Exploring the Impact of Social Media on Narcissistic Behavior Among Students in Medan City

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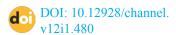[1] fadhilpahlevi@umsu.ac.id, [2] zulfahmi@umsu.ac.id, [3] ridwan.nasution@fisip.uisu.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of social media on the development of narcissistic behavior among students in Medan City, Indonesia. The research employs a qualitative, descriptive approach to understand how social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others contribute to both narcissism's positive and negative aspects. Interviews with respondents reveal a mixed perception of narcissism, with some viewing it as a form of self-appreciation within reasonable limits. In contrast, others see it as an unhealthy phase with negative implications. The study highlights that social media facilitates personality formation and boosts self-confidence but also fosters narcissistic tendencies through excessive self-promotion and attention-seeking behaviors. It concludes that while most respondents do not exhibit severe narcissistic behavior, the potential for harm necessitates mindful social media usage. Recommendations include engaging in meaningful activities, fostering empathy, and providing counseling services to mitigate the adverse effects of narcissism.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media use has become a prevalent leisure activity globally, including in Indonesia. Individuals engage with social media platforms for various entertainment and social purposes. Social media facilitates open and unlimited feedback, comments, and information sharing, effectively minimizing space and time constraints (Sari et al., 2020). These platforms have significantly altered communication practices, enabling instant interactions and presenting both opportunities and challenges (Susanti et al., 2023). Popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, and Instagram have become familiar to the public, with over one billion users worldwide regularly accessing these platforms (Mayangsari & Salim, 2021). Despite the normalization of social media usage, concerns persist regarding the potential for social media addiction. As of 2014, at least 30 million children and adolescents in Indonesia were identified as Internet users, with digital media being their primary communication channel (Liang, 2021).

Social media use has positively impacted cooperation and the expansion of networks and friendships (Pratidina & Mitha, 2023). It also benefits students by improving their proficiency in English (Bakistuta & Abduh, 2023). However, social media also has notable negative impacts. One such impact is juvenile delinquency, which can arise from exposure to content on social media without adequate social control (Aqiilah et al., 2023). Social media use has also been linked to increased laziness (Mulyono, 2021). Cybercrime, encompassing activities such as cyberbullying, pornography, identity theft, fraud, sexual harassment, anxiety, panic, depression, violence, fear of missing out (FOMO), hoaxes, and insomnia, is another significant negative consequence of social media use (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Social media tools facilitated by internet networks have significantly simplified user interactions. Indonesia ranks as the sixth-largest internet user globally, with approximately 3.6 billion people accessing the internet worldwide. According to a UNICEF statistical survey, the number of internet users in Indonesia in 2016 was 132.7 million, representing about

51.5% of the country's total population of 256.2 million. The majority of these users are located on the island of Java, accounting for 86,339,350 users or roughly 65% of the total internet users in Indonesia. This reflects a substantial increase from 2014, where internet usage was recorded at 88.1 million, indicating an addition of 44.6 million users over two years.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Communication and Information, in collaboration with UNICEF, surveyed 400 children and adolescents aged 10-19 years from various urban and rural areas across Indonesia. The findings revealed that 80% of respondents were internet users, highlighting a significant digital divide between urban, more prosperous areas and rural, less affluent regions. The use of social and digital media has become an integral part of the daily lives of young Indonesians, with 98% of the surveyed children and adolescents being aware of the Internet, and 79.5% being active users (Sundoro et al., 2022). Previous research has indicated a relationship between personality factors and social networking site usage. Children and adolescents primarily access the internet for three main reasons: searching for information, connecting with old and new friends, and entertainment. Information-seeking is often driven by school assignments, while social media and entertainment usage cater to personal needs (Mulyono, 2021).

