

# Examining the difference between healthy and pathological narcissism: the role of empathy

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<b>Ethical review</b>	Approved WMO
<b>Status</b>	Pending
<b>Health condition type</b>	Personality disorders and disturbances in behaviour
<b>Study type</b>	Observational invasive

## Summary

### ID

NL-OMON43046

### Source

ToetsingOnline

### Brief title

Examining the difference between healthy and pathological narcissism

### Condition

- Personality disorders and disturbances in behaviour

### Synonym

narcissism, narcissistic personality disorder

### Research involving

Human

### Sponsors and support

**Primary sponsor:** Parnassia Bavo Groep (Den Haag)

**Source(s) of monetary or material Support:** Ministerie van OC&W

## Intervention

**Keyword:** empathy, narcissism, narcissistic personality disorder, personality disorder

## Outcome measures

### Primary outcome

The proposed study addresses two main research questions.

The first question concerns healthy versus pathological narcissism. What factors contribute to mark a possible distinction between healthy and pathological narcissism? More specifically, levels of psychological complaints, self-reflection and insight and levels of implicit and explicit empathy will be examined among the four groups.

The second research question concerns the changeability of empathic abilities. Can empathic abilities be altered in healthy and pathological narcissists? To answer this question, levels of implicit and explicit empathy will be measured while performing a perspective taking computer task.

For a detailed description of the procedure and instruments used in the study we refer to the research proposal.

### Secondary outcome

Not applicable

## Study description

## **Background summary**

Previous research has shown that the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is closely related to the cause of pain and psychological suffering in others. On the other hand, research shows that a higher degree of narcissism can also make a positive contribution to achieving short-term goals, especially in leadership positions. Narcissistic people are often initially labelled as creative, resourceful and innovative. In the long run, however, narcissistic leadership can lead to high interpersonal and social costs due to interpersonal conflicts and the focus of self-interest at the expense of others and the organization. On a personal level, high levels of narcissism can lead to relationship problems, depression (sometimes accompanied by suicidal ideation) and addiction. One of the reasons for the dysfunctional behaviour of highly narcissistic individuals is the lack of empathic abilities. However, empirical studies examining the role of empathy and the changeability of empathy among narcissistic individuals are very scarce.

## **Study objective**

The present research proposal aims at investigating the distinction between healthy and pathological narcissism. In particular, the role of empathy is studied.

The present study is the first in which patients with narcissistic personality disorder are compared to a high-functioning narcissistic control group, a well-functioning, low narcissistic control group and a psychiatric control group. Results can contribute to knowledge about narcissism and (work-related) functioning and hopefully lead to improvement of psychological treatment for patients suffering from NPD.

## **Study design**

The study has an observational, cross-sectional design where four groups are compared to each other. Patients with narcissistic personality disorder (N=30) are compared to a high-functioning narcissistic control group (N=30), a well-functioning, low narcissistic control group (N=30), and a psychiatric control group (N=30).

## **Study burden and risks**

We believe that in the present proposal there are no mentionable risks associated with participation in the study.

As mentioned before, a single measurement is conducted in which participants are asked to participate in an interview, fill out questionnaires and accomplish a computer task in which they are partially exposed to aggressive images .

Participants can, if necessary, stop at any time during the measurement. The

heart rate measurement is considered hardly invasive as the measurement is conducted by placing the finger in a portable device. If participants feel emotional after seeing the aggression related images then a calming conversation with the experimenter will take place in order to make sure that participants can easily follow their way home after the measurement. The participants will be rewarded with a fee of 25 euros.

## Contacts

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## Trial sites

### Listed location countries

Netherlands

## Eligibility criteria

### **Age**

Adults (18-64 years)

Elderly (65 years and older)

### Inclusion criteria

Patient groups:

- Men between 18 and 65 years old
- Psychiatric diagnosis confirmed by Structured Clinical Interview for DSM\*IV (SCID II): (Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) or Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD).

Healthy control groups:

- Men between 18 and 65 years old
- Normal or high scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)
- Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) score of 70 or higher

## Exclusion criteria

Patient groups:

- Current psychotic symptoms
- Serious alcohol or drug dependence
- Current major depression

Healthy control groups:

- Any psychiatric diagnosis or current treatment for psychological problems

## Study design

### Design

Study type:	Observational invasive
Intervention model:	Other
Allocation:	Non-randomized controlled trial
Masking:	Open (masking not used)
Control:	Active
Primary purpose:	Treatment

### Recruitment

NL	
Recruitment status:	Pending
Start date (anticipated):	22-07-2016
Enrollment:	120
Type:	Anticipated

## Ethics review

Approved WMO

Date: 19-12-2016

Application type: First submission  
Review commission: METC Leids Universitair Medisch Centrum (Leiden)

## Study registrations

### Followed up by the following (possibly more current) registration

No registrations found.

### Other (possibly less up-to-date) registrations in this register

No registrations found.

### In other registers

Register	ID
CCMO	NL56829.058.16