

# Effects of Self-Concept on Narcissism: Mediational Role of Perceived Parenting

Maryam Farzand (✉ [maryammalick@yahoo.com](mailto:maryammalick@yahoo.com))

Near East University: Yakin Dogu Universitesi

Yağmur Çerkez

Near East University: Yakin Dogu Universitesi

Engin Baysen

Near East University: Yakin Dogu Universitesi

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## Research article

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# Abstract

**Background:** Increase in narcissism has been a growing concern over the years. Narcissists bring lot of negative consequences to themselves and to people around them. The present study aimed at exploring effects of perceived parenting and self-concept in the development of narcissistic traits and how adults view themselves and recollect parenting effects throughout their lives in order to guide the interventions accordingly.

**Method:** A sample of 628 adults were taken from North Cyprus and Turkey who can comprehend and write English language. Information demographic form, Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) for perceived parenting, Six Factor Self Concept Scale (SFSCS) for self-concept and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) for narcissism were administered for the purpose of data collection.

**Results:** Several constituents of perceived parenting and self-concept interconnect in order to exhibit the distinctive narcissistic traits of an individual. The results of the present showed that perceived parenting specifically perceived parental involvement as well as positive parenting mediate the relationship between self-concept and narcissism among adults. The higher the involvement, the more inflated self-concept was found leading to the development of narcissistic traits. Perceived parenting received from fathers also was found to statistically significant contribution to the development of inflated self-concept and narcissism.

**Conclusion:** It provides the basis for the therapeutic interventions to be focusing on the self-concept of narcissistic individuals along with parenting experiences. The study findings also have challenged the notion of only mothers to be responsible for narcissistic traits among their children.

## Background

Deviation of adult behavior is a complex problem that is yet to find a solution in the 21st century. Several negative behaviors such as externalization actions (Bushment et al., 2016; Mahajan et al., 2010, Ormel et al., 2005; Cutulli et al., 2013), school gangs (Issurdat, 2011), bullying (Yen, 2010), manipulation, narcissism, violence and aggressive (World Health Organization, 2004) are growing concern around the globe. Individual behavior problems are found to be influenced by parenting a great deal as argued by various researches (Hann & Borek, 2001). The family is the prime environment for behavioral development (O'Connor & Scott, 2007). Problematic parenting having lack of parental warmth and concern for children, harsh and inconsistent disciplinary practices are identified as risk factors for the development of deviant social behaviors among adolescents and adults (Hann & Borek, 2001).

In helping alliance with the adults, it was observed that much of the interactions with parents are recalled differently by siblings even in their adult years. Individual's perceptions have a great importance on the lives that organizes information from the surroundings in their minds affecting recollection of experiences, emotions and behaviors (Oyserman, 2001; Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Larsen McClarty, 2007). Keeping in mind the studies of differential parental treatment, sibling interaction, birth order,

genetic factors and other extra familial influences, it has been conceptualized for the study that it is rather perceived parenting that impact an individual's personality and behavior (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011).

Primarily, perceived parenting involves how individuals perceive regular interactions that a parent had in order to nurture and discipline them including certain practices that parents engage in while raising their children such as imposing rules, schedules, punishments, rewards, etc. (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011).

Baumrind (1991) advocated parenting as a complex process that requires individual and collective ways to affect children's behaviors. Baumrind (1991) stated studied two factors of interaction between parents and child: responsiveness and demand. Four parenting styles can be distinguished: authoritative (high demand and high responsiveness), authoritarian (high demand and low responsiveness), permissive (low demand and high responsiveness) and neglectful or indifferent (low demand and low responsiveness) (Baumrind, 1971; Paulson & Sputa, 1996). Significant relationship between the perceived parenting styles with the psychological well-being of children have been documented by several researchers such as Casky (2009), Abar, Carter and Winsler (2009), Kim (2005), and Ling-pung (2010).

Kohut (1971 & 1977) and Kernberg (1975) were the first to state that parental excessive criticism and hostility lead to feelings of inadequacy in children and prevent positive self-regard to be developed. Children inflate their self-worth in order to deal with these feelings of inadequacy by seeking approval and admiration from others.

Havelock Ellis (1898) was the first one to use the concept of narcissism to psychology. Later, Freud has done much work to explain this idea in detail as a disorder (Beranger, 1991). In 1914, an article was published by named "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in which he emphasized that narcissism is connected to a person's libido which either is directed towards one's own self (inward) or towards others (outward). He thought that when a person directs all libido inwards, it causes primary narcissism and if this libido is directed outwards, it result in excessive attachment with others and nothing is left for one's own self.

It was also advocated that adult narcissism is actually deep rooted in early childhood experiences and individual's interpretation of those experiences. Disturbances in early parental and social relationships and how adults recollect those memories is related to adult narcissistic personality. It was also viewed as a defect in the development of a healthy self (Kohut, 1966; Kernberg 1975). Even though much of the literature talks about parental impact on narcissistic behaviors, however, dearth of researches tracks the differences in children exposed to same parenting and their differing perceptions and personalities.

