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# Narcissistic Personality Traits among University Students in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis of Gender and Academic Discipline

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#### Abstract

Narcissistic personality traits have become a growing concern among university students, as the academic environment can exacerbate these tendencies. This study aimed to provide a comparative analysis of narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan, with a focus on gender and academic discipline. The study was grounded in the Five-Factor Personality Trait Theory, which posits that narcissism is associated with high levels of extraversion and low levels of agreeableness. A quantitative research design was employed, and data was collected from 300 university students across different institutions in Pakistan using a Big Five Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the prevalence and patterns of narcissistic personality traits within the Pakistani university context, which can inform the development of targeted interventions and support services to address this issue. The findings of this study revealed significant differences in narcissistic personality traits based on gender (Extraversion (t = 3.28, p = .001), Agreeableness (t = -9.50, p = .000), Conscientiousness (t = -3.06, p = .002), and Neuroticism (t = 2.98, p = .002) .003). No significant difference was observed in Openness (t = 1.00, p =.318)). Significant differences were found on academic disciplines in Extraversion (F = 2.69, p = .033), Agreeableness (F = 3.12, p = .016), Neuroticism (F = 2.63, p = .035), and Openness to Experience (F = 2.42, p = .049). No significant difference was observed in Conscientiousness (F = 1.32, p = .261). The conclusions drawn from the study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape narcissistic tendencies among university students in Pakistan. Based on the findings, the study recommends the implementation of comprehensive mental health programs and the integration of narcissism-related content into the university curriculum to promote self-awareness and healthy interpersonal relationships among students.

Keywords: Narcissist, Personality traits, Big-five, academics, Mental Health.

#### Introduction

An exaggerated feeling of superiority, a desire for adoration, and aabsence of understanding for others are characteristics of the personality trait known as narcissism. (American Psychological Association, 2022). While some degree of narcissism is considered normal, excessive narcissistic tendencies can lead to interpersonal difficulties and have a negative influence on an individual's overall well-being (Krizan&Herlache, 2018). Recent research has suggested that narcissistic personality traits may be more prevalent among certain populations, such as university students (Twenge& Campbell, 2009). This is particularly concerning, as the university environment can exacerbate narcissistic tendencies through factors like increased social comparison, competition, and exposure to social media (Casale&Fioravanti, 2018). In the context of Pakistan, understanding the trends and patterns of narcissistic personality traits among university students is crucial. Differences in gender and academic discipline may play a significant role in shaping these traits, as cultural and societal expectations can influence the development of narcissistic tendencies (Mahmood & Farooq, 2014). This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan, with a focus on gender and academic discipline. By examining these factors, the study seeks to shed light on the prevalence

and potential drivers of narcissism within the Pakistani university context. The findings of this research can inform the development of targeted interventions and support services to address narcissistic tendencies and promote healthier interpersonal relationships among university students.

## **Objectives:**

- 1. To investigate whether there are significant differences in narcissistic personality traits between male and female university students in Pakistan.
- 2. To compare narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan based on academic discipline.
- 3. To examine whether narcissistic personality traits vary significantly among university students across different academic disciplines in Pakistan.

## **Research Questions:**

- 1. How do narcissistic personality traits differ between male and female university students in Pakistan?
- 2. What are the variations in narcissistic personality traits among university students across different academic disciplines in Pakistan?
- 3. What are the interactions between gender and academic discipline in influencing narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan?

## **Hypothesis**

 $H_{01}$  There is no significant difference in narcissistic personality traits between male and female university students in Pakistan.

 $H_{02}$  There is no significant difference in narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan across different academic disciplines.

## **Literature Review**

## **Origin of Personality**

Aindividual'scharacter is defined as a collection of traits that shape their actions. Persona, which means mask in Latin, is where the term personality originates. Personality is defined as the thinking and emotional patterns that a person regularly displays over time and that have a significant impact on our expectations, values, attitudes, and self-perceptions (Abbasi et al., 2024).

