

Business Education and Narcissism: An Investigation on Turkish Universities

(İşletme Eğitimi ve Narsisizm: Türk Üniversiteleri Üzerine bir Sorgulama)

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Öz

Bu çalışmada, işletme eğitiminin işletme öğrencilerinin narsisizm seviyesi üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Literatür, narsisizmin 1970'lerden bu yana arttığını ve işletme öğrencilerinin diğer disiplinlerde okuyanlara göre daha narsistik olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada basit bir soru sorulmuştur; işletme öğrencileri, işletme okullarında deneyim kazandıkça daha mı narsistik hale geliyorlar? Bu sorunun cevabı için bir ipucu aramak amacıyla nicel bir çalışma tasarlanmış ve işletme öğrencilerinin narsisizm seviyeleri, sınıfları (sene), işletme okumaya yönelik bireysel motivasyonları, not ortalamaları, demografik özellikleri ve gelecekteki kariyer seçimleri (örneğin; pazarlama, finans, insan kaynakları yönetimi) bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmaya farklı Türk üniversitelerinden iki yüz altmış dört işletme öğrencisi katılmıştır. Bulgular, işletme öğrencilerinin narsisizm seviyesi ile sınıfları (sene) arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olmadığını göstermektedir. Ancak, narsisizm seviyeleri ile işletme bölümünü tercih etmedeki bireysel motivasyonları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, yaş ile narsisizm arasında negatif bir ilişki ve aile geliri ile narsisizm arasında pozitif bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma-Geliştirme (AR-GE) ve Muhasebe alanında kariyer yapmak istediğini belirten öğrencilerin daha az narsistik eğilimlere sahip olduğu bulunmuştur. Genel Yönetim ve Pazarlama departmanında çalışmak isteyen öğrencilerin ise en yüksek narsisizm puanlarına sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Özetle, bulguları literatürle birlikte değerlendirdiğimizde, bu çalışma işletme eğitiminin bireyleri daha narsist yaptığına değil, narsist özelliklere sahip bireylerin işletme okumaya daha eğilimli olduğuna ima etmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: narsisizm, işletme eğitimi, not ortalaması, işletme departmanları

Abstract

In this study, the effect of business education on business students' narcissism level was investigated. Literature indicates that narcissism has been increasing since the 1970s and business students are more narcissistic than those studying in other disciplines. This research asked a simple question: are business students becoming more narcissistic as they are experienced in business schools? To seek a clue for the answer to the research question, a quantitative study was designed, and business students' narcissism levels were analyzed based on their grades, individualistic motivation in studying business, GPAs, demographics, and based on their future career choices among business departments (e.g., marketing, finance, HRM). Two hundred sixty-four business students from different Turkish universities participated into study. Findings mainly illustrated that there is no significant relationship between business students' narcissism level and their grades (years). However, there is a significant relationship between their narcissism level and their agentic motivation to pursue a degree in business. Further age was negatively related to narcissism and family income was a positive predictor of narcissism. Students who expressed their willingness to pursue a career in R&D or Accounting after graduation were found to have less narcissistic tendencies. Students who are willing to work in the General Management and Marketing department have the highest narcissism scores. In summary, when the findings are evaluated together with the literature, this study implies that business education does not make individuals more narcissistic; rather, individuals with narcissistic traits are more inclined to study business.

Key Words: Narcissism, business education, GPA, business departments

Introduction

Narcissism which is born in a myth is originally a psychiatric term and describes self-love. Beginning from the 1970s, it has been used to describe a culture that promotes self-loving values (Lasch, 2006; Lowen, 2016; Twenge & Campell, 2015). Today, business world supports narcissistic values; even these values are seen as a necessity for a successful career. Consumption and competition in contemporary work life can be listed as leading contributors to narcissism culture, which is mostly triggered by businesses. Considering these together, it is predicted that the business education adopted that narcissistic atmosphere and supports narcissistic values, especially with its sub-disciplines; human resource management, entrepreneurship, and marketing. This notion is mentioned differently by Brown et al. (2010). According to them, the nature of a business school is to equip individuals with an academic and social skill set that helps them to succeed in a competitive business world rather than moral values. Also, Sims (1993) suggested that business professionals learn selfish behaviors while they are at undergraduate or graduate business school. In another research business students were found as less open and agreeable than other majors (Lounsbury et al., 2009).