Theoretical speculation far outweighs empirical evidence when it comes to narcissism. A great deal of attention has centered on parenting styles, with theories making opposing claims. Psychodynamic theories suggest narcissistic traits may be fostered by cold or dismissive parenting in which narcissistic traits are actually a façade hiding underlying fragility, like a defense compensating for the lack of

parental love, acceptance and approval. On the other hand are theories which suggest that narcissists' parents show excessive attention and admiration. Millon (1969 & 1981) believed that individual's perceptions of over-permissive parenting behavior and excessive parental indulgence are related to the development of narcissism. Social learning theory claimed that children learn the behavior modeled by their parents according to their understanding and internalize the beliefs that they are superior to others and entitled to special treatment, ultimately leading to excessive self-love (Brummelmen, et al., 2015). However, not all the children undergoing same parental practices develop narcissistic tendencies (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2010). Moreover, some individual's despite of perceived excessive parental indulgence or perceived over-permissive parenting still does not exhibit narcissistic traits.

It is conceptualized that people create their own realities based on their perceptions which may or may not be factual but are real for the individual. Narcissistic traits or tendencies seem to stem from unstable, inflated self-concept. The inflated self-concept leads towards personality dysfunctions. Children exposed to parental disapproval or excessive indulgence, if does not result in unstable, inflated self may not exhibit narcissistic traits.

Self-concept, the multidimensional concept is understood as having the totality of a person's overall knowledge or perception of who he or she is, the quintessential answer to the question, "Who am I?" Literature talks about narcissism and self-esteem a great deal. Even though self-esteem and self-concept are related and share common grounds, these are two separate constructs. Based on the views and perceptions (self-concept), individual places worth or value towards him or herself (self-esteem) (Ryckmann, 1993; Chang et al., 2003). Based on the knowledge and understanding of one's own self, the evaluation of self-worth and value would be entirely different. Having strong or weak self-concept will result in respective high or low self-esteem. In short, it has been asserted in the present research that the self-concept is the key element of an individual's personality framework that is directly influenced by the perceptions of their social and familial reality, parenting being one of the most important of many factors may conciliate directly between self-concept and narcissistic attributes.

Individuals fostered in an environment of parental acceptance, dialogue and affection have a strong self-concept (Calafat, Gracia, Juan, Becon, Andez-Hermida, 2014). In contrast, parental coercive control reduces an individual's self-concept (Boudreault-Bouchard, Dion, Hains, Vandermeerschen, Laberge, & Perron, 2013).

Narcissism too being of multidimensional nature and having various subtypes may correlate with variations in the acquisition of self-concept. Perceived parenting is argued to act as an arbitrator linking the two. Further, this study aims to establish the basis for therapeutic interventions to be directed more to impact the sustained inflated self-concept in narcissistic adults rather to be largely investigating childhood parenting experiences and its root causes as much of the already available literature has focus on parenting received from mothers and narcissism; no promising therapeutic intervention for treating narcissism is yet acknowledged. The present research having taken into account the importance and influence of perceived parenting of early years, explicate that while in childhood and early adolescence,

psychodynamic approaches digging into parenting experiences may seem plausible. However, in adulthood, perceived parenting retained by the individual for years may be worked upon with the focus on changing the unstable self-concept maintaining the narcissistic self.

As debated earlier excessive self-love may arise from dysfunctionally developed self-concept. With the emerging increase in the narcissistic personality traits among adults in this era of globalized social media, interventions based on empirical evidence is needed to find out its cure. With much of the population is stated to be increasingly developing narcissistic traits, research to understand it in depth and to take precautions and actions towards it is much needed timely before unchecked narcissism may dwell into a society driven by selfishness, egotism and lacking empathy.

## **Materials And Method**

### **Participants**

Purposive convenient sample of 628 male and female adults were taken to explore the study variables. The sample size was based on the notion of sample range to be 5 times the number of items used in the scale (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The purpose of the research was to explore the study variables' effects on adults. Chronological age may not considered an accurate indicator, yet need to be used for practical purposes. Literature review showed that adolescence was up till age 20 in various researches as well as early adulthood was mentioned to be starting from age 20 or 21 (Barzeva, Meeus, & Oldehinkel, 2019; Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2004). Age 20 being overlapped between the two categories, therefore after committee approach, 21 years and older adults were approached from North Cyprus for the present exploratory and descriptive study. Maximum age of adults who participated in this study was 50 years, much older adults with English language knowledge couldn't be found.

### **Data Collection**

After informed consent, the participants first completed demographics information sheet along with the research scales of Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ), Six Factor Self Concept Scale (SFSCS) and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to complete in one sitting. It took approximately 20–25 minutes for the participants to fill the scales.

