. In contrast, Kernberg proposed a different perspective on narcissism, perceiving it as a

defensive withdrawal resulting from parental coldness or dismissiveness (Kernberg, 1970). He posited that narcissism arises from an invalidating environment where parents primarily interact with the child to fulfil their own needs, rather than providing genuine emotional nurturance. In this context, the development of a pathological grandiose self-representation serves as an escape from the deprivation experienced in the environment. Negative self-perceptions are denied and remain unintegrated. Kernberg's conceptualization of narcissism emphasizes the defensive nature of the grandiose self and its function as a protective mechanism against underlying feelings of inadequacy and emptiness.

These two conceptualizations of narcissism were crucial in distinguishing between two subtypes of narcissism: grandiose and vulnerable. The grandiose subtype aligns with Kohut's perspective, characterized by an inflated self-image and an expectation of admiration from others. The vulnerable subtype aligns with Kernberg's viewpoint, characterized by a fragile self-image and a fear of rejection or criticism. By recognizing these distinct subtypes, researchers and clinicians have been able to gain a deeper understanding of the various manifestations and underlying dynamics of narcissism.

1.2 Beyond Personality Disorder - Adapting Narcissism To Personality and Social

Psychology

The transition of narcissism from a clinical concept to a broader construct within personality psychology was influenced by two significant events, leading to its recognition as not just a pathological condition but also a trait present in varying degrees within the general population. The first event was the publication of the influential book "The Culture of Narcissism" by Christopher Lasch (1979/2018), which explored how post-World War II American culture seemingly normalized pathological narcissism and fostered the development of corresponding personality traits in individuals. This book brought attention to the societal aspects contributing to the prevalence of narcissistic tendencies. Second was the official

recognition of narcissism as a personality disorder (NPD) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III* (APA, 1980). With its inclusion in a widely used diagnostic manual, narcissism gained increased attention and became the subject of extensive research not only within clinical contexts but also in general populations. This recognition led to a surge in interest and the development of numerous self-report measures aimed at assessing the various traits and behaviours associated with subclinical levels of narcissism.

The most popular instrument to measure narcissism, to this day, is Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). The original, 40-item version of the tool, created in a series of studies, showed to be multidimensional (Ackerman et al., 2011; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Emmons, 1984; R. Raskin & Terry, 1988; Ruiz et al., 2001). Moreover, those dimensions differently correlated to external criteria, showing that the general pool of items was a mix of adaptive and maladaptive content (Ackerman et al., 2011), which was instantly identified as single-factor NPI's limitation, for instance,

“[...] we believe that the potential usefulness of the scale has been limited by the construction strategy initially chosen to develop the measure. In relying exclusively on an internal consistency strategy, which tends to ignore important subcomponents of a construct in favor of aggregating those components into an undifferentiated general construct reflected by a total score, we have managed to lose sight of the theoretical and clinical complexities that have been historically inherent in the narcissism construct” (Raskin & Terry, 1988, p.892).

Regrettably, despite these warnings, the research practices surrounding the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) remained largely unchanged. The NPI, being the most widely utilized measure in empirical research concerning narcissism, was often employed as a unidimensional tool to assess subclinical narcissism in non-clinical populations. Consequently, various conceptualizations of narcissism as a personality trait emerged, primarily based on aggregated NPI scores, which were essentially limited to how narcissism was conceptualized in DSM-III. However, it is important to note that narcissism exhibits greater diversity at lower levels rather than at higher levels (Jauk & Kaufman, 2018). Therefore, as research on the

construct expanded within non-clinical populations, it became inevitable to parse the multifaceted nature of narcissism within the field of personality psychology. This process of specifying the various manifestations of narcissism has been instrumental in clarifying ambiguous findings from previous studies, particularly through the inclusion of narcissistic vulnerability as an essential component of the construct.

1.3 Grandiose Narcissism and Vulnerable Narcissism Distinction

The criteria of NPD included in DSM-III-R (APA, 1987) and DSM-IV (APA, 1994) caused a wide critique from clinicians (Cain et al., 2008). They argued that the new criteria disproportionately emphasized the grandiose aspects of narcissism, such as seeking superiority, while largely overlooking the more vulnerable aspects, such as ruminating about criticisms from others. By the time the DSM-III-R and DSM-IV were published, two distinct dimensions of narcissism had already been recognized in the literature (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Kernberg, 1985; Wink, 1991). First, primarily studied using the NPI, is labelled grandiose, overt, or thick-skinned. Individuals high on this dimension exhibit traits of arrogance, attention-seeking, and social potency. They often manifest grandiosity and exhibitionism but, holding contradictory views of the self, can feel inferior or react with reactive aggression in the face of failure. Second, labelled vulnerable, covert, or hypersensitive is characterized by social inhibition, modest self-presentation, and fragility to others' evaluations. Those individuals most frequently present themselves as timid or shy but reveal grandiose fantasies in close contact. To ensure clarity throughout the dissertation, I will employ the term "grandiose narcissism" to refer to the first dimension and "vulnerable narcissism" to refer to the second dimension, as these terms are commonly used in the literature (e.g., Miller et al., 2011)

This fundamental division gathered a vast amount of evidence over the years (Cain et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2017), which shows that it is more a distinction of traits (grandiosity and vulnerability) than types (grandiose and vulnerable). In other words, those characteristics are

more or less occurring within the same person, who fluctuates between grandiose self-states and vulnerable self-states, depending on the context. What is common for both is the intense need for validation and admiration, which can be pathological if managed ineffectively, resulting in self-enhancement as a dominant motive in most contexts. In the case of grandiose narcissism, this need drives the person to seek self-enhancement experiences and strengthen positive self-views. In the case of vulnerable narcissism, the goal is rather to avoid self-threatening incidents.

Studies examining personality (Crowe et al., 2019; Glover et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2016, 2017; Weiss et al., 2019) and temperament (Subramanian et al., 2022; Włodarska et al., 2021) shed light on the distinct self-regulatory differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Those indicate different capabilities to “force” reality to confirm one’s self-views. Individuals high in grandiose narcissism possess certain personality traits that equip them with the means to impose their self-views on the environment. They tend to be more approach-oriented, extraverted, and emotionally stable. Their assertiveness, self-promotion, and outspoken nature often lead to objective successes, thus affirming their grandiose self-perception (e.g., Dufner et al., 2019). On the other hand, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism exhibit temperament characteristics that lean toward avoidance, introversion, and neuroticism. They are often insecure, shy, and distrustful, and they struggle with being the centre of attention (Czarna et al., 2014; Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Rogoza et al., 2022). Due to their temperament and personality traits, they have fewer tangible confirmations of their ability to achieve grandiosity. Consequently, they focus on limiting experiences that could potentially disrupt their fragile self-views.

Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism exhibit distinct associations with well-being. Grandiose narcissism is found to be linked to higher psychological functioning, primarily in intrapsychic aspects, while its interpersonal aspects yield mixed results (Dufner et al., 2019).

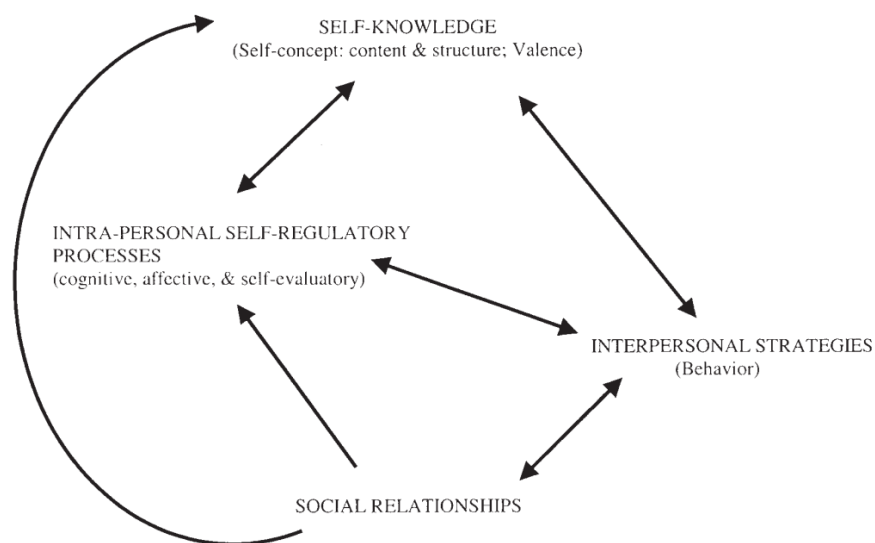
Such contradictory (or null) results might be caused by the heterogeneity of processes related to grandiose narcissism. These mixed findings could be attributed to the heterogeneity of processes associated with grandiose narcissism. For instance, it is related to extraversion but also to disagreeableness (Miller et al., 2011). Additionally, grandiose narcissism is associated with charming and self-assured behaviours (Back et al., 2010) but it is also associated with aggression (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021). In contrast, vulnerable narcissism consistently demonstrates links to poor psychological functioning across various domains. Several studies have revealed its negative associations with self-esteem (e.g., Miller et al., 2011), attachment styles (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Rohmann et al., 2019; Smolewska & Dion, 2005), depression and anxiety (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2011; Orth et al., 2016; Pincus et al., 2014), stress and resilience (Sękowski et al., 2023), or emotional functioning (Czarna et al., 2018, 2021; Di Pierro et al., 2017; Zajenkowski et al., 2018).

Such a categorical approach to two distinct characteristics of, assumingly, one personality trait resulted in a theory providing a dynamic explanation of how those paradoxes could occur within one person. Authors of the Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing model of narcissism (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) based their theory on the assumption that “narcissists experience both high and low self-esteem in alternation depending on external occurrences”(p. 183). Narcissism is characterized by a self that is grandiose yet vulnerable and easy to threaten. As such, its intrapersonal and interpersonal processes are motivated self-construction mechanisms to maintain the self. According to this theory, narcissists pursue certain identity goals through social interactions, actively influencing their environment to support their self-views (Figure 1). Interpersonal self-regulation concerns strategically (although not necessarily consciously) acting in front of others to gather positive feedback or diminish negative feedback from them.

Intrapersonal self-regulation within the Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing model of narcissism involves biased cognitive and affective responses to actual events, leading to selective and distorted interpretations. These biases hinder the chronic goal of seeking external self-affirmation, primarily due to a negative perception of others as suppliers of positive feedback. This unempathetic approach to interpersonal interactions results in poor functioning and difficulties in forming intimate relationships, often leading to experiences of rejection and threats to the grandiose self. Ultimately, the dynamic self-regulatory model of narcissism conceptualizes it as a tendency to the never-ending construction of a grandiose self because of its inefficient self-regulatory processes. It is an influential theory linking grandiosity and vulnerability into one neat model emphasizing that contextual, dynamic factors influence behaviour, and narcissistic behaviour is no exception. However, more contemporary theories have approached these paradoxes in different ways, adopting a multidimensional perspective on the structure of narcissism, recognizing specific self-regulatory strategies associated with different components of the construct.

Figure 1

Framework for Dynamic Self-regulatory Process Model of Narcissism



Note. Figure copied from Morf & Rhodewalt (2001)

1.4 Beyond Grandiosity and Vulnerability: Separation of Antagonism

The narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) is a highly influential theories for resolving those paradoxical research outcomes concerning grandiose narcissism. It builds upon the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive manifestations of the narcissistic trait, as previously identified in research (Brown et al., 2009). In essence, grandiose narcissism is seen as a "mixed blessing," (Paulhus, 1998), meaning that it can have adaptive effects at the intrapersonal level (e.g., boosting self-esteem) but maladaptive effects at the interpersonal level (e.g., fostering hostility). The NARC proposes a two-dimensional process model for maintaining a grandiose self, which extends beyond simply having positive self-views to encompass exaggerated self-perceptions. This model includes two distinct social strategies, as well as various cognitive, emotional, and behavioural pathways: admiration and rivalry (Figure 2).

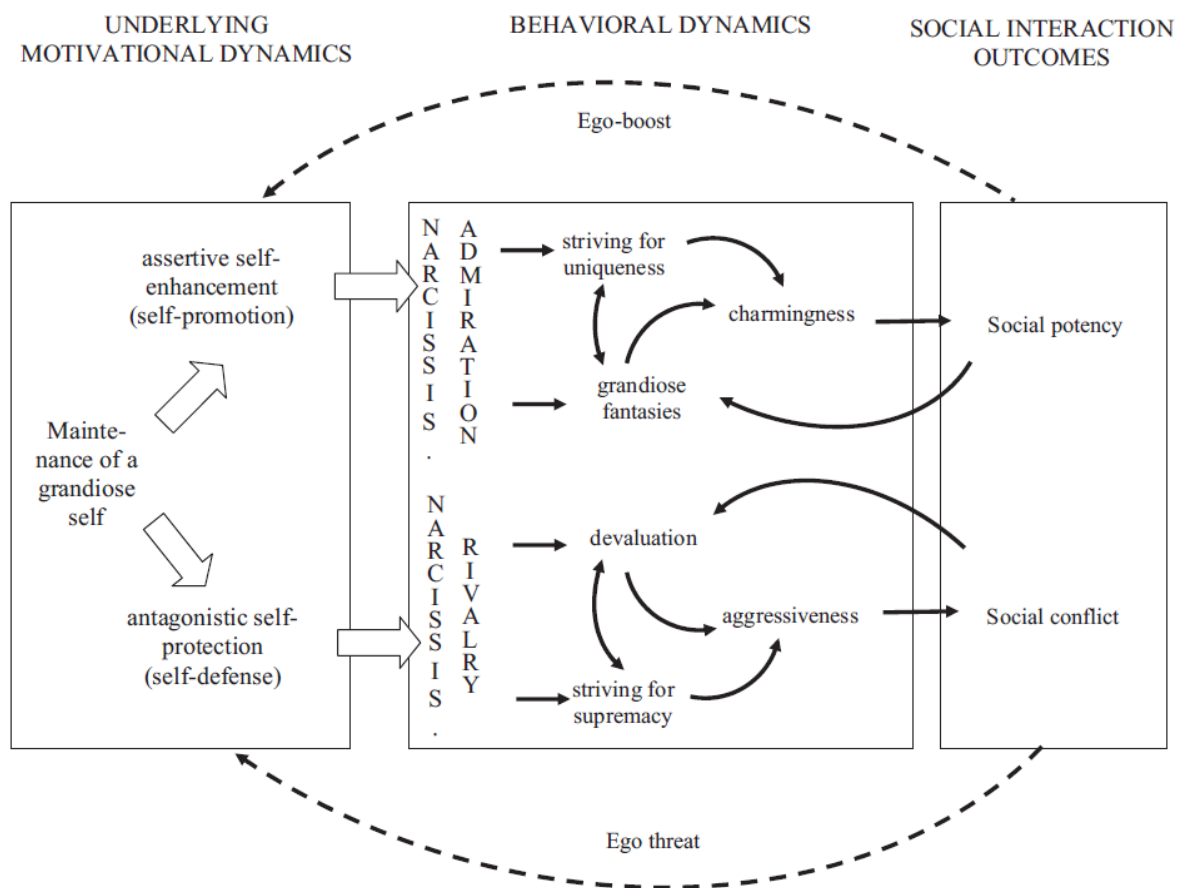
Admiration is a self-enhancement-based tendency to assertively seek social admiration, which provides repeated feelings of being remarkable and admired. Rivalry is a self-protection-based tendency to antagonistically (or aggressively) prevent social failure, which is needed to defend from attacks and self-threats (actual and imagined). Therefore, as a personality trait, grandiose narcissism is activated in specific, self-related contexts. The outcomes of every social interaction are thus dependent on their interpretation by the person (Geukes et al., 2017). If the situation is viewed as potentially self-enhancing, then the admiration strategy is triggered – one starts thinking about their own grandiosity (grandiose fantasies) and striving for uniqueness. This results in self-assured, charming behaviours, which are often successful, providing social reinforcement: others' attention and admiration.

On the other hand, if the social situation is viewed as threatening the grandiose self, then rivalry strategy is triggered – aiming to reinstate or defend the self, one' negative beliefs about others become salient (devaluation of others), and they try to get ahead (striving for supremacy).

Such antagonistic self-defence results in impulsive and antagonistic behaviours (aggression), which are often costly in relationships, leading to transgressions, conflicts, and rejection, fuelling negative views of others, which triggered the reaction in the first place.

Figure 2

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept

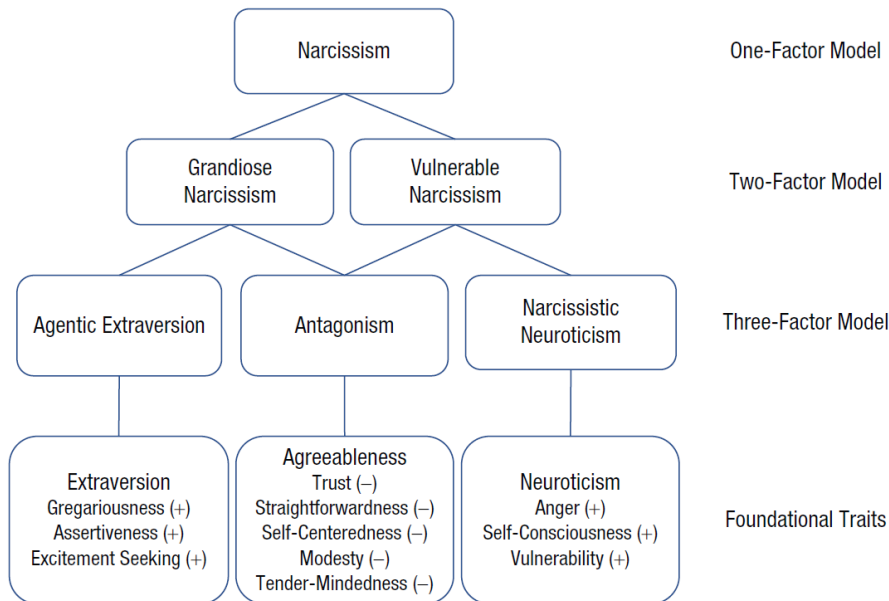


Note. Figure copied from Back et al. (2013)

Although NARC is a processual model concerning different strategies that narcissists use to maintain the grandiose self, it also influenced structural models of narcissism. First, grandiose narcissism, as a whole, could be understood as an individual difference in how grandiose the self is. Second, if triggering admiration or rivalry depends on the interpretation of the situation, then what are individual differences that could explain those? Authors of the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Crowe et al., 2019; Glover et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2019) relied on one of the most prevalent theories of personality – The Five-Factor

Model (FFM; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987) to explain different manifestations of the trait narcissism.

One initial limitation of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) model was its narrow focus on grandiose narcissism, as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), while neglecting self-protection strategies associated with narcissistic vulnerability. The authors themselves acknowledged this limitation by stating, “We do not address *vulnerable narcissism*, which is additionally crucial when investigating pathological forms of narcissism” (Back et al., 2013, p. 1014). Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (TMN; Crowe et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2016, 2017; Weiss et al., 2019) is free of such shortcomings. Narcissism might be conceptualized at multiple levels, and the authors of the TMN aimed to resolve incongruencies of the 2-factor model of narcissism (grandiose/vulnerable). They posit that a 3-factor understanding of narcissism provides a better, sufficient, explanatory value without unnecessary complexity. According to the TMN, a core aspect of narcissism is antagonism (Weiss et al., 2019), which represents the maladaptive dimension of low agreeableness. This antagonism is shared by both grandiose and vulnerable manifestations of narcissism. The differentiation between the two lies in the individual's levels of neuroticism (characteristic of vulnerable narcissism; Miller et al., 2018) and extraversion (characteristic of grandiose narcissism). By incorporating these dimensions, the TMN offers a more nuanced understanding of narcissism and its underlying factors. One significant aspect of the TMN is its alignment with the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality, a widely accepted trait theory (Figure 3) This connection provides a link between narcissism and the clinical perspective on narcissism outlined in the Alternative DSM-5 Model for Personality Disorders (Miller et al., 2013).

Figure 3*Hierarchical Approach to Narcissism in Trifurcated Model of Narcissism*

Note. Figure copied from Miller et al. (2021)

While the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (TMN) builds upon the separation of antagonism, similar to the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) model, it offers a broader conceptualization of narcissism. It should be noted that the NARC model only encompasses a portion of the TMN (Back, 2018). While providing a detailed theoretical description of a specific aspect of a trait is not inherently problematic, assessing only a fraction of the model may raise concerns about the validity of measurement. For instance, in hierarchical factor analyses of various narcissism assessment instruments, the rivalry subscale of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire strongly loaded on vulnerable narcissism in the 2-factor model, but exhibited distinctive antagonistic qualities only in the 3-factor model (Crowe et al., 2019), the rivalry subscale of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire strongly loaded on vulnerable narcissism in the 2-factor model, being distinctively antagonistic only in the 3-factor model. This suggests that if narcissism is a multifaceted construct, as proposed by Sedikides (2021), it should be studied and inferred as a

whole: “We strongly encourage researchers interested in narcissism to use instruments that allow for a bifurcation or, better yet, trifurcation of narcissism[...].” (Miller et al., 2021).

1.5 Domain Matters – Communal Narcissism

1.5.1 Big Two in Social Functioning

A remarkable amount of research from different contexts and paradigms shows that social functioning, although complex and dynamic, can be thought of as twofold (Judd et al., 2005). Two overarching underlying dimensions, roughly refer to constructs representing self-profitability and other-profitability. Acknowledgement of those dimensions was useful in research considering judgements of others (e.g., competence vs morality, Wojciszke, 2005), judgements of self (agency vs communion, Bakan, 1966; independent vs interdependent self, Markus & Kitayama, 1991), personality (dominance vs nurturance, Wiggins, 1991; personal growth vs socialization, Digman, 1997), self-biases (superhero vs saint, Paulhus & John, 1998), stereotype content (masculinity vs femininity, Bem, 1974, competence vs warmth, Fiske et al., 2002), or basic psychological needs (need for competence vs need for relations, Ryan & Deci, 2017). As both have distinct functions, they are conceptualized as independent (i.e., orthogonal, Wiggins, 1991; cf. Imhoff & Koch, 2017). Although those dimensions have different meanings in all those contexts, they share a cross-paradigm common core (Abele et al., 2021; Abele & Wojciszke, 2013). Thus, in the rest of the dissertation I am using a well-established labels of agency and communion for those dimensions. First represents focus on self, useful in attaining one’s goals – instrumentality, competence, independence, and egoistic bias. Second represents focus on relations, useful in integrating one in a larger social unit or group - consideration, nurturance, interdependence and moralistic bias.

1.5.2 Role of Social Domains in Understanding of Narcissism

The existing models discussed above have made significant progress in understanding how narcissists maintain their self-views, particularly through the exploration of antagonism

and its associated strategies. However, these models generally assume that narcissism primarily manifests in the domain of agency, focusing on competences and related attributes. This assumption is not without merit, as extensive research has consistently demonstrated that narcissistic individuals predominantly engage in agentic self-enhancement (e.g., Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Paulhus & John, 1998). This perspective has been effectively synthesized in the Agency Model of Narcissism (Campbell et al., 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007). This model posits that narcissistic self-esteem is a result of a core agentic motive (i.e., striving to get ahead), combined with agentic skills (e.g., confidence) and agentic self-regulatory strategies (e.g., self-promotion). In contrast to the Agency Model, the authors of the Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism (AC model, Gebauer et al., 2012; Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018) challenge this notion and suggest that narcissistic self-enhancement may also be achieved through communal means, similar to other global self-evaluations.

Based on the more comprehensive principle of "Self-Centrality Breeds Self-Enhancement" (SeCeBreSE, Gebauer et al., 2013), the Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism challenges the predominant focus on agentic aspects of narcissism in the literature. The model suggests that this emphasis on agency may be influenced by Western cultural values that prioritize individual agency and by the prevalent use of specific assessment instruments, such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), which predominantly assesses agentic traits. According to the SeCeBreSe principle, individuals tend to self-enhance in domains they consider important or central to their self-concept. From this perspective, narcissists may engage in self-enhancement not only in agentic domains but also in communal domains if it serves their self-centred needs. In other words, narcissistic individuals may seek to enhance their self-views through both agentic and communal means. For instance, their desire for esteem and power, which are agentic motives, can be realized in communal contexts by portraying themselves as *more* tolerant or morally *superior* to others. This notion relates directly to

superhero-type (i.e., agentic) and saint-type (i.e., communal) self-perception biases (Paulhus & John, 1998).

Communal narcissism might seem like an oxymoron; hence, most existing research focused on whether it even exists and whether the construct is valid. Authors of the theory provide a list of evidence proving such validity (Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018). Firstly, communal narcissism is a form of grandiose self-enhancement that overlaps with agentic narcissism but not entirely ($r = .35$ to $.50$; e.g., Fatfouta et al., 2017; Kwiatkowska et al., 2019; Mota et al., 2020; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). Second, it complements extensively studied agentic narcissism, as it relates to communal, not agentic, self-enhancement (Nehrlich et al., 2019). Thirdly, communal narcissism is associated with narcissistic motives - it is in service of upholding social power (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015) related to entitlement (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017), and esteem (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2014). It is worth noting that the Agency-Communion Model (AC model) was not the first to identify the utilization of communal means by narcissists. Pincus et al. (2009) included communal behaviour in the "self-sacrificing self-enhancement" aspect of pathological narcissism, defining it as the "use of purportedly altruistic acts to support an inflated self-image" (p.368). Subsequent analyses (Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2019) revealed that this aspect captured a slightly more neurotic facet of communal narcissism, but it still encompassed communal aspects. Therefore, communal narcissism has been established as a distinct form of narcissism (cf. Rogoza et al., 2023), which refers to self-enhancement in a communal domain.

1.6 Holistic Models of Narcissism – Combining Process x Domain

Recently, two research endeavours integrated a processual understanding of narcissism (i.e., self-enhancement and self-protection strategies to maintain self-views) and acknowledged various domains in which self-views could be maintained. Domain-Specific Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (D-NARQ; Grosz et al., 2022)) extended the NARC

model to several domains which could be utilized for maintenance of grandiose self. Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019) utilizes the logic of the NARC model, but acknowledging that self-regulatory strategies, to be efficient, should be congruent with general goals and personality of a person. Thus, it was built on the assumption that tendencies to exercise a given self-regulatory strategy could be predicted by those. A well-established concept of Big Two (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013; Bakan, 1966; Digman, 1997; Strus & Ciecuch, 2017) was used as a reference framework for both agency-communion and personality distinction.

1.6.1 Domain-Specific Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire

First, the Domain-Specific Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (D-NARQ; Grosz et al., 2022) could be interpreted (as the name suggest) as an extension of the processual NARC model described above. Specifically, admiration (self-enhancement) and rivalry (self-protection) strategies were diversified into several domains. Although the choice of those domains is somewhat arbitrary and “by no means exhaustive” (p. 1493), the list is based on aspects of life previously found to be of particular importance for narcissists. The distinction partly follows an integrated framework for social evaluations (Abele et al., 2021), parsing agency to ability and assertiveness facets and communion to friendliness and morality.

It consists of (1) intellectual ability (e.g., Zajenkowski & Dufner, 2020), referring to ability; (2) social dominance (e.g., Grapsas et al., 2020), referring to assertiveness; (3) communal care (e.g., (Gebauer et al., 2012), referring to both morality and friendliness; and (4) physical attractiveness, not listed by Abele et al. (2021), yet crucial in conceptualizations of narcissism since the very beginning (e.g., Dufner et al., 2013; Freud, 1914/1955; Holtzman & Strube, 2010). This domain approach is helpful in studying individual differences in the construction and maintenance of grandiose self-views. It did not take vulnerable narcissism into

account, however, duplicating limitations of the basic NARC model, which is particularly surprising given the popularity of Trifurcated model (see Back, 2018; Miller et al., 2021).

1.6.2 Circumplex Model of Narcissism

Another attempt to integrate contemporary conceptualizations of narcissism is the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019). The model was developed to integrate: (1) a process-based understanding of narcissism proposed by the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (Back et al., 2013), (2) the diversity of means to construct and maintain a grandiose self, proposed in the Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012); (3) reference to well-established Five-Factor Model of personality, also posited by Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Crowe et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2019); and (4) organisation the manifestations of narcissism by referring to continuous spectrum, proposed in Narcissism Spectrum Model (NSM; Krizan & Herlache, 2018).

The Circumplex model might be interpreted as the extension of the last one, answering a critical question: “Where is communal narcissism in the narcissistic spectrum?”. Specifically, the spectrum model refers to the angular understanding of correlations, which was already utilized in studies on Big Two, both in interpersonal behaviours (with agency and communion as axes; Wiggins et al., 1991) and personality (with plasticity and stability derived from the Five-Factor Model as axes; Digman, 1997) research. Previous research showed that those two circumplexes are complementary (Strus & Ciecuch, 2017) and can be circumscribed on each other. Also, Gebauer et al. (2012) empirically referred to interpersonal circumplex, showing that communal narcissism is related to more warmth than agentic one. Finally, the Trifurcated model points to the pivotal, core role of antagonism in narcissism (similarly, the Narcissism Spectrum puts entitled self-importance as the core), yet communal narcissism is related positively to agreeableness (Kwiatkowska et al., 2019; Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2019, cf. Rogoza et

al., 2023), which puts it out of the spectrum. Congruently, the analysis of multiple instruments to assess narcissism (Rogoza et al., 2019) showed that communal manifestations of narcissism are placed even *further* in the personality circumplex than grandiose one (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

Spectrum of Narcissism Scales Scores on the Circumplex of Personality Metatraits

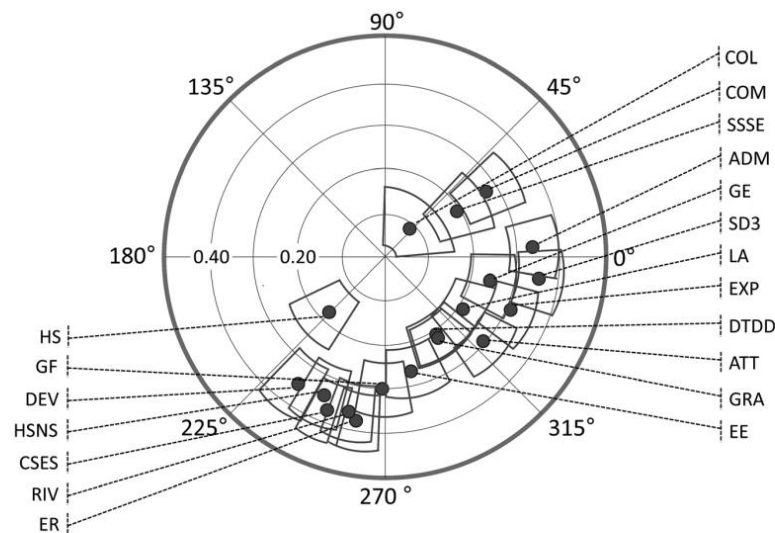


Figure 4. Angular displacement of specific narcissism scales projected onto the space of Circumplex of Personality Metatraits. COL, Collective Narcissism Scale; COM, Communal Narcissism Inventory; SSSE, Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement; ADM, Admiration; GE, Grandiose Exhibitionism; SD3, Short Dark Triad; LA, Leadership/Authority; EXP, Exploitativeness; DTDD, Dark Triad Dirty Dozen; ATT, Attention Seeking; GRA, Grandiosity; EE, Entitlement/Exploitativeness; ER, Entitlement Rage; RIV, Rivalry; CSES, Contingent Self-Esteem; HSNS, Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; DEV, Devaluation; GF, Grandiose Fantasies; HS, Hiding the Self.

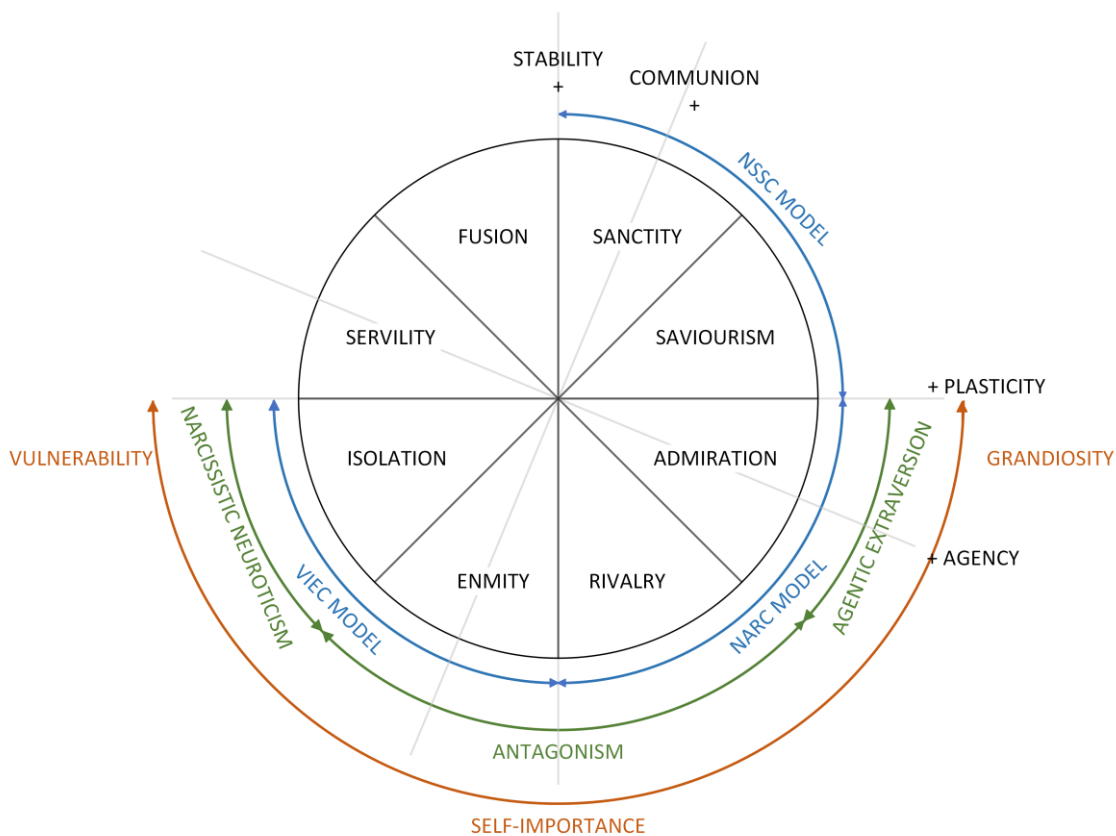
Note. Figure copied from Rogoza et al. (2019). Communal manifestations of narcissism (COM and SSSE) are above the X-axis (above 0 degrees).