Together with capitalism, societies are getting more individualistic moreover narcissistic. Not only Western societies, by cultural leveling but also Eastern societies are getting more narcissistic day by day (Twenge & Campell, 2015; Fastoso et al., 2018). This cultural leveling is also the case in Turkey which adopted a free-market economy in mid of the 20th century. Accordingly, its culture began to adopt narcissistic values that can easily be observed in popular and social media and public life (Aytaç, 2019).

Previous literature showed that business students are more inclined to be narcissists (Westerman et al., 2012; Young & Pinsky, 2006). Recent research by Wood et al. (2021) confirmed the overall view of the literature about business students' narcissism. They also found that students in the finance major have the highest degree of narcissism. Are they narcissistic because of the values they adopted during their college life? Alternatively, are they narcissistic and thus they prefer business schools? This study aims to provide some cues for those questions within Turkish Universities. By clarifying these points, it aims to discuss the role of current business education in the competitive narcissistic business world which generally leaves behind moral and ethical values (Lowen, 2016, pp. 9-10). In addition to that main research question, it also explored whether business students' career choice is related to their narcissism level. For example, students who plan to work in the marketing field after graduation may be more narcissistic than students who plan to work in the accounting field.

Methodologically, a quantitative study was designed, and the survey method was used for data collection. The survey was applied online. Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was used for measuring narcissism¹. In addition to NPI, demographics, students' grades, and GPAs were asked. Business students' career plans were asked based on divisions of business (e.g., finance, marketing, HRM), and their free choice² of choosing the business department for education was queried.

The remainder of the study is followed by a chapter that uncovers the conceptual framework of narcissism term.

¹Not pathological or vulnerable narcissism meant here. It is meant normal narcissism or which called as sub-clinical or grandiose narcissism.

² How much their own decision was to study in business school?

1. Narcissism

As a term, narcissism is born in a mythological story. The story is based on Narcissus, the man who fell in love with himself after seeing his reflection in a puddle. It is said that the story was born in the 8th century BC (Atay, 2009; Ertekin & Yurtsever, 2001). Another character in the story is Echo, who is a nympha³ and is not able to speak except in repetition of the words of others (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p. 119). According to myth one day Echo came across Narcissus in the forest and fell in love with him. Narcissus refused her and insisted on fixing his eyes on his reflection in a river until he transformed a flower that was called by his name (Roman & Roman, 2010, p. 337).

It is said that British sexologist Havelock Ellis coined *the Narcissus-like* term in 1898 (Kang & Park, 2016; Grenyer, 2013). By this term, he describes losing sexual emotions completely and self-admiration tendency (cited by Raskin & Terry, 1988). On the other hand, according to Freud, Paul Nâcke (German Psychiatrist) used narcissism first in 1899 (Freud, 2015, p. 23). Although Otto Rank wrote the first psychoanalytic text in 1911 (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982), Freud was the first one who analyze narcissism in-depth. In his study "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" Freud, in 1905, used the term narcissism in a footnote for the first time. Following his interpretations, narcissism became popular among psychologists and psychiatrists. Freud stated that the high level of narcissism, within the definition of Nacke, which implies one's behavior toward his/her own body like a sexual object is a perversion. However, later, he said that different from what previously appeared, rather than a perversion it can be seen as a characteristic that is inherent in all organisms to a certain degree (Freud, 2015, p. 23).