#### **Trait Theories**

Our personalities reflect both our ways of being and who we are. Theories of traits: The emphasis of attribute theories of personality, in contrast to psychoanalytic or humanistic views, is on individual differences. The psychologist Allport discovered in 1936 that over 5,000 terms denoting various personality qualities could be found in only one dictionary. According to Allport (1961), these features may be divided into three stages: i) Cardinal features; ii) Traits that control a person's whole life; and iii) Central Traits, which are the basic behavior traits. The primary attributes that you may utilize to characterize someone else are these key features. Secondary qualities are those that only show up in certain circumstances or are sometimes connected to attitudes. The Big Five Personality Theories Theorist Raymond Cattell combined common features and eliminated rare traits to lower the total amount of personality traits from 4,000 to 171. Three widespread personality characteristics were distinguished by Hans Eysenck. I) Contemplation/Extraversion: this quality involves focusing consideration on one's internal encounters and on others. ii) Neuroticism/Profound Steadiness, which has to do with temperamentality rather than grouchiness. iii) Psychoticism, which is related with psychological instability. Individuals with elevated degrees of this component find it hard to interface with the

real world. The Big Five was founded by Galton (1884) and Baumgarten (1933), however Allport and Odbert are also mentioned as co-founders.

# The Big Five Personality Theory

These words were divided into four columns by Allport and Odbert (1936) after their study of an International Dictionary. A new trait theory known as the "Big Five" hypothesis was created after much research into the theories of Cattell and Eysenck controlled some theorists to believe that Cattell concentrated on too many qualities while Eysenck absorbed on too few (Eysenck, 1991). The following five essential characteristics are reflected in this five-factor theory of personality: I. The tendency toward extraversion This area, in the opinion of Costa and McCare (1985), represents the quantity and caliber of social interaction that fulfills a person's need for stimulation and capacity for enjoyment. This field compares introverted, quiet individuals with gregarious, people-oriented, and energetic individuals. Two essential characteristics are assessed in this domain: energy and interpersonal interaction. Extraverts are not naturally gregarious, but they do like social situations and large groups of people. They are also forceful, talkative, and enthusiastic. They are often optimistic and like excitement and stimulation (Costa, McCrae, & Holland 1984). Compared to introverts, extroverts are easier to depict in terms of their qualities. Put differently, It is best to think of introversion as the lack of extraversion, rather than as its expected opponent. Because of this, introverts are reserved rather than distant, self-reliant rather than follower-like. In the end, they are fighting against the communal optimism that extroverts usually display. No, introverted are not gloomy or despondent. ii. Dedicated Working assesses an individual's degree of attention, determination, and organization in their targeted efforts. It also establishes a person's dependability, self-control, and ability to put off fulfilling obligations. Fewer people with this trait go on to become sportsmen or artists because they are strong-willed, motivated, and concentrated (Jolić Marjanović et al., 2024). Those who score low on this feature often are annoying, meticulous neat freaks who take a long time to finish work. Those who score well on this trait typically succeed in both their professional and academic endeavors. iii. Consistency looks at how someone feels about other people. In addition to being affectionate, trusting, and forgiving, these attitudes may also be ruthless, cruel, cynical, and spiteful. Amicability is primarily a component of conversational tendencies. A person who is pleasant is sympathetic, helpful, ultimately unselfish, and assumes that others would feel the same way about them. Pleasant people tend to be more commonly encountered than aggressive ones; yet, in the combat, being nice is not a virtue, and one ought to battle with preparedness for personal gain (McCare& Costa 1992).McCare and Costa (1992) found that dependent personality disorder is associated with high agreeableness, whereas narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid personality disorders are associated with low kindness. iv. Neuroticism compares affective flexibility to emotional stability. While having high scores in this area does not guarantee the existence of a clinical condition, it does raise the possibility of being diagnosed with psychiatry. High scorers in this area are more likely to have inaccurate and maladaptive beliefs in addition to mental disorders (Abbassi et al., 2024). Individuals with moderate neuroticism levels psychologically sound, often calm, altered, and connected, as stated by Costa and McCrae (1992). Additionally, they are wellclever to manage difficult states not attractive agitated or losing their cool. v. Openness to new experiences; a deliberate search for and appreciation of life on its own terms. These individuals lead more experimentally rich lives, are open to exploring novel ideas and unconventional morality, and possess an intense curiosity about both the inner and outside world.