The Circumplex Model of Narcissism solves this inconsistency by extending the spectrum into circumplex defined by both Agency-Communion distinction and personality traits. In other words, depending on one's personality (as in TMN), one can develop tendencies for different strategies to self-regulate (as in NARC), which can vary in terms of agency and communion (as in the AC model). Moreover, conversely to D-NARQ described above, the CMN is not based on the assumption that *all* expressions of narcissism are based on the same self-enhancement and self-protection strategies. For example, communal rivalry is directly opposite to communal goals and threatens the grandiose self even more. In data provided by Grosz et al. (2022), it was more closely linked to rivalry in other domains than to communal

care admiration. In the Circumplex model, there are 4 “types” of narcissism, each with specific self-regulation strategies. It contains already established strategies characterizing agentic grandiose narcissism (admiration and rivalry) and (non)agentic vulnerable narcissism (see Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Concept, VIEC; Rogoza et al., 2022), supplementing those with specific ones for communal (grandiose) narcissism (i.e., sanctity and heroism; Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2023) and communal vulnerable narcissism, which were not extensively studied to this day.

Figure 5

Circumplex Model of Narcissism Synthesizing and Extending Contemporary Conceptualizations of Narcissism With Reference to Personality Metatraits, Agency and Communion



Note. Stability and Plasticity are derived from Five Factor Model of Personality (DeYoung et al., 2002); Agency and Communion are rotated by -22.5° against Personality Metatraits (Strus et al., 2019); AC Model = Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012); NARC Model = Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (Back et al., 2013); VIEC model = Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Concept (Rogoza et al., 2022); Narcissistic Neuroticism, Antagonism, and Agentic Extraversion are conceptualized by Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Miller et al., 2015); Vulnerability, Self-Importance, and Grandiosity were conceptualized by Narcissism Spectrum Model (Krizan & Herlache, 2017)

1.7 Summary

Narcissism has been studied for over 100 years, yet much theoretical development happened in the last three decades. Multiple viable (i.e., not falsified yet) conceptualizations are available, each with specifically designed, reliable tools and internal logic. Nonetheless, most of the research is constrained by various factors, which necessitate choosing the level at which narcissism is analysed. Naturally, it would be best to utilize the up-to-date conceptualizations (e.g., Circumplex model or dimensional NARC), forming the broadest inferences that would be possible. As this research project was started in 2017, many of the theories described above were not well-developed (e.g., Circumplex Model and D-NARC), and research plans were not entirely in line with those. However, in all further analyses (both previous research and empirical results of the project), I am referring to the spectrum-based circumplex model of narcissism and its logic, although I have not studied it to its full extent.

1.7.1 Terminology Considerations

Given multiple terminologies in narcissism conceptualizations, I relied on those incorporated within the CMN. However, it combines processual (i.e., dynamic) with structural (i.e., individual differences) understanding of narcissism, which could bring some inconsistencies. Specifically, similar to NARQ, it posits that there are several strategies characteristic of narcissism, and person's choice of a given strategy is a result of interaction between personality and social context. Assessing narcissistic strategies using self-report instruments (e.g., NARQ) taps person's tendency to use a given strategy rather than actual activation of it. In other words, questionnaires measure individual differences in tendency or proclivity to use narcissism strategies. As literature is predominantly based on self-assessed narcissism, in the dissertation I do not rely on the phrase "narcissism strategy", using "narcissism form" instead, similar to Sedikides (2021). Specifically:

1. **“Isolation”** refers to Narcissistic Neuroticism in Trifurcated Model (Miller et al., 2021), a tendency to use non-antagonistic strategy of **avoidant self-protection**
2. **“Rivalry”** and **“enmity”** are two antagonistic strategies, specific for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, respectively. However, distinctive assessment of those is problematic, as they overlap substantially, particularly due to rivalry measure tapping vulnerability (see Figure 5, but also circumplex analyses in Rogoza et al., 2022). Therefore, in the next parts of the dissertation, I did not differentiate between them, treating both as manifestations of a general phenomenon of **“Antagonism”**, in line with the TMN conceptualization. I interpret this as a tendency to use **antagonistic self-protection**
3. **“Admiration”** refers to Agentic Extraversion in TMN, a tendency to use non-antagonistic strategy of self-promotion (Back et al., 2013), serving **self-enhancement in the agentic domain**
4. **“Saviourism”** refers to communal self-protection, which is a novel idea introduced with Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Concept (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2023). I interpret that as a tendency to use a non-antagonistic strategy of **self-protection in the communal domain**, distinct from antagonistic self-protection.
5. **“Sanctity”** refers to overly favourable thoughts about the self in the communal domain (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2023), which I interpret as a tendency to **self-enhance in the communal domain**

2. Narcissism in Romantic Relationships – What Do We Know So Far?

This chapter aims to present the findings of previous studies in a systematic manner, organized into three main sections. The first section provides a literature review that explores the associations between narcissism and functioning within romantic relationships. Following this, the subsequent sections delve into the variations observed in narcissism forms concerning self-views, partner-views, and emotional functioning.

These two explanatory paths hold significant relevance within the context of this project. Firstly, perceptions of self and partner play a pivotal role in attachment theory, which serves as a fundamental framework for understanding and predicting various behaviours and self-regulatory tendencies within close relationships (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Secondly, emotional functioning and successful communication are vital aspects of romantic relationships (Acker & Davis, 1992; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Gottman & Notarius, 2000). Both lines of research contribute valuable insights to the overarching framework of the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN) as they demonstrate distinct patterns across the spectrum of narcissism. Specifically, communal narcissism forms are generally associated with secure attachment and positive emotional functioning, while isolation is in contrast linked to poor emotional functioning and insecure attachment.

Each section follows a similar structure. I begin by discussing research that is based on a single-factor understanding of narcissism, typically using measures such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). Subsequently, I report on studies utilizing 2-factor models that differentiate between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism or admiration and rivalry. Finally, I include, wherever possible, the findings from research conducted using a 3-factor model of narcissism. It is important to note that there is limited research available employing the 3-factor model.

The negative consequences of narcissism, as emphasized by various theories, are predominantly observed in interpersonal relationships, particularly in long-term acquaintances. Extensive research has consistently shown that low empathy, lack of interest in others, and antagonistic attitudes can explain these outcomes (Back et al., 2013; Wurst et al., 2017). However, theories concerning communal grandiose self (Gebauer et al., 2012; Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019) are not congruent with that rationale, as rivalrous mechanisms mentioned above are in contrast to communal identity (cf. Grosz et al., 2022), a core of communal narcissism. Otherwise put, antagonistic (i.e., low-communion, Wiggins, 1991) protection of self might be effective for the restoration of *agentic* grandiose self, but it is counterproductive in the process of restoration of *communal* grandiose self. Consequently, it remains unknown whether the research findings on agentic narcissism can be directly applied to theories on communal narcissism. Further empirical studies are needed to understand the social functioning of communal narcissists, highlighting this as an unresolved gap in our knowledge of narcissism. Constantine Sedikides explicitly identified this issue in his recent review on narcissism (2021): “Are the interpersonal (non-romantic and romantic) relationships of communal narcissists less troublesome than those of agentic narcissists?”.

In my dissertation, I specifically focused on exploring the dynamics of narcissism within romantic relationships. Recognizing that "interpersonal relationships" is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of research, I narrowed my investigation to this specific context. I base my investigation and inferences on the most broad conceptualization of narcissism to date, Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN; Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019). Therefore, the primary objectives of this chapter are twofold: firstly, to review existing research that examines the relationship between narcissism and functioning within romantic relationships, taking into account various levels of conceptualization; and secondly, to interpret these research findings

through the framework of the CMN. This approach allows for the identification of gaps and inaccuracies in the current understanding of narcissism in the context of romantic relationships

2.1 How Is Narcissism Related to Romantic Relationship Quality?

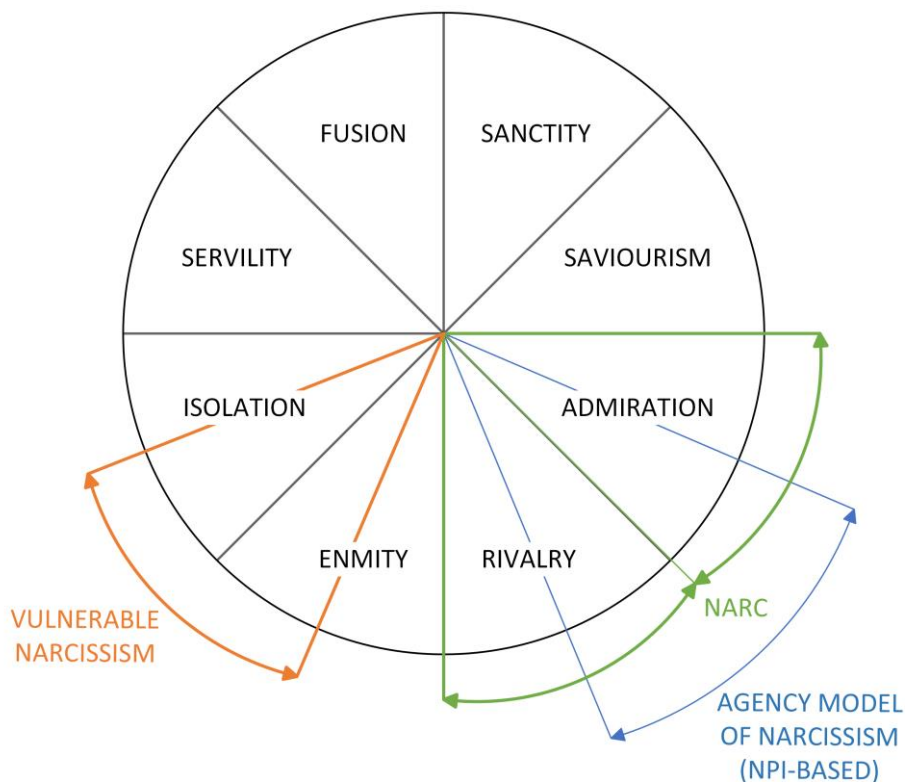
Although interpersonal-related problems are almost an integral feature of narcissism (e.g., DSM-5; Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2021), the complexity of this phenomenon makes it much more challenging to answer this question. Narcissism has been described as a “mixed blessing” in interpersonal settings since the work of Paulhus (1998), who showed that it is linked to both positive and negative outcomes. Such a mixed nature differentially impacts romantic relationships. Narcissists possess qualities to make an appealing first impression (e.g., Dufner et al., 2013; Vazire et al., 2008), resulting in higher success in short-term mating (Jonason et al., 2013). At the same time, narcissism has been repeatedly associated with lower quality and quicker decrease RR quality in long-term relationships (Lavner et al., 2016). Narcissists there are focused on themselves, lacking of interest in their partner’s lives (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Further, narcissism is associated with the feelings inequality of attractiveness (benefiting the narcissist; Rohmann et al., 2010) which results in greater attention to alternatives (Zeigler-Hill, Cosby, et al., 2020), and general conflictual and revengeful means of accommodation (Back et al., 2013; Wilson, 2003). One of the more extreme interpersonal consequences of narcissism is a phenomenon labelled Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), linked to aggressive tendencies presented by narcissists (Fields, 2012; Green et al., 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Määttä et al., 2012; Stevens, 2014).

Aforementioned results were studied on different levels of narcissism conceptualizations (narcissism as a whole, 2-factor models, 3-factor model, see Figure 6), which makes them difficult to directly compare. The results were interpreted mainly through the lens of self-regulatory processes associated with grandiose narcissism (as in a series of studies based on the Agency Model of narcissism, e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002; Foster &

Campbell, 2005; Tanchotsrinon et al., 2007), separating grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism (Feng et al., 2012; Ponti et al., 2020; Rohmann et al., 2010; Smolewska & Dion, 2005; Tortoriello et al., 2017), or separating rivalrous and admiring forms of it (as in studies based on NARC, e.g., (Back et al., 2013; Rentzsch et al., 2021; Vrabel et al., 2020; Wurst et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill, Seidman, et al., 2020). Those explanations were mostly based on the distinction between narcissistic self-enhancement (which generally has positive outcomes) and self-protection (which generally has negative outcomes).

Figure 6

Range of Narcissism Spectrum Studied in Romantic Relationships Context



To my knowledge, the distinction between avoidant self-protection (as in isolation) and antagonistic self-protection (as in rivalry and enmity) was rarely examined empirically in the context of romantic relationships (Lamkin et al., 2015). However, researchers have suggested that exploring this distinction could provide valuable insights and offer an explanation for certain research findings (Rentzsch et al., 2021; Wurst et al., 2017). Understanding these

distinct forms of self-protection may help identify the sources of narcissistic vulnerabilities, such as the frequency of daily feelings of accusations or criticism (Rentzsch et al., 2021). Communal narcissism has received even less research attention within the context of romantic relationships, with only two studies conducted to date. These studies indicate that communal narcissism shares similarities with admiring narcissism, particularly in terms of exhibiting relatively adaptive love styles (Dinić & Jovanović, 2021), and slightly higher quality of romantic relationships (Drotleff, 2020).

During my analysis of the relevant literature, I approached it with two key assumptions. Firstly, I aimed to assess how the reported results align with the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN), specifically focusing on two aspects: (1) the distinction between antagonistic and avoidant self-protection tendencies, and (2) examination of communal self-enhancement. Secondly, I sought to examine whether the explanations provided for the aforementioned associations were related to two factors: (1) the self-views and partner-views of narcissists, and (2) the emotional functioning of narcissists.

2.2 Narcissism, Views on Self and Others, and Romantic Relationship Quality

Narcissism forms are differently related to general beliefs about self and others. Such framing is derived directly from the Attachment Theory (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), which is useful in explaining functioning in interpersonal contexts, including romantic one (Bartholomew, 1997; Brennan & Shaver, 1995). Attachment Theory posits that one's interpersonal behaviour is significantly shaped by their perceptions of self and others, which are formed based on early experiences with attachment figures such as primary caregivers, adolescent romantic partners, or friends (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Fraley & Roisman, 2019). Adult attachment can be understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing two orthogonal (cf. Cameron et al., 2012) dimensions: avoidance and anxiety (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The avoidance dimension pertains to individuals'

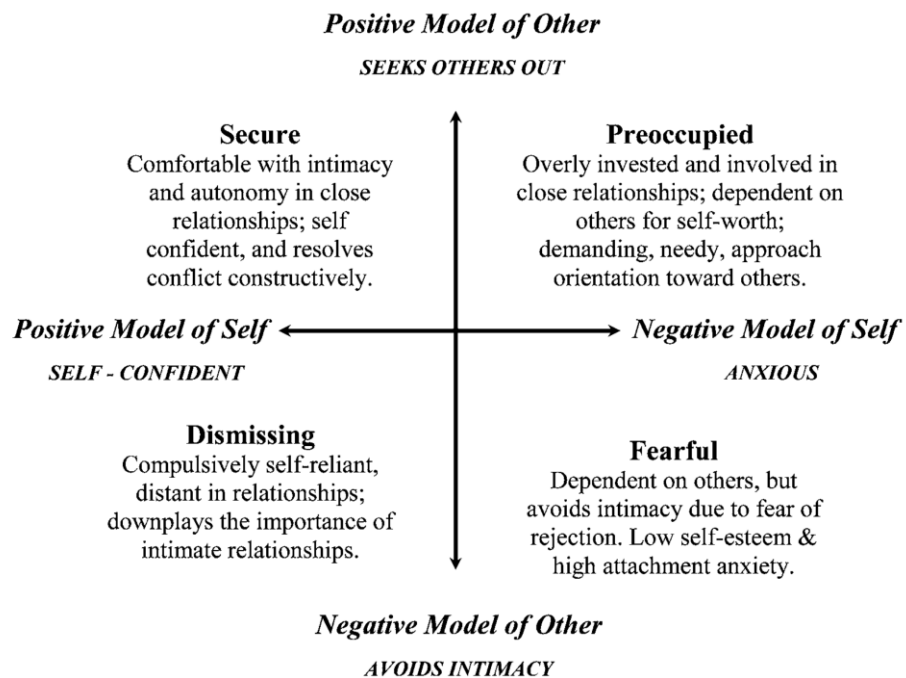
generalized views of others, ranging from a tendency to avoid intimacy (accompanied by a negative view of others) to actively seeking out relationships (accompanied by a positive view of others). On the other hand, the anxiety dimension focuses more on individuals' self-views, ranging from feelings of anxiety (associated with low or negative self-esteem) to a sense of self-confidence (associated with high or positive self-esteem). The unique combinations of these two dimensions yield distinct behavioural patterns in interpersonal interactions, particularly in the context of long-term relationships (Figure 7 provides an illustrative representation of these combinations).

The interplay between avoidance and anxiety dimensions of attachment theory yields distinct attachment styles, each characterized by specific beliefs and behaviours within romantic relationships. Understanding these styles is crucial for comprehending the complexities of interpersonal dynamics. Secure attachment, characterized by low levels of both avoidance and anxiety, represents the most adaptive attachment style. Individuals with secure attachment exhibit positive views of both themselves and others, striking a balance between independence and a willingness to engage in intimate and interdependent relationships. This secure attachment style fosters higher relationship quality and satisfaction. On the other hand, individuals with a dismissive attachment style display high avoidance and low anxiety. They possess a positive view of themselves but hold negative perceptions of others. This leads to a pattern of “compulsive self-reliance” (Bowlby, 1973) – prioritizing independence over intimacy and exhibiting coldness and dismissive behaviours within relationships. Preoccupied attachment, characterized by low avoidance and high anxiety, stands in contrast to the dismissive style. Individuals with a preoccupied attachment style exhibit fear-driven behaviours, flooding their partners with excessive intimacy, and displaying high levels of involvement, demands, and neediness. This attachment style hinders the ability to respect autonomy and boundaries within the relationship. Finally, fearful attachment, marked by high levels of both

avoidance and anxiety, represents the most paradoxical attachment style. Individuals with fearful attachment are highly dependent on others and crave their approval, yet simultaneously fear rejection. This leads to a tendency to distance themselves from others, despite their need for connection and validation.

Figure 7

Two-dimensional Model of Attachment Dimensions



Note. Figure copied from Henderson et al. (2005)

Attachment theory and the conceptualization of narcissism within the CMN share similarities in their focus on self-regulatory processes and the interplay between one's needs in relationships and the maintenance of self-views. These frameworks align with the broader Big Two paradigm of agency and communion, which correspond to self-views (agency) and views of others (communion). By examining these frameworks, precise predictions can be derived. The isolation and admiration forms, which align more closely with the agency axis, are expected to primarily relate to the positivity of self-views, such as self-esteem, reflecting the differentiation between grandiose and vulnerable aspects of narcissism. In contrast, communal forms and antagonism are expected to be primarily associated with the positivity of views on

others. This distinction allows for nuanced explanations of how different narcissism forms impact functioning within romantic relationships.

One of the most prominent theories of narcissism, the Agency Model (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Campbell, 2005), posits that a core of narcissism is a result of favourable self-views encumbered by rather negative or dismissive views of others. However, subsequent research utilizing a more comprehensive two-factor conceptualization of narcissism has shown that the relationship between grandiose narcissism and attachment is weak, while vulnerable narcissism demonstrates a substantial association (Smolewska & Dion, 2005), particularly with anxiety rather than avoidance (Besser & Priel, 2009), showing that negative self-views are the primary concern in this expression of narcissism. These findings align with predictions derived from the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN). In the CMN, isolation, which is a component of vulnerable narcissism, is positioned closest to the low agency end of the narcissism spectrum. Similarly, negative views of others (or avoidant attachment) should exhibit the strongest connection with antagonism. Research conducted within the framework of the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism further supports these patterns. Specifically, the most vulnerable aspect of narcissism, referred to as narcissistic neuroticism, is primarily associated with anxiety. On the other hand, antagonism is related to both anxiety and avoidance (Weiss et al., 2019). This pattern of findings aligns with the CMN, which posits that antagonism encompasses both rivalry and enmity strategies. (Rogoza et al., 2022).

How do those interrelations help in explaining the association between narcissism and functioning romantic relationships? First, studies on narcissism and functioning in romantic relationships, conducted in the (NPI-based) Agentic Model of Narcissism, showed that grandiose narcissists prefer more self-oriented (i.e., agentic) partners (Campbell, 1999). Grandiose narcissists also tend to view their partners as more committed to the relationship (Foster & Campbell, 2005), but are less committed themselves (Campbell & Foster, 2002),

treating the relationship more as a game (*ludus*) than mutual compassion (*agape*) (Campbell et al., 2002). However, subsequent research showed the constraints of such an oversimplified, NPI-based, single-factor approach to narcissism. Preference for agentic partners was moderated by culture (Feng et al., 2012), in line with the person-culture match (Gebauer et al., 2020; Rosenberg, 1965/2015; Sedikides et al., 2015). The preference for agentic partners was found to be moderated by culture, suggesting the importance of person-culture match. In collective countries, where communal values are emphasized, grandiose narcissists showed similar levels of attraction to both agency and communion in their ideal partners. This finding suggests the potential influence of communal narcissism in shaping partner preferences. Additionally, the absence of communal traits in the ideal partner was associated with antagonistic (anti-communal) narcissism, rather than admiring narcissism was a function of antagonistic (i.e., anti-communal), not admiring narcissism. Furthermore, studies conducted within the framework of the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism paradigm expanded those done within the Agency Model. It was found that a game-playing love style (*ludus*) was characteristic of antagonism, while low levels of compassion (*agape*) were associated with both antagonism and narcissistic neuroticism (Lamkin et al., 2015; Weiss et al., 2019).

A more nuanced approach to grandiose narcissism, particularly using the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Conceptualization (NARC model), has yielded more consistent findings, although not without limitations. The key finding from this line of research is that a negative view of others hampers the success of long-term relationships for narcissists, while a positive view of the self may contribute to short-term relationship satisfaction. Campbell referred to this phenomenon as the "Chocolate Cake Model," (Brunell & Campbell, 2011), drawing an analogy between being in a relationship with a narcissist and indulging in sweets - enjoyable in the short term but ultimately unhealthy and detrimental in excess or over time. This pattern was initially tested in the pivotal study introducing the NARC model (Back et al.,

2013), and has since been examined extensively in various contexts (Wurst et al., 2017), with longitudinal confirmation (Rentzsch et al., 2021).

This pattern was initially tested in the pivotal study introducing the NARC model and has since been examined extensively in various contexts, with longitudinal confirmation. However, when interpreting these results through the lens of the CMN, it is important to note that the studies did not fully explore the entire spectrum of narcissism. The distinct effects of admiration and rivalry observed in the research may also be, at least in part, manifestations of vulnerable and communal narcissism. Rivalry encompasses a significant level of vulnerability, as indicated by low self-esteem and neuroticism, among other traits (e.g., Back et al., 2013). According to the spectrum logic of the CMN, the "core" of such traits lies further along the spectrum and is more characteristic of isolation rather than rivalry or enmity. Likewise, some of the positive outcomes associated with admiring narcissism, such as a tendency to express gratitude, likeability, or conciliatory responses to transgressions (Back et al., 2013), likeability, or conciliatory reactions to transgressions (Wurst et al., 2017), could be attributed to communal strategies employed to maintain a grandiose self-image. It is possible that these effects were suppressed by rivalry, assuming that antagonistic and communal strategies to uphold a grandiose self are mutually exclusive (cf. Grosz et al., 2022).

In summary, previous research has consistently shown that positive outcomes in relationships are primarily linked to positive self-views (admiration) rather than positive views of others (communal narcissism). Conversely, negative outcomes in relationships are associated with negative views of others (rivalry) but not necessarily negative self-views (isolation). Therefore, further comprehensive studies are necessary to disentangle these effects and examine them independently. By doing so, a more precise location on the narcissism spectrum can be identified as the "core" of behaviours resulting from self-views and views of others. This

would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between narcissism and functioning in romantic relationships.

2.3 Narcissism, Emotional Functioning, and Romantic Relationship Quality

One of the primary reasons for the categorization of narcissism into various manifestations is the wide range of emotional outcomes associated with this construct. Narcissism has been linked to positive emotionality, well-being (Dufner et al., 2019; Sedikides et al., 2004), a goal-oriented approach and resilience (Sękowski et al., 2023), and mental toughness (Kinrade et al., 2022). However, it has also been associated with self-centeredness, lack of empathy (Sedikides, 2021), and personal vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include contingencies in self-views (Bosson et al., 2008; Geukes et al., 2017; Rhodewalt et al., 2006), which can result in heightened self-monitoring and increased variability in experiencing self-conscious emotions such as hubristic pride and shame (Tracy et al., 2009). Additionally, narcissism has been linked to difficulties in anger regulation, leading to a phenomenon known as "narcissistic rage." (Krizan & Johar, 2015).

Studies investigating the relationship between narcissism and emotions have employed different levels of conceptualizations, ranging from a single construct to the grandiose-vulnerable distinction and the separation of antagonism as a core feature. Therefore, given that the CMN extends the conceptualization of narcissism further, the objectives of this section are twofold: (1) to interpret and explain the findings of previous research on narcissism and emotional functioning, particularly in relation to the experience of hubristic pride, shame, anger, and empathy, using the specific narcissism forms proposed in the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN), and (2) to examine the extent to which these emotional factors are linked to functioning in romantic relationships.

2.3.1 Narcissism, Hubris, Shame, and Anger

The concept that the contingency of self-views contributes to emotional variability, as proposed by Tracy et al. (2009), finds its roots in psychodynamic theory. According to this theory, early experiences of rejection, humiliation, and the imposition of perfectionistic standards by primary attachment figures, such as parents, create a dissociation between explicit and implicit self-esteem. As a result, individuals face challenges in distinguishing their actions from overarching global self-evaluations, leading to a contingent and unstable sense of self. Within this framework, shame emerges as an emotional response to negative global self-evaluation. For narcissists, the regulation of emotions is driven by the pursuit of pride, which serves as the opposite of shame. To maintain some stability in their self-views, narcissists activate a motive of self-enhancement, which is associated with hubris (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). By striving for self-enhancement, narcissists aim to avoid experiencing feelings of shame. However, when narcissists encounter situations that evoke negative feelings of shame, they tend to protect themselves by externalizing these emotions onto others. In response to shame, narcissists redirect their negative emotions outward and display anger towards others (Baumeister et al., 2000; Thomaes et al., 2011).

Examining a comprehensive model of narcissism poses empirical challenges due to the complexity of the psychodynamic "mask" concept, particularly when considering individual differences. Research findings on this topic have been inconsistent (Fatfouta & Schröder-Abé, 2018a, 2018b; Mota et al., 2020), making it necessary to adopt a more structural approach to better understand these effects. The grandiose-vulnerable distinction seems to be particularly valuable in delineating the outcomes of narcissism into more "positive" and "negative" aspects. Tracy et al.'s (2009) theoretical framework aligns more closely with vulnerable narcissism than grandiose narcissism. Grandiose narcissism is associated with greater stability in self-views (Geukes et al., 2017) and the experience of hubristic pride (Czarna, 2014; Rogoza et al., 2018),

while reactive anger tendencies do not appear to be prominent in this subtype (Maciantowicz & Zajenkowski, 2021). Conversely, vulnerable narcissism is linked to feelings of shame (Czarna, 2014; Krizan & Johar, 2015; Schröder-Abé & Fatfouta, 2019) and a tendency towards anger (Czarna et al., 2021; Maciantowicz & Zajenkowski, 2020). Interestingly, within a three-dimensional approach, antagonistic aspects of narcissism, apart from proneness to anger, are associated with both shame (Grove et al., 2018) and hubris (Rogoza et al., 2018). This finding reinforces the central location of antagonism between narcissistic neuroticism and agentic extraversion within the broader narcissism framework (Miller et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2019).

How are those results relevant in the romantic relationship context? Understanding the implications of these findings within the context of romantic relationships is crucial, as the experience and effective communication of emotions play a significant role in predicting relationship quality (e.g., Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Berrios et al., 2015; Impett et al., 2012). Both hubris and shame are self-conscious emotions that are closely tied to how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others or their ideal self. Hubris involves perceiving oneself as strong rather than weak (Oveis et al., 2010), often driven by a desire for status and resulting in downward social comparisons and arrogance (Tracy & Robins, 2007). This mixture of beliefs and emotions is strongly associated with contempt, which is considered one of the most detrimental emotions in close interpersonal relationships (Gottman, 1993; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Schriber et al., 2017). It can be argued that contempt serves as a self-serving mechanism for derogating others (Fischer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016), leading to a distancing of oneself from them, (Martins et al., 2016). Similarly, shame can also lead to withdrawal from social interactions (Haidt, 2003; Schore, 1996; cf. de Hooge et al., 2018), potentially affecting romantic relationships if experienced in that context. Increased loneliness not only diminishes intimacy within romantic relationships but also significantly impacts personal well-being (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). However, it is important to note that there have been relatively

few studies examining the importance of pride/hubris in romantic relationships (Schriber et al., 2017; Tracy & Robins, 2007), so those links are still somewhat speculative.

Unlike shame and pride, there has been extensive research on anger, rage, and their implications within the context of romantic relationships. However, it is important to note that most of these studies have primarily focused on grandiose narcissism, which limits their generalizability to the broader trait of narcissism, particularly considering the distinct outcomes associated with admiration and antagonism (Back et al., 2013; Wurst et al., 2017). Grandiose narcissism is associated with self-regulation through downward comparisons in areas such as sexual (Day et al., 2017) and cognitive abilities (Zajenkowski & Gignac, 2021), which may be linked to contemptuous attitudes toward romantic partners (Schriber et al., 2017). Consequently, individuals high in grandiose narcissism tend to exhibit lower commitment to their relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002). This is evident through beliefs about attractiveness inequality favouring the narcissistic individual (Rohmann et al., 2010), intentions of infidelity (Altınok & Kılıç, 2020; Jonason et al., 2013), and acceptance of behaviours such as ghosting, which involves abruptly ceasing communication without any explanation (Jonason et al., 2021). Such a downward approach to the partner is also associated with more direct maladaptive behaviours, including dominance-based intimate partner violence (Fields, 2012; King, 2012), abuse (Green et al., 2020; Keller et al., 2014; Ponti et al., 2020), and cyber-aggression, such as the non-consensual online distribution of another person's nude photos (Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Qualitative research has revealed an interesting process whereby partners of narcissists report a "vicious cycle" (Day et al., 2022a) wherein narcissists initiate unprovoked attacks, leading to their partners' withdrawal (Day et al., 2022b). This, in turn, reinforces the narcissist's dismissive behaviour, resulting in decreased intimacy and, consequently, lower relationship quality.

2.3.2 Narcissism, Empathy, and Emotional Manipulation

Another crucial aspect of narcissism is its impact on the functioning of others. Individuals with narcissistic traits demonstrate a reluctance, rather than an inability (as emphasized by Hepper et al., 2014), to recognize the thoughts and needs of others, instead prioritizing their own interests. This maladaptive interpersonal interaction style is one of the diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013). The distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism further complicates the understanding of this phenomenon, with grandiose narcissism characterized by an exploitative approach towards others and vulnerable narcissism marked by an overwhelming preoccupation with one's own insecurities. However, when employing comprehensive theories such as the CMN, the complexities surrounding this topic become more evident. Furthermore, empathy itself is a multifaceted construct (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Davis, 1983), leading to ambiguous and imprecise results in studies investigating the relationship between empathy and narcissism. Recent meta-analysis (Simard et al., 2023) has provided valuable insights into these intricate relationships. Within the framework of the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Miller et al., 2016) combined with a four-dimensional model of empathy, Simard et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between narcissism and empathy. The findings of their meta-analysis revealed the following patterns:

(1) Affective empathy, which involves sharing emotional states with others (Singer & Lamm, 2009), exhibited a weak negative correlation with agentic extraversion and a moderate negative correlation with antagonism.

(2) Cognitive empathy, encompassing the ability to understand and recognize the emotions of others (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Decety & Svetlova, 2012) displayed negative associations with narcissistic neuroticism and antagonism.

(3) Empathetic concern, characterized by feelings of sympathy for the misfortunes of others (Davis, 1983; Singer & Klimecki, 2014) exhibited negative associations with all three aspects of narcissism, with the strongest correlation observed with antagonism.

(4) Empathetic distress, defined as a self-oriented aversive response to the suffering of others (Davis, 1983; Decety & Lamm, 2009; Singer & Klimecki, 2014), demonstrated a negative correlation with agentic extraversion and a positive correlation with narcissistic neuroticism.

Looking at those results through the structural lens of the CMN allows for several remarks. Firstly, recognizing that affective empathy and empathetic concern have a stronger focus on others (communal orientation) compared to the other two dimensions helps to explain their stronger correlations with antagonism. This suggests that individuals high in antagonism may struggle more with these empathic processes that are directed towards understanding and sharing the emotions of others. Secondly, in line with the spectrum-based approach of the CMN, it is important to consider the potential complementarity of communal narcissism with the three dimensions studied within the Trifurcated Model. Communal narcissism, characterized by a combination of communal and narcissistic traits, exhibits ambiguous relationships with empathy and prosocial behaviour (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015; Nehrlich et al., 2019). This implies that communal narcissism may have unique dynamics in relation to empathy that differ from the other dimensions of narcissism. Lastly, empathetic distress, which is closely linked to difficulties in emotional regulation, aligns with the assumptions of the CMN. It was found to be related to two aspects of narcissism that represent opposite patterns of intrapersonal emotional regulation, namely admiration and isolation. Further, there was no significant association observed between empathetic distress and the more interpersonal-oriented aspect of narcissism, namely antagonism.

Finally, narcissism was consistently linked with an instrumental approach to others, which is also recognized as a diagnostic criterion for NPD in DSM-5 (APA, 2013). This aspect is also incorporated in contemporary theories of narcissistic personality, particularly as part of the antagonism dimension (Back et al., 2013; Crowe et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, antagonism plays a significant role in the decline of relationship quality among narcissists (Lavner et al., 2016; Wurst et al., 2017). However, taking a broader perspective on the various ways in which individuals maintain a grandiose self, as proposed by the Agency-Communion model of narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012; Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018), allows for a somewhat less negative understanding of narcissism, even within the context of romantic relationships. Specifically, an overtly manipulative and exploitative approach to others may be inconsistent with the overarching goal of communal narcissists, who seek recognition for their exceptional communal qualities. As communal narcissism is an agentic trait realized in communal domain (Gebauer et al., 2012), others might still be viewed as means to achieve narcissistic goals. The manipulation needs to be more subtle, however. One potential avenue for manipulation is through the control of others' emotions, particularly in the highly communal and intimate context of romantic relationships. Moral emotions such as guilt, embarrassment, or gratitude may be targeted. Unfortunately, research on narcissism and emotional manipulateness is limited. Existing ones, nevertheless, indicate that narcissists tend to influence emotions of other's for their own ends (Casale et al., 2019), inducing jealousy (Tortoriello et al., 2017), fostering doubts (i.e., gaslighting (Miano et al., 2021), or eliciting guilt and sympathy (Green et al., 2020).