Studies often utilize the five-factor model of personality, which includes the main dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Additionally, traits such as impulsivity and narcissism are significant, with tendencies toward impulsive actions and grandiosity, respectively. These traits have been associated with social media addiction. As social media usage increases, the potential for addiction also rises, influenced by various factors, including narcissism. Narcissism, characterized by excessive self-focus and beliefs of superiority, intelligence, power, and greatness, drives individuals to use social relationships to gain popularity. Narcissistic individuals are preoccupied with their own interests and pleasures (Putri et al., 2016).

Narcissism is an inherent trait present in every individual from birth. In moderate amounts, it helps maintain a balanced perception of the needs of others, contributing to professional success and reducing dependence on external standards and achievements for personal satisfaction. However, when excessive, it can lead to Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), characterized by a pathological need for adoration and self-importance. Social media can exacerbate narcissistic behavior, providing a platform for self-actualization, which is particularly significant for students. Students use social media to express and channel their hobbies or talents, seeking recognition from their peers. This stage of social development involves a strong desire to be known and acknowledged by others, which can be linked to narcissistic tendencies (Dalimunthe & Sihombing, 2020).

Narcissism encompasses a wide range of characteristics, not only in its symptoms but also in its causes. One of the psychological factors contributing to narcissism is unrealistic aspiration levels or reduced self-acceptance. When self-acceptance diminishes or worsens, narcissistic traits can emerge. Self-acceptance involves wholly and sincerely accepting oneself, including both strengths and weaknesses. It is a crucial aspect of personal development, allowing individuals to fully actualize their potential. People who accept themselves tend to have confidence in their ability to handle problems, view themselves as valuable and equal to others, and do not perceive themselves as strange or abnormal. They are not overly self-conscious, are willing to take responsibility for their actions, can accept both praise and criticism objectively, and do not blame themselves for their limitations or deny their strengths (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2017).

Previous research indicates that students in Medan City exhibit selfish behavior with several objectives: seeking positive judgments from others, attempting to actualize and prove their perfection, and desiring attention. The tendencies of narcissism vary between male and female students due to distinct gender traits. These narcissistic tendencies are exacerbated by social media addiction, as students continuously engage with these platforms. Narcissistic behavior, characterized by excessive self-love, is easily identifiable on social media due to its unrestricted nature. Narcissistic individuals tend to exhibit grandiosity, an obsession with receiving attention, misinterpretation of others' reactions, self-promotion, and a lack of empathy, which indicates a diminished ability to understand and appreciate others' feelings. Narcissistic personality is a long-standing pattern involving highly maladaptive behaviors, thoughts, and feelings (Laeli et al., 2018).

Narcissism is characterized by extreme self-love, a belief in one's superiority and importance, and an exaggerated sense of self-worth. While a certain level of self-love can be considered normal, excessive self-love that intrudes on others or oneself is viewed as a personality disorder. Narcissism involves a tendency to see oneself in an inflated manner, boast about one's achievements, and expect constant praise from others. Narcissistic individuals often perceive themselves as the most capable, unique, and special compared to others. Based on these characteristics, researchers suggest that any social media network is highly related to narcissistic behavior, as it serves as a platform that facilitates such tendencies (Muslimin & Yusuf, 2020).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to explore and describe the use and implications of social media on the narcissistic behavior of students in Medan City. The aim is to delve deeply into the themes related to social media's impact on narcissistic behavior, particularly among students (Fajardo et al., 2022).

The sampling technique used is Purposive Sampling, selected when the researcher has identified individuals with the required characteristics (Salim et al., 2023). The criteria for respondents are: 1) students who actively engage with social media, and 2) awareness of at least one characteristic of narcissism. Table 1 presents the demographic data of the student respondents involved in the study. The table categorizes the respondents by gender and age. There are two groups: male and female students, both within the age range of 17 to 22 years old. Each group consists of 10 students, resulting in a total of 20 respondents. This balanced representation ensures that the study includes perspectives from both male and female students, providing a comprehensive understanding of the behaviors and tendencies being investigated.