Freud classified narcissism as primary and secondary narcissism (Freud, 2015, p. 23). Primary narcissism describes a phase that every human experiences just after born. According to Freud, after birth, a baby perceives him/herself as a love object, and her/his libido only directs own self. On the other hand, secondary narcissism describes a pathological issue in which an individual cannot find a real love object; thus, he/she directs his/her libido to own self.

Another commonly used classification is normal narcissism and pathological narcissism. Normal narcissism different from pathological one is accepted as self-love that exists in every human being to a certain degree (Sedikides et al., 2007; Emmons, 1987; Fromm, 2014; Lowen, 2016). It is not enough to call someone a pathological narcissist if she/he has a highly narcissistic characteristic. Additionally, he/she should hold at least five different long-term behavioral patterns such as; pretentiousness, lack of empathy, and need for recognition. Also, she/he should show some indications of failure in work life, depression, or problematic interpersonal relationships (p.49).

Normal narcissism has long been examined as a personality trait by categorizing it into two distinct facets: overt and covert narcissism. Vulnerable narcissism is also defined as covert narcissism, which brings uncertain feelings of grandeur, lack of self-confidence and initiative, and unsteady feelings of depression. Covert narcissists show hypersensitivity, jealousy, and a fragile ego (Akhtar & Thompson, 1982). In addition to these facets, Fromm further divided narcissism into two types; collective narcissism and individual narcissism (Fromm, 2014, pp. 71-72). Collective narcissism is described as *an in-group identification tied to an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the unparalleled greatness of an in-group* (Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009)

Within the context of this study only normal or in other words, grandiose narcissism was analyzed. The most basic definition of normal or grandiose narcissism (or individual

³ Nympha means godlike and female creatures that live in forests (Erhat, 2015, p. 219).

narcissism as Fromm called it) is a *highly positive or inflated self-view* (Campbell et al., 2002, p. 358). Normal narcissism has three characteristics inflated self-concept, relative lack of interest in warm interpersonal relationships, and reliance upon self-regulatory⁴ strategies (Cisek et al., 2008).

Usually, narcissism evokes bad people or bad attitudes and behaviors, but it is said that everyone is narcissistic to some extent (Freud, 2015; Fromm, 2014). Its relationship with some antisocial behaviors is shown (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman & Baumeister, 2002) and it is associated together with Machiavellism and normal psychopathy as a dark triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and recently as dark tetrad by adding sadism (Bonfá-Araujo et al., 2022). As Lowen (1997) stated narcissistic individuals are less sensitive to helping others or caring planet, and Bergman et al. (2014) illustrated that; through materialism, narcissism is associated with lower levels of environmental ethics. While self-reported and parent-reported pro-social behavior of narcissists is found high, peers-reported found as low (Kauten & Barry, 2014). Another research illustrated that narcissism is negatively related to helping others, and this negative relationship increases together with social pressure (Lanni et al., 2014). Overall, narcissists are less pro-social on more objective measures, and their motivations for helping are strategic rather than altruistic (Hermann et al., 2018; Konrath et al., 2016).

According to Emmons conceptual framework of narcissism consists of three dominant trends. The first of them is cultural narcissism in which the main focus is the *me generation* that began in the 70s and continued in the 80s. The second one is literature about self-serving bias in social psychology. The third one is the trend that analyzes narcissism as a clinical entity (Emmons, 1984; Emmons, 1987). In this chapter, the second and the third dominant trends are summarized. In the next chapter, cultural narcissism is briefly analyzed.

1.1. Narcissism Culture and Competitive Business World

Especially beginning in the 1970s, the dominant culture in the Western world is called narcissism culture. It describes a highly individualistic and goal-oriented culture that developed together with capitalism. Narcissism rises together with an emphasis on self-admiration in culture. Many scholars discussed the increase of narcissism in societies and the dominance of narcissism culture (Lasch, 2006; Twenge & Campell, 2015). According to Tweng et al. (2008), levels of narcissism significantly increased in college students from 1979 to 2006. Twenge & Campell (2015) have shared some statistics that show support for these increasing tendencies. For instance, in the United States of America in 1950's percentage of people that agree the statement of "I am an important person" was %12 and it became more than 80% for young women and more than 77% for young men in 1980s.