3. Current Research

The present dissertation addresses several research questions that stem from the gaps in the existing literature and the limitations of previous studies, employing the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (CMN) as a theoretical framework. The overall objective of this research project is to investigate the predictions derived from the CMN within the context of romantic relationships. While there is substantial knowledge regarding the influence of narcissism on the formation and maintenance of intimate relationships, two issues received comparatively little attention in this context: *the role of communal forms of narcissism, especially its distinctiveness from admiration* (Rogoza et al., 2023), and the *distinctiveness of avoidant and antagonistic self-protection-based forms (i.e., isolation and antagonism)*, in line with the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Miller et al., 2016). Those two issues are the main novelty of the project and main focus in the interpretation of the results.

According to the CMN, communal narcissism represents an adaptive and socially desirable manifestation of narcissism, characterized by a focus on personal agency while avoiding the negative social consequences associated with low communion (as illustrated in Figure 5). On the other hand, isolation and antagonism represent the most maladaptive expressions of narcissism, both intrapersonally and socially. In other words, the CMN proposes that employing communal strategies to maintain the grandiose self can lead to positive outcomes for both narcissists and their close social environment, while employing vulnerable ones can lead to negative outcomes. To examine this prediction, a more detailed investigation is required, which is outlined below. The research project is guided by three specific objectives that aim to shed light on the communal and vulnerable forms of narcissism within romantic relationships. These objectives encompass:

1. Examining the different associations between narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality

2. Examining the diverse mechanisms linking narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality
3. Examining the diverse emotional functioning linking narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality

Diverse Associations Between Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of different forms of narcissism in interpersonal context. Specifically, I propose that relationship between narcissism and quality of romantic relationships is diverse, depending on narcissism form – the least problematic, or even positive for sanctity and saviourism and negative for isolation and antagonism (Figure 8). In other words, using the CMN framework, I expected those relationships to be decreasing in strength, getting gradually less negative along the narcissism spectrum, beginning from the vulnerable forms. Analysing all five forms of narcissism allows me to examine whether communal narcissism is indeed related to better functioning in relationships than admiration, and whether isolation and antagonism are differently related to RR quality. I tested those general predictions in correlational Study 1.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that self-reported assessments of relationship quality and narcissism may be subject to biases, such as the self-serving "saint" characterizing communal narcissism forms and self-aggrandizing bias characterizing isolation. While of relationship quality can assessed objectively, capturing its subjective component, namely romantic relationship satisfaction, remains vital even with potential biases in mind. Moreover, self-enhancement may have uncertain implications for others' well-being (Dufner et al., 2019). Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of narcissism in individuals' romantic relationships, it is imperative to adopt a dyadic perspective, which is a focus of Study 2. Specifically, I focused on actor-partner interrelations to test two crucial issues. First, to check

whether narcissism, and which form of it, explains only actor's or both partners' ratings of the relationship. Second, if the RR quality depends not on narcissism level itself, but to the similarity between partners. In other words, whether differences between partners' narcissism predict RR quality of both.

Furthermore, to obtain comprehensive view on the studied phenomena, it is crucial to examine the dynamics between those. Antagonism has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the decline in relationship quality while admiration was not (Wurst et al., 2017). Utilizing the CMN framework, one could identify two possible gaps. First, it becomes crucial to explore communal narcissism forms, particularly its self-enhancement form of sanctity, located in opposition to antagonism (see Figure 8). Second, given that rivalry taps only antagonistic self-protection, it is essential to examine whether avoidant self-protection, such as isolation, is linked to romantic relationship in a dynamic way quality as well. All those issues were addressed in a longitudinal Study 3.

Diverse Mechanisms Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality

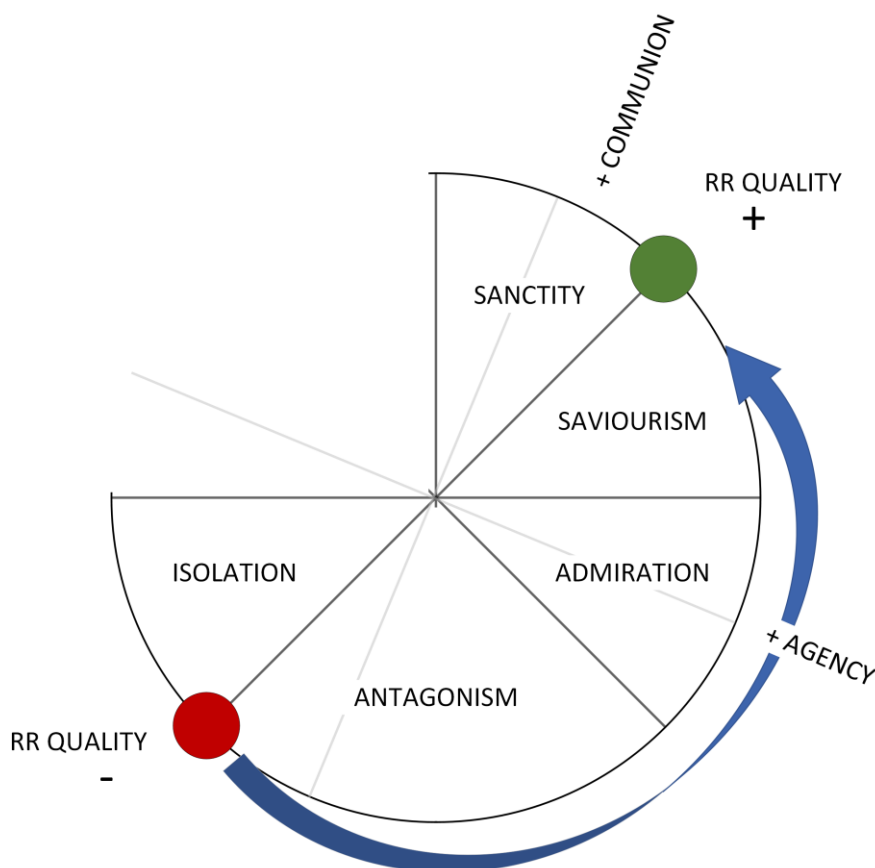
The second objective of this project concern the implications of the spectrum assumption of the CMN, which encompasses both agency and communion, on social functioning, particularly within the context of romantic relationships. I hypothesized that the importance of agentic and communal qualities in explaining romantic relationship quality would vary depending on where a particular narcissistic is located within the narcissism spectrum. In other words, I expected that agentic qualities would be more influential in explaining relationship quality for agency-based narcissism forms like isolation, admiration, and saviourism, while communal qualities would play a larger role in understanding romantic relationship quality for communion-based narcissism strategies such as antagonism, sanctity, and saviourism. Such a distinction is essential to infer about two main novelties in the context

of romantic relationships – the distinctive role of communal narcissism and the difference between antagonism and isolation (see agency and communion dimensions in Figure 8).

To test those hypotheses, I chose to use two prototype constructs, representing agency and communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Wojciszke et al., 2011): self-esteem (Study 4) and other-oriented empathy (i.e., empathetic concern; Study 5) as potential mediators of the association between narcissism and romantic relationship quality. I expected self-esteem to play a larger role in romantic relationships for isolation, admiration, and saviourism. Conversely, I expected empathy to play a larger role in romantic relationships for antagonism, saviourism, and sanctity.

Figure 8

Hypothesized Location of Romantic Relationship Quality on Examined Part of Narcissism Spectrum, Used To Form Specific Hypotheses



Note. Circles represent location on the spectrum with highest expected (positive or negative) correlation

Diverse Emotional Functioning Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality

The third main goal of the project was to examine whether narcissism forms are differently related to emotional functioning, and whether this relationship could explain individual's RR quality. In the CMN framework narcissism spectrum aligns with the foundational personality traits, similar to the assumptions of Trifurcated Model of Narcissism. Therefore, specific narcissism forms are differently linked to characteristics related to those traits, namely neuroticism (isolation), agreeableness (antagonism), and extraversion (admiration). Given that the CMN is somewhat the extension of TMN, I hypothesized that communal narcissism forms would functionally oppose isolation and antagonism. In other words, I expected narcissism forms related to neuroticism (isolation, admiration, saviourism) to be differently linked to emotional regulation. On the same note, I expected narcissism form related to agreeableness (antagonism, sanctity) to be functionally opposite in terms of the approach to others. The aim of Studies 6 and 7 was to test whether those differences predict RR quality.

To test those hypotheses, I focused on emotional dysregulation as an indicator of neuroticism-based outcomes and emotional manipulation as an agreeableness-based outcome. In Study 6, I investigated the relevance of emotional dysregulation in explaining the associations between isolation (and its opposite, saviourism) and narcissism. Additionally, I explored emotional manipulation as a primary mediator between antagonism and romantic relationship quality. While I anticipated that emotional manipulation would mainly be linked to antagonism, I also predicted that it would be associated with all narcissism forms. Furthermore, recognizing the role of specific emotions such as pride, shame, and anger, I examined the interplay between narcissism forms and emotional functioning within an observable and dyadic context—during conversations (Study 7).

In Table 1, I provide an overview of the basic questions of the project and studies in which they were verified. In all studies, Detailed hypotheses for each study are provided within the respective study descriptions.

Table 1

Summary of Research Problems In the Project and Overview of the Studies

Study	Specific problem
Problem 1	
Diverse Associations Between Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality	
Study 1	The relationship between narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality
Study 2	The interdependence between narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality of both partners
Study 3	Narcissism forms as predictors of romantic relationship quality change over time
Problem 2	
Diverse Mechanisms Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality	
Study 4	The role of self-esteem in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality
Study 5	The role of empathy in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality
Problem 3	
Diverse Emotional Functioning Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality	
Study 6	The role of emotional functioning in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality
Study 7	The role of emotional communication in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality

3.0 Methods Overview

In this section, I report both methodology and results of all studies I conducted to examine hypotheses stated above. I divided the analyses into seven studies, each testing the hypotheses relevant to one research question. Most of the studies were based on different samples, some were utilizing multiple of them, however (see Table 1 for details).

3.0.1 Studied Samples and Procedure

The thesis is based on seven samples pooled from diverse populations – a General Polish one, students, or an early adult population in Poland (18-40 years old). Three ways of collecting data were exercised: an online collection of representative samples via the Ariadna Research Panel, online collection of convenience samples, or a paper-pencil collection of student data. Sample composition and characteristics are detailed in Table 3. In online samples, informed consent was collected with a tick box, with which respondents agreed with the terms of the study. In paper-pencil samples, all respondents were given verbal and written information about the study, and signed consent was collected before the beginning of the study. In all studies, participants were informed about their anonymity and the possibility of resigning from the study at any time without any consequences. Remuneration for participants varied across samples. In online panel ones participants gathered points, which they could later exchange for material rewards (see www.panelariadna.pl for details). Participants of online convenience samples were not remunerated. Students were rewarded with extra credits in their courses. The collection of dyadic data, as more complex, was remunerated monetarily. Dyads who took part in the survey (sample 3) participated in the lottery in which 19 bookstore gift cards (50 PLN) were given. Dyads who took part in the laboratory study (sample 8) were all given 100 PLN (50 PLN for each partner) in a bookstore or electronic store gift cards. I report details of each study's procedure accordingly below.

Ensuring data quality

Given that several samples (1, 5, and 7) were collected online and participants were remunerated, two exclusion criteria were selected to ensure data quality (Wood et al., 2017): (1) overall survey finish time; people who either finished too quickly (less than 2 seconds per item) or too long (longer than 3SDs) were excluded, and (2) attentive responding; people who incorrectly answered on more than one attention-check item (e.g., "This item aims to check your attention during the survey. Please mark 4 on the response scale") were excluded. Three attention-check items were in placed randomly in each measurement.

3.0.2 The Assessment of Studied Constructs

Below I report all the measures that were used throughout the project. All used instruments were validated in previous studies, cited accordingly. Reliability coefficients of all measurements at least adequate ($\alpha > .75$). Reliability of single-item measure of romantic relationship satisfaction could not be measured directly but it was previously established using test-retest method (Atroszko et al., 2017).

Romantic relationship quality was measured using several methods.

The Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (NRI-BSV; (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009) was used in most samples. It is a 24-item instrument in which participants were asked to rate the frequency of different behaviours in their relationship, using a scale ranging from 1 = "little or none" to 7 = "the most". It has a hierarchical factorial structure, with five factors loading a second-order factor of Support (indicating a frequency of supportive behaviours in the relationship, e.g., *When you are feeling down or upset, how often do you depend on this person to cheer things up?*) and three factors loading a second-order factor of Conflict (indicating a frequency of conflicting behaviours in the relationship, e.g., *How often do you and this person point out each others' faults or put each other down?*). Given

the high correlations between first-order factors and the rather general nature of the hypotheses, I used those two general factors as overall indicators of romantic relationship quality.

Second, I used Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000) as a more self-reported measure of romantic relationship quality. In contrast to NRI-BSV, in PRQC, respondents are asked to rate their relationship more evaluatively, declaring its characteristics (e.g., *How intimate is your relationship?*) more than actual behaviours. It is an 18-item tool with a response scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *completely*, with six highly correlated factors (Fletcher et al., 2000). Similar to NRI-BSV, I only used the general score in hypotheses testing, indicating overall relationship quality.

Third, I used a high face validity single-item measure (Atroszko et al., 2017) to examine respondents' satisfaction with their relationship (*How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?*) It is based on WHO QOL BREF (Skevington et al., 2004) and uses a 9-point response scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *completely*.

Narcissism was treated as a spectrum of forms and measured with several instruments. A 6-point response scale, ranging from 1 = *definitely disagree* to 6 = *definitely agree*, was used in all instruments concerning this trait.

Sanctity was measured with a 5-item Sanctity subscale (e.g., *I can understand everyone in every situation*) of the Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Questionnaire (NSSQ; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2023).

Saviourism was measured with a 5-item Saviourism subscale (e.g., *When it comes to doing something for other people, I'm better and more effective than anyone else*) of the Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Questionnaire (NSSQ; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2023).

Admiration narcissism was measured with a 9-item Admiration subscale (e.g., *I deserve to be seen as a great personality*) of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (Back et al., 2013).

Antagonism was measured with a 9-item Rivalry subscale (e.g., *I react annoyed if another person steals the show from me*) of the Admiration and Rivalry Scale (Back et al., 2013), and a 12-item Enmity subscale (e.g., *When I'm in a group, other people purposely try to insult me*) of the Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (Rogoza et al., 2022). Although they are included in separate scales, they concern the same phenomenon (antagonism) and are highly overlapping conceptually and empirically.

Isolation was measured with a 12-item Isolation subscale (e.g., *Usually I'm quiet because I do not want to expose myself to ridicule*) of the Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (Rogoza et al., 2012).

Self-esteem was measured using two instruments. First, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was used. It is a 10-item tool that measures overall self-evaluation (e.g., *I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others*) using a 5-point response scale ranging from 0 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*. Second, a single-item measure (Atroszko et al., 2017) with high face validity (*How satisfied are you with yourself?*) was used. It is based on WHO QOL BREF (Skevington et al., 2004) and uses a 9-point response scale ranging from 1 = *definitely no* to 9 = *definitely yes*.

Empathy was measured with Empathic Sensitiveness Scale (Każmierczak et al., 2009), which is a 27-item tool grasping three distinct aspects of empathy: Empathetic Concern (12 items, e.g., *I am often quite touched by things that I see happen*), Perspective Taking (8 items, e.g., *Before I ask for something/deny something to somebody, I try to foresee their reaction*), and Personal Distress (7 items, e.g., *In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease*), separating other-oriented empathy from self-oriented empathy and emotional empathy from cognitive one. Respondents were asked to rate each item using a 5-point response scale, ranging from 1 = *completely disagree* to 5 = *completely agree*.

Negative beliefs about emotions were measured using Beliefs about Emotions Scale (BES; Rimes & Chalder, 2010), a 9-item (e.g., *If I lose control of my emotions in front of others, they will think less of me*) instrument in which respondents were asked to rate each item using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*.

Emotional dysregulation was measured with Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), in its shortened, 18-item (e.g., *When I'm upset, I have difficulty focusing on other things*) version (Victor & Klonsky, 2016). The instrument measures six dimensions of emotional dysregulation utilizing a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*.

Emotional Manipulation was measured with Emotional Manipulation Scale (Hyde & Grieve, 2014), a 10-item (e.g., *How often do you try to make another person feel uneasy?*) instrument in which respondents were asked to rate each item using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *never* to 7 = *every day*.

Communication of emotions was measured in a laboratory observation of dyads in two recorded scenarios, always conducted in the same order. First, in a 15-minute “conflict discussion” (Gottman & Notarius, 2000), partners discussed ways to overcome problems specific to their relationship (which they listed in a survey before the laboratory session). Second, in a 5-minute “love discussion” (Graber et al., 2011), they were asked to present why they value each other and what they rate as the most important traits of their partners – in the form of a short monologue. Communication of emotions of both partners was measured using SPAFF (Specific Affect Coding System; Coan & Gottman, 2008), in which two trained coders grouped all emotional reactions during the laboratory session into one of 16 categories, which were then grouped into second-order factors of “positive” and “negative” emotional communicates.

Table 2*Overview of the Examined Constructs and Hypotheses For Each Study*

Correlate	Narcissism Form				
	Sanctity	Saviourism	Admiration	Antagonism	Isolation
Study 1 The relationship between narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality					
RR Satisfaction	+	0/+	0/-	--	--
Supportive behaviours	+	0/+	0/-	--	--
Negative behaviours	-	0/-	0/+	++	++
Study 2 The interdependence between narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality of both partners					
Partner's evaluation of supportive behaviours	+	0/+	0/-	--	--
Partner's evaluation of negative behaviours	-	0/-	0/+	++	++
Study 3 Narcissism forms as predictors of romantic relationship quality change over time					
Supportive behaviours - lagged	+	0/+	0/-	-	-
Negative behaviours - lagged	-	0/-	0/+	+	+
Study 4 The role of self-esteem in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality					
Self-esteem	0/+	++	++	0/-	--
RR quality via self-esteem	0/+	+	+	0/-	-
Study 5 The role of empathy in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality					
Empathetic concern	++	+	0	--	-
RR quality via empathetic concern	+	0/+	0	-	0/-
Perspective taking	+	+	0	-	--
RR quality via perspective taking	0/+	0/+	0/-	-	-
Personal distress	-	--	--	+	++
RR quality via personal distress	0/+	+	+	0/-	--
Study 6 The role of emotional functioning in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality					
Unacceptability of emotions	-	0/-	+	+	+
RR quality via unacceptability of emotions	0/+	0/+	0/-	-	-
Emotional dysregulation	-	0/-	0/-	+	++
RR quality via emotional dysregulation	0/+	0/+	0/-	-	--
Emotional manipulateness	0/-	0/+	+	++	+
RR quality via emotional manipulateness	0/+	0/-	0/-	--	-
Study 7 The role of emotional communication in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality					
Positive emotions during interaction with partner	+	0/+	0/-	-	--
Negative emotions during interaction with partner	-	0/-	+	++	+

3.0.3 General Analytical Strategy

In all studies, I used two approaches to analyse the data, which enabled me to infer on the examined variables on different levels. First, in all studies, I tested the hypotheses on the most basic, zero-order, correlational level. With that, I tested the observed, overall links between different aspects of narcissism and different tested outcomes. That level of analysis was a basis for falsifying/confirming hypotheses. Second, acknowledging possible limitations of inferring on correlated variables separately (as in zero-order), I used a more person-centred method - a latent profile analysis (LPA) - to explore observable patterns of co-occurring tendencies to use particular narcissism strategies. In that way, I could estimate potential “types” of narcissists and check whether that distinction is useful in predicting romantic relationship quality

Table 3

Overview of the Studied Samples

Sample	RRQ measures	Additional measures	Additional information	Source of the data	<i>N</i>
1	NRI-BSV, PRQC, 1-item RRS	ESQ, SES	2 waves weekly separated	Online (Ariadna)	447
2	NRI-BSV, 1-item RRS		Dyadic data; partner-ratings	University students	417
3	NRI-BSV		Dyadic data	Snowballed	200
4	PRQC, 1-item RRS		2 waves separated by 2 weeks	Online: -Facebook, -Sona	861
5	NRI-BSV, 1-item RRS		Longitudinal, 4 waves with a 3-month lag	Online (Ariadna)	1178
6	NRI-BSV,		Laboratory; Dyadic data; partner-ratings	Paper-pencil	100
7	PRQC, 1-item RRS	BES, DERS, EMS		Online (Ariadna)	1069

Notes. NRI-BSV = Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version; PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components Scale; 1-item RRS = Single Item Romantic Relationship Satisfaction; ESQ = Empathetic Sensitivity Questionnaire; SES = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; BES = Beliefs about Emotions Scale; DERS = Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale; EMS = Emotional Manipulation Scale

3.1 Study 1 – The Relationship Between Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship

Quality

I started my inquiry with the fundamental question – if there are multiple narcissism forms, then are those differently linked to RR quality? The findings of this study served as a foundational basis for the subsequent investigations discussed later, which can be seen as follow-up studies to this initial one. As mentioned earlier, the premise of this study was that narcissism forms rooted in agentic self-protection, such as isolation and antagonism, would exhibit robust and negative connections with RR quality. In contrast, the relationships between more adaptive narcissism forms, namely admiration, saviourism, and sanctity, and RR quality were perceived to be less clear-cut, leading to more tentative expectations. Communal narcissism forms revolve around enhancing the grandiose self with successful relationships with others. Thus, I expected that both are related to RR quality positively. I did not form any specific predictions concerning admiration and saviourism, as more agentic-oriented, and placed in the middle of the spectrum.

H1.1: Sanctity is positively related to RR quality.

H1.2: Antagonism is negatively related to RR quality.

H1.3: Isolation is negatively related to RR quality.

EQ1.1: Are admiration and saviourism related to RR quality?

3.1.1 Method

3.1.1.1 Samples and Procedure

In Study 1, data from all seven samples were utilized. A comprehensive overview of the sample characteristics and procedures can be found in Table 1 of the Method Section. It is worth noting that the samples exhibited diversity in terms of population and data collection procedures. Particularly, Samples 3, 4, and 6 stood out from the rest as they were obtained from student populations. Furthermore, Samples 2, 3, and 6 were based on dyadic data, which

has the potential to reduce the variability in both narcissism and RR (relationship quality) indicators

3.1.1.2 Instruments

Please refer to the "Methods Overview" section for further details on the specific items and scoring methods of each instrument. The measurement of narcissism involved the use of multiple scales. Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Scale (to assess communal narcissism forms), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess enmity and isolation). The quality of romantic relationships was evaluated using three different instruments. The Network of Relationships Inventory - Behavioral Systems Version was employed to measure supportive and negative behaviours within the relationship. The Perceived Relationship Quality Components scale was used to assess overall satisfaction with the relationship. Additionally, a single-item measure of romantic relationship satisfaction was also utilized.

3.1.1.3 Analytical strategy

I followed the general analytical strategy described above. Firstly, I conducted bivariate tests to examine the associations between each form of narcissism and romantic relationship (RR) quality within each individual sample. I then summarized these relationships across all samples using meta-analysis techniques to provide an overall understanding. Next, I combined all the samples to create one general sample. By treating them as a unified dataset, I was able to establish latent profiles of narcissism. This approach allowed me to identify distinct groups based on observable indicators of narcissism, providing a more person-centred perspective. Finally, I examined the differences between the identified latent profiles in terms of RR quality indicators. This analysis aimed to explore how the various profiles of narcissism were

associated with different aspects of RR quality, giving me insights into the specific dynamics within each profile.

Regarding the meta-analyses, I made the assumption that all the samples in my study represented a single population, specifically Polish individuals in romantic relationships. Therefore, in order to test my hypotheses, I utilized fixed estimations of the meta-analytical effects. To establish these effects, I relied on Pearson's correlation coefficients. For the calculations, I utilized the "metafor" package in R (Viechtbauer, 2010). In all of my analyses, I set the significance threshold at $\alpha = .05$, which corresponds to a 95% confidence interval. To assess the heterogeneity of effects across the different samples, I employed three statistics. Firstly, Cochran's Q was used, which measures the difference between the observed effects and the estimate of the fixed-effect model. This statistic provides an indication of the standard deviation of the sample effects around the general effect. Secondly, I employed I^2 (Higgins & Thompson, 2002), which expresses the percentage of variability that is not attributable to sampling error. It helps to gauge the extent of heterogeneity across the samples. Lastly, I utilized τ^2 with REML estimator (Restricted Maximum-Likelihood; see Veroniki et al., 2016), which is the estimate of the variance of underlying distribution of possible effect sizes.

To establish the narcissism profiles, I relied on a larger database, which included individuals both in and out of romantic relationships. My goal was to identify the most robust narcissism profiles rather than focusing solely on individuals in romantic relationships. Therefore, I utilized the complete database, encompassing individuals regardless of their relationship status. Given that I had five different forms of narcissism, I conducted an exploratory analysis to establish the most appropriate number of profiles. I created twelve models, each varying in the number of profiles (ranging from 1 to 6) and the distribution of narcissism across these profiles (including equal vs. varying variances and equal vs. varying covariances). Then, I compared the fit of models to the data. To determine the optimal number

of profiles, I employed the analytic hierarchy process proposed by Akogul and Erisoglu (2017) and utilized multiple information criteria such as AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion). These criteria played a crucial role in selecting the most suitable model that provided the best fit to the data. I utilized “mclust” (Fraley et al., 2012) and “tidyLPA” (Rosenberg et al., 2019) R packages for all estimations. Finally, I visualized and compared the profiles using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in “ggstatsplot” package (Patil, 2021).

3.1.2 Results and Discussion

3.1.2.1 Meta-analyses of zero-order effects

The results of the meta-analyses clearly indicate that the relationship between the studied narcissism strategies and romantic relationship (RR) quality indicators varies. Specifically, sanctity and saviourism were positively associated with positive behaviours in romantic relationships (Figure 9), but not with negative behaviours (Figure 10). Admiration, on the other hand, did not show significant associations with most RR indicators, except for RR satisfaction (Figures 11 and 12). Lastly, the more vulnerable strategies of isolation and antagonism were consistently linked to lower RR quality.

It is important to note three additional findings. Firstly, sanctity, saviourism, and admiration exhibited slightly higher between-sample variance, suggesting that their effects were less robust compared to the other two strategies. Secondly, while the meta-analytical coefficients varied across the different narcissism strategies, the differences between the strategies were relatively small. The effects of sanctity were not significantly different from those of saviourism, and the effects of antagonism and isolation were very similar. Lastly, there was observed cross-sample variability in the effects, with smaller samples (Samples 2, 4, and 6) showing visible differences compared to larger samples. This indicates the possibility of a

sample-related moderating factor, which warrants further investigation in future research or through secondary analysis of the data.

The findings of the study partially support the predictions regarding the associations between different forms of narcissism and RR quality. The communal self-enhancement-based form of narcissism, sanctity, was positively related to higher satisfaction in romantic relationships and greater self-reported positive behaviours, supporting Hypothesis 1.1. However, there was no significant effect observed for negative behaviours. Both antagonism and isolation exhibited robust and negative associations with romantic relationship quality across all aspects, confirming Hypotheses 1.2 and 1.3. Interestingly, the effects of antagonism and isolation were not significantly different. In response to Exploratory Question 1.1, admiration and saviourism showed some positive associations with romantic relationship quality, but for admiration the link was significant only in terms of satisfaction with the relationship, not declared behaviours. Overall, the results align with the spectrum assumption of the CMN; although neighbouring forms of narcissism did not differ substantially in terms of romantic relationship quality, there was a specific pattern where isolation exhibited the worst functioning and sanctity exhibited the best functioning.

In response to the exploratory question (Exploratory Question 1.1), it was found that admiration and saviourism showed some positive associations with RR quality. However, the link between admiration and RR quality was significant only in terms of satisfaction with the relationship, not in terms of declared behaviours.

Overall, the results align with the spectrum assumption of the CMN; although neighbouring forms of narcissism did not differ substantially in terms of romantic relationship quality, there was a specific pattern where isolation exhibited the worst functioning and sanctity exhibited the best functioning.

Figure 9

Association Between Positive Behaviours in Romantic Relationship and Narcissism Forms – Meta-analysis

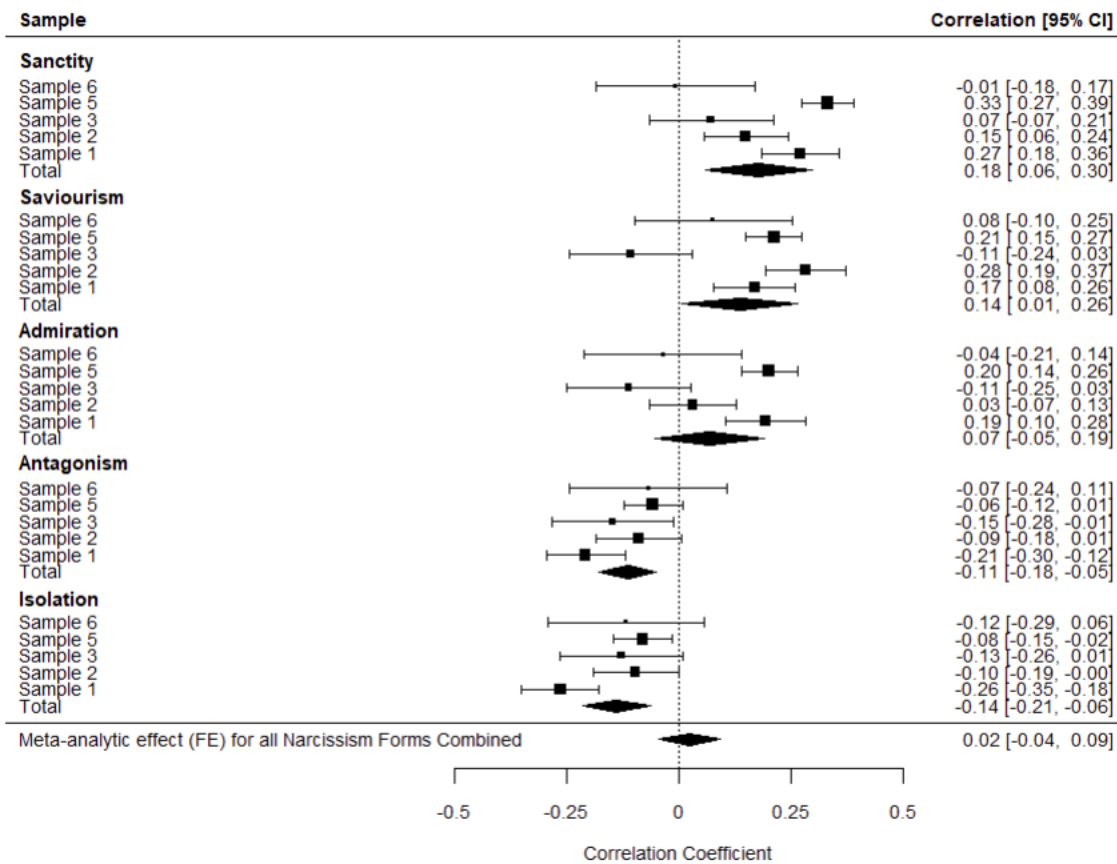


Figure 10

Association Between Negative Behaviours in Romantic Relationship and Narcissism Forms – Meta-analysis

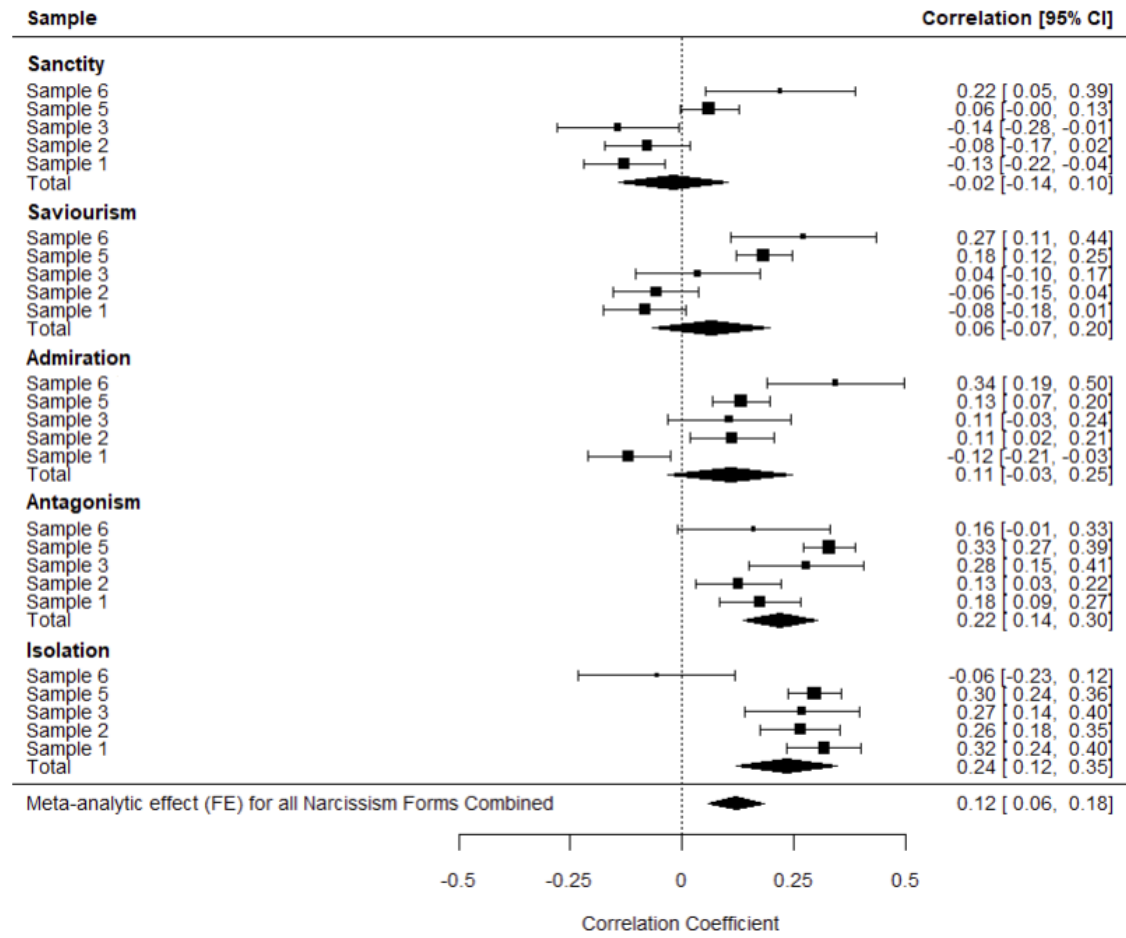


Figure 11

Association Between Satisfaction with Romantic Relationship (Single Item) and Narcissism Forms – Meta-analysis

