

Self-Esteem and Narcissism Tendency among Instagram User Students

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Abstract. Instagram is a popular social media platform among teenagers and students. Its interesting features make users able to exist and show their abilities, beauty, or other unique things. However, if excessive, this can become a form of narcissism, one of which is influenced by self-esteem. This study examines the relationship between self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies in 221 Instagram user students from the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University, Kupang. Data were collected using the self-esteem scale and the narcissism tendency scale, based on Coopersmith's theory and Raskin and Terry. The purposive sampling method was used for sampling from a population of 521 students. Spearman correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.246$, $p = 0.000$), which means that the higher the self-esteem, the higher the narcissistic tendencies in college students who use Instagram. This finding confirms that self-esteem plays a role in influencing narcissistic behavior on social media.

Keyword: *Self-Esteem, Narcissism Tendency, Students, Instagram*

Abstrak. Instagram merupakan media sosial populer di kalangan remaja dan mahasiswa. Fitur-fitur menariknya membuat pengguna dapat tampil eksis dan menunjukkan kemampuan, kecantikan, atau hal unik lainnya. Namun, jika berlebihan hal ini bisa menjadi bentuk narsisme, yang salah satu faktornya dipengaruhi oleh *self-esteem*. Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan *self-esteem* dengan kecenderungan narsisme pada 221 mahasiswa pengguna instagram di Program Studi Psikologi Universitas Nusa Cendana Kupang. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan skala *self-esteem* dan skala kecenderungan narsisme, berdasarkan teori Coopersmith serta Raskin dan Terry. Metode *purposive sampling* digunakan untuk pengambilan sampel dari populasi 521 mahasiswa. Analisis korelasi Spearman menunjukkan hubungan positif signifikan ($r = 0,246$, $p = 0,000$), yang berarti semakin tinggi *self-esteem*, semakin tinggi pula kecenderungan narsisme pada mahasiswa pengguna instagram. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa *self-esteem* berperan dalam memengaruhi perilaku narsisme di media sosial.

Kata Kunci: *Self Esteem, Narsisme, Mahasiswa, Instagram*

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Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, marked by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. College students, aged 18-25 years, are included in Yusuf's late adolescence to early adulthood stage (Hulukati & Djibrin, 2018). At this stage, self-actualization is crucial for students to express themselves and channel their hobbies. Additionally, they also need socialization to expand their social circle (Muslimin & Yusuf, 2020). Social media is one of the main means that can fulfill these needs.

In today's digital era, it is certain that almost everyone, especially teenagers and students, owns a smartphone and also uses social media. According to the Hootsuite Report (We Are Social) Indonesia Digital Report 2023 shows that the population in Indonesia is 276.4 million. There are 212.9 million internet users (77% of the population) and as many as 167 million active social media users in January 2023. One of the most popular in Indonesia, with 86.5% of users, is Instagram. In 2023, 30.8% of Instagram users were dominated by teenagers and young adults in the age group of 18-24 years.

Based on a survey conducted on 50 psychology students, it was found that they use various social media apps, including WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, YouTube, and online gaming apps such as Mobile Legends. The survey results showed that 19 students (38%) were interested in Instagram, 14 (28%) in WhatsApp, 13 (26%) in TikTok, and 2 (4%) each in Facebook and YouTube, as well as Mobile Legends (data taken on June 12, 2023). In interviews conducted on July 2, 2023, with three students who are active Instagram users, they stated that the reason they like Instagram is that many of their friends use it, and they can follow the latest news from idols. Instagram also displays a wealth of information, including photo styles, fashion references, job vacancies, and scholarships. One of the students, MS, added that Instagram has various filters that make her happy to take pictures and attract people's attention to what she shares.

Instagram is an app that allows users to share photos and videos directly. This feature is desirable to students, as they can share their personal activities and express themselves through selfies or uploaded videos. Users can also add captions to strengthen the meaning of

the photo or video. The goal is to attract the attention of other users to give likes or positive comments as a form of praise for the uploaded post (Laeli et al., 2018). However, according to Weiser (Laeli et al., 2018), uploading photos or videos excessively can interfere with optimal self-development. A person may feel compelled to continually upload content to garner attention and praise from others. These actions may reflect behaviors that lead to a narcissistic personality.