One of the main elements of narcissism culture is the emphasis on competition that even begins together with born. In narcissistic societies, together with born an individual experiences a whole life like a race. Education, sports, art, and all other fields of life are designed competitively, just like the business world. Either competition for a good CV or competition among firms makes individuals feel competition for all their work lifespan (Lasch, 2006, pp. 178, 189-190, 193, 197).

⁴ Self-regulation can be described as the ability to act in one's long-term best interest, consistent with his/her deepest values. Emotionally, it is the ability to calm oneself down when he/she is upset (Stosny, 2011).

One of the biggest problems of this competition, especially the competition in the business world, is damage to the environment. According to Lowen (2016), the loss of human values such as disregarding the damage to the natural environment for improving the quality of life can be seen as narcissism at the cultural level. As he stated, “*They don’t feel the tragedy of a world threatened by a nuclear holocaust, nor do they feel the tragedy of a life spent trying to prove their worth to an uncaring world.*” (p.9). According to him, when materialism rapidly prevails and becomes a criterion for development, and when welfare starts to outweigh wisdom, success becomes more important than self-esteem, and fame overshadows dignity, a narcissistic culture that places extreme emphasis on image will emerge. An individual existing in this culture will develop a psychological state in parallel with these developments and, the s/he will naturally focus on his or her success in the company and on the success of his company in the industry instead of paying attention to environmental issues.

1.2. Narcissism and Organizational Behavior

Narcissism in the last years has become a subject of scientific interest in business studies mainly in organizational research and consumer behavior. Different authors discussed the narcissism role in an organizational context mostly about performance and leadership (e.g., Lartey et al., 2024; Dåderman, & Kajonius, 2024). Overall, we can say that studies showed adverse effects of narcissism in the organizational context. For example, according to Hamstra et al. (2021), managerial narcissism lowered employees' perceptions of manager trustworthiness, which in turn was related to increased employee silence. Khoo et al. (2024) demonstrate that the appointment of a highly narcissistic vice-chancellor in a university results in a decline in both research and teaching performance, as well as a deterioration in league table rankings. Another study investigated how leader narcissism, specifically narcissistic rivalry, leads to abusive supervision, and revealed that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry are more likely to engage in abusive behaviors, particularly in response to threats to their self-esteem, regardless of follower-directed deviance (Gauglitz et al., 2023). Working with narcissistic co-workers can also trigger non-narcissistic peers' counterproductive work behaviors (Chambers et al., 2024).

It is also a fact that in businesses, for white-collar crimes, risky decisions, and personal errors, narcissism creates many unwanted outcomes such as blaming others (Bergman et al., 2014). In addition to that, Penney & Spector (2002) have found that narcissism is related to trait anger, job constraints, and counterproductive work behavior. According to Liu et al. (2022), narcissistic executives are likely to obstruct inter-unit knowledge transfer due to their sense of superiority, which leads them to overestimate the value of internal knowledge while underestimating the importance of external knowledge. According to Wirtz & Rigotti (2020), vulnerable narcissism is positively associated with followers' emotional exhaustion and negatively associated with work engagement. Furthermore, the grandiose narcissism of leaders exacerbates the negative relationship between followers' vulnerable narcissism and their work engagement.

However, there is also some proof that narcissism can be helpful for some positive outcomes. For example, in Italy, CEO narcissism is lower in family firms and among family CEOs; however, more narcissistic CEOs in family firms tend to exploit greater innovation opportunities by fostering higher strategic decision comprehensiveness within top management teams (Rovelli et al., 2023). Lee et al. (2023) found that CEO narcissism enhances foreign direct investment risk-taking, which in turn affects global performance variance, with business group affiliation acting as a moderating factor. Also, professional

skepticism of Iranian auditors found to be positively related with narcissism (Safarzadeh & Mohammadian, 2024).