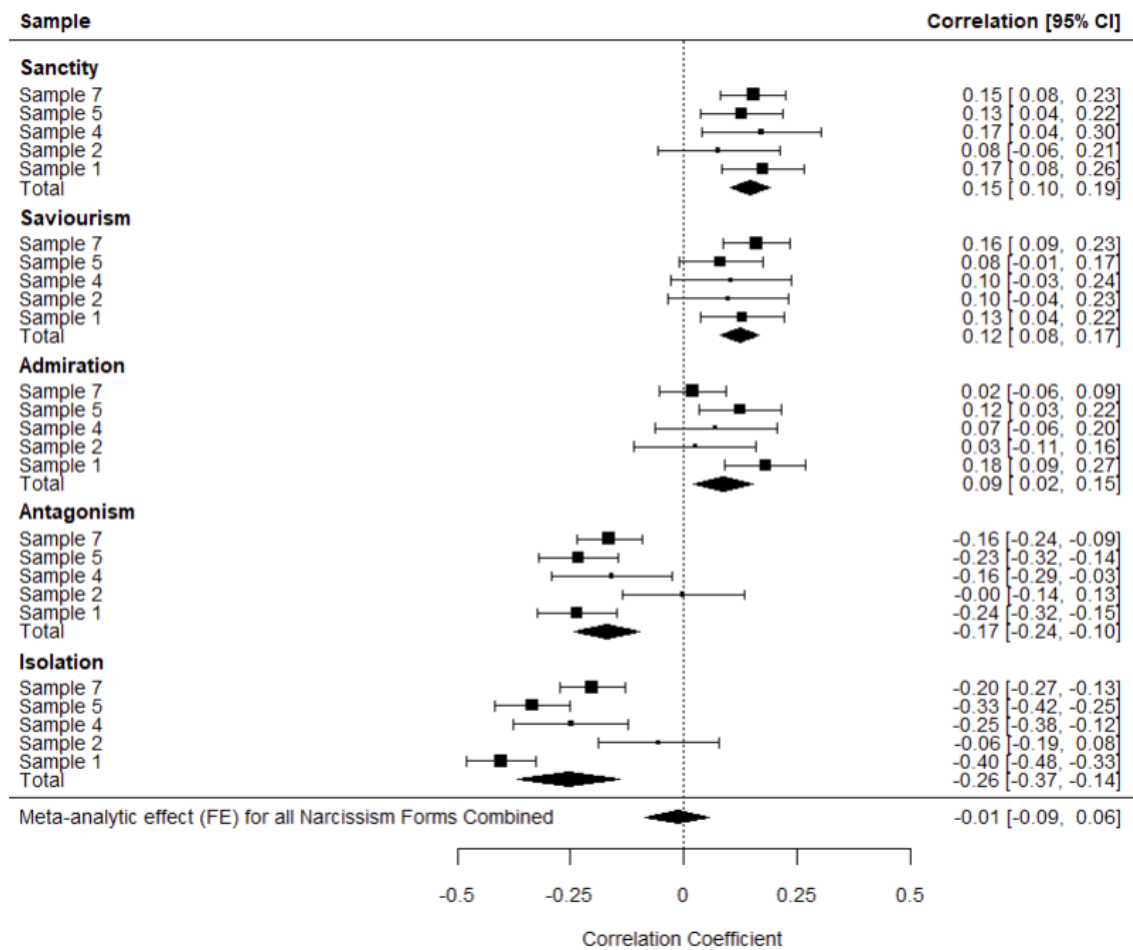
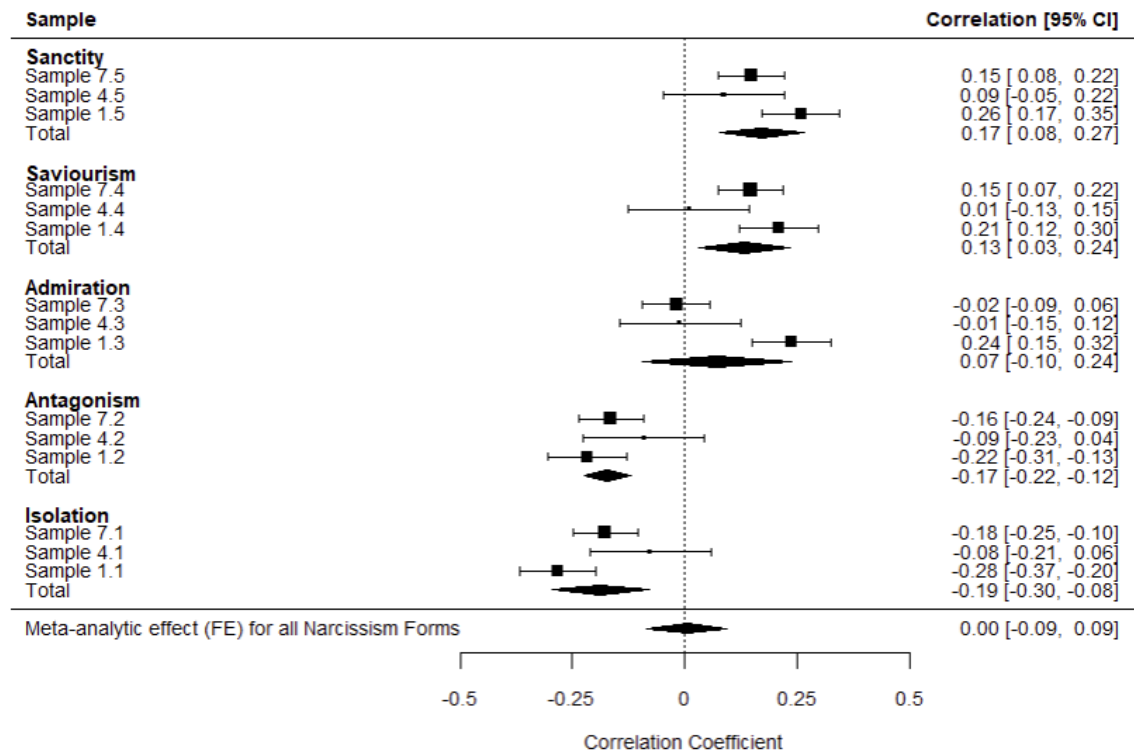


Figure 12

Association Between Satisfaction with Romantic Relationship (Components) and Narcissism Forms – Meta-analysis



3.1.2.2 Narcissism Profiles Comparison

Latent narcissism profiles were estimated using pooled data from all databases except 3 (only grandiose narcissism was measured there), which resulted in a total sample size of $N = 4297$. I exploratorily estimated 12 models with different numbers of profiles (1-6) and different relations between narcissism forms within those profiles – equal or varying variances and covariances. Given multiple possible information criteria on the model, I relied on the analytic hierarchy process proposed by Akogul & Erisoglu (2017), which showed that best fitted was the 5-class model with variances and covariances varying across them (Table 4).

Table 4*Estimation of Narcissism Profiles – Models' Fit Information Criteria*

Model	Classes	AIC	BIC	KIC	AWE	CLC
E	1	50727.90	50853.95	50750.90	51078.00	50689.90
E	2	50581.16	50745.02	50610.16	51037.59	50530.45
E	3	50205.30	50406.98	50240.30	50767.28	50142.68
E	4	49980.08	50219.57	50021.08	50647.69	49905.45
E	5	49794.35	50071.66	49841.35	50567.57	49707.74
E	6	49734.62	50049.75	49787.62	50613.50	49636.00
V	1	50727.90	50853.95	50750.90	51078.00	50689.90
V	2	49317.12	49575.53	49361.12	50037.40	49236.65
V	3	48770.66	49161.42	48835.66	49860.75	48648.08
V	4	48391.27	48914.38	48477.27	49851.27	48226.49
V	5	48135.75	48791.21	48242.75	49965.46	47928.96
V	6	Error in estimation				

Note. E = model with equal variances and covariances across profiles. V = model with varying variances and covariances across profiles. Fit of the chosen model is bolded

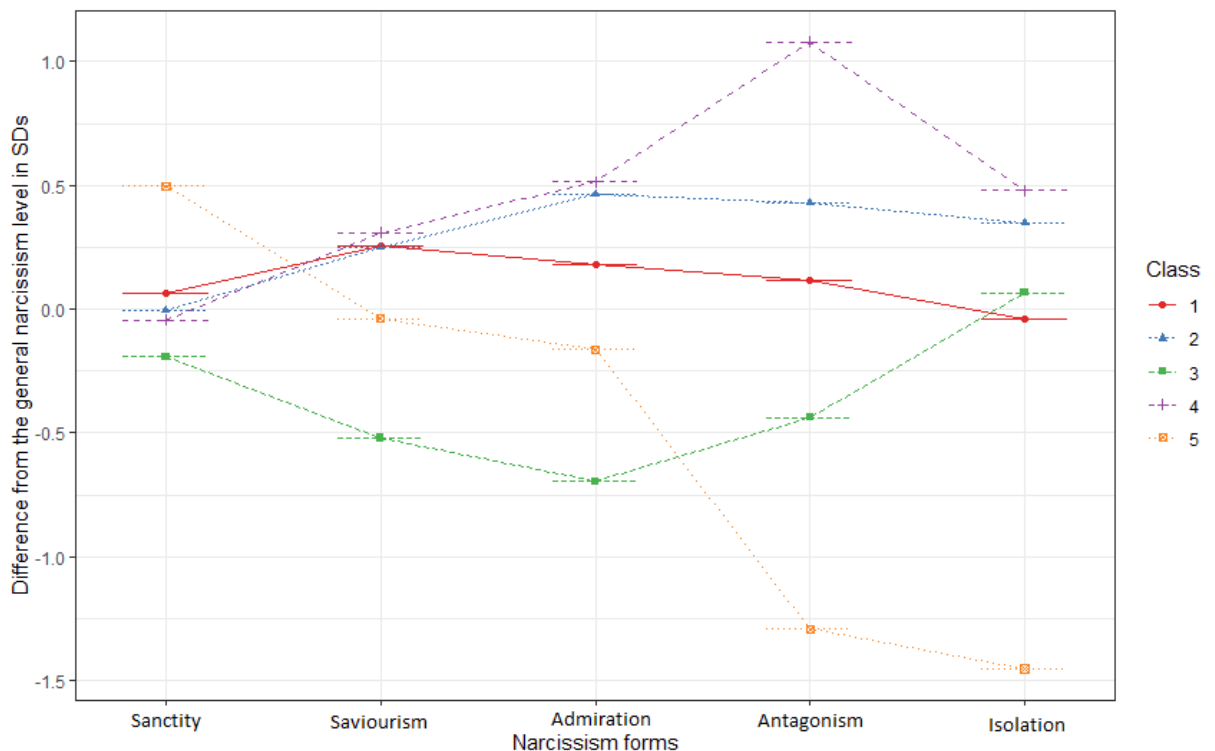
The profiles identified in the analysis exhibited differences in narcissism levels, with the exception of sanctity, which was higher only in one of the profiles. For clarity in further studies and analyses, I assigned names to each profile based on a visual inspection of the plot (Figure 13 I named Profile 1 as "Average" because the narcissism levels in this profile were closest to the overall sample average (which refers to an average score across the entire sample). Individuals assigned to Profile 2 displayed relatively higher levels in all forms of narcissism, except for the communal ones (sanctity and saviourism). As a result, I labeled it as "Agentic." Profile 3 represented individuals with relatively low scores on three forms of narcissism, and the average scores in this profile did not exceed the overall sample average for any of the forms. Therefore, I named it "Low." Profile 4 stood out with noticeably elevated levels of antagonism, leading me to label it as "Antagonistic." In this profile, individuals demonstrated a strong inclination towards antagonistic behaviours. Lastly, Profile 5 was named "Communal" because it was the only profile characterized by heightened sanctity. However, it is worth noting that one could also argue that this profile represents individuals who are non-narcissistic but exhibit

high levels of communion, considering their average scores on the self-protection-based form of communal narcissism, saviourism.

There are at least four insights that can be made on the basis of the results. First, there is no specific profile representing isolation – the highest scores of that form were observed in antagonistic profile. Second, latent profile analysis did not differentiate saviourism and admiration well – in all profiles their levels were somewhat similar and there is no profile in which any of those substantially differ from the other. Third, a distinctive profile of antagonistic narcissism coincided with moderately heightened levels of admiration and isolation. Fourth, communal profile strongly differentiates between sanctity and both narcissism forms which are opposite in the circumplex – antagonism and isolation.

Figure 13

Standardized Levels of Narcissism Forms Across Estimated Profiles



Note. Based on the results shown above I named the profiles. 1 = Average narcissism; 2 = Agentic narcissism; 3 = Low narcissism; 4 = Antagonistic narcissism; 5 = Communal narcissism

The relative nature of the profiles is worth noting – they were all created based on standardized scores, which means that average level of a given variable is the reference.

Therefore, scores presented above are not manifested. For example, people assigned to antagonistic profile are not necessary actually antagonistic. They are simply more antagonistic than others. Measurement that I used utilized the same response scale, yet direct comparisons would be unjustified, given that these are different constructs with different items. For clarity in understanding both perspectives, I report the descriptive statistics of *observed* scores in all narcissistic forms across profiles in Table 5.

Table 5*Descriptive Statistics of Narcissism Forms Across Profiles*

Narcissism profile	<i>n</i>	Sanctity		Saviourism		Admiration		Antagonism		Isolation	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Low	1250 (29%)	3.55	0.92	2.78	0.83	2.28	0.79	2.17	0.56	3.28	1.08
Average	1100 (26%)	3.82	0.46	3.63	0.46	3.32	0.55	2.71	0.62	3.10	0.70
Antagonistic	362 (8%)	3.69	0.88	3.64	0.91	3.65	0.88	3.66	0.87	3.68	0.87
Agentic	883 (21%)	3.80	1.06	3.76	1.11	3.86	0.99	3.22	0.98	3.66	1.15
Communal	439 (10%)	4.20	0.97	3.35	1.19	2.97	1.17	1.34	0.26	1.50	0.37

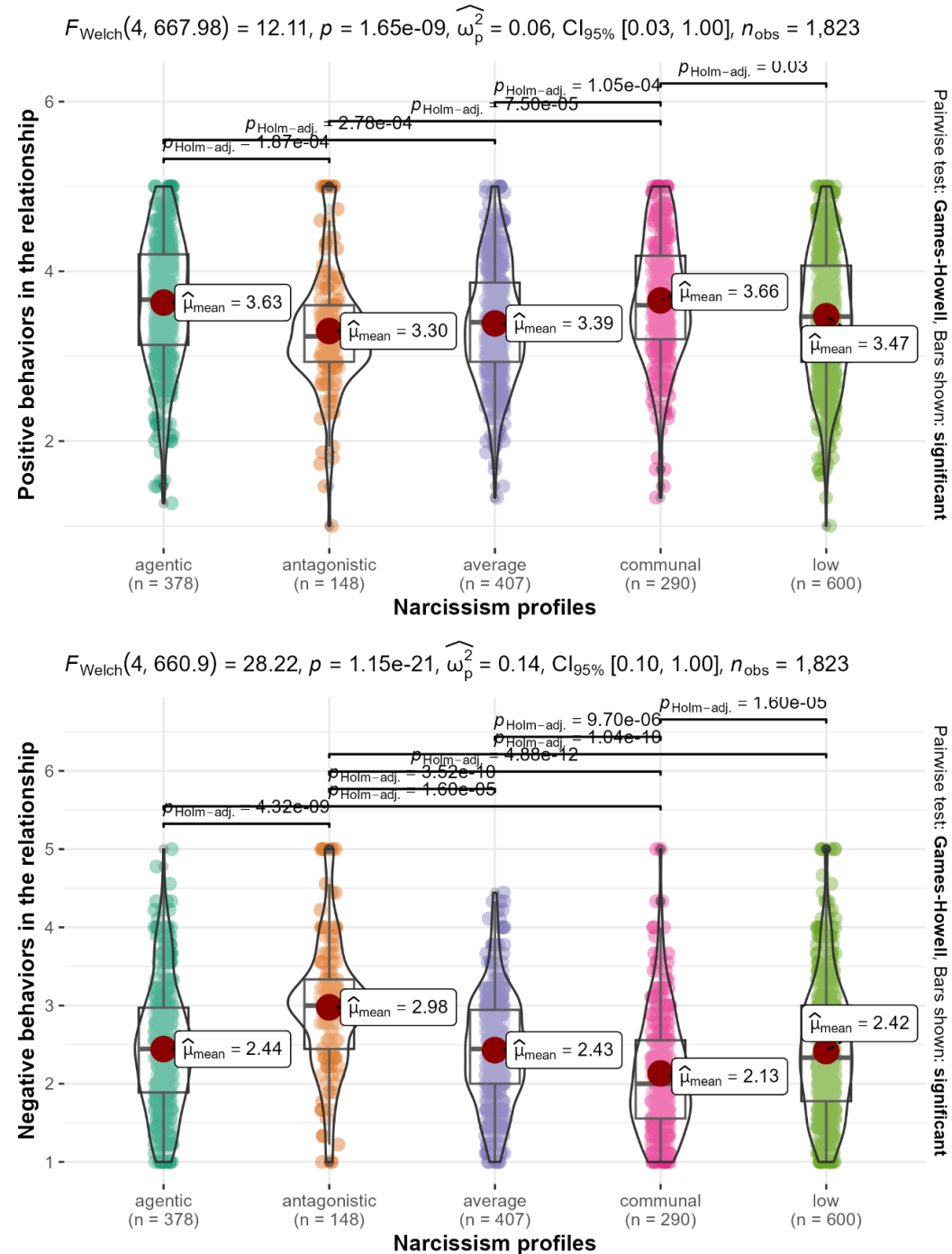
Note. Observed scores are reported, all the scores reflect average score of relevant items, rated on a 1-6 scale. Percentages are rounded. Total $N = 4034$, 263 observations were not assigned to any profile.

Next, I compared those profiles, checking whether there were differences in RR quality across them. Given the results of the meta-analyses reported above, and general assumptions of the CMN, I expected that people assigned to antagonistic profile would report the lowest RR quality while the communal ones would report the highest. On the same note, following the spectrum, I expected lower RR quality among people assigned to agentic profile than those in average. Finally, I expected that people assigned to communal profile report higher RR quality than those assigned to low narcissism one, given differences in antagonism and isolation between those two profiles. To sum up, I expected the following order in terms of RR quality:

communal > low > average > agentic > antagonistic. I report comparisons of the profiles in Figures 14 and 15.

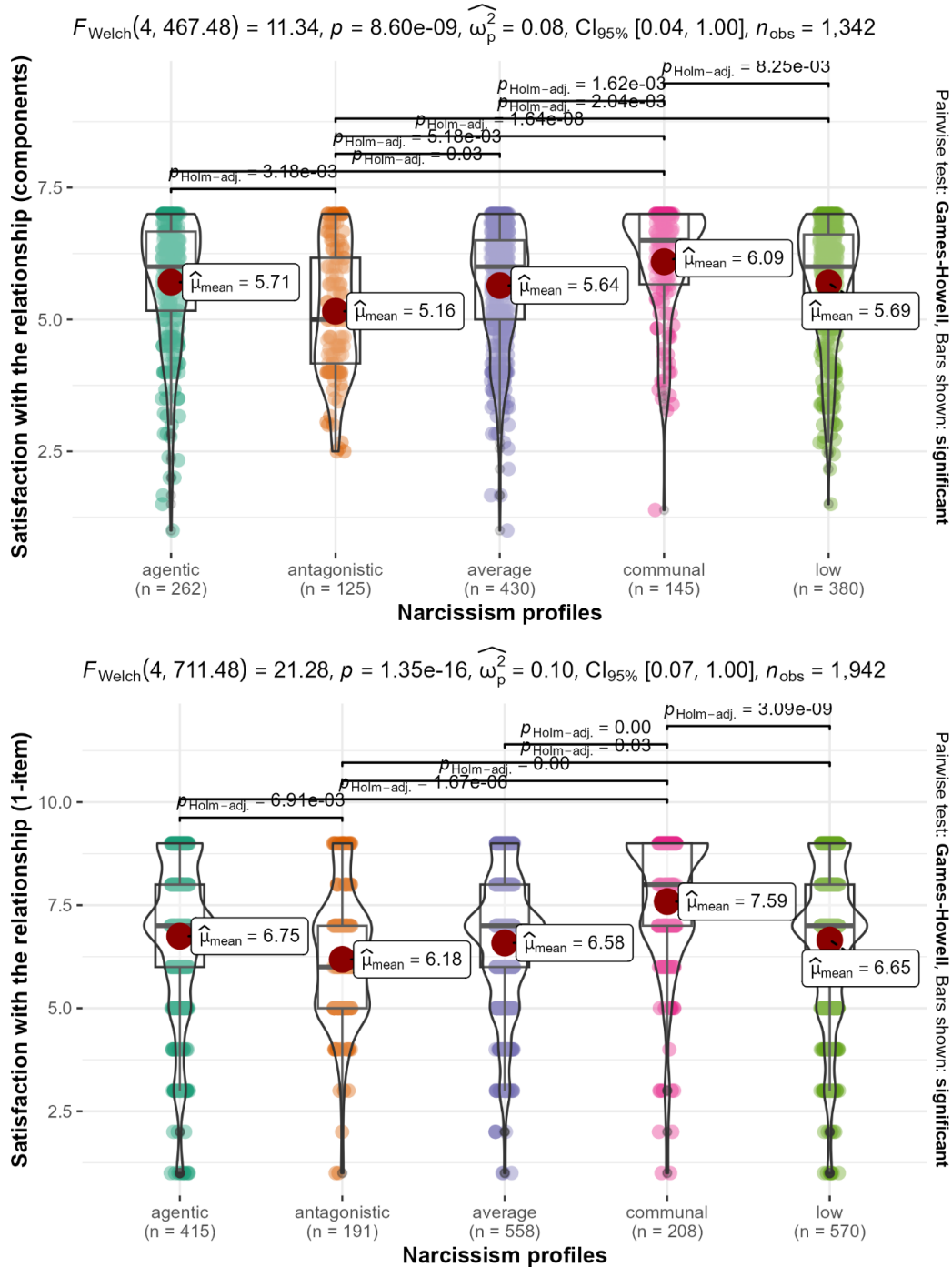
Figure 14

Positive and Negative Behaviours in the Relationship Across Profiles of Narcissism



Note. Significant differences between profiles are marked above the plot.

Figure 15
Satisfaction with the Romantic Relationship Across Profiles of Narcissism



Note. Significant differences between profiles are marked above the plot.

In group comparisons, the communal profile exhibited the highest quality of romantic relationships (RR). This profile was characterized by fewer negative behaviours, higher satisfaction with the RR, and comparable levels of positive behaviours compared to the agentic profile. On the other hand, the average, agentic, and low-narcissism profiles did not display

systematic differences in RR quality. The antagonistic profile, however, fared the worst in the context of RR, as individuals in this group reported lower levels of positive behaviours, higher levels of negative behaviours, and the lowest RR satisfaction.

In summary, the circumplex organisation of narcissism forms was partially evident in the latent profiles identified in the study. Five distinct groups of people were identified, including two contrasting profiles that represent the communion axis of the CMN: the communal profile (high in sanctity, low in antagonism and isolation) and the antagonistic profile (high in antagonism, somewhat higher in isolation and admiration). These two profiles significantly differed from the average profile (with all narcissism strategies being around average) in terms of RR quality, with communal narcissists reporting higher quality and antagonistic narcissists reporting lower quality.

Overall, Study 1 demonstrated that all narcissism strategies are to some extent related to RR quality. Communal narcissism forms were related greater RR quality, while antagonism and isolation were similarly associated with poorer RR quality. These findings align with the main hypothesis of the project, which posits that narcissism forms differ in their functioning within romantic relationships based on their position within the narcissism spectrum (Problem 1). Furthermore, the spectrum was partially reflected in the latent profiles, with the crucial distinction of communion-antagonism predicting RR quality.

3.2 Study 2 – The Interdependence Between Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality of Both Partners

One of the most substantial limitation of study 1 was that it was based on self-reported data provided by only one of the partners. In study 2, I extended examination of the relationship between narcissistic strategies and RR quality to both partners' perceptions of their relationship. Specifically, it tested two research questions: (1) Is one partner's narcissism relevant to the other's perception of the relationship? (2) Is there a homophily effect and does similarity between partners contribute to their RR quality? Given the overall negative assumptions about others and poor emotional regulation related to narcissistic antagonism, I predicted that antagonism is linked to more negative behaviours reported by both partners. Following the circumplex logic of the CMN, I also expected that communal forms, especially sanctity (which is opposite to antagonism) would be linked to more positive and less negative behaviours in the relationship, as reported by both partners. Finally, I expected admiration and, to lesser extent, saviourism to be weakly linked to both partners' evaluations of their relationship. For clarity, I present Study 2 main hypotheses in Figure 16.

Moreover, women are culturally prescribed from being *dominant* (Bosson et al., 2022), often punishing their overt expressions of anger or aggression far more than those of men. Thus, I expected that women's antagonism would be particularly relevant in predicting negative behaviours in the relationship reported by their partners. On a similar note, men are prescribed from being *weak* (Bosson et al., 2022). Thus, I expected that in predicting negative behaviours reported by their partners, men's isolation is particularly relevant.

H2.1: Actor's sanctity is linked to their partners' ratings of more positive and less negative behaviours in the relationship.

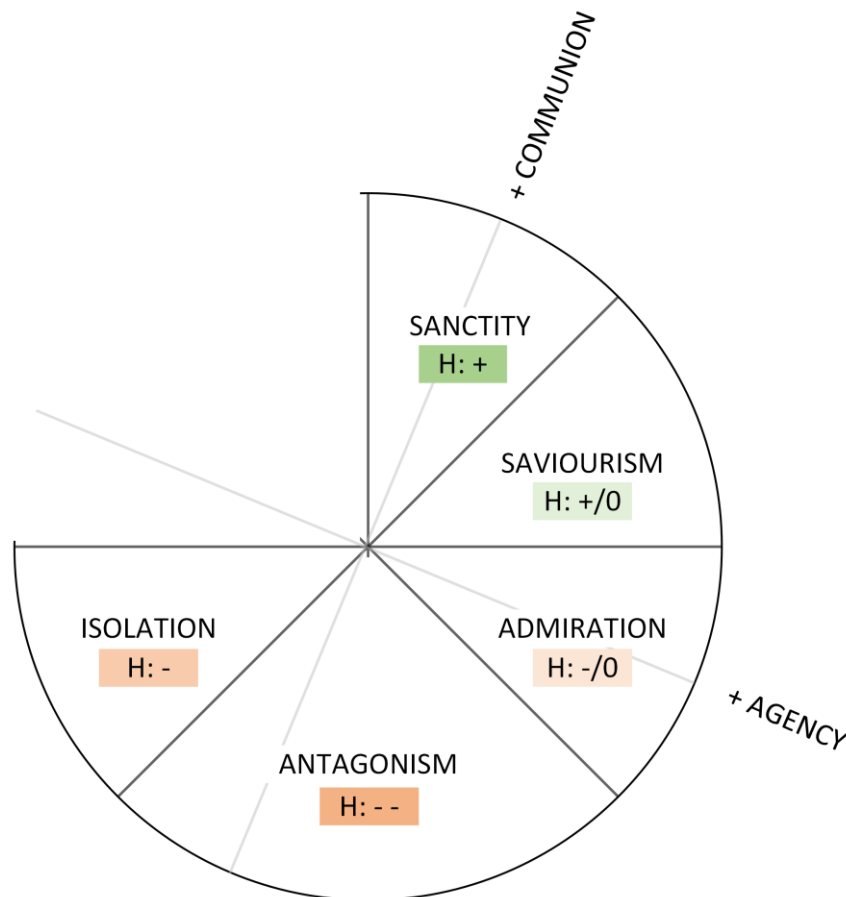
H2.2: Actor's antagonism is linked to their partners' ratings of less positive and more negative behaviours in the relationship; this effect is stronger for women.

H2.3 Actor's isolation is linked to their partners' ratings of less positive and more negative behaviours in the relationship; this effect is stronger for men.

EQ2.1 Are actor's admiration and saviourism linked to their partner's rating of positive and negative behaviours?

Figure 16

Hypothesized Correlations Between Studied Narcissism Forms and Partner's Romantic Relationship Quality



Note. Minus symbols refer to negative correlation, plus symbols to positive.

3.2.1 Method

3.2.1.1 Sample and procedure

Study 2 was conducted on three databases (Samples 2, 3, and 6), merged in order to gain higher power for the analyses. All were collected using snowballing sampling – links to the survey were sent via e-mail or other online communicators or published online on various Facebook groups. As the hypotheses consisted dyads, data from both partners was assessed. To do that, I used codes, which first partner generated and then passed it on to the second one. Inclusion criteria included age (over 18), relationship duration (at least 6 months), and partners' gender (only heterosexual couples). Due to technical mistakes, besides demographics and behaviours in the relationship, part of Sample 2 data was assessed with random 50% of the scales missing for each participant. It consisted of 207 couples. Sample 3, consisting of 100 couples, and Sample 6, consisting of 50 couples, were collected without missing data. In summary, the total database consisted of 357 heterosexual couples, with men ($M = 31.62$, $SD = 12.84$) slightly older than women ($M = 29.54$, $SD = 12.07$), $t(356) = 10.66$, $p < .001$.

3.2.1.2 Instruments

Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Heroism Scale (to assess communal narcissism forms), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess isolation), described above. The quality of a romantic relationship was measured using Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (to assess supportive and negative behaviours).

3.2.1.3 Analytical strategy

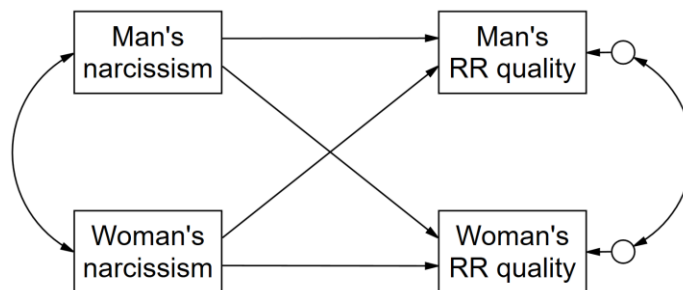
Given that part of the data was missing, although programmed to be, I conservatively checked whether data is missing completely at random (MCAR), using Little's test (1988).

Then, to include all the observations, including those with missing data, in all analyses I used SEM with Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation.

First, I examined the hypotheses using zero-order correlations between actor and partner's scores. However, recognizing the interdependence of the data, I further investigated the potential dyadic effects of narcissism on RR quality (i.e., whether partners' narcissism levels are linked to the RR quality of both of them). To accomplish this, I employed the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), a structural equation modelling approach depicted in Figure 17. In particular, I analysed five models, each corresponding to a different form of narcissism. On a person-centred level, I used the profile assignment of both partners as dummy variables (predictors) in the same APIM model, with the average profile serving as the reference point.

Figure 17

Actor-Partner Interdependence Models Tested in Study 2



I proceeded to investigate the presence and influence of homophily effects on the quality of the relationship between both partners. To achieve this, I computed two straightforward indicators of homophily for all the narcissism strategies under examination. Firstly, I determined the difference between the scores of each woman and their partners. That way, a score of zero indicated a similar level of narcissism, while a positive score indicated a higher score for the man and a negative score for the woman. I employed this indicator to assess the impact of specific differences, such as when a woman displayed greater antagonism than her partner, and whether such differences influenced the quality of their relationship. Secondly, I calculated an overall measure of homophily by considering the absolute value of the difference score. This measure enabled me to examine the general effects of differences, irrespective of

gender, and explore whether variations in antagonism or other narcissistic traits between partners influenced their relationship quality.

3.2.2 Results and Discussion

3.2.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

I started with examining patterns of missing data in subset of the database with relevant variables, and found that there was no pattern – data was missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(183) = 207, p = .110$. To provide a comprehensive overview, I reported the extent of missing data and conducted a gender comparison for all variables examined, as presented in Table 6. Consistent with prior studies on narcissism, the data revealed that men exhibited higher levels of antagonism, while women demonstrated higher levels of isolation. Additionally, I observed that women reported a higher frequency of supportive behaviours within the relationship compared to their partners. However, no significant differences were observed concerning communal narcissism strategies or the frequency of negative behaviours within the dataset.

Table 6

Study 1 - Missing Data And Gender Comparison

Variable	Missing	Women		Men		Difference 95% CI	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Sanctity	31.4%	3.73	0.95	3.72	0.83	[-0.15, 0.14]	.952
Saviourism	15.9%	3.37	1.00	3.39	0.93	[-0.18, 0.15]	.866
Admiration	13.7%	3.29	1.10	3.41	1.16	[-0.32, 0.02]	.080
Antagonism	13.7%	2.72	1.17	2.94	1.24	[-0.46, -0.15]	< .001
Isolation	12.9%	2.96	0.88	2.79	0.88	[0.04, 0.27]	.006
Supportive behaviours	0%	3.89	0.64	3.79	0.68	[0.03, 0.17]	.004
Negative behaviours	0%	2.33	0.71	2.29	0.71	[-0.03, 0.12]	.201

Note. Missing data percentage refers to data points missing for each participant, not dyad.

When examining the zero-order correlations within gender groups (Table 7), similar results were observed for both men and women. None of the narcissism forms displayed robust associations with more positive behaviours. However, admiration, antagonism, and isolation were all positively associated with self-reported negative behaviours within the relationship. Notably, two gender differences emerged at this level of analysis. Firstly, sanctity exhibited a

negative relationship with antagonism solely among women. Secondly, saviourism displayed a positive association with supportive behaviours exclusively among women. Nevertheless, it is important to note that all the observed links between narcissism and relationship behaviours were at best moderate, with the highest correlation coefficient being $r = .25$.

