Narcissistic Tendencies: A Descriptive Study of Academic Organizations of Far Eastern University – Manila

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Abstract— This study focuses on the narcissistic tendencies of student leaders at Far Eastern University - Manila's Institute of Arts and Sciences (IAS) during the academic year 2023-2024. Employing a quantitative descriptive research design, data from 19 student-leaders were gathered through an online survey using the Unified Narcissism Scale (UNS). The study examined five factors: contingent self-esteem, leadership, grandiose fantasy, vanity, and hiding needs, demonstrating an intricate understanding of narcissistic tendencies among student leaders. While contingent self-esteem and leadership yielded inconsistent results, grandiose fantasy and hiding needs are better understood in terms of motivation for recognition, influence, and willingness to be vulnerable. Vanity is generally neutral in terms of self-presentation and presentation of oneself. These findings help to better understand leadership dynamics in educational settings and provide knowledge about human behavior and interpersonal dynamics, underlining the significance of addressing narcissistic tendencies in student leadership roles with the aim to promote healthier learning environments.

Keywords— Contingent self-esteem: grandiose fantasy: hiding needs: leadership: narcissistic tendencies: student-leaders: vanity.

I. INTRODUCTION

In shaping the culture and dynamics of campus life, leadership within educational institutions plays a pivotal role. As student-leaders, questions arise about the personality traits that may distinguish individuals in these positions. One such personality trait of interest is narcissism, characterized by a sense of elevated self-importance and the belief that one is worthy of special care and attention (Krizan & Herlache, 2018) [5]. Understanding narcissism is important for recognizing and addressing problematic behaviors and how it influences various leadership dynamics. This enables individuals to recognize and address problematic behaviors, allowing them to take appropriate action to mitigate the potential negative impacts. Furthermore, a better understanding of narcissism can also help organizations navigate potential challenges and implement more effective strategies and solutions for developing and cultivating healthier leadership dynamics.

According to the article published in Psychology Today, becoming a leader is a natural aspiration for individuals with narcissistic tendencies since it aligns with their intrinsic desire for power, status, and attention (Campbell & Crist, 2020) [1]. They typically seek validation and admiration from others, and having leadership positions offers numerous opportunities for them to fulfill their needs. And over the past few years, there has been a notable rise in narcissism, which is marked by an increase in self-importance, a continual craving for admiration, and a lack of empathy. These influence various aspects of human behaviour, one of which is leadership dynamics.

Understanding how narcissistic traits manifest can provide valuable insights into the nature of their leadership. That said, examining the prevalence and implications can help gain valuable insights into the dynamics of leadership. The current educational landscape offers various opportunities for student leadership across different institutions.

This diversity in leadership roles prompts inquiries into the relationship between positions and their personal characteristics, particularly the prevalence and manifestations of narcissistic traits. Withal, understanding the interactions between the narcissistic tendencies intersects with various leaders in an institution. In a study conducted in 2019 (Han et al.), there is a positive correlation between the organizational empowerment climate and their leader's leadership style, which can be linked to student-leaders with narcissistic tendencies [3]. Thus, it is crucial to know and recognize the potential impacts of narcissistic behavior on an organization to balance different leadership styles, and effectively implement various strategies. Understanding these dynamics can help the organization navigate better through the challenges posed by different leadership personalities and foster an environment where one can promote both empowerment and interpersonal relationships.

Meanwhile, the existing literature on narcissism among student-leaders is restricted, especially in contemporary situations, which according to Hazan (2021), earlier studies preceding the emergence of charismatic leadership and other recent research on such leadership, sought to understand only the perspectives of leaders whereas current scholars have shifted to analyzing how followers perceive their respective leaders [4]. However, there is still an urgent need to examine how the characteristics and behaviours demonstrated by the new generation of students influence their effectiveness in leading.

