Examining the Impact of Narcissism and Academic Exaggeration on Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students

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To Stretch the Truth: Examining Narcissism and its Effects on GPA Inflation
Lindsay Koeller, Megan White, Matthew Faherty, Joshua Pasek
Advisor: Erin M. O'Mara, Ph.D.

Introduction

Academic Exaggeration
- The practice of self-reporting GPA higher than official GPA
- Students tend to exaggerate self-reports of their GPA despite awareness of their exact GPA
- Academic exaggeration is associated with higher subsequent GPA (Willard & Gramzow, 2006)

Narcissism
- An inflated sense of self-importance and egotism
- Different types:
  ○ General grandiosity (e.g., Narcissistic Personality Inventory; Raskin & Terry, 1988)
  ○ Defensiveness (e.g., Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; Hendin & Cheek 1997)
  ○ Desire for social admiration and prevention of social failure e.g., Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale; Back, Kufner, Dufner, Gerlach, Rauthmann, & Denissen, 2013)

The Current Research

Our current study examines whether the association between academic exaggeration (AE) and end-of-semester GPA (EOS-GPA) varies by students’ level and type of narcissism.

Results

Participants: \( N = 147 \) (\( n_{\text{Female}} = 81 \)), \( M_{\text{age}} = 19.69, SD_{\text{age}} = 1.43 \)

Procedure
- Academic exaggeration (AE) = variability (residuals) between self-reported and official prior semester cumulative GPA.
- Official prior and cumulative EOS-GPA obtained after data collection ended.

Method

- Participants completed three measures of narcissism:
  ○ Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)
  ○ Hypersensitive Narcissism (HSN)
  ○ Narcissistic Admiration (NAR) and Rivalry (RIV)

Results

In four separate analyses, EOS-GPA was regressed onto a factorial crossing of sex, AE, and each measure of narcissism.

The 3-way interaction for NPI was not significant; sex was then included as a covariate.
- NPI and AE interact to predict future GPA, \( F(1, 133) = 5.20, p = .024 \), see Figure 1.
  ○ AE was associated with EOS-GPA for those lower in narcissism.

The 3-way interaction is associated with EOS-GPA for HSN and RIV, and trending for NAR.

Each AE x narcissism interaction was significant for women but not men (all \( F’s > 4.06, \) all \( p’s < .05 \)).
- At high levels of HSN, AE was positively associated with EOS-GPA; at low levels of HSN, AE was negatively associated with EOS-GPA; see Figure 2.
- At high levels of RIV and NAR, AE is negatively associated with EOS-GPA; at low levels of NAR, the positive association between AE and EOS-GPA is trending towards significance, see Figures 3 and 4.

Conclusions

The whether AE impacts academic performance or GPA varies by degree of narcissism, and the type of narcissism impacts the direction of that association, particularly for women.