Table 7*Study 2 - Correlations With 95% Confidence Intervals Within Gender Groups*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sanctity		.58** [.49, .66]	.25** [.12, .36]	-.09 [-.21, .04]	.01 [-.12, .13]	-.02 [-.14, .10]	-.09 [-.21, .03]
2. Saviourism	.55** [.45, .63]		.43** [.32, .52]	.21** [.08, .32]	.10 [-.02, .23]	.01 [-.11, .13]	.01 [-.11, .13]
3. Admiration	.24** [.12, .36]	.48** [.38, .58]		.47** [.38, .55]	.27** [.16, .37]	-.01 [-.12, .10]	.15* [.03, .25]
4. Antagonism	-.23** [-.35, -.11]	.18** [.05, .30]	.39** [.30, .48]		.43** [.33, .52]	-.08 [-.19, .03]	.18** [.07, .29]
5. Isolation	-.03 [-.16, .10]	.02 [-.11, .15]	.19** [.07, .29]	.32** [.21, .41]		-.11 [-.22, .00]	.25** [.15, .36]
6. Supportive behaviours	.04 [-.09, .16]	.15* [.03, .27]	-.01 [-.12, .10]	.03 [-.08, .14]	-.09 [-.20, .03]		-.18** [-.28, -.08]
7. Negative behaviours	-.03 [-.16, .09]	.05 [-.08, .17]	.14* [.03, .25]	.14* [.03, .25]	.25** [.14, .35]	-.26** [-.36, -.16]	

Note. Men's scores are reported above diagonal, while women's scores are reported below diagonal. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

3.2.2.2 Interdependence of Narcissism and Romantic Relationship Quality

Within Dyad

In terms of the hypotheses at hand, the examination of dyadic correlations, which pertain to the interrelations between partner's scores, revealed several significant relationships that can be categorized into two groups (Table 8). Firstly, there were associations indicating homophily, or similarity, between partners' narcissism levels (diagonal entries in Table 8). Secondly, there were connections between partners' narcissism levels and their behaviours within the relationship. Concerning homophily, women's sanctity was not found to be related to any of the forms of narcissism exhibited by men. However, men's communal narcissism displayed positive associations with women's admiring narcissism, as well as with both sanctity and heroism.

Additionally, admiring narcissism demonstrated similar relationships for both partners, displaying positive links with their respective levels of admiration and antagonism. Notably, it was not associated with partner's isolation. Furthermore, homophily was observed to be stronger for isolation and antagonism compared to other narcissism strategies. These findings align with the concept of narcissism as a spectrum, as neighbouring forms of narcissism exhibited greater homophily.

Regarding the hypotheses, the zero-order analyses yielded the following results. Firstly, H2.1 was not supported, as there was no significant relationship found between sanctity and partners' ratings of behaviours within the relationship. Secondly, H2.2 received partial support, as actors' antagonism was positively associated with more negative behaviours reported by their partners. However, the expectation that this effect would be stronger for women was not confirmed. Although the correlation coefficient was higher when women were treated as the actors, the difference was not statistically significant. In line with H2.3, isolation was found to be linked to poorer behaviours within the relationship. Interestingly, the results for supportive behaviours differed between genders. Specifically, men's isolation was associated with fewer supportive behaviours and more negative behaviours reported by their partners. Conversely, women's isolation did not show a significant relationship with supportive behaviours reported by men. These findings support the additional expectation of H2.3, suggesting that isolation has more negative consequences for men than for women. Lastly, exploratory analyses revealed that actors' admiration was related to more negative behaviours reported by their partners. On the other hand, the relationship between saviourism and behaviours displayed less consistency, as it was only linked to more negative behaviours reported by partners among women.

The multivariate analyses examining the interplay between partner's behaviours in the relationship predicted by each other's narcissism, using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), are presented in Table 9. All models were saturated, ($df = 0$), hence no fit

indices are reported. Hypothesis 2.1 was, again, falsified, as sanctity was not related to behaviours in the relationship, actor's nor partner's. Hypothesis 2.1 was once again contradicted, as sanctity was found to have no relationship with behaviours in the relationship for either the actor or the partner. Results provided limited support for H2.2, as the antagonism displayed by both partners was only weakly associated with higher levels of negative behaviours reported by both individuals. This effect was particularly pronounced when a woman's antagonism predicted a man's ratings of negative behaviours in the relationship, thus confirming the additional expectation proposed in H2.2.

Table 8
Study 2 - Between-partner Correlations With 95% Confidence Intervals

Variable	Women							
	Sanctity	Saviourism	Admiration	Antagonism	Isolation	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	
Men	Sanctity	.21** [.08, .33]	.07 [-.07, .19]	.21** [.08, .33]	-.10 [-.22, .03]	-.02 [-.15, .11]	-.07 [-.19, .05]	.03 [-.09, .15]
	Saviourism	-.03 [-.17, .10]	.14* [.01, .27]	.24** [.12, .36]	.17* [.04, .29]	.07 [-.06, .19]	.01 [-.11, .13]	.02 [-.10, .15]
	Admiration	-.03 [-.16, .10]	.03 [-.10, .16]	.16** [.05, .27]	.16** [.05, .28]	.09 [-.03, .20]	-.08 [-.19, .03]	.14* [.03, .25]
	Antagonism	-.06 [-.19, .07]	.21** [.08, .33]	.16** [.05, .27]	.43** [.33, .52]	.18** [.07, .29]	-.05 [-.17, .06]	.11* [.00, .22]
	Isolation	.07 [-.06, .20]	.14* [.01, .27]	.08 [-.03, .20]	.19** [.07, .30]	.28** [.16, .38]	-.12* [-.23, -.01]	.18** [.07, .29]
	Supportive behaviours	.02 [-.10, .15]	-.02 [-.14, .11]	-.01 [-.12, .10]	-.02 [-.13, .10]	-.05 [-.16, .06]	.55** [.48, .62]	-.12* [-.22, -.01]
	Negative behaviours	-.07 [-.19, .06]	.15* [.02, .27]	.12* [.01, .23]	.20** [.09, .31]	.24** [.13, .34]	-.16** [-.26, -.06]	.62** [.55, .68]

Note. Bold font indicate significant asymmetries

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Notably, the strongest confirmation was observed for H2.3, as isolation predicted an interdependence between partners concerning negative behaviours. Both partners' levels of isolation were predictive of their ratings of negative behaviours within the relationship. However, the additional expectation that isolation would have a more detrimental impact on men was not supported. Furthermore, exploratory analyses revealed that women's saviourism was linked to higher levels of supportive behaviours reported by themselves. This finding is intriguing, especially considering that women's saviourism was also associated with more negative behaviours reported by their partners. Results pertaining to admiration were more straightforward, as it was consistently linked to higher levels of negative behaviours reported by both partners, similar to the association observed for isolation.

The examination of general effect sizes leads to two key conclusions. Firstly, it is evident that the effects observed across all cases, with the exception of isolation, were small. Notably, almost 10% of the negative behaviours reported by men could be explained by vulnerable narcissism. Secondly, the explanatory power of the models varied in line with the spectrum of narcissism, particularly when considering men's reports. Among the examined variables, sanctity accounted for the least amount of variance in the dependent variables, while isolation emerged as the most influential. This pattern suggests that, in the context of relationships, the vulnerable aspects of narcissism may hold greater significance (Smolewska & Dion, 2005).

Table 9*Study 2 - Separate APIM Models, Standardized Coefficients*

Effects	Men		Women	
	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
<i>Model 1: Sanctity</i>				
Men	-.03	-.08	-.08	.04
Women	.03	-.05	.05	-.03
R²	.002	.009	.007	.002
<i>Model 2: Saviourism</i>				
Men	.01	-.01	-.01	.01
Women	.00	.14*	.16*	.04
R²	.00	.020	.027	.002
<i>Model 3: Admiration</i>				
Men	.00	.13*	-.08	.12*
Women	-.02	.10 [‡]	.00	.12*
R²	.000	.031	.006	.035
<i>Model 4: Antagonism</i>				
Men	-.08	.12 [‡]	.05	.07
Women	.01	.15*	-.07	.12 [‡]
R²	.006	.053	.004	.024
<i>Model 5: Isolation</i>				
Men	-.10	.20**	-.11 [‡]	.13*
Women	-.03	.18**	-.06	.22**
R²	.012	.096	.018	.077

[‡]*p* < .10, * *p* < .05, ***p* < .01.

The analysis utilizing the narcissism profiles of both partners as predictors yielded different results (Table 10). Specifically, women who were assigned to agentic or low narcissism groups reported higher levels of positive behaviours within their romantic relationships compared to those with an average profile. Additionally, men whose partners were assigned to communal profiles reported fewer negative behaviours in their romantic relationships. Although the effects of profiles were rarely independent of each other, this categorical approach to assessing narcissism proved to be equally effective in predicting behaviours within romantic relationships. It explained a similar amount of variance as the previous model, indicating its comparable efficacy in capturing the dynamics of relationship behaviours..

Table 10

Study 2 - APIM Model In Which Narcissism Profiles Of Both Partners Were Used as Simultaneous Predictors of Behaviours Reported by Them

Profiles	Men		Women	
	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
<i>Antagonistic</i>				
Men	-.04	.11	-.06	.00
Women	-.08	-.01	-.03	.11
<i>Agentic</i>				
Men	-.02	.02	.11	-.13
Women	.12	-.02	.28**	.05
<i>Low narcissism</i>				
Men	-.03	-.04	.05	-.11
Women	.13	-.15	.25**	-.03
<i>Communal</i>				
Men	-.10	-.04	.14	-.13
Women	.08	-.17 [‡]	.04	-.08
Total R²	.028	.056	.096	.049

Note. APIM = Actor-Partner Interdependence model. Standardized coefficients are reported. Average narcissism profile was used as a reference. Significant coefficients indicate a significant difference in a given group and a reference group.

[‡] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

3.2.2.3 Homophily Among Partners and its Relationship With Their Romantic

Relationship Quality

As evident from the findings presented in Table 8, there was a noticeable homophily among partners, with dyads characterized by somewhat similar levels of narcissism strategies. The strongest homophily effect was observed for antagonism, while the weakest effect was observed for saviourism. Notably, saviourism was the only non-symmetrical effect observed in the studied samples. Specifically, there was no homophily among partners in terms of communal narcissism, as women's communal narcissism did not exhibit a significant association with any specific form of narcissism in their partners. Conversely, men's communal narcissism was linked to their partners' admiration. Furthermore, adopting a more categorical approach to narcissism also revealed homophily across all profiles, except for the average profile (Table 11). Of particular significance were the substantial differences observed for the

agentic and communal profiles, which rarely coincided within a single dyad. Agentic narcissists tended to form partnerships with individuals displaying average or low levels of narcissism. On the other hand, communal narcissists tended to pair with other communal narcissists or individuals who generally exhibited lower levels of narcissism. However, due to the small size of the antagonistic group, drawing definitive conclusions based on these findings was not feasible.

Table 11

Study 2 - Narcissism Profile Composition of Studied Dyads

		Women					Total
		Antagonistic	Agentic	Average	Low	Communal	
Men	Antagonistic	1	3	0	0	1	5
	Agentic	2	36	12	13	4	67
	Average	2	15	17	18	3	55
	Low	0	13	5	18	9	45
	Communal	0	7	1	10	19	37
	Total	5	74	35	59	36	209

Note. Given the missing data in sample 3, the profiles were rarely estimated in it, hence smaller sample size in general.

To explore the associations between homophily and reported behaviours within the relationship, I conducted zero-order correlations. However, no gender-specific differences between partners were observed (see Table 12). Nevertheless, the absolute differences in narcissism levels between partners exhibited weak associations with their evaluations of the relationship. Specifically, differences in saviourism were linked to higher levels of supportive behaviours reported by men. Additionally, differences in antagonism were associated with increased reports of negative behaviours by both partners. These results highlight the contrasting social consequences of agentic (i.e., antagonism) and communal (i.e., saviourism) self-protection, indicating negative outcomes associated with the former and somewhat positive outcomes associated with the latter.

Table 12

Study 2 – Relationship Between Partner's Homophily and Behaviours in the Romantic Relationship

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Men		Women	
			Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
Higher scores for men						
Sanctity	0.00	1.11	-.04 [-.17, .09]	-.00 [-.13, .13]	-.04 [-.17, .09]	.02 [-.11, .15]
Saviourism	0.01	1.26	.01 [-.12, .14]	-.10 [-.23, .03]	-.10 [-.22, .04]	-.04 [-.17, .09]
Admiration	0.15	1.45	.04 [-.08, .15]	.01 [-.11, .13]	-.04 [-.15, .08]	-.02 [-.14, .10]
Antagonism	0.31	1.29	-.04 [-.16, .07]	-.00 [-.12, .11]	-.04 [-.15, .08]	-.02 [-.14, .10]
Isolation	-0.21	1.21	-.03 [-.14, .09]	.02 [-.10, .13]	-.03 [-.14, .09]	-.04 [-.16, .07]
Homophily						
Sanctity	0.85	0.71	.10 [-.03, .23]	.02 [-.12, .15]	.07 [-.06, .20]	.01 [-.13, .14]
Saviourism	1.00	0.77	.14* [.01, .27]	-.04 [-.17, .09]	.05 [-.08, .18]	-.05 [-.18, .08]
Admiration	1.13	0.92	.00 [-.11, .12]	.06 [-.05, .18]	.03 [-.09, .15]	.01 [-.11, .12]
Antagonism	0.98	0.89	-.01 [-.12, .11]	.15** [.04, .27]	.11 [-.01, .22]	.17** [.06, .29]
Isolation	0.96	0.77	.02 [-.10, .14]	.01 [-.10, .13]	.05 [-.07, .16]	-.01 [-.13, .11]

In summary, Study 2 aimed to investigate whether the quality of the romantic relationship (RR) is influenced not only by an individual's own narcissism but also by their partner's narcissism. The overall findings align to some extent with the results of Study 1. Narcissism forms based on self-protection emerged as more influential in RR quality compared to self-enhancement-based forms. Contrary to the initial prediction (H2.1), sanctity was not found to be related to supportive or negative behaviours. Notably, saviourism (EQ2.1) exhibited a gendered pattern of associations. Women's saviourism was linked to more positive evaluations of the relationship by themselves but poorer evaluations by their partners. Interestingly,

differences in saviourism were weakly associated with more positive evaluations of the relationship by men. Admiration (EQ2.1) was linked to more negative behaviours in the relationship, such as criticism or frequency of arguments, but these effects were not unique. Antagonism (H2.2) consistently demonstrated associations with more negative behaviours in the relationship across three analyses: zero-order level, partner's interdependence, and differences between them. Admiration (EQ2.1) was linked to more negative behaviours in the relationship, such as criticism or frequency of arguments, but these effects were not unique. Antagonism (H2.2) consistently demonstrated associations with more negative behaviours in the relationship across three analyses: zero-order level, partner's interdependence, and differences between them.

3.3 Study 3 – Narcissism Forms as Predictors of Romantic Relationship Quality Change Over Time

The investigation encompassed four key aspects. Firstly, I examined the time-invariant strength of the association between narcissism and RR quality as individual differences. Secondly, I investigated the co-occurrence of changes in narcissism and RR quality within individuals, aiming to identify whether deviations from their personal averages were correlated. Thirdly, the study explored the reciprocity of the relationship, assessing whether fluctuations in one variable predicted changes in the other over time. Lastly, the investigation aimed to determine whether narcissism, and specifically which of its forms, could be considered as predictors of the overall trajectory of RR quality.

In line with previous studies, I developed several hypotheses to be tested in this study. Firstly, drawing from the CMN, I posited that sanctity and antagonism are functionally opposite, and thus should be associated with different sets of behaviours and beliefs. Specifically, I hypothesized that the negative association between antagonism (e.g., rivalry) and long-term romantic relationship quality could be explained by a lack of social competences necessary for maintaining healthy relationships, such as trust and commitment. In contrast, given that sanctity is grounded in communal identity goals (e.g., being esteemed as communal), I anticipated that it would not be linked to a decline in relationship quality, and may even be associated with an increase in quality. My expectations regarding saviourism and admiration, as positions in the middle of the spectrum, were more tentative due to limited research. However, based on the logic of the CMN, I predicted that both would have weak associations with the dynamics of relationship quality, with saviourism potentially having a more positive effect due to its communal identity goals and higher interest in maintaining successful relationships. Furthermore, I expected antagonism to be predictive of a decline in relationship quality, consistent with previous research (Lavner et al., 2016; Wurst et al., 2017). Finally, following

the CMN, I expected isolation to also be negatively influence romantic relationship dynamics. Additionally, I expected this relationship to be weaker than in case of antagonism, as antagonism is an “emergency” strategy aimed to restore threatened self, which implies higher interpersonal dynamics.

H3.1. Sanctity is related to increase in romantic relationship quality over a year.

H3.2. Antagonism is related to decrease in romantic relationship quality over a year.

H3.3 Isolation is related to decrease in romantic relationship quality over a year.

EQ3.1 Are admiration and saviourism related to the dynamics of romantic relationship quality over a year?

3.3.1 Method

3.3.1.1 Sample and procedure

The study was conducted using a general sample from Poland over the course of four waves spanning one year, with a four-month lag between each wave. Data collection was carried out through the Ariadna research panel - Sample 5. The sample was designed to be representative in terms of gender and included respondents aged 18-40. This age range was chosen as romantic relationships during this period often involve various life transitions, such as completing education, getting married, acquiring property, or starting a family. The composition of the sample for each wave is summarized in Table 13. The survey was sent to all participants who took part in the first measurement each time. Therefore, the missing data in the study are not solely due to dropouts but also include participants who did not complete all four measurements. The final sample used to test the hypotheses consisted of respondents who reported being in a romantic relationship and participated in at least three out of the four measurements.

Table 13*Study 3 - Sample Composition in Each Wave of the Study*

Wave	Date	N	Respondents declaring being in RR	% of males	M_{age} (SD_{age})
1	01.2020	1425	1080 (75.79%)	43%	30.75 (5.47)
2	05.2020	665	506 (76.09%)	45%	30.96 (5.10)
3	09.2020	526	403 (76.62%)	45%	31.11(5.02)
4	01.2021	371	286 (77.09%)	50%	30.96 (5.20)
People who were in RR in at least 3 measurements			319	47%	31.21 (4.99)

Note. RR = Romantic Relationship

3.3.1.2 Instruments

The same instruments were used as in Study 2. Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Heroism Scale (to assess communal narcissism forms), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess isolation), described above. The quality of a romantic relationship was measured using Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (to assess supportive and negative behaviours).

3.3.1.3 Statistical analyses

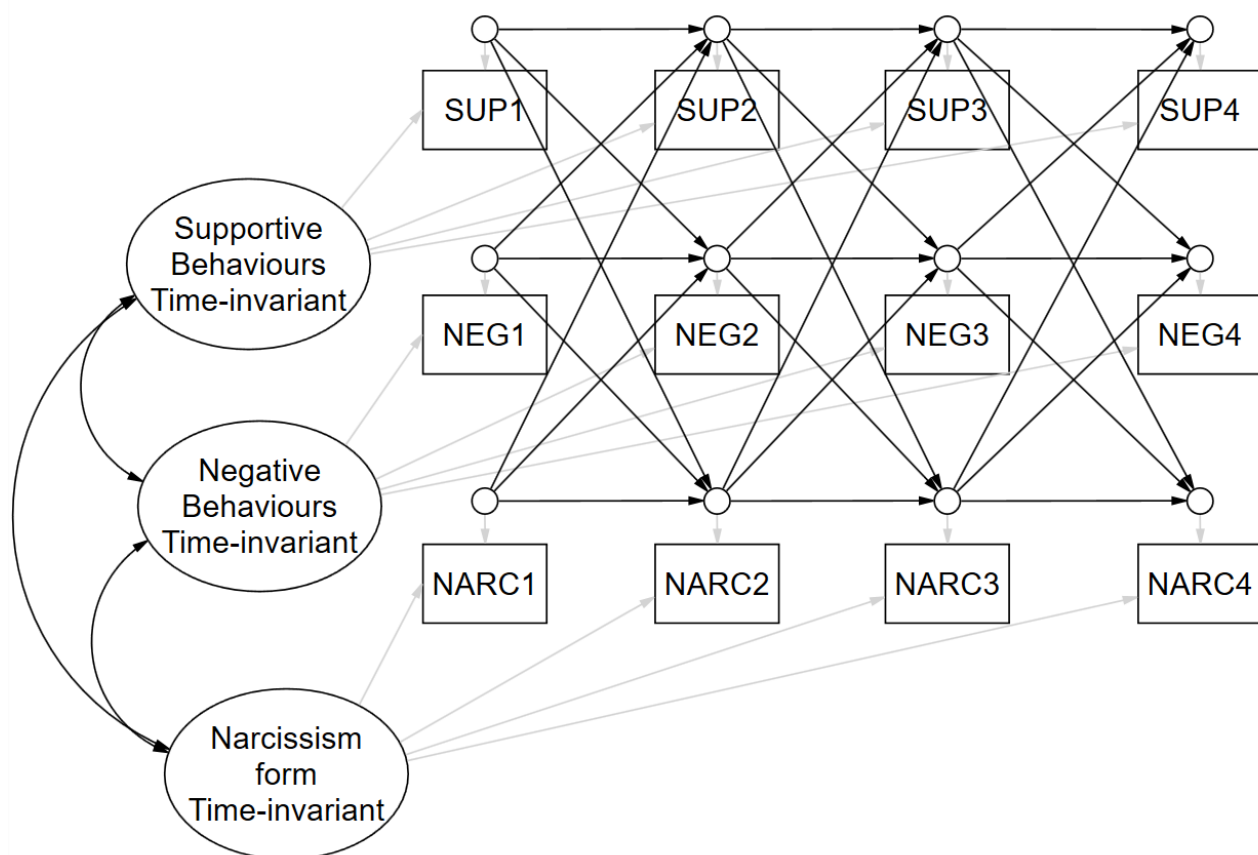
I started with calculating strength of zero-order relationships between narcissism forms and RR quality in each wave. Then, I proceeded with testing the hypotheses. In both estimated models described below I used Robust Maximum Likelihood (MLR) estimation to account for relatively small sample size and skewness of the data. Concerning missing data, I used Full-Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation to test the hypothesis on the whole sample.

To test the dynamic relationship between narcissism and behaviours in the relationship I used Random-Intercept Cross-Lag Panel Model (RI-CLPM; Hamaker et al., 2015) to separate within-person changes from between-person changes in rank order. Thus, I extracted three types of time-related information about narcissism and RR quality from the data: on time-invariant relationships between them, on the correlations of their fluctuations, and whether one predicts

the other in the future. Examining overall hypotheses, I constrained the cross-wave effects as well as ones in each wave. Specifically, I estimated models in which I set several coefficients to be equal: (1) covariances between change scores in all measurements, (2) autoregressive paths between measurements, (3) cross-lag paths between measurements. I conducted five separate analyses which included one narcissism strategy alongside supportive and negative behaviours (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Template of tested RI-CLPMs Tested in Study 3



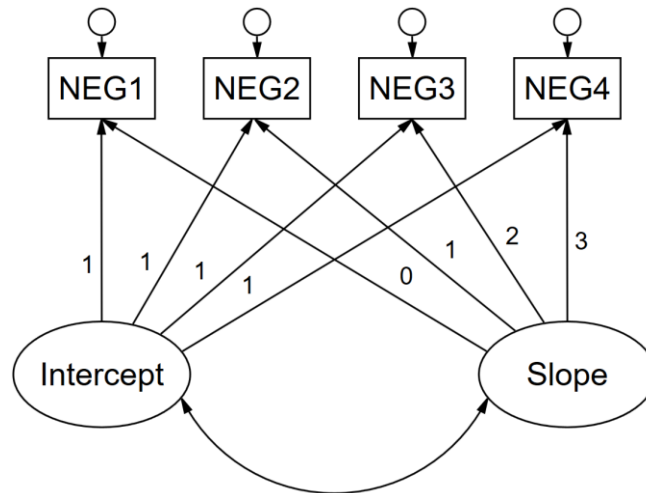
Note. Significance of effects depicted in black was used for hypotheses testing. For clarity, covariances between time-variant latent variables in the model are not presented. NARC – examined narcissism form. SUP – Supportive behaviours, NEG - negative behaviours.

Then, to test the prediction of narcissism as a factor contributing to overall change in RR quality I used Latent Growth Curve Modeling (LGCM; (Preacher, 2008), which enabled me to estimate linear trends of changes in RR quality for each participant, and therefore test whether

narcissism predicts the tempo and direction of changes in RR quality (Figure 19). Within those models, two latent variables are estimated, providing specific information about every observation: intercept and slope. First represents the “starting point”, showing baseline level of predicted trait. The latter represent tempo of change. In other words, linear relationship between studied trait and time is estimated for every observation.

Figure 19

Template of Latent Growth Models Tested in Study 3



Note. NEG - Negative behaviours in a given measurement. Narcissism forms were used as predictors of intercept and slope.

3.3.2 Results and Discussion

3.3.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 14 presents the means and standard deviations of supportive and negative behaviours within the relationship, as well as their relationships with different narcissism strategies across all four measurements. The findings indicate that sanctity, saviourism, and admiration were all positively associated with more supportive behaviours. However, when examining negative behaviours in the romantic relationship, only saviourism and admiration showed significant associations, being linked to higher levels of both positive and negative behaviours. In contrast, the relationships were more straightforward for antagonism and

isolation. Both of these narcissism strategies were consistently associated with higher levels of negative behaviours within the relationship. Their associations with supportive behaviours were weak, albeit negative, and exhibited slight variations across the different waves of measurement.

Table 14

Study 3 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With Confidence Intervals Across Four Measurements

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Sanctity	Saviourism	Admiration	Antagonism	Isolation
<i>Wave 1</i>							
Supportive behaviours	3.35	0.73	.33** [.23, .42]	.20** [.09, .30]	.17** [.06, .27]	-.18** [-.28, -.07]	-.22** [-.32, -.12]
Negative behaviours	2.51	0.79	.10 [-.01, .21]	.14* [.03, .24]	.12* [.01, .23]	.16** [.05, .27]	.20** [.09, .30]
<i>Wave 2</i>							
Supportive behaviours	3.68	0.70	.29** [.18, .39]	.11* [.00, .22]	.19** [.08, .29]	-.12* [-.23, -.01]	-.17** [-.28, -.06]
Negative behaviours	2.61	0.90	.08 [-.04, .19]	.15* [.03, .25]	.17** [.06, .27]	.32** [.22, .42]	.25** [.14, .35]
<i>Wave 3</i>							
Supportive behaviours	3.61	0.74	.24** [.13, .34]	.12* [.01, .23]	.10 [-.01, .21]	-.14* [-.24, -.03]	-.12* [-.22, -.01]
Negative behaviours	2.62	0.91	.07 [-.04, .18]	.20** [.09, .30]	.18** [.07, .28]	.28** [.17, .38]	.18** [.07, .29]
<i>Wave 4</i>							
Supportive behaviours	3.29	0.70	.28** [.15, .40]	.21** [.07, .33]	.26** [.13, .38]	-.08 [-.22, .05]	-.16* [-.28, -.02]
Negative behaviours	2.60	0.83	.13 [-.01, .26]	.22** [.09, .35]	.13 [-.01, .26]	.37** [.25, .48]	.31** [.18, .42]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

3.3.2.2 Dynamics of Narcissism and Behaviours in the Relationship: Random-

Intercept Cross-Lag Panel Models

All models were well-fitted to the data (CFI > .95, RMSEA < .05, SRMR < .05). Studied constructs were rather stable across measurements – time invariant (individual differences) part of their observed level explained about 50% of behaviours in the relationship and 60% of each

narcissism form. The relationship of narcissism and behaviours in the relationship on both between- and within-person level is reported in Table 15.

On the between-person level (i.e., stable personal dispositions), narcissism strategies differed in terms of supportive behaviours, as communal ones and admiration were linked to more of them. Considering negative behaviours, all studied narcissism strategies were related to more of them, and their effects were similar. This pattern of results show that when individual fluctuations are partialled out, narcissism forms create three groups: (1) sanctity, as the most adaptive, (2) saviourism and admiration, as adaptive but to lower extent than sanctity, and (3) antagonism and isolation, which are maladaptive.

The examination of within-person effects, reflecting the dynamics of narcissism and behaviours within the relationship, revealed several noteworthy findings. Firstly, deviations in supportive behaviours (i.e., deviations from one's personal baseline) were positively associated with admiration and, to a lesser extent, sanctity. This suggests that increased self-enhancement is accompanied by more positive evaluations of one's relationship.

Secondly, deviations in negative behaviours coincided with deviations in antagonism and isolation. This indicates that both avoidant self-protection and antagonistic self-protection are linked to poorer evaluations of one's relationship. Interestingly, communal self-protection appeared to be more beneficial, as it was not associated with an increase in negative behaviours within the relationship. It is worth noting that the effect sizes were larger for negative behaviours compared to supportive behaviours.

Thirdly, when considering time-related associations (i.e., lagged effects), three noteworthy findings emerged. Firstly, sanctity was negatively predicted by supportive behaviours reported three months prior, suggesting a compensatory effect. This indicates that after experiencing more supportive behaviours within the relationship, the inclination towards communal self-enhancement decreases. However, an increase in communal self-enhancement

does not translate into better relationship behaviours in the long run. Secondly, antagonism exhibited a reciprocal relationship with negative behaviours. Higher levels of antagonism predicted an increase in negative behaviours in the relationship three months later, and vice versa. This finding suggests a "vicious cycle" in which antagonistic self-protection contributes to poorer relationship quality, which in turn reinforces the inclination towards antagonistic self-protection, aligning with the NARC framework (Back et al., 2013). Finally, a similar reciprocal cycle was observed for isolation. However, this cycle was more balanced, as isolation also weakly predicted more supportive behaviours in the subsequent measurement. This pattern of results suggests that vulnerable narcissists may attempt to counter the negative consequences of their narcissism, to some extent.

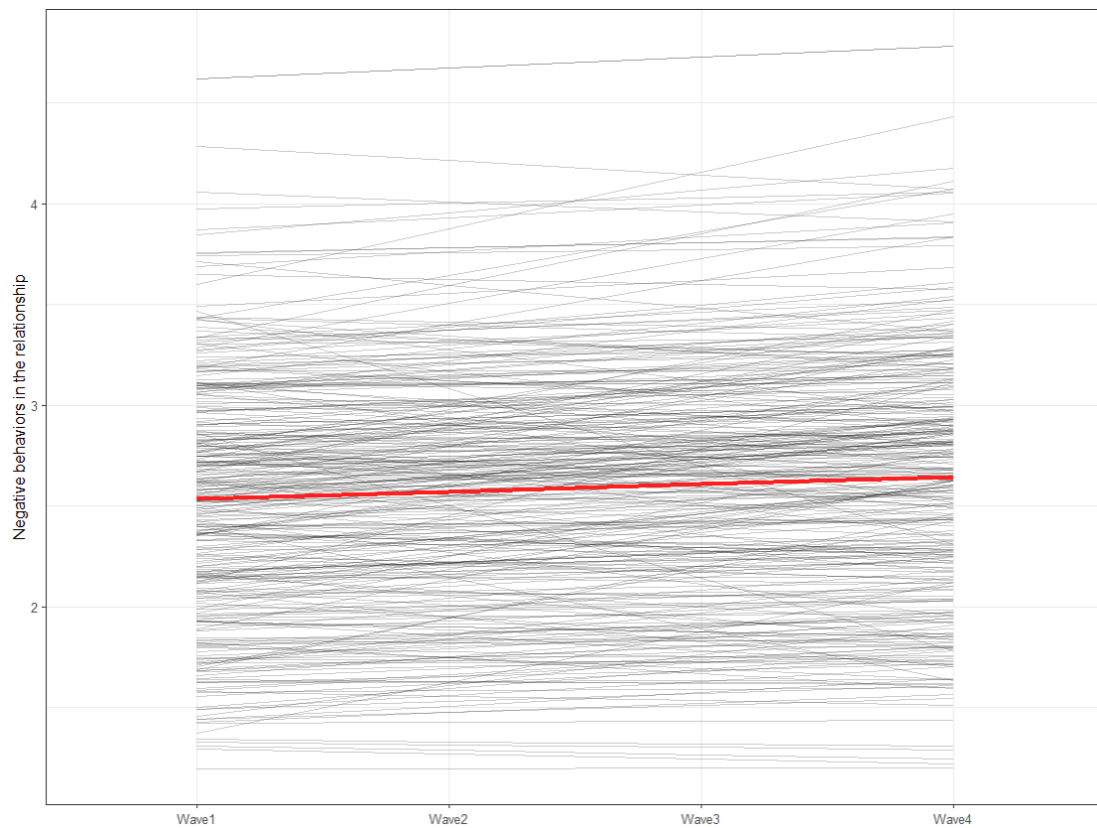
3.3.2.3 Narcissism as a Predictor of Overall Trajectories of Changes of

Behaviours in the Relationship: Latent Growth Models

There were no significant carry-on effects of supportive behaviours (as shown in Table 14), indicating that there was no overall tendency of increase or decline in these behaviours over time. Additionally, supportive behaviours demonstrated weak associations with narcissism overall. In contrast, significant carry-on effects were observed for negative behaviours, and changes in these behaviours were linked to narcissism forms based on self-protection. Therefore, I proceeded to examine whether the level of narcissism (in any form) predicted stable changes in the frequency of negative behaviours over the course of one year. All models exhibited good fit to the data ($CFI > .95$, $RMSEA < .05$, $SRMR < .05$). Figure 20 visualizes the changes in negative behaviours within the relationship over the course of one year, representing the model without any predictors.