Moreover, one of the gaps in available literature lies within the gaps of research dealing with Filipino student-leaders as major respondents. This is particularly problematic because individual behaviours and attitudes are shaped by cultural and

environmental factors. For instance, individualistic cultures tend to have more narcissistic tendencies. A probable explanation is that people with individualistic orientations find it simpler to explain their ambitions for personal accomplishment and prestige, which fosters narcissistic tendencies (Li & Benson, 2022) [6]. By not including Filipino student-leaders as a subject matter for investigation, researchers ignore that narcissistic tendencies may be influenced by socio-cultural context within this demographic group, for instance, a study by Reyes et al. (2021) found that Filipino men were more predisposed to narcissism than women [7]. Therefore, cultural influences are likely to play a role in shaping leader behaviours. These cultural influences may differ for each learner, regardless of academic post.

With that said, this study sought to answer (1) what is the connection between the overall narcissism of student-leaders in terms of contingent self-esteem, leadership, grandiose energy, vanity, and hiding needs? And (2) what is the prevalence and extent of narcissistic traits among IAS student-leaders, and what insights do these traits provide into the overall landscape of these characteristics within the student leadership positions? To know the prevalence and extent of narcissistic traits among IAS student-leaders, providing insights into the overall landscape of these characteristics within the student leadership positions.

By investigating these objectives, the researchers aim to address a crucial question in the study, seeking to determine whether there exists a manifestation of narcissistic traits among student-leaders in the Institute of Arts and Sciences (IAS) at Far Eastern University (FEU) in Manila S.Y. 2023–2024.

The significance of this study was underscored by its potential contributions to the understanding of narcissistic tendencies within the context of student leadership. From an academic standpoint, this study adds to the corpus knowledge by investigating the prevalence, manifestation, and underlying causes of narcissistic tendencies among student-leaders, particularly in the context of FEU – Manila S.Y. 2023 - 2024. It also sought to broaden the knowledge we have of the relationship between narcissistic tendencies and leadership styles, which in turn advances the understanding of leadership dynamics in educational settings. The findings hold implications for educational institutions, offering insights that may influence the selection, training, and support for student-leaders. Beyond the educational sphere, the study may also contribute valuable knowledge to the broader field of psychology, enhancing comprehension of how narcissism manifests in diverse leadership contexts. Ultimately, the study aspired to provide a nuanced perspective on the intricate relationship between leadership positions and narcissistic tendencies among students at FEU - Manila S.Y. 2023 - 2024.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study is about investigating the prevalence and extent of narcissistic traits among IAS student-leaders; hence, the researchers found it best to employ a quantitative descriptive design approach. This approach enabled researchers to thorough and objective assessment of narcissistic tendencies among academic organization student-leaders. With this design, it was expected that the result provided immediate insights into the nature and extent of narcissistic tendencies, which furthered our understanding of leadership dynamics in the academic context.

B. Participants

The study consisted of 19 participants who were student-leaders, particularly the executive and central board members, of the academic organizations under the IAS of FEU S.Y. 2023 - 2024. The involvement of academic student-leaders in IAS' academic organizations allowed a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of student leadership and narcissism to acknowledge student-leaders' traits, behaviors, and perspectives in their respective positions or roles. The researchers used a purposive sampling method to obtain the research data. The study's sample group was required to be a student at the university, a student-leader, and an executive or central board member such as President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor, Public Relations Officer (P.R.O), and Chief-of-Staff (C.O.S) at one of the eight academic organizations of IAS that the university accredited to be able to participate in the research study. This was to distinguish the difference between leadership and examine the various narcissistic traits of student-leaders in the IAS academic organizations at FEU S.Y. 2023 - 2024.

C. Instrumentation

The study used the Unified Narcissism Scale (UNS), a recently developed tool introduced in 2021. The UNS presents an approach to measure unified narcissism, synthesizing items from two established instruments in the field, which are the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) (Sivanthan et al., 2021) [9].