### **Measures**

All the scales utilized in the present study were administrated after taking permissions from the respective authors. Permission was also sought from the Ethics Committee Board in order to begin the research. Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) developed by Frick (1991) was used to study perceived parenting. The scale showed in past research the internal consistency ranging from  $\alpha = .63$  to  $.80$  (Shelton et al. 1996). The scale consists of five subscales: positive parenting, poor monitoring, inconsistent

discipline, involvement, corporal punishment and other discipline practices. The scale was also seen to be internally consistent in the present study as well ( $\alpha = .75$ ). Six Factor Self Concept Scale (SFSCS) developed by Stake (1994) was used to study self-concept. The scale consisted of six subscales: power, task accomplishment, giftedness, vulnerability, likeability and morality with alpha coefficients ranging between .76 – .86 (Stake, 1994; Jedouri & Rajeh, 2020). The scale was also consistent for the current sample with  $\alpha = .83$ . The Narcissistic Personality Inventory developed by Raskin and Hall (1979) was used to study narcissism. It has seven subscales: authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity and entitlement with reliability coefficient ranging from .74 to .90. (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rosario & White, 2005). The reliability of present research study is .80 (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics of Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Six Factor Self Concept Scale and their subscales (N = 628)*

<b>Score Range</b>							
Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	Potential	Actual	Skewness
Perceived Parenting	51	152.39	17.04	.75	51–255	97–225	.38
Positive parenting	6	19.23	5.17	.70	6–30	6–30	2.28
Poor monitoring	10	30.51	6.56	.76	10–50	12–44	–.33
Inconsistent discipline	6	15.06	5.05	.80	6–30	6–31	.44
Involvement	19	58.47	9.69	.72	19–95	26–94	.16
Corporal punishment	3	10.19	2.84	.69	3–15	3–15	–.41
Other disciplines	7	18.92	5.21	.78	7–35	7–35	.29
Narcissism	40	65.47	6.54	.80	40–80	44–79	–.42
Authority	8	13.07	2.24	.72	8–16	8–16	–.43
Self-sufficiency	6	9.91	2.10	.80	6–12	6–11	–.40
Superiority	5	8.21	1.64	.71	5–10	5–10	–.53
Exhibitionism	7	11.19	2.27	.79	7–14	7–7	–.37
Exploitativeness	5	8.08	1.71	.75	5–10	5–10	–.36
Vanity	3	4.83	1.16	.70	3–6	3–6	–.39
Entitlement	6	10.16	2.03	.83	6–12	6–12	–.66
Self-concept	36	139.85	28.59	.83	36–252	74–244	.27
Power	7	28.21	9.15	.67	7–49	8–48	.75
Task Accomplishment	6	22.31	7.23	.72	6–42	8–42	.31
Giftedness	5	19.20	6.07	.72	5–35	5–35	–.05
Vulnerability	6	23.99	7.23	.72	6–42	6–42	.01
Likeability	6	22.09	8.63	.81	6–42	6–41	.27
Morality	6	24.05	9.99	.74	6–42	6–42	1.09

## Statistical Analysis

Data Analysis was carried out on the gathered research data using Statistical Package for the Social

## Results

Regression was used to predict self-concept by perceived parenting. The analysis was carried out after testing the assumptions for linear regression. The value of adjusted  $R^2$  show that 7 % statistically significant variance in self-concept is explained by perceived parenting (see Table 2).

Table 2  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting on Self-Concept (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	7.13***	70.91		47.89***	.07
Perceived Parenting	6.92***	.45	.27		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is self-concept. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

Linear regression was also calculated to predict narcissism by perceived parenting. The value of adjusted  $R^2$  show that 5 % statistically significant variance in narcissism is explained by perceived parenting (see Table 3). Linear regression to predict self-concept based on perceived parenting of mothers showed 10 % statistically significant variance in self-concept is explained by perceived parenting of mothers (see Table 4). The same analysis for done for father figures show 5 % statistically significant variance in self-concept is explained by perceived parenting of fathers (see Table 5).

Table 3  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting on Narcissism (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	21.70***	51.44		35.32***	.05
Perceived Parenting	5.94***	.09	.23		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is narcissism. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

Table 4  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting of Mothers on Self-concept (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	13.99***	88.01		68.62***	.10
Mother	8.28***	1.86	.31		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is self-concept. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

Table 5  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting of Fathers on Self-concept (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	15.79***	101.01		37.04***	.05
Father	6.09***	1.41	.24		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is self-concept. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

To predict narcissism based on perceived parenting of mothers, value of adjusted  $R^2$  show that 8 % statistically significant variance in self-concept is explained by perceived parenting of mothers (see Table 6). Results of regression to predict narcissism based on perceived parenting of fathers show that 4 % statistically significant variance in narcissism is explained by perceived parenting of fathers (see Table 7).

Table 6  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting of Mothers on Narcissism (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	36.48***	54.81		51.54***	.08
Mother	7.18***	.39	.28		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is narcissism. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

Table 7  
Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting of Fathers on Narcissism (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. $R^2$
Intercept	38.03***	57.90		25.24***	.04
Father	5.02***	.28	.20		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is narcissism. \*\*\* $p < .001$*

Multiple linear regression was carried out to predict narcissism based on perceived parenting and self-concept. The value of  $R^2$  show that 27 % statistically significant variance in narcissism is explained by perceived parenting and narcissism. The sample's predicted narcissism is equal to 43.32 - .04 (parenting) + .12 (self-concept), where the responses for both were measured using the 5 and 7 point Likert scale. Increase in narcissistic traits is 4 % due to perceived parenting and 12 % due to self-concept. Both perceived parenting and self-concept were significant predictors of narcissism (see Table 8).