Figure 20

Estimated Growth of Frequency of Negative Behaviours in the Relationship in Study 3



Note. Average intercept was $M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.68$. Average slope was higher than 0 (which indicates significant changes across time), $M = 0.37$, $SD = 0.16$, $p = .024$

Table 15*Study 3 - Separate APIM Models*

Predictors	Between-person, time-invariant correlations		Within-person				
	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	Time-variable correlations (co-occurring deviations)		Cross-lag explained variables		
			Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours	Tested narcissism form	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
<i>Model 1</i>							
Sanctity	.41**	.19*	.11 [†]	-.04	.08	.01	.01
Supportive behaviours		-.38**		.00	-.13*	.06	.01
Negative behaviours					.02	.00	.19
<i>Model 2</i>							
Saviourism	.25**	.26**	.01	.06	.05	.05	-.01
Supportive behaviours		-.38**		.00	-.08	.07	.01
Negative behaviours					.05	.00	.19
<i>Model 3</i>							
Admiration	.21**	.24**	.14*	.09	-.13	.03	.01
Supportive behaviours		-.38**		.00	-.07	.04	.01
Negative behaviours					.02	.01	.16
<i>Model 4</i>							
Antagonism	-.25**	.28*	.06	.39**	.08	.03	.18 [†]
Supportive behaviours		-.42**		.02	.01	.05	.03
Negative behaviours					.25*	.03	.25*
<i>Model 5</i>							
Isolation	-.30**	.26**	.02	.26**	.07	.12 [†]	.13*
Supportive behaviours		-.40**		.01	-.01	.05	.03
Negative behaviours					.18*	.01	.20[†]

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. $N = 319$. A 3-month lag between measurements was used.. Autoregressive (carry-on) cross-lag effects are bolded.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The findings revealed a positive correlation between each form of narcissism and a higher intercept of negative behaviours, consistent with the results presented in Tables 13 and 14. The latent growth modelling (LGM) analysis provided valuable insights by examining the slope value and prediction. Specifically, the results clearly indicate that antagonism is the only narcissism strategy associated with an increase in negative behaviours within the romantic relationship over the course of one year, as evidenced in Table 16. This highlights the distinct contribution of antagonism in predicting the trajectory of negative behaviours in the relationship.

Table 16

Study 3 – Latent Growth Models in Which Narcissism Predicted Intercept and Slope of Negative Behaviours in the Relationship

Predictor	Negative behaviours in the relationship	
	Intercept	Slope
Traits		
Sanctity	.19*	-.04
Saviourism	.23**	.00
Admiration	.22**	.09
Antagonism	.29**	.34**
Isolation	.20**	.16
Profiles		
Communal	-.07	.09
Low	-.11	.02
Agentic	-.06	.09
Antagonistic	.12 [†]	.14

Note. Average narcissism profile was used as a reference. Significant coefficients indicate a significant difference in a given group and a reference group.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

In summary, similar to the findings in Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 demonstrated that self-protection-based narcissism forms play a more prominent role in romantic relationship (RR) quality compared to self-enhancement-based forms. Communal narcissism forms and admiration were found to be "mixed blessings," as they were associated with both more supportive and negative behaviours. However, these associations were limited to between-person effects. In contrast, hypothesis 3.1, which proposed that sanctity would influence the

dynamics of the relationship, was refuted, as sanctity was found to be dependent on the relationship behaviours rather than influencing them.

Antagonism emerged as the primary factor influencing the dynamics of RR, confirming hypothesis 3.2. It exhibited robust and reciprocal relationships with more negative behaviours in the relationship. Individuals with higher levels of antagonism reported poorer overall RR quality, and an increase in antagonism was linked to an increase in negative behaviour in the RR, followed by subsequent increases in negative behaviours three months later. Moreover, antagonism predicted an overall increase in negative behaviours throughout the span of a year, highlighting its significance in the decline of RR quality.

Furthermore, the effects of isolation mirrored those of antagonism in terms of direction, confirming hypothesis 3.3. However, considering effect sizes, particularly in light of the correlation between isolation and antagonism, it becomes evident that antagonism plays a more central role in predicting RR quality. Notably, attempts at repair were observed in relation to isolation, as higher levels of isolation were associated with both more negative behaviours at a given moment and increased supportive behaviours in the relationship three months later. It is important to explore the independent contributions of isolation and antagonism in predicting the dynamics of RR quality through future research or secondary analysis of the available data.

3.4 Study 4 – The Role of Self-Esteem in the Link Between Narcissism and Romantic Relationship Quality

The purpose of Study 4 was to investigate potential explanations for the differences in the associations between narcissism forms and RR quality, specifically focusing on the distinction between grandiose (sanctity, saviourism, and admiration) and vulnerable (antagonism and isolation) narcissism. A key distinguishing factor between these two types is the positivity of self-views. While earlier two-factor models suggested that self-esteem levels differentiate grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2011), subsequent analyses have revealed that the antagonistic aspect of the trait is also related to lower self-esteem (e.g., Back, 2013, Mota et al., 2019). Building on these findings and recognizing the pervasive influence of self-esteem on psychosocial functioning, I posited that the effects of narcissism on RR quality would be partially mediated by self-esteem, with the strength of these mediations varying across different narcissism forms. In other words, I hypothesized that there would be a unique, positive effect of self-esteem, a unique effect of narcissism (with its direction contingent on the specific forms of narcissism), and a shared effect between the two. To formulate precise hypotheses, I drew upon the circular logic of the CMN (Figure 5, Figure 21). Specifically, as self-esteem seems to be more satiated with agency (Wojciszke et al., 2011), I expected it to have greater relevance in explaining functioning within RR for agency-oriented strategies such as admiration, saviourism, and isolation. Therefore, I formulated hypotheses specifically for these strategies, while also conducting exploratory analyses to examine the mediation of self-esteem for sanctity, antagonism, and narcissism profiles.

H4.1: Higher self-esteem partially mediates the effect of saviourism on RR quality

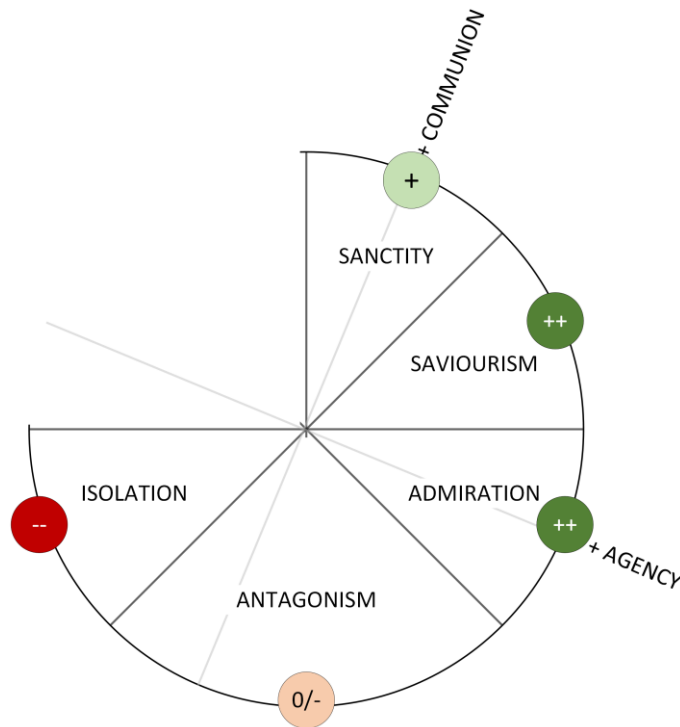
H4.2: Higher self-esteem partially mediates the effect of admiration on RR quality

H4.3: Lower self-esteem partially mediates the effect of isolation on RR quality

EQ4.1 Does self-esteem mediate the effects of sanctity or antagonism on RR quality?

Figure 21

Hypothetical Associations of Self-esteem With Narcissism Forms in the CMN, Which Was a Basis for Mediation Hypotheses in Study 4



3.4.1 Method

3.4.1.1 Sample and Procedure

Study 4 was conducted on a general Polish sample collected via Ariadna online research panel in April 2018 (Sample 1). Registered users of the panel were informed about the study via e-mail. After finishing the survey, they were compensated with points internal for Ariadna, which could be exchanged for material rewards. The survey included two measurements, with a week-long lag between them, to eliminate bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Inclusion criteria were based only on age (all participants were over 18) and relationship status (only people who declared being in a romantic relationship were filling out the survey). Response to all items in the survey was mandatory; data were analysed when a given participant took part in both

measurements. Thus, there was no missing data in the sample. Sample 1, used for hypothesis testing, consisted of 447 respondents, predominantly female (68%).

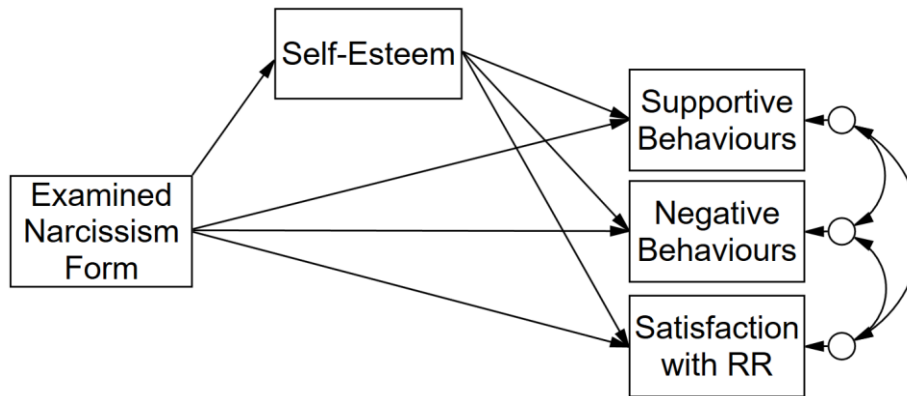
3.4.1.2 Instruments

All instruments were presented in a random order for each participant. Detailed description of each of them is provided above, in the “Methods Overview” section.

Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Scale (to assess communal narcissism strategies), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess enmity and isolation). Quality of a romantic relationship was measured using two instruments: Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (to assess supportive and negative behaviours) and Perceived Relationship Quality Components scale (to assess satisfaction with the relationship). Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

3.4.1.3 Analytical strategy

In Study 4, I examined whether self-esteem is involved in the narcissism-RR quality link. In all analyses, RR quality was indicated by three variables: satisfaction with the relationship, supportive behaviours in the relationship, and negative behaviours in the relationship. First, I conducted a series of mediation analyses on the zero-order level – one for each studied narcissism aspect, including self-esteem as a mediator and three indicators of romantic relationship quality as explained variables (Figure 22). Second, to infer on the person-centred level, I used profiles (established in Study 1) as dummy variables and conducted a mediation analysis in which those were endogenous variables (predictors). The models were saturated (i.e., $df = 0$), so I report no fit indices.

Figure 22*Template of Mediation Analyses Conducted in Study 4*

3.4.2 Results and Discussion

3.4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 17 presents the means and standard deviations of all variables specific to this study and their correlations with narcissism strategies. Most of the links were statistically significant and slightly varied across examined narcissism forms. The direction of the correlations was in line with the general hypotheses of the study: grandiose strategies (sanctity, saviourism, and admiration) were linked to higher self-esteem, and higher relationship quality than more vulnerable narcissism strategies (antagonism and isolation).

Table 17*Study 4 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With 95% Confidence Intervals*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Sanctity	Saviourism	Admiration	Rivalry/ enmity	Isolation
Self-esteem	2.87	0.49	.25** [.16, .34]	.22** [.12, .30]	.36** [.28, .44]	-.35** [-.43, -.27]	-.55** [-.62, -.49]
Supportive behaviours	3.33	0.78	.27** [.18, .35]	.17** [.08, .26]	.19** [.10, .28]	-.21** [-.30, -.12]	-.26** [-.35, -.18]
Negative behaviours	2.31	0.79	-.13** [-.22, -.04]	-.08 [-.17, .01]	-.12* [-.21, -.03]	.25** [.16, .33]	.32** [.23, .40]
Satisfaction with RR	5.58	1.18	.26** [.17, .34]	.21** [.12, .30]	.24** [.15, .32]	-.25** [-.33, -.16]	-.28** [-.37, -.19]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

3.4.2.2 Self-Esteem As a Mediator

The mediation models conducted for each form of narcissism revealed that self-esteem partially mediated the links between all narcissism forms and RR quality, as demonstrated in Table 18. The direction of these effects was driven by the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, rather than the domain central to the self. The grandiose narcissism forms were positively associated with RR satisfaction and supportive behaviours, and self-esteem significantly mediated these relationships. Furthermore, the association between grandiose strategies and negative behaviours was fully explained by self-esteem. On the other hand, the vulnerable strategies were related to all three aspects of RR quality, and self-esteem mediated all of these effects. Notably, the mediation effect sizes were consistent with the predictions of the CMN, with the strongest effects observed for the two opposing agency-oriented strategies, namely admiration and isolation. These results provide confirmation for all of the hypotheses.

Additionally, the model examining narcissism profiles revealed that differences in self-esteem (as shown in Table 19) accounted for several distinctions between specific profiles and the reference profile. Firstly, individuals with a communal profile reported higher RR quality compared to those with an average profile, and a portion of this difference was explained by their higher self-esteem. However, a substantial direct effect remained even after controlling for the mediator. Conversely, individuals low in narcissism exhibited lower RR quality, and this difference was fully explained by their lower self-esteem. No mediation effect was observed for the agentic narcissism profile. Lastly, individuals with an antagonistic orientation reported lower RR quality than those with an average profile, and this difference was explained by self-esteem. The overall model accounted for a total of $R^2 = .134$, $.107$, and $.133$ for RR satisfaction, supportive behaviours, and negative behaviours, respectively.

Table 18*Study 4 - Mediation Models via Self-esteem: Direct and Indirect Effects*

Effects	Satisfaction with RR	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
Model 1: Sanctity			
Direct effects			
Sanctity	.19**	.21**	-.05
Self-esteem	.28**	.25**	-.32**
Indirect effects			
Via Self-esteem	.07**	.06**	-.08**
Model 2: Saviourism			
Direct effects			
Saviourism	.15**	.11*	-.01
Self-esteem	.30**	.28**	-.33**
Indirect effects			
Via Self-esteem	.06**	.06**	-.07**
Model 3: Admiration			
Direct effects			
Admiration	.14**	.10 [‡]	.00
Self-esteem	.28**	.27**	-.33**
Indirect effects			
Via Self-esteem	.10**	.10**	-.12**
Model 4: Antagonism			
Direct effects			
Antagonism	-.16**	-.15**	.11*
Self-esteem	.30**	.27**	-.31**
Indirect effects			
Via Self-esteem	-.06**	-.05**	.06**
Model 5: Isolation			
Direct effects			
Isolation	-.15*	-.14*	.20**
Self-esteem	.25**	.22**	-.22**
Indirect effects			
Self-esteem	-.14**	-.12**	.12**

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. [‡] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The results regarding self-esteem were in line with the predictions and demonstrated its involvement to some extent in all narcissism strategies. Consistent with expectations, self-esteem mediated the effects of admiration, saviourism, and isolation on RR quality. Given the communal or anti-communal focus of sanctity and antagonism, specific expectations were not formulated for these forms. Nevertheless, the mediation effects were stronger for narcissism forms primarily based on agency (admiration and isolation), except for saviourism, indicating its distinctiveness from admiration. It is important to note that all narcissism forms exhibited

associations with RR quality independent of self-esteem. Communal strategies were uniquely linked to more supportive behaviours, while admiration was associated with higher satisfaction with RR. Antagonism and isolation were generally associated with lower RR quality.

In comparing the narcissism profiles, the communal profile appeared as significantly different from the average profile, likely due to low levels of isolation (see Study 1). Individuals low in narcissism reported lower RR quality, and this difference was fully explained by their lower self-esteem. A closer examination of the profile nature revealed that low narcissism was characterized by low levels of admiration and average levels of isolation, which could explain this result. Finally, the lower RR quality observed among individuals assigned to the antagonistic profile was partially explained by their lower self-esteem.

Table 19

Study 4 - Mediation Model via Self-esteem: Direct and Indirect Effects of Narcissism Profiles

Effects	RR satisfaction	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
Direct effects of profiles			
Communal	.14*	.14*	-.16**
Low	.07	.11 [†]	.01
Agentic	.11*	.10 [†]	-.03
Antagonistic	-.08	-.02	.01
Self-esteem	.28**	.27**	-.28**
Indirect effects of profiles			
<i>Communal</i>			
Via self-esteem	.07**	.07**	-.07**
<i>Low</i>			
Via self-esteem	-.04*	-.04*	.04*
<i>Agentic</i>			
Via self-esteem	.02	.02	-.02
<i>Antagonistic</i>			
Via self-esteem	-.03**	-.03*	.03**

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. Average profile (all narcissism forms on average level) was used as a reference group. Reported coefficients are the differences with tested group and the reference group [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

These findings lead to three key conclusions. Firstly, the mechanisms that link narcissism to RR quality cannot be solely attributed to self-esteem issues, suggesting that there

are additional explanations to be explored. Secondly, while self-esteem did not fully account for the tested associations in any of the narcissism strategies, it emerged as a crucial predictor of RR quality. It overlapped with narcissism but remained independent in its predictive power. This highlights the significance of self-esteem as a separate and influential factor in understanding RR quality. Thirdly, the results provide support for the assumptions of the CMN regarding the role of self-esteem in different narcissism strategies. Specifically, they corroborate previous research indicating that narcissistic neuroticism (represented here by isolation) is the aspect most closely linked to lower self-esteem. Additionally, the study reveals that within the more "adaptive" section of the circumplex, it is admiration rather than any of the communal narcissism strategies that reflects higher self-esteem. This finding aligns with the general understanding that self-esteem tends to be more associated with agency rather than communion (Wojciszke et al., 2011).

3.5 Study 5 – The Role of Empathy in the Link Between Narcissism and Romantic Relationship Quality

The objective of Study 5 was to investigate potential explanations for the variations in the associations between different forms of narcissism and romantic relationship quality (RR quality). Specifically, the focus was on empathy, as its low levels or absence are frequently mentioned in various conceptualizations of narcissism (Sedikides, 2021). However, it is important to note that empathy is a trait primarily associated with communal orientation and may therefore be particularly relevant in the context of communal self-enhancement (Gebauer et al., 2012). Additionally, self-oriented empathy serves as an indicator of poor emotional regulation skills (Decety & Lamm, 2009), contributing to lower RR quality.

I formulated several hypotheses concerning narcissism and empathy (Figure 23). I hypothesized that individuals with communal narcissism, particularly those with a tendency towards communal self-enhancement (especially sanctity), would exhibit higher levels of empathy, which in turn would contribute to improved RR quality. Conversely, due to the agentic orientation associated with admiration, I did not expect any links between this form and empathy. However, temperamental characteristics and general mental toughness (Kinrade et al., 2022) associated with admiration could assist individuals in coping with stress (Sękowski et al., 2023) inflicted with seeing others' difficulties, potentially enhancing their overall RR quality. Regarding antagonism, I expected it to have the strongest association with empathy (Leunissen et al., 2017; Vonk et al., 2013), particularly with low levels of other-oriented empathy (Hepper et al., 2014), indicating negative view of others. Finally, I predicted that isolation would be related to self-focus and, consequently, higher levels of self-oriented empathy, reflecting difficulties in emotion regulation that increase stress in interpersonal contexts. Consistent with the spectrum logic of the CMN, I expected antagonism to be positively linked to self-oriented empathy; on the same note I expected that isolation is linked to lower other-oriented empathy.

H5.1: Higher other-oriented empathy mediates the effect of sanctity on RR quality

H5.2: Higher other-oriented empathy mediates the effect of saviourism on RR quality

H5.3: Lower level of self-oriented empathy mediates the effect of saviourism on RR quality

H5.4: Lower level of self-oriented empathy mediates the effect of admiration on RR quality

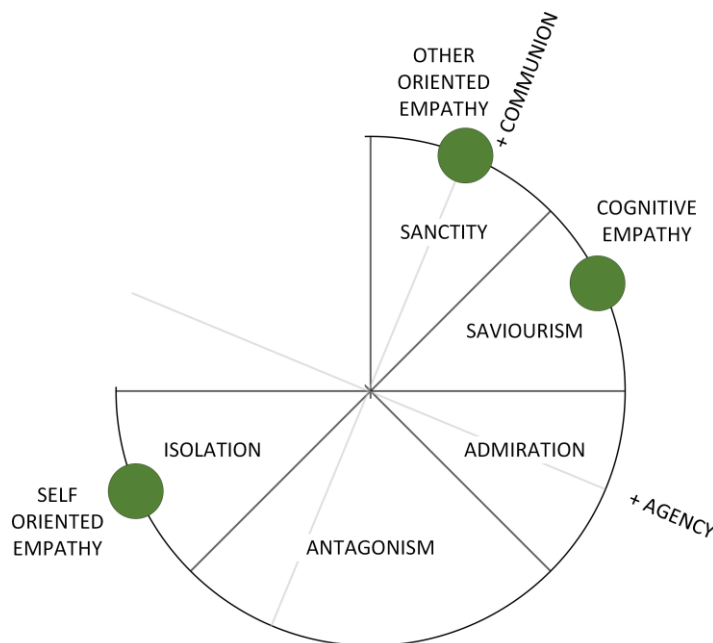
H5.5: Lower level of other-oriented empathy mediates the effect of antagonism on RR quality

H5.6: Lower level of other-oriented empathy mediates the effect of isolation on RR quality

H5.7: Higher level of self-oriented empathy mediates the effect of isolation on RR quality

Figure 23

Hypothetical Locations of Empathy Aspects Within the CMN, Which Was a Basis for Mediation Hypotheses in Study 5



3.5.1 Method

3.5.1.1 Sample and Procedure

Study 5 was conducted on Sample 1, ($N = 447$, 68% females), the same as Study 4. It was a general Polish sample collected via Ariadna online research panel in April 2018. Registered users of the panel were informed about the study via e-mail. After finishing the survey, they were compensated with points internal for Ariadna, which could be exchanged for material rewards. The survey included two measurements, with a week-long lag between them,

to eliminate bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Inclusion criteria were based only on age (all participants were over 18) and relationship status (only people who declared being in a romantic relationship were filling out the survey). Response to all items in the survey was mandatory; data were analysed when a given participant took part in both measurements. Thus, there was no missing data in the sample. Sample 1, used for hypothesis testing, consisted of 447 respondents, predominantly female (68%).

3.5.1.2 Instruments

All instruments were presented in a random order for each participant. Detailed description of each of them is provided above, in the “Methods Overview” section.

Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Saviourism Scale (to assess communal narcissism strategies), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess enmity and isolation). Quality of a romantic relationship was measured using two instruments: Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (to assess supportive and negative behaviours) and Perceived Relationship Quality Components scale (to assess satisfaction with the relationship). Empathy was measured using Empathic Sensitiveness Scale (Kaźmierczak et al., 2007), which measure three aspects of empathy – empathetic concern (other-oriented emotional empathy), perspective taking (cognitive empathy), and personal distress (self-oriented empathy).

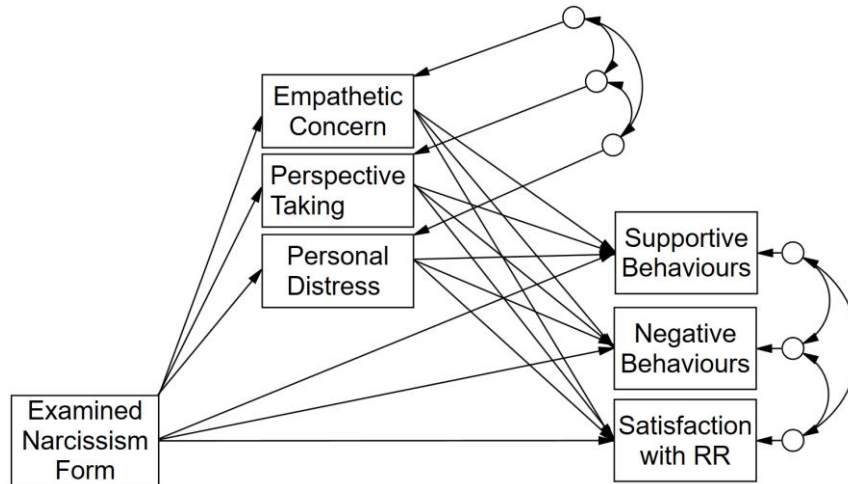
3.5.1.3 Analytical strategy

In Study 5, I examined whether empathy aspects are involved in the narcissism-RR quality link. In all analyses, RR quality was indicated by three variables: satisfaction with the relationship, supportive behaviours in the relationship, and negative behaviours in the relationship. First, I conducted a series of mediation analyses on the zero-order level – one for each studied narcissism strategy. I included three aspects of empathy as simultaneous mediators

and three indicators of relationship quality as explained variables (Figure 24). Finally, to infer on the person-centred level, I used profiles (established in Study 1) as dummy variables and conducted a mediation analysis in which those were endogenous variables (predictors).

Figure 24

Template of Mediation Analyses Conducted in Study 5



3.5.2 Results and Discussion

3.5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 20 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables specific to this study, as well as their correlations with different forms of narcissism. The results indicate significant correlations between narcissism forms and the variables of interest, supporting the overall hypotheses of the study. Specifically, grandiose narcissism forms (sanctity, saviourism, and admiration) were linked to higher (other-related) empathy than vulnerable narcissism forms (antagonism and isolation). Notably, there were variations within each category. Among the grandiose narcissism forms, the strength of the correlations decreased along the spectrum, with sanctity exhibiting the strongest link, highlighting differences in self-reported communal orientation. Furthermore, isolation was found to be more strongly related to personal distress compared to antagonism, suggesting a stronger association with neuroticism. Consistent with previous literature, the empathy indicators demonstrated that higher levels of other-oriented

empathy were associated with better RR quality, while higher levels of self-oriented empathy were linked to poorer RR quality.

3.5.2.2 Empathy as a Mediator

Separate mediation models were conducted for each form of narcissism, revealing that aspects of empathy partially mediated the links between these forms and RR quality (Table 21). The analysis also unveiled diverse roles played by different aspects of empathy. Specifically, empathetic concern was positively associated with RR satisfaction and supportive behaviours, but not with negative behaviours. On the other hand, perspective-taking was negatively associated with negative behaviours, but not with RR satisfaction or supportive behaviours. As anticipated, personal distress exhibited different effects compared to the other two aspects of empathy. It was linked to lower RR satisfaction and supportive behaviours, as well as higher negative behaviours.

Empathetic concern and perspective-taking mediated the effects of three narcissism forms, all of which were associated with the communion domain: sanctity, saviourism, and antagonism. Communal narcissism forms were linked to higher RR satisfaction and supportive behaviours through greater empathetic concern. In contrast, antagonism was linked to lower RR satisfaction and supportive behaviours through lower empathetic concern. Perspective-taking had similar effects, but specifically on negative behaviours. On the other hand, personal distress acted as a mediator for all forms of narcissism studied. Grandiose narcissism forms were associated with higher RR quality through lower personal distress, while vulnerable narcissism forms were linked to lower RR quality through higher personal distress. These findings shed light on the nuanced relationships between narcissism, empathy, and RR quality, emphasizing the distinct roles played by different aspects of empathy in mediating these associations.

Table 20*Study 5 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With 95% Confidence Intervals*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sanctity	4.14	0.89										
2. Saviourism	3.22	1.03	.72**									
			[.67, .76]									
3. Admiration	3.15	0.88	.46**	.63**								
			[.39, .53]	[.57, .68]								
4. Antagonism	2.33	0.79	-.20**	.03	.12*							
			[-.29, -.11]	[-.06, .12]	[.02, .21]							
5. Isolation	2.83	1.08	-.14**	-.07	-.12**	.67**						
			[-.23, -.05]	[-.16, .02]	[-.21, -.03]	[.62, .72]						
6. Empathetic concern	3.59	0.51	.46**	.25**	.13**	-.26**	-.05					
			[.38, .53]	[.16, .33]	[.04, .22]	[-.34, -.17]	[-.15, .04]					
7. Perspective taking	3.61	0.47	.40**	.24**	.15**	-.29**	-.15**	.52**				
			[.32, .47]	[.15, .32]	[.06, .24]	[-.37, -.20]	[-.24, -.05]	[.45, .58]				
8. Personal distress	3.09	0.64	-.18**	-.17**	-.20**	.33**	.59**	.09	-.14**			
			[-.27, -.09]	[-.26, -.08]	[-.29, -.11]	[.25, .41]	[.52, .65]	[-.00, .18]	[-.23, -.05]			
9. Supportive behaviours	3.33	0.78	.27**	.17**	.19**	-.21**	-.26**	.22**	.22**	-.21**		
			[.18, .35]	[.08, .26]	[.10, .28]	[-.30, -.12]	[-.35, -.18]	[.13, .30]	[.13, .31]	[-.30, -.12]		
10. Negative behaviours	2.31	0.79	-.13**	-.08	-.12*	.25**	.32**	-.08	-.20**	.30**	-.34**	
			[-.22, -.04]	[-.17, .01]	[-.21, -.03]	[.16, .33]	[.23, .40]	[-.18, .01]	[-.28, -.11]	[.21, .38]	[-.42, -.25]	
11. RR satisfaction	5.58	1.18	.26**	.21**	.24**	-.25**	-.28**	.17**	.16**	-.24**	.66**	-.50**
			[.17, .34]	[.12, .30]	[.15, .32]	[-.33, -.16]	[-.37, -.19]	[.08, .26]	[.07, .25]	[-.32, -.15]	[.60, .71]	[-.57, -.43]

Notes. RR = Romantic relationship * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 21Study 5- *Separate Mediation Models via Empathy: Direct and Indirect Effects*

Effects	Satisfaction with relationship	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
Model 1: Sanctity			
Direct effects			
Sanctity	.17**	.15**	-.01
Empathetic concern	.11	.13*	-.04
Perspective taking	.01	.07	-.14*
Personal distress	-.22**	-.19**	.28**
Indirect effects			
Via empathetic concern	.05	.06*	-.02
Via perspective taking	.04**	.06	-.05*
Via personal distress	.04**	.03*	-.05**
Model 2: Saviourism			
Direct effects			
Saviourism	.13**	.07	.01
Empathetic concern	.15**	.17**	-.04
Perspective taking	.02	.08	-.14*
Personal distress	-.23**	-.21**	.29**
Indirect effects			
Via empathetic concern	.04*	.04*	-.01
Via perspective taking	.01	.02	-.03*
Via personal distress	.04**	.04*	-.05**
Model 3: Admiration			
Direct effects			
Admiration	.17**	.12*	-.04
Empathetic concern	.16**	.17**	-.04
Perspective taking	.03	.09	-.13*
Personal distress	-.21**	-.20**	.28**
Indirect effects			
Via empathetic concern	.02	.02	-.01
Via perspective taking	.00	.01	-.02
Via personal distress	.04**	.04**	-.06**
Model 4: Antagonism			
Direct effects			
Antagonism	-.13*	-.10*	.08
Empathetic concern	.15*	.17**	-.02
Perspective taking	.02	.08	-.13*
Personal distress	-.22**	-.20**	.27**
Indirect effects			
Via empathetic concern	-.04*	-.04**	.01
Via perspective taking	-.01	-.02	.03*
Via personal distress	-.05*	-.04**	.06**
Model 5: Isolation			
Direct effects			
Isolation	-.19**	-.17**	.20**
Empathetic concern	.16**	.17**	-.02
Perspective taking	.03	.09	-.13*
Personal distress	-.14*	-.12	.16**
Indirect effects			
Via empathetic concern	-.01	-.01	.00
Via perspective taking	-.01	-.01	.02
Via personal distress	-.08*	-.07	.10**

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The results from the model focused on narcissism profiles provided similar findings (Table 22). Empathetic concern was positively associated with higher RR satisfaction and more supportive behaviours, while perspective taking was linked to fewer negative behaviours. Personal distress was related to overall lower RR quality. Compared to individuals in the average narcissism profile, those in the communal profile reported higher RR quality, which could be attributed to higher levels of empathetic concern and lower personal distress. However, the reduced frequency of negative behaviours in this profile was not explained by perspective taking. Individuals with lower levels of narcissism reported slightly lower RR quality due to higher personal distress, likely influenced by moderate levels of isolation combined with low levels of admiration or saviourism characteristic of this profile. Interestingly, individuals in the agentic profile reported higher RR quality, but this was not mediated by any of the aspects of empathy. This finding suggests that communal aspects play a negligible role in the interpersonal functioning of individuals in this profile, as reported in previous studies (e.g., Campbell et al., 2006). Surprisingly, the antagonistic profile was only marginally associated with lower RR quality compared to the average profile. However, in line with H5.5, this difference was partially explained by lower levels of empathetic concern. Overall, the model accounted for a total of $R^2 = .115$, $.132$, and $.123$ for RR satisfaction, supportive behaviours, and negative behaviours, respectively. These findings provide further insights into the relationship between narcissism profiles, empathy, and RR quality, highlighting the distinct roles of different aspects of empathy in mediating these associations.

Table 22*Study 5 - Mediation Model via Empathy: Direct and Indirect Effects of Narcissism Profiles*

Effects	RR satisfaction	Supportive behaviours	Negative behaviours
Direct effects			
Communal profile	.11	.09	-.11*
Low narcissism profile	.05	.09	.02
Agentic profile	.13*	.12*	-.04
Antagonistic profile	-.09	-.02	.03
Empathetic concern	.16**	.18**	-.02
Perspective taking	.00	.07	-.12*
Personal distress	-.23**	-.22	.24**
Indirect effects			
<i>Communal profile</i>			
Via empathetic concern	.03*	.04*	-.01
Via perspective taking	.00	.02	-.03
Via personal distress	.07**	.06**	-.07**
<i>Low narcissism profile</i>			
Via empathetic concern	.01	.01	-.00
Via perspective taking	.00	.00	-.01
Via personal distress	-.03*	-.03*	.03*
<i>Agentic profile</i>			
Via empathetic concern	.00	.00	.00
Via perspective taking	.00	.01	-.01
Via personal distress	-.01	-.01	.01
<i>Antagonistic profile</i>			
Via empathetic concern	-.02*	-.02**	.00
Via perspective taking	.00	-.01	.02
Via personal distress	.00	.00	.00

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. The Balanced profile (all narcissism forms on average level) was used as a reference group. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Partitioning empathy into its different aspects proved to be necessary, as the effects varied across each aspect. Empathetic concern, representing the emotional and other-oriented aspect of empathy, was positively associated with RR satisfaction and frequency of supportive behaviours. Perspective taking, representing the cognitive other-oriented aspect of empathy, was linked to a lower frequency of negative behaviours. On the other hand, personal distress, representing the self-oriented aspect of empathy and reflecting neuroticism, was associated with lower RR quality across all aspects. These findings are consistent with previous studies on empathy (Leunissen et al., 2017).