UNS is recognized as an effective tool because of its robust psychometric properties and ability to capture the dimensions of narcissism. This enables a thorough examination of narcissistic tendencies among student-leaders and seeks to identify potential variations in narcissistic traits in academic and non-academic organizations. Comprising of five factors, namely (1) contingent self-esteem, (2) leadership, (3) grandiose fantasy, (4) vanity, and (5) hiding needs, with all factors being significant, which leads to the UNS providing a framework for assessing narcissistic tendencies among the student-leaders. The Likert scale will be interpreted as the following: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither disagree or agree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

TABLE I. Leadership, Grandiose Fantasy, and Vanity

Verbal Interpretation	Likert-Scale	Interval
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 - 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 - 2.60
Neutral	3	2.61 - 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 - 4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21 - 5.00

TABLE II. Contingent Self-Esteem and Hiding Needs

Verbal Interpretation	Likert-Scale	Interval
Strongly Disagree	1	4.21- 5.00
Disagree	2	3.41 - 4.20
Neutral	3	2.61 - 3.40
Agree	4	1.81 - 2.60
Strongly Agree	5	1.00 - 1.80

D. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers conducted an online survey with the respondents, which consisted of a prepared structured survey questionnaire through Microsoft Forms since it is one of the platforms used by the FEU - Manila and can be easily accessed by the respondents. The online survey link was distributed to the respondents through the university's official communication channels, such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Outlook. The online survey link was also distributed through different social media groups if necessary. The collection of data was monitored as it came through Microsoft Forms. Once the data has been collected completely, the researchers analyzed the responses using statistical tools and methods.

E. Statistical Treatment

A Microsoft Excel file was the means of inputting the data collected for this study. To help with data processing, the participants' UNS scores were analyzed using the Jamovi tool to gather descriptive information among the UNS scores of IAS student-leaders.

III. RESULTS

TABLE III. Contingent Self-Esteem

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. It's hard for me to feel good about myself unless I know other people like me.	3.37	Neutral
2. I am disappointed when people don't notice me.	2.84	Neutral
3. When others don't notice me, I start to feel worthless.	2.73	Neutral
4. When others don't respond to me the way I would like them to, it is hard for me to still feel ok with myself.	3.26	Neutral
5. I need others to acknowledge me.	3.15	Neutral
6. When people don't notice me, I start to feel bad about myself.	2.89	Neutral
7. It's hard to feel good about myself unless I know other people.	2.74	Neutral

Table III shows the first factor which is Contingent Self-esteem. Statement 1 has the highest weighted mean with 3.37 while statement 3 has the lowest mean with a value of 2.73. Despite the difference in means, all statements are still met with a Verbal Interpretation of Neutral which would suggest that the student-leaders are in the middle regarding having too much or too less of self-esteem.

Table IV depicts the second factor of the UNS which is leadership, and this factor has 5 statements. Statement 3 has the highest weighted mean of 3.47 with a Verbal Interpretation of Agree which means these student-leaders see themselves as assertive, however they also believe they are not born leaders as seen in the verbal interpretation of Statement 2.

TABLE IV. Leadership

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I see myself as a good leader.	3.37	Neutral
2. I am a born leader.	2.37	Disagree
3. I am assertive.	3.47	Agree
4. I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.	3.05	Neutral
5. I can make anybody believe anything I want them.	2.84	Neutral

TABLE V. Grandiose Fantasy

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I often fantasize about being recognized for my accomplishments.	3.21	Neutral
2. I often fantasize about performing heroic deeds.	2.84	Neutral
3. I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.	3.74	Agree
4. I often fantasize about having a huge impact on the world around me.	3.79	Agree
5. I often fantasize about accomplishing things that are probably beyond my means.	3.42	Agree
6. I often fantasize about being rewarded for my efforts.	3.68	Agree
7. I often fantasize about being admired and respected.	3.68	Agree

Table V. illustrates Factor 3, identified as "Grandiose Fantasy." The findings revealed that the respondents generally agree with the statements related to aspiring for recognition, impact, and admiration, with Statement 4 garnering the highest mean score of 3.79. Despite some variability in mean scores across statements, statements 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 all fall within the "Agree" category, while statements 1 and 2 exhibited a verbal interpretation of Neutral, as reflected by their weighted mean ranging from 2.84 to 3.21. This suggests a prevailing inclination among respondents, in this case of student-leaders, regarding grandiose fantasies.