Last but not least, According to Duchon & Drake (2009), just like a human in the organization, an organization can be a narcissist in other words narcissism can be a characteristic of an organization. Just like people, organizations are also motivated to protect their collective sense of identity and legitimacy; accordingly, they can sometimes engage in narcissistic behavior, and extreme narcissistic organizations are excessively ego-centric and exploitative. According to the authors, these narcissistic organizations are unable to behave ethically because they do not have a moral identity.

1.3. Narcissistic Consumption

Narcissism and consumption or in other words narcissistic consumption (Sedikides et al., 2018) have been analyzed intensely over almost 20 years in literature, and it is shown that mainly individuals that have narcissistic tendencies are inclined to symbolic products, luxury consumption (Kang & Park, 2016) and compulsive buying (Harnish & Bridges, 2015), be less loyal to brands (Lambert & Desmond, 2013) and materialistic (Rose, 2007; Bergman et al., 2014; Velov et al., 2014; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017), preferring products that positively distinguishes them (Lee et al., 2013). In general, they are motivated to consume to sustain their positive image even when it comes to gift-giving (Hyun et al., 2016) or buying in virtual environments (Türkmen & Aytaç, 2023).

Giacomin & Jordan have illustrated that narcissism may maybe a state-like or context-depending characteristic, and this is called *state narcissism* (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014; Giacomin & Jordan, 2016). With the help of this new approach, Kokkoris et al. (2018) showed that consumer choices increase the state narcissism of consumers through increased self-referencing. This same effect was not observed in a communal context like choices for charitable organizations.

2. Research

2.1. Research Question and Hypotheses

According to Gruba-McCallister (2007), today's society is exceptionally narcissistic, individualistic and consumption-oriented and these societal characteristics are intertwined, and have their origins in capitalism which is an ideology that holds the narcissism problem essentially. In parallel with this interpretation, repeatedly, narcissism's relationship with materialism is evidenced (Bergman et al., 2014; Rose, 2007; Harnish & Bridges, 2015; Velov et al., 2014; Cisek et al., 2008; Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017). This materialistic culture is mainly dominated by businesses that create brands and try to stay connected with consumers, together with consumption. Accordingly, it is possible to say that through materialism, consumption is one of the main elements of narcissistic culture and nature, which is at the heart of business education. Without consumption, of course, one cannot talk about business, and in today's highly competitive business world, business schools mostly offer 'strategic' courses (e.g., strategic marketing management, strategic management accounting) which mainly focus on competition.

Today, there is not only massive competition among firms but also there is massive competition among workers in those firms. This competition can be called CV fetishism, which means narcissistic attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Lasch, 2006, pp. 83-84). For example, it is found that narcissism enhances new entrepreneurs' performance

through workaholism (Shirokova et al., 2024). Briefly, it can be said that two of the main characteristics of narcissism culture are consumption and competition, and both of them interact closely with business education through the strategic focus of business education.

Previously it has been found that business students are more narcissistic than students from other departments (Westerman et al., 2012) and in parallel with this, it is shown that business students cheat more and act less cooperative ways than do students from other departments (Brown et al., 2010). In an early study, it was found that business students learn selfish behaviors during their graduate or undergraduate education in business schools (Sims, 1993). Lounsbury et al. (2009) found that business students scored lower in agreeableness and openness compared to other students. According to the authors, the emphasis in business schools on competition, individual achievement, and the pursuit of profit may negatively impact an individual's inclination to be kind, generous, and helpful. Recent inquiries revisited these facts and corroborated these prior findings (Wood et al., 2021). Çavuşoğlu et al. (2017) found that in sports students in Turkey, first-year students have higher levels of entitlement dimension of narcissism. The opposite is expected for business students. It is predicted that the emphasis in business schools as discussed by Lounsbury et al. (2009) may lead business students to become more narcissistic as they advance:

H₁: There is a significant and positive relationship between business students' grades (year) and narcissism level.