Table 8  
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Perceived Parenting and Self-Concept on Narcissism (N = 628).

Variables	<i>t</i>	B	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	20.03***	43.32		116.88***	.27
Perceived Parenting	2.87***	.04	.10		
Self-concept	13.71***	.12	.49		

*Note. The dependent variable for regression is narcissism. \*\*\**p* < .001*

After controlling for gender and age, self-concept (see Table 9) has significant positive relationship with narcissism among adults explaining about 8 % variance (model1). Model 2 shows that parenting significantly mediates the direct relationship of self-concept and narcissism explaining about 28 % variance. The path (direct effect) from self-concept to perceived parenting is positive and statistically significant ( $b = .14, s.e. = .02, p < .001$ ), indicating that a person scoring higher on self-concept are more likely to develop narcissistic traits than those scoring lower on the measure. The direct effect of parenting on narcissism is positive and significant ( $b = .04, s.e. = .01, p < .05$ ) indicating that persons scoring higher on parenting are likely to exhibit more narcissistic traits than those scoring lower on the measure (see Fig. 1). The direct effect of self-concept and narcissism was positively significant ( $b = .11, s.e. = .01, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect is tested using non-parametric bootstrapping. In this case the indirect effect (.01) is statistically significant: 95% CI= (.001-.01). If the null of 0 falls between the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval, then it is inferred that the population indirect effect is 0. If 0 falls outside the confidence interval, then the indirect effect is inferred to be non-zero. Sobel test further validated the indirect effect of self-concept and narcissism through perceived parenting ( $z = 3.47, p < .001$ ).

Table 9  
Mediating Effect of Perceived Parenting between Self-concept and Narcissism (N = 628).

<b>Narcissism</b>				
			Model 2	
95% <i>CI</i>				
Predictors	Model 1 B	B	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
(Constant)	129.38	43.97	39.56	38.38
Self-concept	.14 <sup>***</sup>	.11 <sup>***</sup>	.09	.13
Perceived Parenting		.04 <sup>**</sup>	.01	.07
Age	1.83	.62	.02	1.23
Gender	-.19	-.35	-1.22	.53
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.08	.28		
<i>F</i>	17.47 <sup>***</sup>	59.77 <sup>***</sup>		
$\Delta R^2$		.22		
$\Delta F$		187.91		
<i>Note: B = unstandardized regression coefficient, R2 = explained variance; Gender and age are controlled variables; **p &lt; 0.01; ***p &lt; 0.001</i>				

After controlling for gender and age (see Table 10), likeability has significant positive relationship with authority among adults explaining about 11 % variance (model1). Model 2 shows that involvement mediates the direct relationship of likeability and authority significantly explaining about 53% variance. The path (direct effect) from likeability to involvement is positive and statistically significant ( $b = .29$ ,  $s.e. = .04$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that a person scoring higher on likeability is more likely to have more high score on involvement than those scoring lower on the measure (see Fig. 2). The direct effect of involvement on authority is positive and significant ( $b = .03$ ,  $s.e. = .01$ ,  $p < .01$ ) indicating that persons showing more authority are authority than those scoring lower on the measure. The direct effect of likeability on authority is also positive and significant ( $b = .14$ ,  $s.e. = .01$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The indirect effect is tested using non-parametric bootstrapping. In this case the indirect effect (.01) is statistically significant: 95% *CI* = (.003-.01). If the null of 0 falls between the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval, then it is inferred that the population indirect effect is 0. If 0 falls outside the confidence interval, then the indirect effect is inferred to be non-zero. Sobel test was carried to find the significant indirect effect of likeability and authority through involvement ( $z = 2.77$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 10

Mediating effect of Involvement (Perceived) between Likeability (self-concept) and Authority (narcissism) (N = 628).

Authority				
		Model 2		
95% CI				
Predictors	Model 1 B	B	LL	UL
(Constant)	39.63	7.08	6.26	7.91
Likeability	.29 <sup>***</sup>	.14 <sup>***</sup>	.13	.16
Involvement		.03 <sup>**</sup>	.01	.05
Age	.29	.57	.38	.75
Gender	-.33	.32	.07	.56
$R^2$	.11	.53		
$F$	26.74 <sup>***</sup>	172.95 <sup>***</sup>		
$\Delta R^2$		.34		
$\Delta F$		476.44 <sup>***</sup>		
<i>Note: B = unstandardized regression coefficient, R2 = explained variance; Gender and age are controlled variables; **p &lt; 0.01; ***p &lt; 0.001</i>				