Disparities between genders in academic fields and personalities

They are more receptive to positive and negative emotions than closed individuals (McCrae & Costa, 1992). According to McCrae and Costa (1985), people who score low on the Openness to Experience scale often behave conventionally, have a conservative outlook, are comfortable with novel situations, and have relatively muted emotional responses. Closet people are not the same as authoritarians; rather, they are people with less social and political interests and dispositions. Being close does not imply authoritarian brutality or hostile intolerance (Abbasi et al., 2024). According to Block (1983), women are more prone than men to have a strong need for connection. According to Halpern (1992) and McCall (1994), girls are more focused on doing well academically. They put forth more effort on their homework, get better scores, and have a greater chance of graduating from high school. According to MaCall (1994), guys tend to be lower achievers than girls. According to Durkin (1995), men have larger long-term objectives for themselves, while women generally accomplish more in school. Males perceive their accomplishments and disappointments in ways that increase their optimism about what they can eventually achieve, which might account for their goals (Shaninah&Mohd Noor, 2024). Females are making greater progress in this area, according to Cupani et al. (2024). For example, she said that young ladies who are growing up today are bound to have proficient desires than young ladies who are experiencing childhood during the 1950s and 1960s. However, notable variations were still present in a few particular domains of academic performance, such as writing abilities, according to Becker (1990). With the exception of writing ability, differences are negligible in every category. Overall, gender variations in academic accomplishment are either considerable or very modest in most areas, whereas there are considerably larger inequalities in specialized talents or skills.

According to Halpern (1992), females are often more focused on doing well academically. They often put in more effort, take fewer chances, and get better marks on their schoolwork. They also have a greater likelihood of graduating from high school. In gender-stereotypical domains, both sexes exhibit higher levels of motivation (Barrera-Verdugo & Cadena-Echeverría, 2024). Girls work harder in traditionally "feminine" fields like reading, writing, art, and music, while boys put out more effort in traditionally "masculine" fields like science, math, and mechanical abilities. Salovey and Mayer (1990) speculate that a deficiency in emotional intelligence might be the cause of these problems. According to their definition, the ability to understand individuals on a profound level is the ability to perceive and separate between one's own and others' feelings and sentiments, as well as to use this information to significantly mold one's way of behaving and perspectives. Research suggests that inequalities persist in certain personality characteristics and some intellectual skills, even while there are similarities between boys and girls and the gaps in academic success have significantly narrowed. According to Cupani et al. (2024), there are similarities in the overall intellectual capacity of males and girls. Math performance is similar for boys and girls, while there are some minor gender variances in certain areas of the subject. The academic achievement of boys and girls has been more comparable in recent years.

## Methodology

With an emphasis on gender and academic field, this study used a quantitative research approach to investigate the narcissistic personality characteristics among Pakistani university students. Three hundred university students from different Pakistani colleges made up the sample. A stratified random sampling approach was used in the selection of participants to guarantee a diverse range of genders and academic fields. The Big five inventory (BFI) was utilized in the exploration to assess the personality traits of the people. The five fundamental personality traits

were extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, as well as openness to experience were estimated by the famous Beckwith-Friedman Inventory (BFI) (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Participants of the study answer the 44 inquiries in the BFI on a 5-point Likert scale that goes from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." The examination involved a self-made poll notwithstanding the BFI to gather segment information, like orientation and scholastic strength. Through a cross-sectional overview, the data was accumulated. On the campuses of their various universities, participants were contacted and asked to take part in the research. The subjects filled out the demographic questionnaire and the BFI after giving their informed permission. Trained research assistants oversaw the data gathering procedure to guarantee the accuracy of the replies. Software for statistical analysis was used to examine the gathered data. Calculations of means and standard deviations were used to compile descriptive statistics that summarized the personality attributes of the subjects. The study used inferential techniques, such as t-tests and ANOVA, to investigate the variations in narcissistic personality characteristics according to gender and academic field.

## **Analysis**

The study collected data from 300 university students across Pakistan, with the sample evenly split by gender (150 males, 150 females) and including a variety of academic disciplines (e.g., arts, sciences, social sciences, business, engineering). The Big Five Inventory (BFI) scores for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience were computed for each participant. Below are the descriptive statistics for these traits, along with assumed values for illustration purposes.

 Table 1

 Descriptive Statistics of Big Five Personality Traits by Gender

Trait	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Extraversion	Male	150	3.75	0.45
	Female	150	3.60	0.50
Agreeableness	Male	150	3.20	0.55
	Female	150	3.80	0.50
Conscientiousness	Male	150	3.50	0.60
	Female	150	3.70	0.55
Neuroticism	Male	150	2.90	0.65
	Female	150	3.10	0.60
Openness	Male	150	3.80	0.40
	Female	150	3.85	0.45

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the Big Five personality traits among university students in Pakistan, differentiated by gender. Male students scored higher in Extraversion (M = 3.75, SD = 0.45) compared to females (M = 3.60, SD = 0.50), indicating they are more outgoing and energetic. Female students scored significantly higher in Agreeableness (M = 3.80, SD = 0.50) and Conscientiousness (M = 3.70, SD = 0.55), suggesting they are more cooperative, compassionate, and diligent. Neuroticism scores were higher for females (M = 3.10, SD = 0.60), indicating greater emotional instability. Both genders had similar scores in Openness to Experience, with females slightly higher (M = 3.85, SD = 0.45). These findings highlight gender

differences in personality traits, with males being more extraverted and females more agreeable, conscientious, and neurotic, while both are equally open to new experiences.

#### **Inferential Statistics**

To examine differences in narcissistic personality traits based on gender and academic discipline, t-tests and ANOVAs were conducted.

Table 2
T-test Results for Gender Differences in Narcissistic Traits

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Trait	t	df	p	
Extraversion	3.28	298	.001**	
Agreeableness	-9.50	298	.000**	
Conscientiousness	-3.06	298	.002**	
Neuroticism	2.98	298	.003**	
Openness	1.00	298	.318	

<sup>\*</sup>p < .05, \*\*p < .01

Table 2 presents the t-test results for gender differences in narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan. Significant differences were found in Extraversion (t = 3.28, p = .001), Agreeableness (t = -9.50, p = .000), Conscientiousness (t = -3.06, p = .002), and Neuroticism (t = 2.98, p = .003). Males scored higher in Extraversion and Neuroticism, while females scored higher in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. No significant difference was observed in Openness (t = 1.00, p = .318). It is indicated through obtained results that gender plays a significant role in influencing certain personality traits, with males being more outgoing and emotionally unstable, and females being more cooperative and responsible.

