

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

In-depth Research on Etiology, Diagnosis, Treatment approaches, and Sociocultural Impacts

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Abstract— The paper explores the clinical characteristics, underlying causes, and societal effect of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), with a focus on underprivileged communities. It goes over diagnostic standards, environmental and psychological factors, and available treatments, such as counselling and medicine, highlighting the value of individualized, compassionate approaches in the management of this intricate and frequently misdiagnosed illness.

Index Terms— Narcissistic Personality Disorder, DSM- 5, Childhood Trauma, Mental Health, Identity

I. INTRODUCTION

Entitlement, lack of empathy, need for immoderate admiration, exploitation of others, arrogant behavior and thinking, are all characteristics of narcissistic personality disorder, also known as NDP. Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental health condition in which people have an unreasonably high sense of their own importance (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2023). The DSM-5 classifies NPD as a Cluster B personality disorder, which includes disorders characterized by unpredictable, dramatic, or emotional behaviour. Individuals who suffer from this condition might not be able to comprehend or care about other people's feelings. However, beneath this façade of overwhelming confidence, they lack self-assurance and become quickly agitated by the smallest criticism. Despite decades of interest and criticism, NPD is still a very debatable diagnosis, in part because of its similarities to other personality disorders and the stigma associated with narcissistic behaviour. The purpose of the research is to investigate NPD from a variety of angles, including its definition, diagnostic criteria, potential causes, and therapeutic implications from a clinical standpoint.

II. DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA OF NPD

The DSM-5 defines narcissistic personality disorder as a widespread pattern of grandiosity, craving for admiration, and lack of empathy that manifests in a range of situations and starts in early adulthood. When a person fulfils five or more of the following requirements, a diagnosis is made:

- Grandiosity, an excessive feeling of self-importance and a conviction that one is better than others.
- Obsession with idealized love, power, brilliance, beauty, or limitless success.
- Thinking that one is "special" and that only other high-status individuals or organizations can comprehend them.
- Needing a lot of adoration and a continual need for approval and recognition from other people.
- A sense of entitlement, as well as irrational expectations of preferential treatment or automatic obedience to one's desires.
- Exploitative of others on an interpersonal level, using them for one's own benefit.
- Lack of empathy, the incapacity or reluctance to understand or relate to the needs and feelings of other people.
- Jealousy of other people or the conviction that one is jealous of others.
- Egotistical actions or attitudes, a tendency to be arrogant or contemptuous of other people.

Not everyone who possesses narcissistic qualities satisfies the whole diagnostic criteria for NPD, and some people may display narcissistic tendencies without fulfilling the requirements for a condition.

III. CAUSES AND SOCIOCULTURAL IMPACT OF NPD

NPD is a disorder that can be genetically passed on, as people suffering from NPD are more likely to have close relatives who also suffered from the same. In addition, it can also be caused due to being in a certain environment, as NPD may be aggravated by a child's relationship with their parents, particularly if there is excessive praise or criticism. NPD is also a way a person makes themselves feel better, they see themselves as great so that their insecurities don't bring them down. Kaguako a well-known therapist, addresses the widespread misunderstandings about NPD and investigates the ways in which early life events, specifically, a lack of emotional support may play a role in the disorder's development. According to the article, NPD is a complicated psychological disorder that has its roots in unfulfilled emotional needs during childhood, although it is sometimes misinterpreted as simple conceit or selfishness. Kaguako highlights the idea that early attachment disturbances and neglect cause people with NPD to struggle with self-care and emotional regulation later in life. The essay also emphasizes how society has an inclination to ignore the emotional weaknesses that underlie people with NPD because of their grandiose conduct (Kaguako, 2022). Between 1% and 2% of Americans are thought to suffer from NPD (Weinberg & Ronningstam, 2022).

Levy and Rosenstein discuss the etiological elements that contribute to NPD, including as early childhood experiences, genetic influences, and environmental factors, based on recent research. The clinical ramifications of diagnosing and treating NPD are further examined by Levy and Rosenstein, who point out that people with this condition frequently exhibit comorbidities such substance misuse or depression (Levy & Rosenstein, 2020). As mentioned before, childhood experiences play a major role in development of NPD as a child's fragile sense of self can be caused by parental neglect, overindulgence, or harsh criticism, which

might cause them to look for approval and adoration from others as adults. A child who experiences emotional neglect or abuse as a child may also develop narcissistic behaviour as a coping mechanism, compensating by inflating their sense of self-worth. Moreover, societal and cultural factors also play a role in its development, it can also arise as a result of cultural emphasis on materialism, achievement, and individualism. To succeed or fit in, people may be more prone to exhibit narcissistic qualities in cultures that place a high emphasis on wealth, prestige, and looks. In addition, there is also the psychodynamic perspective, NPD may have its roots in early developmental phases, such as a fixation in the narcissistic phase of libidinal development, according to Freudian and psychodynamic theories. The failure to establish safe attachments in early life may result in trouble establishing positive relationships with others, which frequently shows itself as narcissistic conduct in later life. Although the precise etiology of NPD is still unknown, it seems to be caused by a combination of environmental circumstances and genetic predispositions, especially during development.