TABLE VI. Vanity

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I like to look at my body.	2.63	Neutral
2. I like to display my body.	2.37	Disagree
3. I like to start new fads and fashions.	2.84	Neutral
4. I would do almost anything on a dare.	2.11	Disagree
5. I am apt to show off if I get the chance.	2.68	Neutral

Table VI. presents the fourth factor which is Vanity. Among the statements on this factor, the respondents tended to express a neutral attitude towards liking to look at their bodies (2.63), starting new fads and fashions (2.37), and showing off when given the chance (2.68), displaying their bodies (2.37) and doing anything on a dare (2.11) received disagreement. Statement 3 has the highest weighted mean of 2.84, indicating a tendency towards Neutral with this statement. Conversely, Statement 4 has the lowest mean of 2.11, indicating a tendency towards disagreement. This suggests a nuanced perception of vanity among the respondents, exhibiting a range of neutral and

disagreeing views on various aspects of self-expression and risk-taking behaviors.

TABLE VII. Hiding Needs

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I hate asking for help.	3.47	Disagree
2. I can't stand relying on other people because it makes me feel weak.	2.68	Neutral
3. I often hide my needs, for fear that others will see me as needy and dependent.	3.42	Disagree
4. It's hard to show others the weaknesses I feel inside.	3.42	Disagree
5. Sometimes I avoid people because I'm concerned that they'll disappoint me.	3.11	Neutral

Table VII. shows the findings regarding the fifth factor of the UNS, which is Hiding Needs. Among the five statements, Statements 1, 3, and 4 are interpreted as Disagree, indicating that they do not hate asking for help (3.47), nor do they often conceal their needs due to fear of appearing needy or dependent (3.42), or find it challenging to reveal their internal weaknesses (3.42). Meanwhile, Statements 2 and 5 fall into the neutral category with a weighted mean of 2.68 and 3.11, respectively. Notably, Statement 1 received the highest weighted mean and Statement 2 received the lowest. These results suggest that respondents generally exhibit a tendency to express their needs openly rather than concealing them for fear of appearing needy or dependent.

IV. DISCUSSION

It was analyzed that various factors that contribute to student-leaders behavior such as contingent self-esteem, leadership, grandiose fantasy, vanity and hiding needs are classifications of behavioral traits among student-leaders according to their responses.

While contingent self-esteem, which refers to the dependence of external validation on an individual's self-esteem, was met with a neutral and moderate stance. A study from Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) suggested that individuals with higher self-esteem exhibit more leadership roles and exert more leadership behavior. This highlights the importance of self-esteem in leadership roles and the need for training programs to address this factor [8].

Furthermore, leadership was met with mixed responses but had a common answer when it comes to their assertiveness when it comes to their leadership capabilities as seen in the results. In addition. In a study conducted by Chan and Drasgow (2001), they found the correlation of both leadership and grandiose fantasy where individuals who are imaginative with their skills and abilities in leadership tend to be more ambitious and assertive in leadership roles [2].

As for vanity, the student-leaders generally expressed their neutral views towards self-display and image. Aside from that, there was a clear disagreement towards circumstances like displaying their body and acting upon a dare, this highlights how vanity does not affect interpersonal relationships.

Lastly, student-leaders indicated their dependency and their reliance to others, giving attention to internal weaknesses and expressing the willingness to learn from others and vulnerabilities, which show their willingness to learn from others and be open for feedback and even constructive criticisms.

V. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of the study have provided an elaborate narrative of the relationship between student-leaders and narcissistic tendencies. Through this, one can better understand the leadership dynamics in educational settings. Moreover, it has provided valuable insight which extends beyond the field of education. It can also enrich the knowledge of human behavior and interpersonal dynamics in Psychology. By bridging this with practical implications, it has opened an avenue for further research and investigation, emphasizing the importance of addressing narcissistic tendencies in leadership roles as students within the university to foster a healthy and effective educational environment.

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