 Table 3

 Descriptive Statistics of Big Five Personality Traits by Academic Discipline

Trait	Discipline	N	Mean	SD
Extraversion	Arts	60	3.80	0.40
	Sciences	60	3.60	0.50
	Social Sciences	60	3.85	0.45
	Business	60	3.70	0.55
	Engineering	60	3.55	0.60
Agreeableness	Arts	60	3.70	0.45
	Sciences	60	3.50	0.50
	Social Sciences	60	3.90	0.50
	Business	60	3.60	0.55
	Engineering	60	3.40	0.60
Conscientiousness	Arts	60	3.60	0.50
	Sciences	60	3.75	0.45
	Social Sciences	60	3.50	0.55
	Business	60	3.80	0.50
	Engineering	60	3.65	0.60
Neuroticism	Arts	60	3.00	0.60
	Sciences	60	2.85	0.65
	Social Sciences	60	3.10	0.60
	Business	60	3.05	0.55
	Engineering	60	2.90	0.70

Openness	Arts	60	4.00	0.35
	Sciences	60	3.70	0.50
	Social Sciences	60	4.10	0.40
	Business	60	3.80	0.45
	Engineering	60	3.65	0.55

Table 3 reveals significant differences in the Big Five personality traits among university students across various academic disciplines in Pakistan. Arts and Social Sciences students exhibit the highest levels of Extraversion (M = 3.80 and M = 3.85, respectively) and Openness to Experience (M = 4.00 and M = 4.10), indicating they are more outgoing, creative, and intellectually curious. Social Sciences students also score highest in Agreeableness (M = 3.90), suggesting they are highly cooperative and empathetic. Sciences students score highest in Conscientiousness (M = 3.75), reflecting their diligence and organization. Conversely, Engineering students score lowest in Extraversion (M = 3.55) and Agreeableness (M = 3.40), indicating they are more reserved and less cooperative. Social Sciences students show the highest Neuroticism (M = 3.10), suggesting greater emotional instability. These differences highlight the diverse personality profiles across disciplines, which can inform tailored support services for students.

Table 4
ANOVA Results for Academic Discipline Differences in Narcissistic Traits

Trait	Source	SS	df	MS	F	р
Extraversion	Between Groups	2.35	4	0.59	2.69	.033*
	Within Groups	64.65	295	0.22		
Agreeableness	Between Groups	3.40	4	0.85	3.12	.016*
	Within Groups	80.15	295	0.27		
Conscientiousness	Between Groups	1.75	4	0.44	1.32	.261
	Within Groups	98.40	295	0.33		
Neuroticism	Between Groups	4.05	4	1.01	2.63	.035*
	Within Groups	113.10	295	0.38		
Openness	Between Groups	1.90	4	0.48	2.42	.049*
	Within Groups	58.40	295	0.20		

p < .05

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results for differences in narcissistic personality traits across academic disciplines among university students in Pakistan. Significant differences were found in Extraversion (F = 2.69, p = .033), Agreeableness (F = 3.12, p = .016), Neuroticism (F = 2.63, p = .035), and Openness to Experience (F = 2.42, p = .049). No significant difference was observed in Conscientiousness (F = 1.32, p = .261). These findings suggest that students' academic disciplines influence certain personality traits. Students from different disciplines exhibit varying levels of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness. For example, students in arts and social sciences might score higher in Openness, reflecting their creative and intellectual engagement, while those in business might score higher in Extraversion due to the social nature of their field. Understanding these differences can help tailor support services and interventions to address the specific personality profiles of students in different academic disciplines.

#### Discussion

The results revealed distinct gender discrepancies in the Big Five personality traits. Male students scored higher in Extraversion and Neuroticism, indicating they are more outgoing and emotionally unstable compared to their female counterparts. On the other hand, female students scored higher in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, suggesting they are more cooperative, compassionate, and diligent. These findings align with prior studies regarding gender differences in personality traits, which often attribute such variations to sociocultural factors and gender role expectations (Schmitt et al., 2008; Vedel, 2016).

The study also uncovered significant differences in narcissistic personality traits across various academic disciplines. Students in the arts and social sciences exhibited the highest levels of Extraversion and Openness to Experience, reflecting their outgoing nature and intellectual curiosity. In contrast, engineering students scored lower in Extraversion and Agreeableness, suggesting they are more reserved and less cooperative. These differences may be attributed to the unique demands and characteristics of the academic disciplines, as well as the self-selection of individuals into specific fields of study (Vedel, 2016).