Importantly, these characteristics align with the CMN framework, which emphasizes the agency-communion distinction. The hypotheses (H5.1, H5.2, and H5.4) were supported, as other-oriented empathy played a crucial role in explaining the links between communal narcissism forms and higher RR quality, as well as between antagonism and lower RR quality. Additionally, while H5.3 and H5.7 were also confirmed, indicating that self-oriented empathy partially mediated the links for admiration and isolation, these effects were not unique to those two forms. The lower levels of self-oriented empathy partly explained why grandiose narcissism forms (sanctity, saviourism, admiration) were associated with higher RR quality, while higher self-reported empathy explained the poorer RR quality associated with vulnerable narcissism forms. Notably, the mediating effect of self-oriented empathy was strongest for isolation, which is consistent with the findings of study 4, where isolation was most strongly linked to low self-esteem.

3.6 Study 6 – The Role of Emotional Functioning in the Link Between Narcissism and Romantic Relationship Quality

The aim of study 6 was to investigate potential emotion-related explanations for the variations in the links between different narcissism forms and romantic relationship quality (Figure 25). Specifically, I focused on three indicators of emotional functioning: beliefs about the acceptability of emotions and consequences of showing emotions, emotional dysregulation, and emotional manipulateness.

First, I examined the beliefs about the acceptability of emotions and whether showing emotions is seen as a sign of lack of control and weakness. Drawing on previous research (Tracy et al., 2009), hypothesized that narcissism, in general, would be associated with higher levels of perceiving emotions as unacceptable. However, since showing emotions is an important aspect of interpersonal relationships and communal orientation, I expected higher levels of unacceptability of emotions in agency-based narcissism forms, particularly admiration.

Second, emotional dysregulation was explored as it is consistently linked to vulnerable narcissism forms such as isolation and antagonism. Building on the findings from study 5, I hypothesized that emotional dysregulation would play a mediating role in the link between narcissism and romantic relationship quality. Specifically, I expected emotional dysregulation to explain the lower quality of romantic relationships associated with isolation.

Finally, on a behavioural level, I examined whether emotional manipulateness could account for the lower quality of romantic relationships, particularly in relation to antagonism. Emotional manipulateness refers to the. I hypothesized that higher tendency to use emotions as a tool for manipulation and control would explain lower romantic relationship quality in individuals high in antagonism.

H6.1. Unacceptability of emotions is positively related to isolation, antagonism, and admiration

H6.2 Unacceptability of emotions mediates the links between isolation, antagonism, and admiration and RR satisfaction

H6.3 Emotional dysregulation is positively related to isolation and antagonism

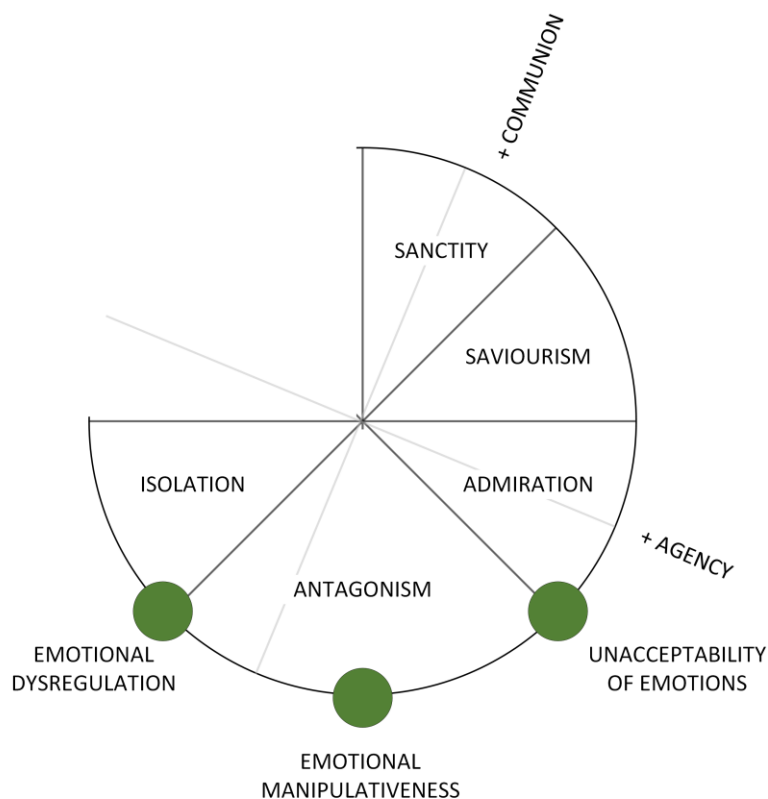
H6.4 Emotional dysregulation mediates the links between isolation, antagonism and RR satisfaction

H6.5 Emotional manipulateness is positively related to isolation and antagonism, with stronger effects for the latter

H6.6 Emotional manipulateness mediates the links between isolation, antagonism and RR satisfaction

Figure 25

Hypothetical Locations of Emotional Functioning Aspects Within the CMN, Which Was a Basis for Mediation Hypotheses in Study 6



3.6.1 Method

3.6.1.1 Sample and Procedure

Study 6, similar to studies 4 and 5 was conducted on a general Polish sample collected via Ariadna online research panel. The data was collected in February 2023 (Sample 7). Registered users of the panel were informed about the study via e-mail. After finishing the survey, they were compensated with points internal for Ariadna, which could be exchanged for material rewards. Response to all items in the survey was mandatory. Thus, there was no missing data in the sample. Inclusion criteria were based only on age (all participants were over 18). Initial sample consisted of 1069 participants, which was reduced to 684 after those who declared not being in the romantic relationship were filtered out. Sample 7, used for hypothesis testing, consisted of 684 respondents (aged 18-87, $M_{\text{age}} = 45.7$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.26$, 53.7% females).

3.6.1.2 Instruments

Narcissism was measured similarly to previous studies, using NSSQ, NARC, and VIEC. Romantic relationship quality was indicated only by components-based RR satisfaction, measured by PRQC. Negative beliefs about emotions were measured using BES, emotional dysregulation was measured using DERS, while emotional manipulation was measured using emotional manipulation questionnaire. Instruments were randomized for each of the participants.

3.6.1.3 Analytical strategy

I followed the same procedure as in Studies 4 and 5. After zero-order analyses based on Pearson's correlations, I conducted a series of mediation analyses for each of the mediators (beliefs about unacceptability of emotions, emotional dysregulation, and emotional manipulateness). First, I conducted four mediation analyses for each studied mediator, with narcissism forms interchangeably used as predictors (Figure 26). Then, given the overlap of the

mediators, I conducted four mediation analyses in which all three were used simultaneously (Figure 27). Finally, to infer on the person-centred level, I used profiles (established in Study 1) as dummy variables and conducted four mediation analyses (three with single mediator and one with three parallel mediators) in which those were endogenous variables (predictors).

Figure 26

Template of “Singular” Mediation Analyses Conducted in Study 6

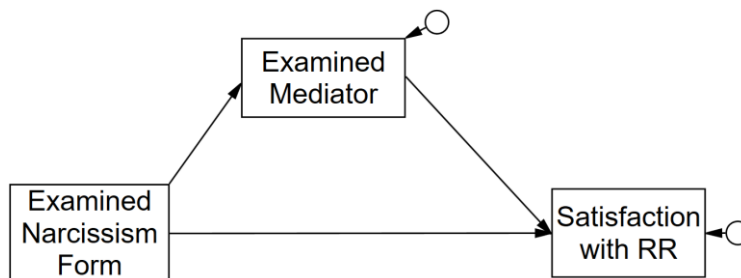
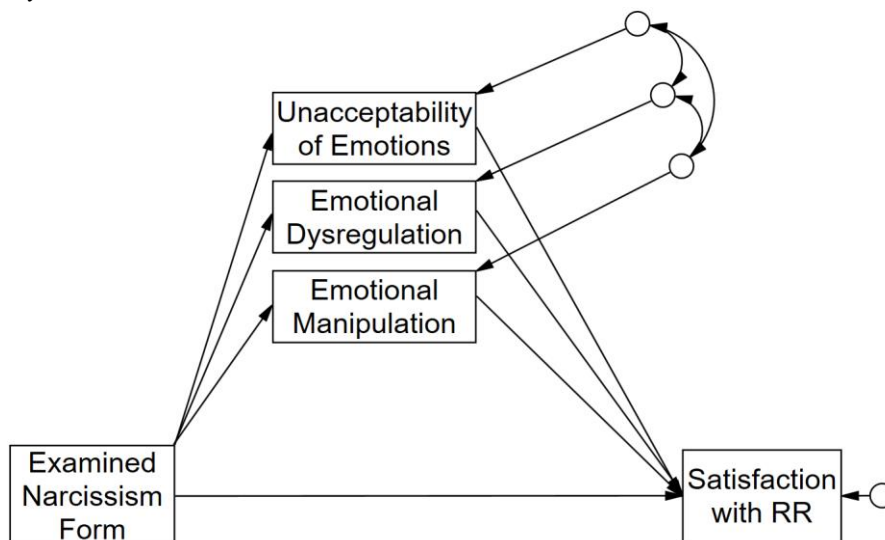


Figure 27

Template of “Parallel” Mediation Analyses Conducted in Study 6



3.6.2 Results and Discussion

3.6.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 23 presents the means and standard deviations of the variables specific to this study, along with their correlations with different narcissism forms. The results showed significant correlations between narcissism forms and the emotional functioning variables, with variations observed across the different forms. It is important to note that in this sample, sanctity and saviourism demonstrated substantial overlap, making it challenging to separate them. Therefore, the results were interpreted in terms of communal narcissism, encompassing both forms.

The zero-order correlations were consistent with the predictions of the study and aligned with the spectrum logic of the CMN. Communal narcissism demonstrated distinct patterns of associations compared to other narcissism forms. It showed weak, but positive correlations with unacceptability of emotions and emotional manipulateness, while not being related to emotional dysregulation. Admiration, despite being strongly correlated with both communal narcissism and antagonism, displayed similar emotional functioning characteristics to the latter. It exhibited better emotional regulation but was still positively linked to unacceptability of emotions and emotional manipulateness.

Both antagonism and isolation were associated with poorer emotional functioning, with notable differences indicating their distinctiveness. Antagonism displayed higher levels of manipulateness, while isolation demonstrated greater emotional dysregulation. Furthermore, all variables indicating poorer emotional functioning were negatively correlated with RR satisfaction, highlighting the importance of emotional functioning in romantic relationship quality.

3.6.2.2 Mediation Role of Emotional Functioning

Unacceptability of emotions was rather weakly involved in the link between narcissism and RR satisfaction. The only significant result that I found considered admiration. However, the relative explanatory role of such a model was lower than for other narcissism forms, as indicated by R^2 value. In all other narcissism forms the effects were hardly mediated by unacceptability of emotions (Table 24). Emotional dysregulation, which was more strongly associated with isolation and antagonism than other narcissism strategies, significantly mediated the link between these forms and RR satisfaction. Additionally, a weak suppressive effect was found for admiration, although this effect was negligible since both the total and direct effects of admiration were insignificant. Furthermore, emotional manipulation was found to mediate the effects of all studied narcissism strategies. The mediation effect sizes were particularly higher for admiration and antagonism compared to other narcissism strategies.

Table 23*Study 6 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations with 95% Confidence Intervals*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Sanctity	3.81	0.79								
2. Saviourism	3.70	0.83	.86**							
			[.84, .88]							
3. Admiration	3.24	0.99	.52**	.57**						
			[.46, .57]	[.52, .62]						
4. Antagonism	2.75	0.97	.19**	.22**	.56**					
			[.12, .26]	[.15, .29]	[.51, .61]					
5. Isolation	3.17	1.06	.13**	.15**	.28**	.68**				
			[.05, .20]	[.07, .22]	[.21, .34]	[.63, .71]				
6. Unacceptability of Emotions	3.74	1.10	.10**	.09*	.29**	.39**	.35**			
			[.02, .17]	[.01, .16]	[.22, .36]	[.32, .45]	[.29, .42]			
7. Emotional Dysregulation	2.37	0.69	-.01	.03	.19**	.45**	.51**	.37**		
			[-.09, .06]	[-.04, .11]	[.12, .27]	[.39, .51]	[.45, .56]	[.30, .43]		
8. Emotional Manipulation	2.26	1.23	.10*	.16**	.42**	.58**	.42**	.36**	.52**	
			[.02, .17]	[.09, .23]	[.36, .48]	[.53, .63]	[.35, .48]	[.29, .42]	[.46, .57]	
9. RR satisfaction	5.62	1.20	.15**	.15**	-.02	-.16**	-.18**	-.13**	-.21**	-.25**
			[.08, .22]	[.07, .22]	[-.09, .06]	[-.24, -.09]	[-.25, -.10]	[-.20, -.05]	[-.28, -.13]	[-.32, -.18]

Notes. RR = Romantic relationship * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Given a substantial associations between all three mediators (Table 23), I conducted a multiple mediation analysis using all three mediators simultaneously. The results revealed that emotional functioning mediated the effects of antagonism and isolation, but not communal narcissism or admiration (as reported direct effects in Table 25). Among the mediators, emotional manipulateness had the strongest and negative independent effect on RR satisfaction. Emotional dysregulation independently mediated the effects only in the case of antagonism. This overlap in mediation effects is also reflected in the amount of explained variance, with the lowest variance explained for antagonism and the highest for communal narcissism. Therefore, the positive association between communal narcissism and RR satisfaction may be explained through mechanisms other than emotional functioning.

The analysis of narcissism profiles (Table 26) yielded consistent results. Unacceptability of emotions showed weak associations with both narcissism and RR satisfaction. Emotional dysregulation and manipulateness accounted for some differences between the profiles. Higher RR satisfaction in the communal and low-narcissism profiles could be partially explained by their better emotional functioning, characterized by improved emotional regulation and lower tendencies for manipulation. It is important to note that these mediation effects were partial, suggesting that the differences in RR satisfaction may be influenced by factors beyond emotional functioning. Conversely, individuals low in narcissism reported higher RR satisfaction due to their lesser tendencies for emotional manipulation, while not differing from the reference group in terms of emotional regulation. Individuals assigned to agentic and antagonistic profiles reported lower RR satisfaction due to emotional dysregulation and higher tendencies for emotional manipulation.

Table 24*Study 6 - Separate Mediation Models Predicting RR Satisfaction: Direct and Indirect Effects*

Effects	Mediator		
	Unacceptability of emotions	Emotional dysregulation	Emotional manipulativeness
Model 1: Communal narcissism on RR satisfaction			
Direct effects			
Communal narcissism	.17**	.16**	.19**
Mediator	-.15**	-.21**	-.28**
Indirect effects			
Via mediator	-.01 [†]	.00	-.04**
<i>R</i> ²	.044	.067	.099
Model 2: Admiration on RR satisfaction			
Direct effects			
Admiration	.02	.02	.11**
Mediator	-.14**	-.21**	-.30**
Indirect effects			
Via mediator	-.04**	-.04**	-.13**
<i>R</i> ²	.017	.043	.072
Model 3: Antagonism on RR satisfaction			
Direct effects			
Rivalrous narcissism	-.14**	-.09*	-.03
Mediator	-.08	-.17**	-.24**
Indirect effects			
Via mediator	-.03 [†]	-.08**	-.14**
<i>R</i> ²	.032	.049	.063
Model 4: Isolation on RR satisfaction			
Direct effects			
Vulnerable narcissism	-.15**	-.10*	-.09*
Mediator	-.08 [†]	-.16*	-.21**
Indirect effects			
Via mediator	-.03 [†]	-.08**	-.09**
<i>R</i> ²	.036	.050	.069

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 25

Study 6 - Summary of Four Simultaneous Mediation Models via Emotional Functioning: Direct and Indirect Effects

Effects	Predictor			
	Communal narcissism	Admiration	Antagonism	Isolation
Direct effects				
Examined narcissism form	.19**	.11**	.00	-.06
Unacceptability of emotions	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.01
Emotional dysregulation	-.08 [‡]	-.09 [‡]	-.10*	-.08
Emotional manipulativeness	-.22**	-.24**	-.19**	-.18**
Indirect effects				
Via unacceptability of emotions	.00	-.01	-.01	-.01
Via emotional dysregulation	.00	-.02 [‡]	-.05*	-.04
Via emotional manipulativeness	-.03**	-.10**	-.11**	-.08**
<i>R</i> ²	.106	.082	.072	.074

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. [‡] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 26

Study 6 - Separate Mediation Models Predicting RR Satisfaction With Narcissism Profiles: Direct and Indirect Effects

Effects	Mediator		
	Unacceptability of emotions	Emotional dysregulation	Emotional manipulativeness
Direct effects			
Communal profile	.08*	.06 [‡]	.07*
Low narcissism profile	.03	.05	.01
Agentic profile	-.01	.02	.04
Antagonistic profile	-.12*	-.09*	-.06
Mediator	-.09*	-.17**	-.23**
Indirect effects			
Communal profile	.02 [‡]	.03**	.02**
Low narcissism profile	.01 [‡]	.00	.03**
Agentic profile	-.01 [‡]	-.04**	-.06**
Antagonistic profile	-.01 [‡]	-.04**	-.07**
<i>R</i> ²	.038	.057	.073

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. [‡] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The replication of these results was evident when all indicators of emotional functioning were included as simultaneous mediators (Table 27). Once the mediators were incorporated into the analysis, no direct differences between the profiles and the reference group were observed, highlighting the significance of emotional functioning in explaining narcissists' relationship quality. However, it is worth noting that using profiles appeared to be less effective in predicting variance in RR satisfaction compared to using individual narcissism forms as traits. The inclusion of all profiles explained 7.9% of the variance, while similar analyses focusing on a single narcissism form as a trait explained anywhere from 7.2% to 10.6% of the same dependent variable.

Table 27

Study 6 - Mediation Model via Emotional Functioning: Direct and Indirect Effects of Narcissism Profiles

Effects	RR satisfaction
Direct effects	
Communal profile	.05
Low narcissism profile	.02
Agentic profile	.05
Antagonistic profile	-.05
Unacceptability of emotions	-.02
Emotional dysregulation	-.09*
Emotional manipulateness	-.18**
Indirect effects	
<i>Communal profile</i>	
Via unacceptability of emotions	.00
Via emotional dysregulation	.02 [†]
Via emotional manipulateness	.02**
<i>Low narcissism profile</i>	
Via unacceptability of emotions	.00
Via emotional dysregulation	.00
Via emotional manipulateness	.03**
<i>Agentic profile</i>	
Via unacceptability of emotions	.00
Via emotional dysregulation	-.02 [†]
Via emotional manipulateness	-.05**
<i>Antagonistic profile</i>	
Via unacceptability of emotions	.00
Via emotional dysregulation	-.02 [†]
Via emotional manipulateness	-.06**
<i>R</i> ²	.079

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. The Average profile (all narcissism forms on moderate level) was used as a reference group. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

3.7 Study 7 – The Role of Emotional Communication in the Link Between Narcissism and Romantic Relationship Quality

In Study 7, I aimed to verify the role of different narcissism forms in interpersonal communication, particularly in relation to the communication of emotions, both positive and negative. I conducted this laboratory study where I measured the type and quantity of emotions communicated during recorded interactions between dyads in two scenarios: conflict discussion and affirmation of the partner. Although my expectations were mostly tentative due to the null results observed in partner-rated narcissism scores and relationship quality in Study 2, I drew on findings from other studies, specifically Study 5 (empathy) and Study 6 (emotional functioning), to formulate several expectations for this study.

I expected that communal narcissism forms would be associated with more positive emotional communication, based on the findings from Study 1 that showed a positive link between communal narcissism and positive behaviours. However, I did not anticipate a significant association with the quantity of negative emotions, as there was no previous evidence of a link between communal narcissism and negative behaviours. Drawing on the results from Study 5, which indicated a positive relationship between communal narcissism and other-based emotional empathy (empathetic concern), as well as the findings from Study 6 that revealed weak beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions in communal narcissism, I also hypothesized that communal narcissism would be related to a greater expression of positive emotions during the affirmation task. Additionally, I expected differences between sanctity and saviourism, with sanctity being associated with more positive emotionality. This expectation was based on two important cues, crucial in the CMN. Firstly, saviourism is considered "lower" on the narcissism spectrum and is more closely linked to antagonistic expressions of the trait. Secondly, as a self-protection strategy aimed at restoring threatened self-views in communality, saviourism may involve devaluing the partner's communion.

I hypothesized that admiration would be related to a lower display of emotions during the interactions, particularly in the affirmation task, based on the higher unacceptability of emotions associated with it as found in Study 6. I also anticipated that if emotions were expressed, they would be predominantly negative, considering the findings of more negative behaviours reported by partners in Study 2 and higher emotional manipulation in Study 6. However, given the overall self-confidence exhibited by individuals with admiration (indicated by higher self-esteem in Study 4), I expected that there may be alternative explanations for this link beyond emotional factors.

I expected that individuals higher in antagonism would display less positive and more negative emotions during interactions with their partners, based on the consistent findings from previous studies. However, it is important to note that the negative behaviours associated with antagonism are more directed towards others rather than oneself. Previous research has shown that self-esteem only weakly mediated this relationship (as observed in Study 4). Additionally, individuals with antagonism tend to exhibit lower levels of other-oriented emotional empathy (as found in Study 5), poorer emotional regulation, and a higher tendency to manipulate others' emotions (as indicated in Study 6). These characteristics suggest that individuals with antagonism may exacerbate conflicts, particularly when they involve topics that are important to them personally. (which was designed in the study).

Based on the findings from previous studies, isolation showed similarities to antagonism in terms of its correlates. However, there were also some notable differences, suggesting that isolation is more self-focused rather than derogatory towards others. The lower romantic relationship quality associated with isolation was explained by intrapersonal factors, such as lower self-esteem (as observed in Study 4), self-oriented empathy (as found in Study 5), and emotional dysregulation (as indicated in Study 6). In terms of interpersonal dynamics, isolation was linked to a higher tendency for emotional manipulation (as seen in Study 6). Interestingly,

it was not related to other-oriented empathy (as reported in Study 5). Given these patterns of results, I expected isolation to be associated with a greater expression of negative emotions during interactions, while not necessarily being linked to the display of positive emotions.

H7.1. Communal narcissism forms are linked to expressions of more positive emotions and less negative emotions during discussion with romantic partner.

H7.2. Admiration is not linked to the quantity of positive emotions expression, yet it is linked to more expressions of negative emotions during discussion with romantic partner.

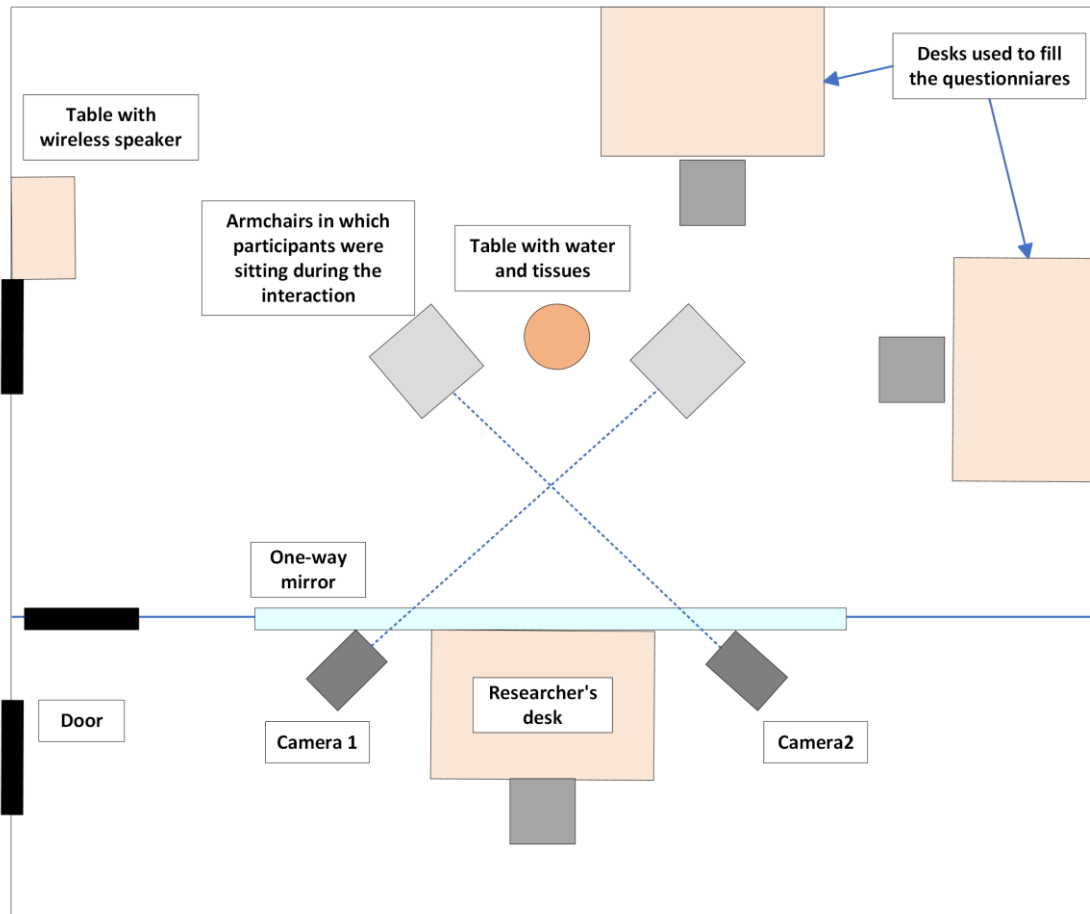
H7.3. Antagonism is linked to less expressions of positive emotions and more expressions of negative emotions during discussion with romantic partner.

H7.4. Isolation is not linked to the quantity of positive emotions expression, yet it is linked to more expressions of negative emotions during discussion with romantic partner.

3.7.1 Method

3.7.1 Sample and Procedure

Study 7 was conducted in a laboratory setting between 2021 and 2022. The sample consisted of 50 romantic couples who had been in a relationship for at least 6 months. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants, utilizing undergraduate students' contacts and advertisements on local webpages. The advertisements included basic information about the study, including remuneration details, and interested individuals were directed to contact the researcher for more information. Once potential participants agreed to the study conditions, they were asked to schedule an appointment using an online tool, which provided available 2-hour time slots each week during the semester. Prior to the laboratory session, both partners completed an online survey. Each participant received a 50PLN gift card as remuneration and provided written consent for their participation and the use of recorded interactions for research purposes

Figure 28*Study 7 – Laboratory Layout*

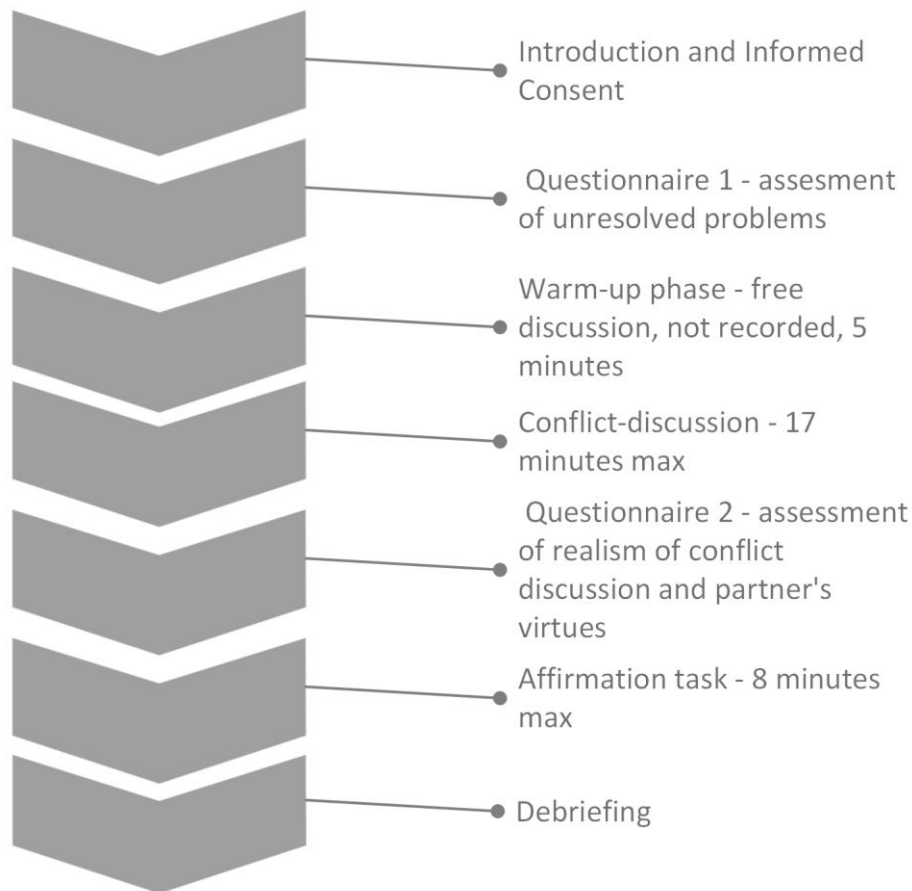
The data collection for this study took place in a controlled laboratory setting provided by the University of Gdańsk. The room included a one-way mirror, behind which two cameras were positioned to record the interactions between the participants (participants did not know the exact positions of cameras). Both partners were provided with water and paper tissues, which were placed in the small table between them. The participants were seated in armchairs, positioned approximately 135 degrees apart, with a small table between them containing water and paper tissues (Figure 28). The entire data collection process was conducted by the researcher, with the assistance of a trained undergraduate student. Communication with the participants during the session was done indirectly through a wireless speaker, ensuring that they could only see and interact with each other.

The laboratory procedure consisted of several steps (Figure 29). First, there were initial greetings and introductions, where the researcher explained the nature of the study and obtained written consent from both partners. They were also asked to fill out a questionnaire that included an open-ended task to list three issues that create conflicts between them. Following the warm-up phase, where the participants were left alone for about 5 minutes, the conflict discussion phase began. The participants were asked to discuss the problems they listed in their questionnaires, with an emphasis on constructive approaches. Each problem was randomly selected, and the discussion continued until both partners felt there was nothing more to say or after approximately 7 minutes. Most couples discussed all six listed problems, and the duration of this task did not exceed 17 minutes.

After the conflict discussion, the participants were asked to fill out another questionnaire evaluating the realism of the discussion and listing three important or positive characteristics of their partner. The next task was an affirmation task, where each participant took turns reading out and explaining the reasons for listing the chosen characteristics, providing an experiential example. This task was done as a monologue, not a discussion, and its overall duration did not exceed 8 minutes.

Finally, a debriefing session took place, during which the participants filled out a third questionnaire evaluating the realism of the affirmation task and assessing their mood using a five-item scale. Overwhelming majority of respondents rated their mood as very positive ($M = 4.7$; $SD = 0.3$), with only one person rating the mood as poor. The researcher then provided verbal debriefing, explaining the detailed aims of the study, and engaged in a short discussion to evaluate the participants' psychological state at that point. At the end of the session, the participants were asked for their consent to use the recordings for purposes beyond the current project, with the assurance that it would only be used if both agreed.

Figure 29
Study 7 – Procedure



3.7.1.2 Instruments

Narcissism was measured using Narcissistic Sanctity and Heroism Scale (to assess communal narcissism forms), Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale (to assess admiration and rivalry), and Isolation subscale of Vulnerable Isolation and Enmity Scale (to assess isolation), described above. The quality of a romantic relationship was measured using Network of Relationships Inventory – Behavioral Systems Version (to assess supportive and negative behaviours).

The recordings were rated by two trained undergraduate students who were after at least 4 years undergraduate courses. Their ratings were based on Specific Affect Coding System

(SPAFF; Coan & Gottman, 2008), in which all emotional reactions during the laboratory session were assigned into one of 16 categories, which were then grouped into second-order factors of “positive” and “negative” emotional communicates. Moreover, given extensive studies on four of “negative” emotional communicates (i.e., Four Horses of the Apocalypse, Gottman & Gottman, 2022) in romantic context, they (criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, contempt) were additionally grouped together.

3.7.1.3 Analytical strategy

In Study 7, I examined whether narcissism forms differ in term of communication of specific emotions and whether that difference could explain narcissism-RR quality link. In all analyses, RR quality was indicated by two variables: supportive behaviours in the relationship, and negative behaviours in the relationship. Given sample size, I examined the hypotheses only on zero-order level, examining which emotional communicates in the interaction could be predicted by each narcissism form.

3.7.2 Results

3.7.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

In Table 28 I report means and standard deviations of observed emotions during each task. As each recording was of slightly different length, the results were standardized by dividing the overall number of emotional communicates by the time of the interaction. Thus, values reported in the Table show a relative number of emotional communicates observed per one minute. Moreover, as some of the emotions were not observed in some dyads, the emotions are also characterized by the number of dyads in which a particular emotion was communicated at least once.

Table 28

Study 7 - Prevalence of Emotional Communicates During Conflict Discussion and Affirmation of the Partner

	Conflict Discussion Task						Affirmation Task					
	Women			Men			Women			Men		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall emotions	48	2.32	1.21	48	2.27	1.23	46	1.39	0.61	46	1.15	0.58
Positive emotions	48	0.94	0.60	48	0.86	0.57	46	1.38	0.60	46	1.13	0.59
Humour	44	0.47	0.45	44	0.47	0.43	34	0.47	0.34	34	0.46	0.34
Validation	44	0.35	0.21	46	0.31	0.21	40	0.39	0.18	37	0.34	0.18
Interest	27	0.17	0.14	23	0.09	0.04	1	0.19	-	0	-	-
Affection	30	0.13	0.07	27	0.15	0.09	46	0.57	0.24	45	0.47	0.22
Enthusiasm	5	0.09	0.05	5	0.09	0.04	22	0.25	0.14	14	0.19	0.12
Negative Emotions	48	1.39	0.89	48	1.41	0.92	46	0.01	0.04	46	0.02	0.05
Belligerence	24	0.15	0.09	22	0.13	0.14	1	0.13	-	0	-	-
Fear/Tension	8	0.15	0.10	17	0.11	0.08	1	0.14	-	2	0.14	0.00
Whining	7	0.14	0.11	3	0.05	0.01	0	-	-	0	-	-
Dominance	43	0.34	0.33	43	0.29	0.26	0	-	-	1	0.15	-
Anger	6	0.08	0.06	0	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	-
Sadness	20	0.16	0.17	18	0.13	0.08	0	-	-	1	0.14	-
Disgust	0	-	-	1	0.06	-	0	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Four horses</i>	48	0.89	0.66	48	1.00	0.72	1	0.19	-	1	0.14	-
Criticism	45	0.54	0.39	42	0.33	0.26	0	-	-	1	0.14	-
Defensiveness	41	0.42	0.34	45	0.72	0.54	1	0.19	-	0	-	-
Stonewalling	6	0.08	0.03	12	0.13	0.10	0	-	-	0	-	-
Contempt	4	0.10	0.04	2	0.14	0.01	0	-	-	0	-	-

Note. *n* = number of people who communicated given emotion at least once; *M/SD* = number of given emotions communicated per minute **among couples in which those emotions were communicated**. Statistically significant ($p < .01$) differences between partners are bolded.