According to the American Psychiatric Association in DSM-5 (2013), narcissistic personality tendencies are fixed personality patterns characterized by excessive fantasies of success, power, beauty, intelligence, ideal love, and strong needs (Laeli et al., 2018). According to Raskin & Terry (1988), narcissism is an individual's admiration for oneself which is often characterized by a tendency to overvalue oneself, likes to be the center of attention, does not like to accept criticism, is more concerned with and prioritizes oneself, lacks empathy, and tends to be exploitative (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

The aspects of narcissism according to Raskin & Terry (Maulidania, 2017) include authority, characterized by the assumption of being a leader or being an influential person, exhibitionism, characterized by the assumption of liking to be the center of attention, exploitation, characterized by the assumption that one can be someone who takes advantage of others and become someone who succeeds by exploiting others, rights, entitlement, characterized by referring to one's expectations and amount of entitlement in their life, arrogance, characterized by being haughty and thinking of oneself as more attractive, superiority, characterized by being superior or being haughty by feeling that one is the most powerful, arrogant, and important, and self-acceptance, characterized by believing that one can fulfill one's own needs with one's abilities.

Based on the results of interviews with three students related to narcissistic tendencies in Instagram users YM, IM, and CG stated that getting likes and positive comments on the posts they upload is very desirable. However, they do not pay much attention to comments that are critical or negative. When their posts get many likes, they tend to compare them with previous posts that did not get the same response. Receiving many likes is considered important to them because this gives a sense of appreciation and achievement. Students with

the initials IM also often create content with their friends and upload it to Instagram, and tag their friends in stories. IM admits that he wants to show everyone the beauty of the places they visit, especially if they are in interesting locations.

One of the factors that can influence narcissistic behavior is self-esteem because individuals with narcissistic personalities need appreciation and respect so that self-esteem can be formed. Self-esteem plays a crucial role in a person's development, helping them to become mature adults. Therefore, self-esteem will affect the way a person lives life, acceptance of himself, and how to live life with others (Clarke et al., 2015).

Humans have a need to maintain and improve their self-esteem. This is in line with the statement that everyone should strive to appear positive in social and online environments. Individuals with low self-esteem are likely to be more eager to engage in cyber activities to increase their self-esteem (Karmer & Winter, in Ramadhana, 2018). In contrast, individuals with high self-esteem may feel threatened when they experience failure. Thus, they begin to maintain their self-esteem by putting others down and praising their strengths (Myers, in Ramadhana, 2018).

Self-esteem, according to Coopersmith (Suhron, 2021), is an assessment made by a person against himself, which can reflect an attitude of acceptance or rejection and shows how far a person believes that he is capable, important, successful, and valuable. Aspects of self-esteem, according to Coopersmith (Wulandari, 2022), the strength aspect is a feeling that a person has or that can influence others. This can be proven by recognition from others. Aspects of the ability to succeed according to the desired goal. This is indicated by a person's ability to perform specific tasks and the results obtained from these tasks. The aspect of meaningfulness is a feeling that individuals feel about themselves that is meaningful to others. This sense of meaningfulness is characterized by care and compassion for others. The benevolence aspect shows an attitude towards ethics or morals that apply in society and is characterized by obedience to applicable rules and individuals feel free from unpleasant feelings.

In this developmental phase, university students are at an important stage of identity formation, where self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies can change. Research by Kernis & Goldman (2006) shows that individuals in this phase are more vulnerable to changes in self-esteem, which can be related to narcissistic behavior. Therefore, this study was conducted on psychology students, as they have a better understanding of psychological concepts, including self esteem and narcissism. This deeper understanding suggests that individuals with a psychology background tend to be reflective of their behavior, especially in the context of social media. Psychology students are often involved in discussions and research on mental health issues, so that they may be more aware of the impact of self-esteem and narcissism in everyday life.

Based on the description above, the researchers are interested in conducting research with the theme “the relationship between self esteem and narcissistic tendencies in students who use Instagram in the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University Kupang”. This research is expected to contribute knowledge in the field of psychology, as well as help students understand the extent to which the level of self-esteem with the level of narcissistic tendencies in Instagram users. With this understanding, students are expected to be more introspective about their behavior and interactions on social media.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative method with a correlational design to investigate the relationship between two variables. The study population consisted of 521 students from the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University, Kupang, with a sample of 221 students selected through a purposive sampling technique. The sample criteria included students aged 18-22 years old, students from the 2020-2023 class, and active Instagram users. Data were collected through interviews and psychological questionnaires distributed via Google Forms.