Likeability has significant positive relationship with exhibitionism among adults explaining about 15 % variance (model1) after controlling for gender and age (see Table 11). Model 2 shows that positive parenting mediates the direct relationship of likeability and exhibitionism significantly explaining about 23% variance. The path (direct effect) from likeability to positive parenting is positive and statistically significant ( $b = .22, s.e. = .02, p < .001$ ), indicating that a person scoring higher on likeability is more likely to have more high score on exhibitionism than those scoring lower on the measure. The direct effect of positive parenting on exhibitionism is positive and significant ( $b = .09, s.e. = .02, p < .001$ ) indicating that persons scoring high on positive are likely to score high on exhibitionism than those scoring lower on the measure (see Fig. 3). The direct effect of likeability on exhibitionism is also positive and significant ( $b = .10, s.e. = .01, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect is tested using non-parametric bootstrapping. In this case the indirect effect (.02) is statistically significant: 95% CI= (.01-.03). If the null of 0 falls between the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval, then it is inferred that the population indirect effect is 0. If 0 falls outside the confidence interval, then the indirect effect is inferred to be non-zero. Sobel test was carried to find the significant indirect effect of likeability and authority through involvement ( $z = 4.16, p < .001$ ).

Table 11  
 Mediating effect of Positive Parenting (perceived) between Likeability (self-concept) and Exhibitionism (narcissism) (N = 628).

Exhibitionism				
			Model 2	
95% CI				
Predictors	Model 1 B	B	LL	UL
(Constant)	14.52	8.23	7.39	9.07
Likeability	.22 <sup>***</sup>	.10 <sup>***</sup>	.08	.13
Positive Parenting		.09 <sup>***</sup>	.15	.12
Age	-.36	-.08	-.32	.16
Gender	.23	-.55	-.87	-.24
$R^2$	.15	.23		
$F$	36.95 <sup>***</sup>	47.43 <sup>***</sup>		
$\Delta R^2$		.12		
$\Delta F$		94.21 <sup>***</sup>		
<i>Note: B = unstandardized regression coefficient, R2 = explained variance; Gender and age are controlled variables; **p &lt; 0.01; ***p &lt; 0.001</i>				

## Discussion

Individual's self-concept is affected by many factors. One of the most influencing factor are other people's evaluation towards the individual especially the significant others in his/her life (Peterson & Rollins, 1986).

Parents are the role models in building character, personality, morals and faith as they are the source of aspirations during the development process (Salasiah, 2011; Collins, Maccoby, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000). For this reason one of the many purposes of the study was to examine the effects of perceived parenting on the development of self-concept. Many researchers suggest that parenting affects individual starting from childhood (Baumrind, 1991; Jackson-Newsom et al., 2008; Park et al., 2010). In most perceived parenting studies, the main supposition had been that mothers' effect the personality of children with an increasing shift towards fathers' role and impact as well (Nurmi & Aonula, 2005; Kakhara, Tilton-Weaver, Kerr, & Stattin, 2010).

Previous theorizing by clinical psychologists suggests that adult's narcissism may be related to perceived parenting practices (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977), however, lack of consensus surrounding the conceptualization of narcissism can be found. This research tried to test if perceived parenting has any influence on narcissistic traits by impacting the self-concept.

One of the objectives of this exploratory study was to predict perceived parenting and its effect on self-concept. A significant regression equation was also found  $F(1, 626) = 47.89, p < .001$  with an  $R^2$  of .07 explaining 7 % statistically significant variance in self-concept is explained by perceived parenting (see Table 2). Regression was also done to predict the role of both mothers and fathers on the self-concept. Results showed that mothers contributed 10 % statistically significant variance in self-concept as compared to fathers who contribute 5 % significant variance in the development of self-concept (see Tables 4 & 5).

The compiled research to date suggests that low levels of perceived parental monitoring and inconsistent parental practices are associated with individual's involvement in a range of antisocial and delinquent behaviors, narcissistic tendencies, and other personality disorders (Crouter & Head, 2002; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Patterson, 1986). Inconsistent and erratic discipline by parents promotes deviant attitudes and behaviors in their children (Akers, 2000).

Factors associated with the development of narcissism are of significant interest to clinicians and researchers (Wright et al., 2017). Elevated narcissism in adults often sets up a cascade of interpersonal and mental health challenges reinforcing the need to understand its concomitants. Experiences of maltreatment and different perceived parenting styles have been implicated (Schie, Jarman, Huxley, & Grenyer, 2020). Perceived parental warmth was associated positively and monitoring was associated negatively with both types of narcissism (Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006).

Another objective of present study was to find out relationship between perceived parenting and narcissism among adults (see Table 3). Based on literature, it was hypothesized that perceived parenting and its sub scales impact narcissism. Some theorists have highlighted the role of the mother figures. Present research took into account the role father figures play in the development of narcissism (Huxley & Bizumic, 2017; Brummelman et al., 2015). From the regression analysis it was found that mothers contribute 8 % statistically significant variance in narcissism as compared to fathers who contribute 4 % significant variance in narcissism (see Tables 6 & 7). Some other studies have also found differences in maternal and paternal parenting with a stronger association for perceived maternal parenting (Huxley & Bizumic, 2017; Watson, Little, & Biderman, 1992).

Previous researches also showed inflated self-concept to be associated with a range of mental health indicators. Emmons (1984) found that NPI scores correlated positively with self-esteem, extraversion, dominance, and independence and negatively with abasement, self-ideal discrepancy, neuroticism, and social anxiety. Some degree of narcissism as measured by the NPI appears to be tapping into the benefits

associated with high self-esteem and may not be maladaptive. Emmons (1984) concluded there may be a curvilinear relationship between the self-evaluation, narcissism and adjustment.