Many marginalized communities can be greatly impacted by narcissistic personality disorder, especially those who belong to stigmatized or socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. The LGBTQ+ community is one such group that can face particular difficulties as a result of NPD. Because of cultural assumptions, many members of the LGBTQ+ community experience higher degrees of social stigma, discrimination, and identity issues. Those with NPD who belong to this community may experience an increased need for approval and admiration from others. The contradiction between their internalized sentiments of grandiosity and the exterior societal stigma they suffer might make it difficult for an NPD person who is also LGBTQ+ to embrace their sexual orientation or gender identity. They may become overly fixated on their appearance or try to get approval from others or from social media in an effort to uphold a grandiose self-image. They also have trouble empathizing with and comprehending the needs of others, which can be made worse by marginalized identities. For example, a lack of emotional reciprocity may make it difficult for someone with NPD to build meaningful relationships in the LGBTQ+ community, which can result in social alienation and isolation.

IV. TREATMENT APPROACHES FOR NPD

A multifaceted strategy that incorporates both therapy support and medicinal measures is frequently needed to treat narcissistic personality disorder. Pharmacotherapy, particularly the use of antidepressants or antipsychotic drugs, is a frequent medical treatment.

To treat the sadness, anxiety, or irritability symptoms that commonly accompany NPD, doctors may prescribe selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as sertraline (Zoloft) or fluoxetine (Prozac). SSRIs are especially helpful in treating mood disorders that might arise in people with NPD when they experience criticism, failure, or low self-esteem. More severe forms of narcissism, like paranoia, impulsivity, or emotional dysregulation, may be treated with atypical antipsychotic drugs like olanzapine or risperidone. These drugs can lessen the severity of delusions or angry outbursts and assist control mood swings. Pharmacological treatments can be useful in treating co-occurring mental illnesses like anxiety or depression that may make managing NPD more difficult, even if they are not the first-line remedy for the disorder. Psychotherapy and medication should be combined for a more thorough course of treatment.

One treatment that can be used for NPD can be cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). The goal of cognitive behavioral therapy is to assist people in identifying and changing the unhelpful thought and behaviour patterns that underlie narcissistic tendencies. This may entail confronting the irrational feeling of entitlement or superiority that underlies the actions of people with NPD. Additionally, CBT can help people build healthier coping mechanisms, lessen defensive responses to perceived slights, and enhance interpersonal skills. Yakeley addresses modern treatment ideas, emphasizing the difficulties that therapists encounter when working with patients who have NPD. The author offers suggestions for enhancing NPD diagnosis and treatment results in the conclusion, stating that therapy techniques must be adaptable and customized to meet the needs of each patient (Yakeley, 2018). As Yakeley mentions, therapy techniques which are customized to meet the needs of each patient would apply to be more effective when it comes to NPD, as each person has different needs, and those needs need to be approached in different way. CBT would be the most effective therapeutic treatment as it would allow personalized therapy, along with gaining a deeper understanding of their problem and developing a healthy coping mechanism.

Weinberg and Ronningstam highlight the particular difficulties in treating people with NPD because of their inability to reflect on themselves, defensiveness, and the brittle self-esteem that underlies their grandiose actions. Effective treatment techniques are described in their article, such as the significance of establishing clear boundaries, giving regular feedback, and employing a psychodynamic approach that emphasizes self-esteem management (Weinberg & Ronningstam, 2020). Group therapy is another effective treatment. It provides a special chance for people with NPD to work on their interpersonal and social skills in a safe setting. People with NPD can learn more about how their narcissistic tendencies impact other people by receiving candid criticism about their behaviour from their peers in group therapy. Group therapy's controlled setting offers a secure setting for people to examine their feelings and develop more sympathetic interpersonal relationships. Additionally, group therapy can offer social learning opportunities, allowing participants to watch and emulate positive interpersonal skills. This environment can foster a deeper comprehension of emotional dynamics and lessen the loneliness that frequently accompanies narcissism. Group therapy gives people with NPD an extra layer of support by assisting them in creating and maintaining more good social connections, especially when combined with other types of psychotherapy.

V. CONCLUSION

A complicated and multidimensional disorder, narcissistic personality disorder can seriously affect emotional functioning and interpersonal interactions. Numerous elements, such as societal influences, early life experiences, and genetic predispositions, affect its development. Marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, may be particularly affected by the disorder, as internalized stigma and outside pressures can intensify narcissistic tendencies. Even if treating NPD is still

difficult, people can control their symptoms and enhance their quality of life by combining medical treatments like antidepressants and antipsychotics, psychotherapies like cognitive behavioral therapy, and extra therapies like group therapy. Treatment can promote improved self-awareness, emotional control, and interpersonal skills by treating the disorder's psychological and social components. A caring, holistic strategy and ongoing research are crucial for enhancing NPD.

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