The data collection instrument used in this study is the Narcissism Tendency Scale (16 items) compiled by Maulidania (2017) based on aspects proposed by Raskin & Terry (1988),

namely authority, exhibitionism, self-fulfillment, exploitation, superiority, arrogance, and entitlement. The validity score of the Narcissism Tendency Scale ranged between 0.334-0.646. The test retest reliability test results obtained 0.890. The self-esteem scale (26 items) compiled by Wulandari (2022) is based on aspects put forward by Coopersmith, namely strength, ability, meaningfulness, and virtue. The test-retest reliability test results obtained a value of 0.924.

The data analysis techniques employed include a normality test, conducted using a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while the linearity test uses deviation from linearity. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Spearman rank correlation technique to determine the significant relationship between the two variables.

Results

The results of the normality test in this study indicate that the distribution of values on the narcissistic tendency variable is not normal, with a significance level that is less than 5% ($0.000 < 0.05$). In contrast, the self-esteem variable shows a significance value of more than 5% ($0.069 > 0.05$), indicating that the data are normally distributed. Furthermore, the linearity test results show a Deviation from Linearity value of $0.291 > 0.05$. This concludes that there is a linear relationship between the narcissism tendency variable and the self-esteem variable. In the hypothesis test, the 2-tailed sig value was obtained at $0.000 < 0.05$. This shows that there is a relationship (correlation) between the self-esteem variable and the tendency towards narcissism. In addition, the correlation coefficient value obtained is 0.246, indicating a positive relationship (correlation) between self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies.

Descriptions of respondents in this study were 221 respondents, 175 (79.2%) were female, and 46 (20.8%) were male. Based on age distribution, the majority of respondents were 20 years old, with 73 (33%) respondents, and the least represented age group was 18 years old, with 7 (3.2%) respondents. Based on the semester, most respondents were in Semester 4, with 68 (30.8%), and the least were in Semester 8, with 30 (13.6%).

Table 1. *Narcissism Tendency Variable Categorization*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	25	11,3%
Medium	165	74,7%
High	31	14%
Total	221	100%

Table 1 shows the level of narcissistic tendencies of Instagram users in the Psychology Study Program of Nusa Cendana University, namely 74.7% (165 people) of students are in the moderate category, 16.3% (31 people) of students are in the high category and 14.0% (25 people) of students are in the low category. So, the level of narcissism tendency of students is in the moderate category.

Table 2. *Self-Esteem Variable Categorization*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	31	14%
Medium	162	73,3%
High	28	12,7%
Total	221	100%

Table 2 shows the level of self esteem in Instagram users in the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University, namely 73.3% (162 people) of students are in the moderate category, 14.0% (31 people) of students are in the low category, and 12.7% (28 people) of students are in the high category. It can be concluded that the level of self-esteem of students falls in the moderate category.

Discussion

The results of the categorization conducted show that the tendency of narcissism in students who use Instagram in the Psychology Study Program of Nusa Cendana University is 74.7% (165 students) in the moderate category, 16.3% (31 students) are in the high category,

and 14.0% (25 students) are in the low category. So, the level of narcissism tendency in Instagram users is in the moderate category. Raskin & Terry (Wahyuni *et al.*, 2022) suggest that narcissism is an individual's admiration for oneself, which is often characterized by a tendency to overvalue oneself, like to be the center of attention, do not like to accept criticism, and tend to be exploitative.

In general, respondents in this study have a level of narcissistic tendencies in the moderate category. This means that students can assess themselves quite positively, they enjoy attention from others, but are also able to accept criticism well. Individuals with moderate levels of narcissism try to balance between the desire to be recognized and the awareness of the importance of healthy social relationships. Engkus *et al.* (2017) said that individuals with narcissistic tendencies in the moderate category could have a desire to be narcissistic but not force themselves.

Researchers analyzed seven aspects of narcissistic tendencies and found that students who use Instagram tend to have a moderate level of narcissism. They exhibit a desire to perform, get attention, and feel superior, but not in an extreme way. This finding reflects the social dynamics of social media, where individuals strive to balance their desire for recognition with an awareness of their social boundaries. These tendencies influence their interactions on the platform and how they construct their identity in the digital world.