The data analysis technique employed in this study follows the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994). This model includes several stages. First, data reduction involves summarizing, selecting the main points, focusing on important aspects, identifying themes and patterns, and discarding irrelevant information. It is crucial to avoid mixing SI and CGS units, as this can cause dimensional inconsistencies in equations. If mixed units must be used, the units for each quantity in an equation should be clearly stated. The next stage, data presentation, involves organizing the reduced data into descriptions, charts, and relationships between similar categories to facilitate understanding and presentation. Finally, drawing conclusions and verification involves extracting insights from the data, examining the flow, cause and effect, and other proportions to derive new findings. These findings are then described comprehensively, providing a systematic analysis of the collected data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Technology is advancing rapidly, significantly altering the way we communicate. Traditionally, communication was direct or face-to-face, but now, social media enables us to interact without meeting in person (Hidayat et al., 2022). Social media has evolved into a lifestyle for many, serving not just as a means of communication but also as a form of digital recreation. There are various types of social media platforms, each catering to different preferences such as text-oriented, picture-oriented, and video-oriented platforms, all of which are easily accessible with internet connectivity.

The widespread use of social media, particularly among students, has introduced a new issue: narcissism. Narcissism is characterized by extreme self-love, a belief in one's superiority, and an exaggerated sense of self-importance (Kurniasari & Rachmah, 2017). While a certain degree of self-love is normal, excessive self-love that disrupts others or oneself is considered a personality disorder (Muslimin & Yusuf, 2020). Thus, narcissism can be defined as an excessive self-love that potentially disturbs an individual and those around them.

Table 1. Data Respondents Students

No	Gender	Age	Total
1	Male	17-22	10
2	Female	17-22	10

A. Favorite Social Media by Platform and the Influence of Social Media on Student Social Interaction

The various types of social media available provide numerous options for users, including students. Based on interviews with respondents, five social media platforms are their mainstays: WhatsApp for sending short messages, Instagram for viewing photo and video content, TikTok and YouTube for watching video content, and Twitter for enjoying text-based content. Most respondents prefer Instagram over Facebook for viewing photo and video content.

Social interaction can be direct or indirect, with social media serving as an intermediary. According to interviews, social media affects social interaction among students. Respondents reported that they still interact with individuals around them, but social media helps them communicate with relatives or friends who are not physically present. Besides being a communication medium, social media is a source of information and news for students. Importantly, social media does not negatively impact the respondents' social lives; they continue to interact directly with their local communities (Najib et al., 2018).

B. The Role of Social Media in the Formation of Personality and Self-Confidence

Many respondents agree that social media plays a significant role in shaping personality in everyday life due to its pervasive presence. Social media influences personality development through content, information, and positive motivation provided by creators, which users can reference. It also allows users to express their opinions through comments, fostering confidence in exploring and forming their personalities. Additionally, sharing pictures on social media serves as a form of self-esteem for some individuals (Amelia & Wibowo, 2023).

Furthermore, respondents noted that social media can boost self-confidence by serving as a platform for personal branding. Some individuals may be hesitant to showcase their skills or talents directly. Still, social media provides a

channel to display these abilities and receive positive feedback, which can enhance self-confidence. However, for some people, social media has not yet become a medium for building self-confidence.

C. Definition of Narcissistic Behavior and Characteristics of Narcissism on Social Media

Based on interviews with several respondents, narcissistic personality disorder is identified as a condition where an individual perceives themselves as highly important and deserving of admiration (Oldale, 2020). People with narcissistic disorders often feel superior to others. Narcissistic behavior is subjective and varies in intensity and expression across individuals. Typically, a narcissistic person desires constant recognition and aggressively brands themselves on social media.