Mediational effects of perceived parenting for explaining the relationship between self-concept and narcissism and self-concept among adults were explored. It was hypothesized that perceived parenting mediate the relationship between self-concept and narcissism. It was also hypothesized that involvement subscale mediate the relationship between likeability (self-concept) and authority (narcissism). Positive parenting was also hypothesized to mediate the relationship between likeability and exhibitionism (narcissism). The results of the present study showed that perceived parenting, involvement as well as positive parenting (perceived) mediate the relationship between self-concept and narcissism among adults.

## **Conclusion**

Parent-child dyad is the building block of self-concept on which the personality of an individual is based. Though self-concept may change during the lifespan of an individual but a fairly large portion of it is influenced by the early experiences with parents and how those experiences are perceived. The congruent self-concept develops into a fully functioning balanced individual that strives for self-actualization. Incongruent self-concept on the other hand along with many other social and familial factors is the result of over or under indulgent perceived parenting that leads to the development of narcissistic traits in individuals.

## **Implications**

The current study seeks to further the understanding of narcissistic traits in early adults, early middle age and late middle age and their association with a spectrum of perceived parenting and over or under developed self-concept. From a clinical perspective, understanding these relationships may aid in the provision of effective and timely interventions. This study being part of ongoing therapeutic interventions, which will be directed more on working on the inflated self-concept of narcissistic adults in the next phase, established the links between the variables.

Balance in parenting practices is crucial in the development of children's personalities. Future research may further investigate the exact mechanisms by which certain combinations of parenting styles lead to the development of specific characteristics of narcissism, that is, autonomy, self-discipline, adaptive self-concepts preferably using longitudinal designs and how the perceptions are developed.

Because of continuous advancement in technology and social media, societies are moving from collectivism to individualism. Without due attention towards understanding in depth the emerging threat of narcissism as tried in the present study, it may end up making societies deprived of empathy and altruism. Immoral behavior is on rise creating a toxic environment where only those without high human values will be able to survive.

## Declarations

# Declarations

## Ethics approval and consent to participate

Before collecting the data ethical approval for the study was sought and granted by the Scientific Research and Ethics Committee with the decision number DÜ/EB/2018/198. Considering the sensitivity of the topic and reluctance of the participants, verbal as well as written informed consent was taken from those participants who were willing to participate in the study. They were also briefed that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained and are free to leave at any point.

## Consent for publication

Maintaining ethical standards and respect for their privacy and confidentiality, they were informed and consented that keeping their data confidential, analysis of their given data will be published in academic journals, conferences, etc.

## Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

## Funding

No grant or funds were received for conducting the present study.

## Authors' contributions

Ms. Maryam Farzand is mainly responsible for the study conceptualization, data collection, data preparation. Dr. Yagmur Cerkez was involved in report writing and Dr Engin Baysen with the data analysis.