The descriptive analysis of emotional communication during the interaction provides valuable insights. Firstly, in line with the expected emotional nature of the tasks, the conflict discussion involved fewer positive emotions and more negative emotions compared to the affirmation task. Secondly, there were differences in the frequency of specific emotional expressions. In the conflict discussion, emotions such as humour, dominance, criticism, and defensiveness were observed most frequently, while in the affirmation task, humour and validation were more prevalent. Notably, highly destructive emotions such as contempt and disgust were rarely observed. Additionally, a gender difference emerged, with women more likely to communicate criticism while their partners exhibited defensiveness. This finding

aligns with the reported dynamic observed by external raters, wherein women were often the initiators of the discussion, while men tended to avoid it.

3.7.2.2 Narcissism and Emotional Communication During Partners' Interaction

The associations between each narcissism form, observed emotions during the interaction, and self-reported behaviours in the relationship are presented in Table 29. Contrary to expectations, communal narcissism forms and admiration were not significantly related to overall positive or negative emotions during the interactions. However, communal narcissism forms (H7.1) particularly saviourism, were linked to slightly more expressions of affection and fewer negative emotions, such as sadness, whining, and stonewalling, during the conflict discussion. Admiration (H7.2) was associated with more affection during conflict, but not with any of the negative emotions. Antagonism (H7.3), on the other hand, was related to fewer positive emotions, specifically humour and validation, but not to negative emotions. Finally, isolation (H7.4) was linked to less affection displayed during the interaction, but more expressions of whining and sadness.

Overall, the results did not align with most of the predictions made in the study. Contrary to expectations, communal narcissism was not associated with more positive emotions, but rather with fewer negative emotions during the interactions. Similarly, the anticipated links between antagonism, isolation, and negative emotional communication were not observed. However, in line with expectations, antagonism was related to fewer positive emotions during the interactions. Interestingly, one of the emotions that showed the strongest associations with narcissism was affection, which was predicted by more agency-oriented narcissism forms, namely isolation, admiration, and saviourism.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that the connections between narcissism strategies and emotions during interactions are not as straightforward as indicated by self-reports. It is important to note that the strategies were measured as individual tendencies,

without any indication of a particular strategy being activated during the task. Therefore, there is a need for experimental observational studies in which interactions are observed after a specific narcissism strategy is activated.

Table 29

Study 7 - Zero-order Correlations Between Narcissism Forms and Behaviours in the Relationship and Emotional Communicates During Conflict Discussion and Affirmation of the Partner

Variable	Conflict Discussion Task							Affirmation Task						
	SAN	SAV	ADM	ANT	ISOL	SUP	NEG	SAN	SAV	ADM	ANT	ISOL	SUP	NEG
Total emotions	-.00	.02	.07	-.10	-.04	.00	.31**	.02	.08	-.09	-.10	-.18	.10	.08
Positive emotions	.06	.20	-.03	-.32**	-.25*	.24*	-.01	.03	.08	-.09	-.11	-.19	.11	.07
Humour	.06	.14	-.09	-.23*	-.18	.12	.02	-.01	.05	-.03	-.08	-.20	.04	.19
Validation	-.01	.08	.01	-.29**	-.09	.29**	-.09	.02	.02	-.01	.02	.04	.07	-.10
Interest	-.01	.12	-.04	-.19	-.10	.12	.00	.03	-.04	-.01	-.05	.05	-.13	.07
Affection	.18	.24*	.21*	-.08	-.33**	.15	.03	.10	.13	-.13	-.20	-.19	.07	.01
Enthusiasm	-.04	.07	.08	-.01	-.18	-.06	.22*	-.08	-.04	-.09	.06	-.05	.18	-.06
Negative Emotions	-.04	-.10	.11	.08	.10	-.15	.42**	-.05	.04	.07	.06	.11	-.21*	.18
Belligerence	.02	-.03	.06	.13	.06	-.17	.38**	-.08	.04	-.09	.08	.10	.11	.01
Fear/Tension	-.02	-.12	.12	.10	.08	-.17	.32**	.01	.17	.20	.05	.06	-.17	.16
Whining	-.37**	-.18	-.04	.08	.30**	.08	-.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dominance	.05	-.07	-.02	-.07	-.02	-.15	.21*	.06	-.09	.02	.04	.00	-.17	.05
Anger	.01	.05	.04	-.02	.06	-.02	.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sadness	-.41**	-.21*	.01	-.07	.20*	-.03	-.07	-.16	-.01	-.01	-.11	.00	-.00	.05
Disgust	-.11	-.01	-.01	.08	-.02	.13	.11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Four horses</i>	-.02	-.06	.13	.11	.07	-.09	.38**	-.02	-.04	-.03	.05	.09	-.17	.10
Criticism	.00	-.03	.05	.01	.17	-.02	.28**	-.08	-.04	-.04	.16	.08	-.11	.07
Defensiveness	.02	-.01	.14	.15	-.02	-.09	.30**	.03	-.04	-.01	-.05	.05	-.13	.07
Stonewalling	-.14	-.22*	.07	.06	-.05	-.20	.17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contempt	.14	-.00	.02	-.13	.10	-.11	.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. CN = Communal narcissism, AN = Admirative narcissism, RN = Rivalrous narcissism, VN = Vulnerable narcissism, SUP = Supportive behaviours in the relationship, NEG = negative behaviours in the relationship. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

4. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have organized the information into four sections for clarity and coherence. Firstly, I provide a summary of the study results, comparing them to the general hypotheses and three key research problems that guided the project. In the summary of the results concerning each problem I particularly emphasize two novel contributions of the project: the examination of communal forms of narcissism, including communal self-protection, within the context of romantic relationships and examination of both antagonism and isolation as separate forms of narcissism (i.e., narcissistic neuroticism in TMN; Miller et al., 2016). Secondly, I offer an interpretation of the results within the wider context of narcissism conceptualizations, exploring the potential future utility of the project's results. By locating the findings in a broader theoretical perspective, I aim to shed light on their significance and implications for the field of narcissism research. The third section of this chapter is dedicated to discussing the constraints and shortcomings of the conducted studies. I also propose several strategies to overcome these limitations and suggest potential theoretical advancements that could be pursued in this area of study. Finally, the fourth section presents a concise summary of the overall conclusions drawn from the project. This section provides a synthesis of the key findings and their implications, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research conducted and its contribution to the field of narcissism and romantic relationship quality.

4.1 Examination of the Research Problems

4.1.1 Problem 1 - Diverse Associations Between Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality

In this project, I have thoroughly investigated the associations between different forms of narcissism and the quality of romantic relationships across various samples. The initial three studies were specifically designed to examine these associations from different perspectives: individual's (Study 1), partner's (Study 2), and dynamic (Study 3).

Congruent with the assumptions of the CMN, the effects of different narcissism forms on RR quality in Study 1 exhibited a diverse pattern that aligned with the underlying spectrum (Figure 9). The summarized results from all samples in Study 1 revealed that isolation was associated with the poorest RR quality, which gradually improved along the spectrum, and even showed positive associations with communal forms of narcissism. These findings were not only evident when analysing individual traits but also in distinct profiles that could potentially represent different "types" of individuals based on their levels of narcissism. It is crucial to highlight that while these distinctions were observed, none of the narcissism forms were associated with fewer negative behaviours within the relationship. This finding indicates that there is a clear differentiation between sanctity and non-narcissistic communal orientation.

Study 2, which involved dyadic assessments, yielded less conclusive findings concerning communal narcissism. Only its self-protection form, saviourism, was related to RR quality of any of the partners. Interestingly, a gender-related effect emerged from the analysis. Women's saviourism was found to predict more negative behaviours reported by their partners but more supportive behaviours reported by the women themselves. This result suggests a potential biased "saint" self-perception (Paulhus & John, 1998) related to strategies employed during restoration of threatened self-views on communion. However, it is important to note that this effect was exploratory, observed in only one instance, and gender specific. Therefore, further empirical verification using diverse samples is necessary for any inferences on its potential mechanism.

Such a lack of convincing results concerning communal narcissism shows its distinctiveness to admiration, which, along with other non-communal forms of narcissism (antagonism, and isolation) consistently showed associations with more negative behaviours reported by both partners. Moreover, the results align with the spectrum assumption of the CMN. Actor's sanctity showed no associations with partner's evaluations of RR quality, saviourism

showed some mixed results, while admiration more clearly showed negative effects. Further down the spectrum, both antagonism and isolation showed negative links with partner's RR quality and the effects were slightly stronger and more robust for the latter.

In summary, the dyadic approach to the question partly supported the findings from self-reported assessments. The quality of a romantic relationship is primarily (negatively) influenced by the non-communal forms of narcissism exhibited by both partners, rather than communal ones. This conclusion is further supported by examining the homophily (similarity) in narcissism between partners, where differences in antagonism were significant predictors of more negative behaviours reported by both partners.

Finally, I conducted a longitudinal study to explore dynamic relationships between different forms of narcissism and RR quality. The findings revealed that communal forms of narcissism, similar to admiration, were associated with RR quality at the stable, between-person level. In other words, individuals with higher levels of these traits reported higher RR quality. These associations were also significant in a more dynamic context but were limited to self-enhancement forms of narcissism, namely sanctity and admiration. More specifically, the variability in these two forms of narcissism was found to co-occur with variability in self-reported supportive behaviours within the relationship. This means that increases in sanctity and admiration were accompanied by increases in self-reported supportive behaviours in the relationship. These results become particularly intriguing in the case of sanctity, as it was negatively predicted by supportive behaviours reported three months prior. This pattern of findings suggests an interdependence between grandiose communal self-views (as indicated by sanctity) and positive experiences within a romantic relationship.

In the longitudinal setting, although grandiose forms of narcissism (sanctity, saviourism, admiration) showed associations with RR quality, their impact appeared to be relatively minor compared to more vulnerable forms of narcissism. As anticipated, antagonism emerged as the

strongest predictor of RR quality decline over time. The longitudinal associations of isolation with RR quality were somewhat similar to those of antagonism, with one notable difference. An increase in isolation not only predicted more negative behaviours but also more supportive behaviours reported three months later. This suggests possible attempts at accommodation within the relationship, indicating a greater level of commitment and stability in the relationship. Congruently, only antagonism predicted overall decline of one's RR quality over a year.

Based on the findings from the three studies, I can conclude that narcissism forms indeed exhibit diverse relationships with romantic relationship quality. However, the role of communal forms of narcissism in this context appears to be relatively limited compared to the opposing anti-communal forms (antagonism and to lesser extent, isolation). The CMN provides a useful framework for understanding the different manifestations of narcissism and results of Studies 1, 2, and 3 confirmed that they can be arranged into a spectrum extended by communal narcissism forms (Table 30). However, when it comes to functioning in romantic relationships, the range of effects along the spectrum is more negative to neutral, rather than negative to positive. While Studies 2 and 3 did not find a significant role for communal narcissism forms in predicting RR quality, Study 1 did demonstrate a link between communal narcissism forms and individual's subjective evaluation of RR quality. This discrepancy suggests the need for further studies to explore the influence of communal narcissism on both subjective and objective measures of RR quality. Understanding the subjective aspect of RR quality is essential, as it provides insight into individuals' own evaluations and assessments of their relationship satisfaction and well-being. Furthermore, the "core" factor contributing to poorer RR quality seems to be more strongly associated with antagonism rather than isolation, aligning with previous research findings (Crowe et al., 2019; Lamkin et al., 2015), yet the difference between the two was rather small.

Table 30*Summary Of The Examined Effects and Results of Studies 1, 2, and 3*

Study	Do correlations align with spectrum?	Are Communal Narcissism and Admiration distinct in terms of correlates?	Are Isolation and Antagonism distinct in terms of correlates?
1	YES	YES, higher RR quality linked with communal	YES, lower RR quality linked with isolation (weakly)
2	YES	YES, communal narcissism was unrelated, and admiration was negatively related to RR quality	YES, lower RR quality linked with isolation (weakly)
3	NO, communal narcissism and admiration did not differentiate enough	NO, both were not related to RR quality in a longitudinal way	YES, antagonism was a stronger predictor of decline of RR quality

4.1.2 Problem 2 - Diverse Mechanisms Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic Relationship Quality

Following two overarching dimensions of the CMN, which represent interpersonal and intrapersonal orientations, I hypothesized that different forms of narcissism would be associated with subjective RR quality in distinct ways. Specifically, I anticipated that intrapersonal phenomena would explain the link between more agency-based forms of narcissism (saviourism, admiration, and isolation) and subjective RR quality, while interpersonal phenomena would account for the association between more communion-based forms (sanctity, saviourism, and antagonism) and subjective RR quality. To explore these hypotheses, I conducted Studies 4 and 5, which examined the mediating roles of self-esteem and empathy.

In Study 4, my expectations regarding the mediating role of self-esteem were confirmed. It was found that self-esteem mediated a larger part of the associations between narcissism forms characterized by intrapersonal characteristics (admiration, isolation) and subjective RR quality, compared to those characterized by interpersonal characteristics (sanctity, antagonism). However, it is important to note that self-esteem was involved in all studied associations, indicating its prevalent role in explaining the link between all forms of narcissism and

subjective RR quality. Surprisingly, both sanctity and saviourism were associated with higher RR quality due to higher self-esteem to the same extent, which was unexpected. This finding could be attributed to the somewhat dichotomous distinction between "communion-based" and "agency-based" forms, which may not fully capture the complexities of saviourism. According to the CMN, saviourism involves an inclination to act (i.e., agency) for the benefit of others (i.e., communion) in order to restore grandiose communal self-views by obtaining social rewards such as popularity or esteem (agency). Therefore, I initially expected that saviourism would be functionally closer to admiration rather than sanctity. However, Study 4 revealed a different pattern, challenging the initial hypothesis. Nonetheless, communal narcissism and admiration differed, as the latter's relationship with RR quality was explained by self-esteem to a larger extent. On the same note, isolation and antagonism differed, as the first's relationship with RR quality was predominantly explained by self-esteem.

In Study 5, which examined the role of empathy, the results were more complex due to the multidimensional nature of empathy itself. As I anticipated, self-oriented empathy was more relevant in explaining the correlates of narcissism forms associated with intrapersonal characteristics (admiration, isolation). On the other hand, other-oriented empathy was more relevant in explaining the correlates of narcissism forms associated with interpersonal characteristics (sanctity, saviourism, antagonism). This finding aligned with my initial expectations. However, it is worth noting that the links between narcissism forms and empathy were not unique. Similar to self-esteem, empathy was related to all narcissism forms to some extent. For example, communal narcissism forms were associated with lower levels of self-oriented empathy, while antagonism was associated with higher levels of it. This finding supports the spectrum assumption of the CMN, highlighting that distinct patterns of empathy associated with different forms of narcissism are not separated and narcissism could be interpreted as one general construct. Nonetheless, the results concerning empathy were in line

with predictions derived from the CMN. Communal narcissism forms were differently linked to empathy aspects than admiration, which indicates different mechanisms of building and maintaining romantic relationships. On the same note, avoidant self-protection (i.e., isolation) and antagonistic self-protection (i.e., antagonism) differed in how they contribute to the lower RR quality, as the first is mostly associated with intrapersonal problems and the latter with interpersonal ones.

In general, results of Studies 4 and 5 allow me to conclude that the relationship between narcissism and RR quality could be explained by different factors (Table 31). Consistent with predictions derived from the CMN, sanctity and saviourism were found to be associated with higher RR quality, primarily due to slightly higher levels of self-esteem and, more importantly, other-oriented empathy, as well as lower levels of self-oriented empathy. In contrast, antagonism emerged as a crucial factor exacerbating RR quality issues, primarily driven by low reactivity to others (indicated by other-oriented empathy) combined with preoccupation with negative self-views (poor self-esteem and self-oriented empathy). This implies that individuals high in antagonism may exhibit less empathy towards their partners and struggle with negative self-perceptions, which contribute to lower RR quality. Lastly, the negative association between isolation and RR quality could be primarily explained by low self-esteem and reactivity, with less emphasis on reactions to others.

Table 31*Summary Of The Examined Effects and Results of Studies 4 and 5*

Study	Do correlations align with spectrum?	Are Communal Narcissism and Admiration distinct in terms of correlates?	Are Isolation and Antagonism distinct in terms of correlates?
4	YES, to some extent – sanctity and saviourism did not differ	YES, admiration was stronger related to self-esteem and self-esteem mediated a larger part of admiration – RR quality link than for communal forms	YES, isolation was stronger related to self-esteem and self-esteem mediated a larger part of isolation – RR quality link than for antagonism
5	YES	YES, admiration was stronger related to self-oriented empathy while sanctity was related to other-related empathy. Those differences resulted in different paths in mediation analyses	YES, isolation was stronger related to self-oriented empathy while antagonism was related to other-related empathy. Those differences resulted in different paths in mediation analyses

4.1.3 Diverse Emotional Functioning Linking Narcissism Forms and Romantic

Relationship Quality

The third research question of my project aimed to investigate the differences between various forms of narcissism in terms of emotional functioning. Building on the associations between the CMN and the basic personality traits, I hypothesized that these differences would align with those observed in neuroticism. Specifically, I expected that the quality of emotional functioning would be crucial in explaining the relationship between isolation and RR quality, while positive emotional functioning would contribute to the positive outcomes associated with communal forms of narcissism. To empirically test these expectations, I conducted studies 6 and 7. These studies examined the links between cognitive (such as beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions), emotional (such as emotional dysregulation), and behavioural aspects (such as emotional manipulateness and emotions expressed in conflict) of emotional functioning and narcissism forms.

The correlations between communal forms of narcissism and emotional functioning indicated a generally more favourable (less unfavourable) emotional adjustment compared to other forms of narcissism. Individuals with higher levels of communal narcissism demonstrated

fewer negative beliefs about emotions, better emotional regulation, and fewer tendencies for emotional manipulation of others, compared to admiration, as observed in Study 6. It is important to note that these effects were primarily based on self-report measures. When observational measures were utilized in Study 7, those effects were less clear. Both admiration and communal narcissism forms were linked to more positive emotions communicated to partner. Nonetheless, unlike communal narcissism, admiration was not linked to reduced negative emotionality during conflicts. This suggests that while admiration may contribute to positive emotional experiences during conflicts, it does not appear to mitigate negative emotions.

Both isolation and antagonism were related to overall poor emotional functioning, yet the specifics were slightly different, indicating different mechanisms linking those to RR quality. Consistent with previous research and Studies 4 and 5, Study 6 also confirmed that isolation, more than antagonism, is characterized by a maladaptive preoccupation with one's own emotional state and difficulties in regulating it (Simard et al., 2023). Antagonism, on the other hand, was related the strongest with emotional manipulateness, which indicates an instrumental approach to others. Study 7 further demonstrated the difference between isolation and antagonism. First was related to less affection communicated to partner during conflict, that is care and offering comfort (Coan & Gottman, 2007), which could indicate preoccupation with own emotion not partner's, congruent with the results of study 5 concerning empathy. Second, antagonism was linked to less validation, that is the communication of acceptance of partner's views and opinions (Coan & Gottman, 2007), which could indicate a conflicting approach to discussions, congruent with previous studies.

In general, the findings from Studies 6 and 7 allow me to draw similar conclusions as the earlier studies (Studies 1-3). It is evident that the distinctions between different narcissism forms are more apparent in self-report measures, but become less pronounced and weaker when

more objective assessments are used. However, despite the challenges in objectively measuring these distinctions, the results provide insights into the value of including communal narcissism forms in the broader spectrum of narcissism. Based on the findings, communal narcissism forms demonstrate unique associations with aspects of emotional functioning that are not captured by other forms of narcissism. Although the links between communal narcissism and RR quality are relatively weak, the latent profile analyses reveal that communal narcissism may not exist independently of other forms. Interestingly, the only distinct profile associated with communal narcissism is characterized by low levels of isolation and antagonism. This suggests that communal narcissism may not have straightforward positive consequences but could represent a form of narcissism that is not linked to negative outcomes. On the other side of the spectrum, Studies 6 and 7 indicate that isolation and antagonism are different in terms of emotional functioning, yet those differences are not straightforwardly translating to differences in RR quality. The strongest predictor of poorer RR quality was emotional manipulateness – strongly related to antagonism, but related to all non-communal forms of narcissism.

Table 32

Summary Of The Examined Effects and Results of Studies 6 and 7

Study	Do correlations align with spectrum?	Are Communal Narcissism and Admiration distinct in terms of correlates?	Are Isolation and Antagonism distinct in terms of correlates?
6	PARTLY, only in terms of emotional manipulation. The correlation pattern mostly differentiated communal vs non-communal forms	YES, communal narcissism forms were not related to worse emotional functioning while admiration was.	YES, isolation was linked the strongest with emotional dysregulation, while antagonism with emotional manipulation
7	NO, as there were only a handful significant correlations in the study. The results were more in line with grandiose-vulnerable distinction than the spectrum	PARTLY. Both shared a tendency to show more affection, but only communal forms were linked to less sadness and whining	YES, although both were linked to less positive emotions during the interactions, isolation was related to showing less affection while antagonism was related to showing less validation

4.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Project

The primary objective of this project was to enhance our understanding of the role of narcissism in shaping the quality of romantic relationships through a more nuanced approach. Chapter 2 highlighted that previous research in this domain predominantly relied on two-dimensional frameworks, such as the grandiose-vulnerable or admiration-rivalry distinction (see Figure 7). Hence, this project makes two significant contributions, particularly due to its comprehensive nature. Firstly, it represents, to the best of my knowledge, the first investigation into the role of communal narcissism within the context of romantic relationship functioning. Secondly, it expands upon and corroborates prior studies (e.g., Lavner et al., 2016) by distinguishing between antagonistic tendencies (i.e., antagonism) and avoidant self-protective tendencies (i.e., isolation) associated with narcissism. Furthermore, the empirical examinations conducted within this project were based on the predictions derived from the Circumplex Model of Narcissism (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019), and as such, they serve as additional validation of this relatively new conceptualization.

When considering the role of communal narcissism forms in explaining RR quality, they demonstrate functional distinctions from their closest counterpart, admiration. While both forms are associated with higher RR quality, communal narcissism forms (sanctity and saviourism) uniquely explain it through communal characteristics, such as empathy. This finding aligns with the Agency-Communion Model of Narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012; Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018), suggesting that communal narcissism represents a distinct form of the trait (cf. Rogoza et al., 2023) and should be included within the well-established spectrum of narcissism (Miller et al., 2021). However, the study results provide limited evidence regarding the distinctiveness of sanctity (communal self-enhancement) and saviourism (communal self-protection) specifically within the context of romantic relationships, indicating that this distinction may not be crucial. Additional implications arise from the comparisons of

latent profiles, which reveal that the distinctly communal profile exhibits higher levels of sanctity, as well as lower levels of isolation and antagonism. These findings hold potential for intervention-based research aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of narcissism by promoting a more communal orientation (e.g., *Giacomin & Jordan, 2014*). Therefore, interventions might focus not on targeting narcissism itself, but rather on highlighting that more communal expressions of narcissism are not only less harmful in interpersonal relationships but also have positive intrapersonal outcomes.

Furthermore, an additional contribution of this project is the differentiation between isolation and antagonism within the context of romantic relationships. The CMN predominantly adopts the structural framework proposed by the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (TMN; *Crowe et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2019*), and this project aligns with the rationale of the TMN. The findings indicate that both isolation (referred to as narcissistic neuroticism in the TMN) and antagonism have detrimental effects on romantic relationships, albeit possibly through distinct processes. Antagonism, congruently with previous research (*Back et al., 2013; Rentzsch et al., 2021; Wurst et al., 2017*) emerges as a crucial factor in explaining lower quality of romantic relationships among individuals with narcissistic tendencies, primarily due to their negative beliefs about others. On the other hand, isolation appears to be more self-centred, suggesting that difficulties in romantic relationships associated with this form of narcissism may be amendable by interventions targeting self-concept and emotional regulation skills.

In conclusion, the findings of this project suggest that a four-dimensional approach to narcissism is optimal when studying its relations with romantic relationship quality. As a result, previous studies utilizing single-dimensional assessments of narcissism, such as the Agency Model of Narcissism (*Campbell et al., 2006*) are outdated and should be validated using more comprehensive approaches. Furthermore, research based on a two-dimensional approach to

narcissism may also oversimplify the understanding of this construct. Specifically, within the grandiose-vulnerable distinction, the negative consequences of narcissism may not be accurately attributed and explained, as it combines self-enhancement with antagonistic self-protection and avoidant self-protection with antagonistic self-protection. This issue has been highlighted by both the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism and the Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Concept. The current project adds to this discussion by demonstrating that these two theoretical frameworks may not encompass the entire spectrum of narcissism manifestations. Communal narcissism, in particular, exhibits distinct patterns of relationships compared to all agentic forms, suggesting its utility in interpersonal research, including the study of romantic relationships. Consequently, communal narcissism should be recognized as a separate entity, expanding the previously established spectrum of narcissism. Lastly, the project underscores the need for a more dynamic approach when examining the internal division of communal narcissism into self-enhancement and self-protection strategies, as these dimensions overlap significantly when studied as individual differences.

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This project, despite its comprehensive nature, is not without limitations. In this section, I will discuss these limitations, beginning with general ones followed by study-specific ones. Many of them can be addressed in future research with relative ease. Therefore, I propose several ways to modify replications or conduct further analyses using the data utilized in this dissertation. Starting with the general limitations of the project, four key ones stand out.

First, in all the studied samples, I used the same indicators of narcissism and mostly the same indicators of relationship quality. Additionally, none of the indicators of relationship quality directly measured sexual satisfaction, which is considered a crucial aspect of romantic relationships (e.g. Schwartz & Young, 2009). Overcoming this limitation is relatively

straightforward by using alternative measures (e.g., Five Factor Narcissism Inventory Glover et al., 2012).

Secondly, and more importantly, the measures used in this project were based on self-reports, which significantly limits external validity and raises questions about the generalizability of the findings (Dang et al., 2020). The only study that allowed for non-self-reported assessments of the key indicators was Study 7, which did not provide strong evidence for the behavioural distinction of different forms of narcissism. Given the subjective nature of both relationship quality and narcissism, addressing this limitation requires more advanced assessment methods, such as field experiments, experience sampling methods, or carefully designed experiments which could activate different strategies. Furthermore, in order to augment the understanding of the behavioural aspects of different forms of narcissism, a qualitative approach could be applied to the data from Study 7. This qualitative analysis could potentially shed light on the nuances and complexities of narcissistic behaviours that might not be fully captured by quantitative measures alone.

Third basic limitation of the whole project is the nature of the construct of narcissism. According to the basic theoretical framework that I chose – Circumplex Model of Narcissism (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2019) – narcissism is a one general construct that can manifest differently depending on an individual's basic temperamental/personality characteristics and the specific domain that is central to their self. Moreover, expressions of narcissism, such as strategies used, may differ depending on the context, serving either as a means of self-enhancement or self-protection. However, in this project, I did not directly measure these expressions but relied on participants' self-reports, effectively assessing their tendencies to express these strategies rather than their actual use. Therefore, all the studies should be considered preliminary and should be complemented by more dynamic research that takes into account the contextual factors (e.g., Kuper et al., 2022) important in understanding narcissism.

The aforementioned experience sampling method could be valuable in identifying realistic contexts in which specific strategies, such as saviourism, are activated, while experiments could provide causal inferences regarding the influence of each strategy on behaviour within relationships.

Finally, a fourth limitation of this study pertains to the relatively superficial approach employed in the analysis of the data. Due to the scale and scope of the project, I relied on simple bivariate correlations to draw inferences, without taking into account potential moderating factors that could provide additional insights. It is important to address these limitations by conducting further analyses on the collected data. Specifically, given the interrelated nature of different forms of narcissism, it is advisable to employ multivariate analyses, which are widely recognized in the field as a standard practice. However, it is crucial to exercise caution when conducting such analyses, considering the potential challenges associated with the "perils of partialing" situation (Sleep et al., 2017), particularly in the context of dyadic assessment (Smith et al., 2022). To delve deeper into the relationship between different forms of narcissism and the quality of romantic relationships, it would be worthwhile to employ commonality analysis (Ray-Mukherjee et al., 2014; Seibold & McPhee, 1979). This technique allows for the precise partitioning of the explained variance in romantic relationship quality into components that are uniquely explained by each form of narcissism, as well as those that are commonly explained. Exploring these avenues of analysis would provide valuable insights and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that cultural norms and societal expectations regarding agency and communion vary between men and women (Bosson et al., 2022), as noted in Study 2. Consequently, participants' gender naturally serves as a potential moderator of the effects observed in this study. It is reasonable to expect that communal narcissism may be more beneficial for women, indicating greater adaptability, whereas antagonism may have detrimental effects. On the other hand, admiration,

as a form of agentic narcissism, may be rewarded in men. However, it is important to note that investigating these gender-specific dynamics was beyond the scope of the current project.

The limitations observed in Study 1 are akin to those of the entire project, given its nature as a meta-analytic summary and profile analysis based on the combined sample. Nevertheless, there are additional areas of critique that warrant consideration. Specifically, in this study, I employed fixed effects estimation, assuming that all samples were drawn from a single population. However, the presence of cross-sample heterogeneity suggests the possibility of a significant sample-related moderator, which deserves further investigation. Furthermore, in profile estimation, I utilized the combined dataset, encompassing individuals both in and out of romantic relationships. While the objective was to establish comprehensive profiles, it is important to conduct further analyses to determine whether similar profiles can be identified specifically within the group of individuals involved in romantic relationships. Moreover, cross-sample comparisons of profile patterns should be undertaken to gain deeper insights into the data.

Study 2 is primarily constrained by sampling issues, which impact the generalizability of the findings. The analysis was conducted on a combined sample consisting of three distinct datasets, collected using different methodologies. A significant concern arises from a portion of the sample that was mistakenly collected with planned random 50% of data missing. Although attempts were made to address this issue by utilizing Full Information Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Arbuckle, 1996), it is crucial to examine dyadic analyses using a separate dataset with minimal or no missing data. Additionally, it is important to note that all analysed dyads were conveniently sampled and composed of voluntary participants. Consequently, the generalizability of the results may be limited to relatively high-quality romantic relationships among young adults. These limitations are particularly evident in the distributions of RR quality indicators, which exhibit significant skewness. Lastly, considering

the nature of dyadic analyses and the homophily issues, it would be valuable to explore not only self-reported levels of narcissism but also partner-reported narcissism, specifically examining one's perception of their partner's narcissistic traits.

The primary limitation of longitudinal Study 3 stems from the arbitrary choice of the inter-measure lag. Although originally intended to span a year-long assessment, financial constraints led to a limited number of measurements set at four, evenly spaced intervals. As a result, the examination of cross-lag effects and changes becomes rather exploratory, allowing only for tentative inferences regarding the time-related associations between different forms of narcissism and RR quality. To obtain more systematic and interpretable data, it would be beneficial to consider experience sampling studies or diary studies with a more natural lag, such as a one-day interval between measurements. Additionally, there may be confounding effects related to the cohort, as the longitudinal study commenced before the COVID-19 pandemic (in mid-January 2020) and concluded after the second wave of the disease. Consequently, further analyses of the data could incorporate external factors related to time to gain deeper insights from the study.

Studies 4, 5, and 6 were conducted following a similar approach, and thus share common limitations. The primary objective of these studies was to examine the associations between different forms of narcissism and RR quality via different mechanisms. Although mediation analyses were employed, it is important to note that the studies were cross-sectional in nature, which precludes making causal inferences, a key characteristic of mediating relationships. Consequently, the mediation analyses served as statistical tools to decompose explained variance rather than definitive tests of mediation. This limitation holds theoretical significance, as using narcissism as a causal predictor of empathy or self-esteem could be seen as a simplification, given that these variables can be interpreted as both individual differences and states. Additionally, the studies relied on single indicators to assess self-esteem, empathy,

and aspects of emotional functioning. Future research could address these limitations by employing multimethod assessments to explore these issues in greater depth.

Study 7, being the least standardized among the studies conducted, is subject to several significant limitations. Firstly, the realism of the experimental procedure is questionable. Participants were asked to discuss their intimate problems in an unfamiliar environment, with the presence of a large mirror, and positioned at a specific angle that is not face-to-face. This artificial setting may have influenced the dynamics of the conflict discussions. Secondly, the issues raised during the conflict discussion might not fully capture the most contentious conflicts that partners face, as participants may have withheld more intimate and sensitive topics. Thirdly, the sample primarily consisted of university students from the University of Gdańsk. Although these students did not study psychology, minimizing the potential influence of future classes held by the researcher, the non-anonymous nature of data collection could have led to increased self-monitoring among participants. Lastly, the final sample size was relatively small, limiting the generalizability of the findings and precluding definitive conclusions. To overcome these limitations, future research should include qualitative analyses and aim for a larger sample size. It is also important to note that Study 7 solely focused on observing emotions during the entire interaction and did not consider the interplay between expressed emotions and the content of the discussed problems. Therefore, future quantitative analyses should be supplemented by a more comprehensive investigation.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

This research project contributes to better understanding of narcissism in the context of romantic relationships. Applying a comprehensive Circumplex Model of Narcissism to predict romantic relationship quality shows that there is a substantial difference between different manifestations of narcissism in terms of functioning in the intimate context. The results of studies conducted within the project align with the recent suggestion to trifurcate narcissism (Miller et al., 2021). However, based on the project's results my suggestion is to quadfurcate (i.e., divide into four parts) narcissism by including communal form of it to the spectrum. Specifically, communal narcissism, admiration, antagonism, and isolation showed to be independently and differently related to romantic relationship quality. In general, all the studies included in the project indicate that communal manifestations of narcissism, including self-enhancement and self-protection ones, have no destructive effects on the quality of romantic relationships. Based on this research I can partly answer Constantine Sedikides' question (2021) "Are the interpersonal (non-romantic and romantic) relationships of communal narcissists less troublesome than those of agentic narcissists?". Yes, they are less troublesome, at least in romantic context. Broadly speaking, the project indicates that narcissism might be expressed in an adaptive manner, decreasing its social costs, which could potentially be used in interventions aimed to redirect the identity goals rather than decreasing narcissism itself.

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