The tendency to use social media can foster selfish behavior. Interviews with respondents highlighted several characteristics indicative of narcissistic disorder on social media. One characteristic is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), where individuals are constantly afraid of missing trends or lifestyles that do not impact their lives. Another characteristic is oversharing, where individuals are excessively open about personal matters that should remain private. Additionally, narcissistic individuals often post trivial content frequently, engage in excessive self-promotion by continuously uploading photos of themselves and excessively praising their appearance, and seek attention through extreme behaviors on social media. They also consistently view themselves as better than others. These behaviors collectively illustrate the impact of social media on exacerbating narcissistic tendencies.

D. Looking on the Positive Side of Narcissistic Attitudes on Social Media

Interviews with several respondents indicate that narcissistic behavior on social media can have positive effects, such as boosting self-confidence. When users frequently share their activities or speak in front of the camera to inform others, it can enhance their self-esteem and aid in building personal branding if directed positively. However, excessive narcissism, where individuals fail to recognize their own mistakes, can negatively impact other social media users (Oldale, 2020).

Many respondents believe that narcissistic behavior on social media is acceptable as long as it does not harm others. They view freedom of expression on social media as a right, provided it adheres to legal regulations, and consider sharing daily life a natural use of these platforms. Nonetheless, some respondents find narcissistic behavior disturbing when it becomes excessive, as it often involves a need to be the center of attention and a thirst for praise.

E. The Impact of Narcissistic Behavioral Tendencies and the Background of Narcissism on Social Media

Respondents noted that narcissistic tendencies on social media can lead to increased self-pride, as individuals often feel superior to others. This sense of superiority can result in explosive emotions when they face defeat or criticism. Narcissistic behavior can also foster selfish attitudes, leading to a lack of concern for others, and potentially attract hate speech. It can interfere with daily social relationships and often results in a fanatical obsession with social media and oneself.

Narcissistic attitudes do not appear suddenly; they are shaped by various factors. According to respondents, environmental influences play a significant role in developing excessive self-confidence. Parenting factors, such as a lack of attention or constant criticism, drive individuals to seek excessive attention and validation on social media. This need for validation and the support of an environment that encourages self-centered behavior contribute to the development of narcissistic tendencies.

Table 2. Order Tabulation of Tendency of Narcissistic Behavior Intensity of Social Media Use

Intensity of Social Media Usage	Narcissistic Behavior Tendencies		
	Low	Medium	*High*
WhatsApp	31,37	62,51	76,60
Instagram	15,43	40,53	64,69
Facebook	23,25	52,12	70,72
TikTok	25,83	54,01	72,28
Telegram	10,21	31,64	55,55
Twitter	15,31	42,51	65,12
Youtube	20,41	53,00	72,18
I message	9,45	28,57	50,43
Total	**24,25**	**71,48**	**100**

Table 2 presents an order tabulation of the tendency of narcissistic behavior intensity across various social media platforms based on their usage. The data categorizes the intensity of social media usage into three levels: low, medium, and high. It then measures the corresponding tendencies of narcissistic behavior for each level of intensity on different social media platforms.

For WhatsApp, the narcissistic behavior tendencies are 31.37% at low intensity, 62.51% at medium intensity, and 76.60% at high intensity. On Instagram, these tendencies are 15.43%, 40.53%, and 64.69%, respectively. Facebook shows narcissistic tendencies of 23.25% at low intensity, 52.12% at medium intensity, and 70.72% at high intensity. TikTok users exhibit tendencies of 25.83% at low intensity, 54.01% at medium intensity, and 72.28% at high intensity. For Telegram, the tendencies are lower, with 10.21% at low intensity, 31.64% at medium intensity, and 55.55% at high intensity. Twitter users show tendencies of 15.31%, 42.51%, and 65.12% across the three intensity levels. YouTube users exhibit tendencies of 20.41% at low intensity, 53.00% at medium intensity, and 72.18% at high intensity. Lastly, iMessage shows the lowest tendencies with 9.45% at low intensity, 28.57% at medium intensity, and 50.43% at high intensity.

Overall, the total narcissistic behavior tendencies across all platforms are 24.25% at low intensity, 71.48% at medium intensity, and 100% at high intensity, indicating a significant correlation between high social media usage and increased narcissistic behavior tendencies.