Overall, students were in the moderate category in every aspect of narcissistic tendencies. However, some respondents showed the highest percentage in the high category in the exploitation aspect, namely 28.1% (62 people). This means that some students have the potential to take advantage of others for personal gain. Raskin & Terry (in Maulidania, 2017) state that the exploitation aspect refers to individuals who tend to use others as a means to increase their self-esteem, such as demeaning others to gain admiration. This aligns with the opinion of Wahyuni *et al.* (2022) that narcissistic individuals tend to be indifferent to interpersonal relationships, warmth, or other positive aspects of relationship outcomes. Instead, they use relationships to appear successful and popular, and try to look attractive solely to garner public attention.

Researchers also analyzed the variable of narcissistic tendencies in Instagram users based on gender. The results show that overall, both men and women have the most narcissistic tendencies in the moderate category. However, women have a higher percentage in the high category (15.4%) than men (8.7%). This finding aligns with Kusumawati & Rachmah's (2021) research, which shows that female students have a higher narcissistic level than male students. The narcissistic differences between male and female Instagram social media users can be influenced by several things, such as internet technology, lifestyle, and mass culture. In line with Sembiring's (2017) and Novi & Eka's (2021) statements, it is also emphasized that women tend to be more narcissistic than men because they more often follow a modern lifestyle that places personal appearance, especially body image, as a top priority, in the hope of getting praise from others.

Muslimin & Yusuf (2020) suggested that social media is one of the supports of narcissistic behavior. The impact of using social media can be positive or negative, depending on the intensity of its use. The more frequent and longer the intensity of using social media, the more it is related to narcissism (excessive concern for oneself). Individuals often upload photos or videos to garner attention from others. This act of attracting excessive attention shows behavior that leads to narcissistic personality (Durand & Barlow, 2017, in Asiah *et al.*, 2018).

Coopersmith (in Suhron, 2021) suggests that self-esteem is an assessment that a person makes of himself, which reflects an attitude of acceptance or rejection and shows how far a person believes that he is capable, important, successful, and valuable. Sedikides (Wahyuni *et al.*, 2022) states that there are three possible motives in self-evaluation, namely self-assessment, self-improvement, and self-verification. In self-assessment, individuals gain precise knowledge about themselves. In self-enhancement, individuals receive positive information about themselves, and in self-verification, individuals confirm something known about themselves. Which motive appears most often depends on culture, a person's personality, and the situation they face.

The results of descriptive analysis of self-esteem variables in Instagram users in the Psychology Study Program of Nusa Cendana University show that 73.3% (162 students) have

self-esteem in the medium category, 14.0% (31 students) are in the low category, and 12.7% (28 students) are in the high category. Based on these data, respondents in this study generally belonged to the moderate category. This suggests that students have a relatively accurate self-assessment, encompassing both their positive and negative aspects. This assessment is based on experiences gained in daily life. Often, they assess themselves as individuals who are able to live life well, according to their abilities. However, on the other hand, there are still doubts about their value and self-worth.

In line with Coopersmith's opinion (in Malasari, 2020), individuals with moderate self-esteem show behavior that is close to the characteristics of individuals with high self-esteem. However, there are some important exceptions, such as the level of confidence in oneself, uncertainty in one's abilities, and dependence on acceptance from the social environment.

The researcher analyzed the four aspects of self-esteem and found that students have moderate self-esteem. This finding indicates that students have a stable and balanced self-esteem. They feel pretty good about themselves in terms of strength, ability, virtue, and meaningfulness, although not at a high level. The use of Instagram has a positive impact on building balanced self-esteem, helping college students avoid extreme social comparisons and increasing self-awareness and a realistic understanding of themselves.

Although the four aspects dominate in the moderate category, some respondents showed the highest percentage in the high category in the strength aspect, namely 19.5% (43 students). This can be interpreted that some students who use Instagram feel they have influence over others and get positive recognition from others. Coopersmith (in Wulandari, 2022) states that strength is related to an individual's ability to influence others and gain recognition from their social environment. In the context of social media such as Instagram, recognition from others (e.g., likes, comments, and followers) can contribute to feelings of power. When students get positive responses from the content they share, this can strengthen their self esteem.

Researchers also analyzed self-esteem variables in Instagram users based on gender. The results show that women have a higher percentage in the moderate category (80.2%) than

men (69.6%). This indicates that women have a more stable self-esteem in the moderate category. Although men have a higher percentage in the high category (15.2%) than women (12.0%), this difference is not very significant. Adishesa & Evelin (2020) state that men and women have different self-esteem because women experience pleasant emotions on Instagram more often than men. As a result, women are more likely to attach importance to reflected judgment because they learn to value their ability to socialize more. Instagram is expected to increase self-esteem by presenting oneself to social media with the aim of being recognized and getting feedback that can increase self-esteem.