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## Figures

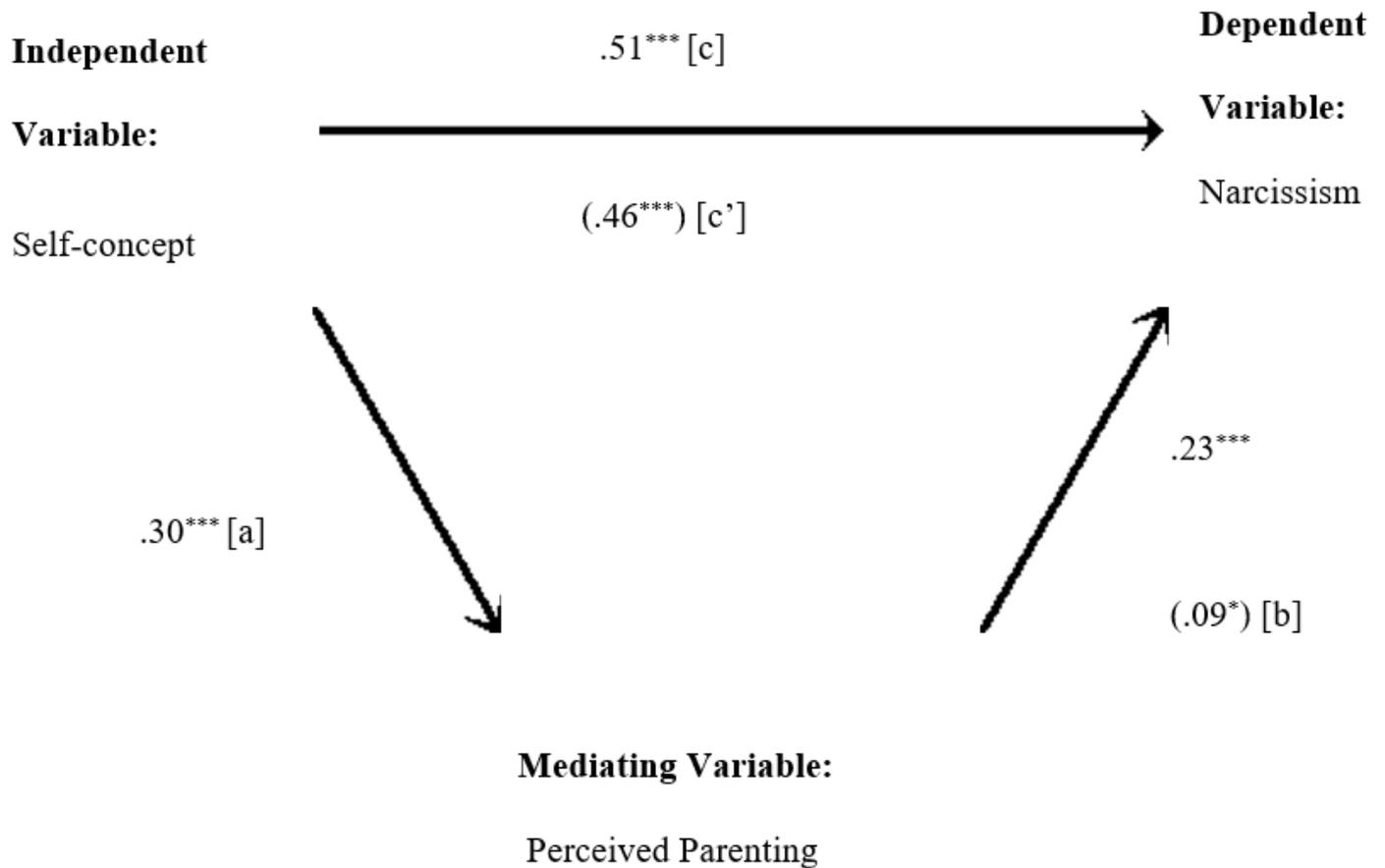
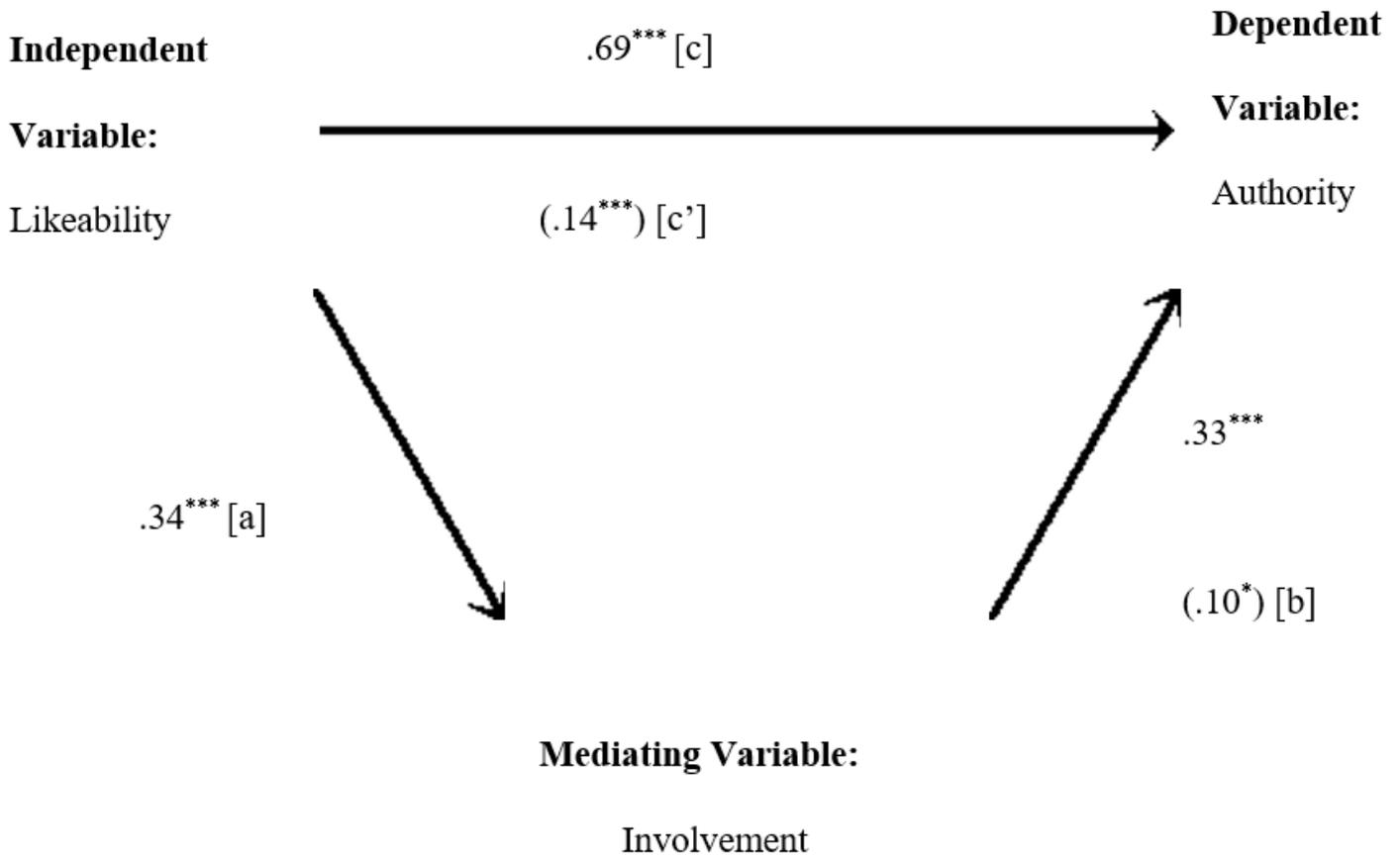