F. Students' views on the statement that narcissism is a form of self-love

Opinions among respondents on whether narcissism is a form of self-love are divided. Those who disagree argue that considering narcissism as self-love can lead to negative outcomes. They believe that excessive self-love can turn into selfishness and a lack of concern for others, pushing narcissism into an unhealthy phase. These respondents emphasize that loving oneself too much can result in neglecting the feelings and needs of those around them.

Conversely, some respondents agree with the notion that narcissism, when seen as self-love, can have positive aspects. They argue that self-love leads to greater gratitude for one's own attributes and reduces the tendency to compare oneself with others. These respondents believe that as long as self-love remains within reasonable bounds and is not excessive, it is beneficial. They also caution against using social media as a platform for narcissism, as it often attracts negative reactions from other users.

From the interviews, it is evident that most respondents do not consider themselves to have experienced narcissistic disorder. They attribute this to a lack of confidence necessary for narcissism and their ability to limit excessive social media use. However, a small proportion of respondents admit to experiencing narcissistic tendencies, driven by the pressure to keep up with social media trends to avoid feeling left behind.

G. Efforts Made to Avoid Narcissistic Behavior and Social Media Addiction

In this statement, respondents emphasized the importance of millennials and students being wise in their use of social media. They suggested that the most effective way to avoid narcissistic tendencies is to use social media naturally and with moderation. Exercising self-control is crucial; it involves controlling, planning, and guiding oneself with positive activities. They advocate for the principle that not everyone needs to know the ins and outs of one's personal life. The most common advice from respondents was to engage in "me time" by participating in more positive personal activities and keeping busy with endeavors other than social media. It is important to appreciate one's own efforts and to recognize and accept personal shortcomings.

Many respondents believe that overcoming or dealing with social media addiction involves setting limits on social media usage and finding alternative activities. These activities include reading books, focusing on worship, developing personal talents, exercising, cleaning the house, and learning to manage time effectively by setting priorities for beneficial tasks. Engaging in these activities can help individuals stay productive and reduce their reliance on social media.

H. Steps in Responding to Someone with Narcissistic Attitudes on Social Media

In this statement, respondents conveyed various perspectives but shared the same underlying goal: they prefer not to engage with individuals exhibiting narcissistic behavior. They believe such behaviors, while possibly a personal preference for some, only need a reminder rather than interference, as everyone's pleasures differ. Narcissistic individuals are perceived as those who do not accept input unless it is in the form of praise for themselves.

To avoid adopting similar behaviors, respondents suggest maintaining a healthy distance and setting personal boundaries. Regularly reminding oneself of one's strengths, desires, and goals is crucial. They advise taking control, making time for self-care, and remembering that it is not one's responsibility to please narcissists. Sometimes, ignoring or walking away is more effective than confronting those with narcissistic tendencies, as engaging with them can often lead to frustration. Narcissistic individuals might enjoy making others feel helpless, so it is important not to appear flustered or annoyed, as this could encourage their behavior.

To manage interactions with narcissistic individuals, respondents recommend providing constructive advice, sharing life experiences, and offering reminders within a reasonable context. This approach is seen as more effective than confrontation or bullying, helping to maintain a positive and healthy environment.

DISCUSSION

A person with narcissistic behavior has strong feelings and thoughts, often considering themselves to be very important and unique. This behavior is characterized by an inflated self-image and a constant desire for attention and praise. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies are more likely to prioritize status over interpersonal affection, leading to shorter friendships or romantic relationships. They typically do not invest in long-term relationships.

Sigmund Freud first coined the term "narcissistic" to describe individuals who perceive themselves as overly important and demand significant attention from those around them (Khadijah & Arlizon, 2022). People with narcissistic tendencies have unreasonable self-importance, focus solely on themselves, and lack empathy (Saripah et al., 2023). They feel comfortable when admired by others. Increased social media use is associated with higher levels of narcissism, as these individuals frequently upload content about themselves to gain more attention and appreciation. Narcissistic individuals tend to control their social media presence more meticulously and spend more time on these platforms compared to non-narcissistic individuals (Engkus et al., 2017).