Putri & Isrofins (2021) say that the use of social media can affect a person's self-esteem. This can be seen when individuals publish themselves by displaying photos or videos that they find interesting. Photos or videos that a person uploads and then gets likes and comments from others become one of the aspects that encourage the self-esteem effect. Self-esteem is determined by social approval factors in the form of approval from others. This can not only increase self-esteem but can also reduce it. In line with Raymer's opinion (in Putri & Isrofins, 2021) that individuals with low self-esteem use social media intending to be accepted by others, while individuals with high self-esteem use social media to support their popularity.

This study aims to determine the relationship between self-esteem and narcissism tendencies in Instagram user students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University, Kupang. Based on the results of the hypothesis test, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, namely that there is a relationship between self-esteem and narcissism tendencies in Instagram user students, with a correlation coefficient value of 0.246 and a significance value of 0.000, which indicates that $p < 0.05$. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between the two variables with a small effect. Which means, the higher the self-esteem, the higher the tendency of narcissism; conversely, the lower the self-esteem, the lower the tendency of narcissism

Sarwono (2014) in Eliya & Rahma (2020) said that narcissism is a negative behavioral impact of high self-esteem. Not everyone who has high self-esteem can use it in a good direction. Negative behavior from high self-esteem is when they feel superior to others, and

people are motivated to continue to maintain it. When there is a situation that is perceived as threatening this superiority, narcissistic behavior appears, which aims to maintain it.

Najib *et al.* (2018) said that adolescents who have high levels of narcissism have high self-esteem. High self-esteem becomes a problem when it turns into narcissism. Most people with high self-esteem have a value for individual achievement and relationships with others. Narcissists usually have high self-esteem, but they lack the other part, which is caring for others. Although narcissists are often friendly and charming at first, over time their self-centeredness often causes problems with their relationships with others (Myers, 2010 in Putri & Isrofins, 2021).

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Ambar Wati (2023), which shows that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and narcissistic behavior with a correlation coefficient of 0.291 and a significance value of 0.031. Another study that is also in line is a study conducted by Putri & Isrofins (2021), which shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between narcissistic behavior and self-esteem on the use of TikTok social media with a significance result of $0.000 < 0.05$ and a calculated F value of 11.027.

In contrast to the results of a study conducted by Wahyuni *et al.* (2022), the results showed that there was a negative relationship between self-esteem and the tendency for narcissistic behavior of Instagram users in early adulthood. The higher the level of self-esteem, the lower the tendency for narcissistic behavior; conversely, the lower the self-esteem, the higher the tendency for narcissistic behavior. Different results were also obtained from the study (Elliya & Rahma, 2020) that students who have low self-esteem have high narcissistic tendencies, conversely, students who have high self-esteem have low narcissistic tendencies. Different results were also obtained from the study by Gustira *et al.* (2021), showing that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and the tendency for narcissistic behavior in student Instagram users. According to Gustira *et al.* (2021), individuals with narcissistic tendencies have low self-esteem. This causes individuals who have narcissistic personalities to need appreciation and self-esteem from others to increase their self-esteem. So, they display narcissistic behavior, namely, they like to show off about themselves, both from something they have or the success they have achieved.

Conclusion

There is a positive relationship between self-esteem and narcissism tendencies in Instagram user students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University, with a correlation coefficient of 0.246 and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. The level of narcissism tendencies in Psychology Study Program students, Nusa Cendana University, is in the moderate category, namely (74.7%) or 165 students. The level of self-esteem in Psychology Study Program students, Nusa Cendana University, is in the moderate category, namely (73.3%) or 162 students.

Suggestion

For students, engage in self-reflection to understand personal values and potential. Utilize Instagram to share educational content, ensuring its use is not limited to excessive self-promotion. Additionally, actively participating in positive activities, such as student organizations, is important for building healthy self-esteem and reducing narcissistic tendencies. For future researchers, develop this study further by exploring the relationship between narcissistic tendencies and other psychological factors that may also play a role, such as loneliness, self-acceptance, self-control, self-image, subjective well-being, and fear of missing out (FOMO).

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