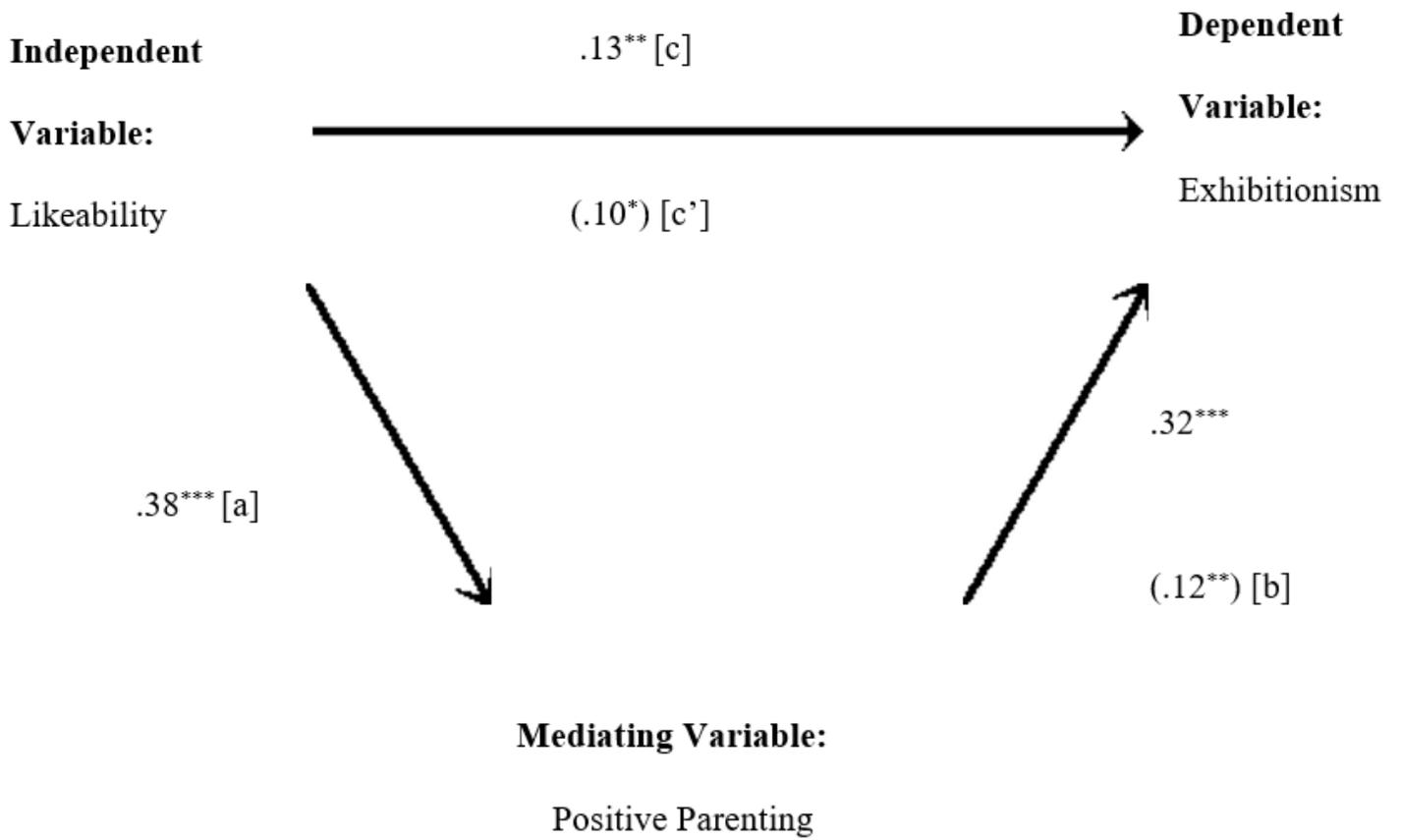
Figure 1

Medgraph shows indirect effect of self-concept and narcissism through perceived parenting. The numerical value in parentheses are beta weights taken from the second regression and the other values are zero order correlations.



**Figure 2**

Medgraph shows indirect effect of likeability and authority through involvement (perceived). The numerical value in parentheses are beta weights taken from the second regression and the other values are zero order correlations.



**Figure 3**

Medgraph shows indirect effect of likeability and exhibitionism through positive parenting (perceived). The numerical value in parentheses are beta weights taken from the second regression and the other values are zero order correlations.