The observed patterns in narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan have important implications for the development of targeted interventions as well as support services. Recognizing the gender as well as discipline-specific differences can inform the design of tailored programs that address the unique needs and challenges faced by students. For instance, female students may benefit from initiatives that foster self-esteem and emotional regulation, while male students may require support in developing empathy and interpersonal skills (Barnett & Powell, 2016).

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of incorporating narcissism-related content into the university curriculum, particularly in disciplines where students exhibit higher levels of narcissistic tendencies. This can promote self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and healthy interpersonal relationships among students, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and academic success (Twenge& Campbell, 2009).

A 2023 study by Barnett and Powell found that female students with narcissistic tendencies often exhibit lower self-esteem as well as higher stratum of aggression in comparison with their male counterparts (Barnett & Powell, 2016; Bhattacharyya & Goswami, 2024). The previous literature suggested that gender plays an important role in shaping the expression as well as impact of narcissistic traits in academic settings. Furthermore, the observed differences in narcissistic personality traits across academic disciplines corroborate a 2024 systematic review by Vedel, which examined Big Five personality group differences across various majors (Saiyed, 2024). The review found that students in arts as well as social sciences tend to score higher in Extraversion as well as Openness, while those in engineering as well as sciences exhibit lower levels of these traits. These findings underscore the importance of considering academic discipline when studying narcissistic tendencies among university students. The discussion also highlights the need for tailored interventions as well as support services to address narcissistic personality traits in a gender as well as discipline-specific manner. A 2023 study by Twenge and Campbell emphasized the growing prevalence of narcissism among younger generations, particularly in academic settings (Cupani et al., 2024). They argued that the university environment can exacerbate narcissistic tendencies through increased social comparison, competition, and exposure to social media.

#### **Conclusions**

This study offers significant insights into narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan, highlighting notable differences based on both gender and academic discipline. The results indicate that male students generally exhibit higher levels of Extraversion and Neuroticism, whereas female students show greater levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. These findings illustrate distinct personality profiles between genders, with males being more outgoing and emotionally volatile, while females are more cooperative and diligent.

Furthermore, the study reveals substantial differences in personality traits across various academic disciplines. Students in Arts and Social Sciences display increased stratum of Extraversion as well as Openness to Experience, suggesting a greater inclination towards sociability and creativity. In contrast, students in Sciences and Engineering tend to score lower in Extraversion and Openness, indicating a more reserved and less creatively inclined disposition. Social Sciences students stand out with the highest levels of Agreeableness and Neuroticism, highlighting their greater empathy and emotional sensitivity. Business students exhibit a balanced profile, with moderate levels across all traits, showing tendencies towards higher Extraversion and Conscientiousness.

These conclusions emphasize the importance of understanding the interplay between gender and academic discipline in shaping personality traits. Such insights are crucial for developing targeted interventions as well as support services particularly cater to the specific needs attributed to students, thereby enhancing their academic experience and promoting a more supportive and inclusive university environment.

#### Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis of narcissistic personality traits among university students in Pakistan, several targeted recommendations emerge to enhance student well-being and foster positive interpersonal dynamics within academic settings.

Firstly, tailored interventions should be developed to address the specific personality profiles identified among students. For instance, programs focusing on emotional regulation and empathy-building can benefit those exhibiting higher levels of Neuroticism, promoting healthier emotional responses and interpersonal relationships. These interventions should be integrated into existing mental health support services within universities, ensuring they are accessible and responsive to the diverse psychological needs of students.

Moreover, embedding modules on personality awareness and development into the university curriculum is essential. By incorporating these elements, students can gain a deeper understanding of their personality traits and those of others, fostering self-awareness and empathy. This initiative not only supports personal growth but also equips students with essential skills for navigating social interactions and professional environments effectively.

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