The term "narcissistic" or narcissism was first proposed by Sigmund Freud in his book "General Introduction to Psychoanalysis," where he described individuals who see themselves as excessively important and desire constant attention (Fauziah, 2020). The psychodynamic approach suggests that individuals with narcissistic tendencies often lack appreciation for positive behavior during childhood, leading to expressions of insecurity and a need for attention (Thiro et al., 2021). The consequences of narcissistic behavior include aggression, self-preservation, distorted thinking, damaged interpersonal relationships, deviant behavior, and lack of self-recognition.

Aggression is a common response in narcissistic individuals when faced with criticism or threats. They often react aggressively by insulting others, displaying anger, or committing acts of violence. For example, they may raise their voice forcefully during interactions (Permadi & Habibullah, 2022). Narcissism also involves self-esteem maintenance or self-enhancement, leading individuals to pursue personal goals without empathy for others. They may display selfishness and use any means to enhance their persona, often blaming situations or others when their desires are unmet (Saleh & Muzammil, 2018).

Regarding interpersonal relationships, narcissistic individuals initially come across as attractive and confident, capable of leading groups. However, they struggle to maintain long-term relationships characterized by empathic closeness or emotional warmth. Their tendency to exploit relationships to showcase their superiority ultimately leads to the deterioration of these connections (Martiani et al., 2020). Additionally, narcissistic personality disorder can lead to deviant behavior, depression, and anxiety due to functional disorders and psychological stress (Aprilian et al., 2019).

Narcissists often fantasize about being exceptionally interesting and accomplished, deserving special treatment. However, others perceive them as braggarts and show-offs, far removed from the reality they imagine. Despite being less severe than other personality disorders, narcissism is associated with aggression, self-development issues, interpersonal relationship problems, cognitive biases, and personal dysregulation (Rahman & Ilyas, 2020). While many people consider narcissistic behavior normal and overlook its impact, the symptoms can be detrimental to both individuals with narcissistic traits and those around them (Saijuri & Qorib, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that students in Medan City have mixed opinions about narcissism. Some students agree that narcissism, within reasonable limits, is a form of self-appreciation. However, others view narcissism as an unhealthy phase of life with negative impacts. For students exhibiting narcissistic behavior, it is recommended that they engage in meaningful activities to actualize themselves.

The study highlights the high levels of social media usage among students, which contributes to the rise of narcissistic behavior. This behavior stems from the ease of accessing social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where students express themselves and communicate to assert their presence. Additionally, narcissistic tendencies can develop from social interactions and the varied forms of communication, such as sharing photos, videos, and other content, which are perceived as narcissistic behaviors.

Social media significantly influences personality formation and self-confidence. Respondents noted that social media closely relates to their lives, shaping their personalities through the content they consume. It also boosts self-confidence by providing a platform to showcase skills and talents. However, this heightened self-confidence can sometimes lead to narcissistic behavior.

The research concludes that most respondents do not exhibit narcissistic behavior on social media, recognizing its potential harm to themselves and others. While some respondents agree that narcissism is a form of self-love within reasonable limits, others disagree, viewing it as unhealthy and negatively impactful. To mitigate social media addiction, it is suggested to limit social media use and engage in alternative activities such as reading, worship, developing talents, exercising, cleaning, and time management. Doing productive and beneficial activities can help reduce reliance on social media (Utami et al., 2020). The study offers several recommendations: (1) students with narcissistic tendencies should engage in meaningful activities and foster empathy for their environment; (2) counselors should provide appropriate services to address and reduce narcissistic behaviors and their impacts; and (3) future researchers should expand their knowledge and insight into this topic to enhance research quality.

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