By testing this hypothesis, the study aims to answer the question whether business education is an essential contributor to business students' comparatively high narcissistic attitudes and behaviors. If this hypothesis is rejected, there will be a possible explanation for business students' comparatively high narcissism; students with high narcissism are more eager to be educated in business school. Young & Pinsky (2006) applied the same logic in the entertainment industry, and they found that the industry is attracting narcissists rather than increasing narcissism. At this point, one might argue that the excessive agency associated with narcissism may influence the results. In other words, some could claim that individuals who consciously choose their own field of study, such as business, are more likely to be narcissistic. However, in Turkey, environmental and familial factors play a significant role in influencing individuals' choice of academic departments (e.g., Altındal, 2022). This makes it important to question whether this holds true, and it may also explain why business students exhibit higher levels of narcissism:

H₂: There is a significant and positive relationship between business students' narcissism level and the degree that shows business students' individualistic motivation to prefer to study in business school

McManus et al. (2022) found a negative direct relationship between narcissism and GPA at an American university. However, they also found a positive association through the confidence variable. Another study investigating the role of grandiose narcissism in academic performance revealed that narcissistic admiration was associated with a higher predicted GPA, and while it was positively correlated with actual GPA, this effect was largely driven by positive self-evaluations. When controlling self-evaluation, the direct relationship between admiration and actual GPA turned negative. Another study showed no significant relationship between GPA and narcissism but found a positive association with cheating behavior among business students (Brunell et al., 2011). Although the findings in the literature do not provide a clear conclusion, we expect narcissism to negatively affect GPA because narcissistic traits may lead to overconfidence and a lack of

sustained effort, which could hinder academic performance. This may be particularly true for business students, given the competitive nature of their field.

H₃: There is a negative relationship between business students' GPA and their narcissism level

Previous literature has shown that narcissism among men is higher than among women (Carroll, 1987; Haaken, 1983; Young & Pinsky, 2006; Ames et al., 2006; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Exceptionally female celebrities found as more narcissistic. According to Young and Pinsky (2006), this may be a result of a self-selection bias in which the industry attracts and retains more narcissistic women. Similarly, it is expected that between male and female business students, there is no significant difference in terms of narcissism because of indifference to individual motivations for studying in business school. Literature shows that higher social class is associated with increased entitlement and narcissism (Piff, 2014). In parallel with this finding, it is expected that as business students' family income increases their narcissism level increases too. Finally, in parallel with H₁, it is expected that as students' age increases - which can be assumed as increased experience in business school- their narcissism level increases too. So;

H₄: There is a significant relationship between business students' demographic characteristics and their narcissism level.

To the best of our knowledge, no research previously compared the narcissism level of people who work in different departments of business, but in the literature, some clues imply people from different departments have different kinds of personalities. For instance, marketers perceived as a portrait of a frivolous, unreliable, and unprofessional rogue, while accountants as formal, boring intellectuals with few social skills and even less charm (Mills & Tsamenyi, 2000; Aytaç et al., 2016). One can infer that marketing people are more narcissistic than accounting people from looking at this depiction. Similarly, because accounting generally exists at the operational level in an organizational structure and finance is generally at a more strategic level, it can be predicted that people who consider a career in finance are more narcissistic than people who consider a career in accounting because of higher potential of being a manager considering one of the subfactors of narcissism is leadership and authority (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Supporting this, Wood et al. (2021) found that NPI scores of business students are higher among finance majors. Accordingly;

H₅: Business' student's narcissism level significantly differs among groups created based on students' future career choices

2.2 Methodology

Participants were invited to participate in to the study via a survey link, which was posted in various social media groups associated with business schools at several Turkish universities, including Facebook and WhatsApp. This approach utilized convenience sampling, as participants were selected based on their accessibility within the social media groups, making it easier to gather data from the target population of business students. A total of 274 business students participated in the survey; however, 10 respondents were identified as having provided inappropriate answers and were subsequently eliminated from the analysis. Convenience sampling was employed due to some practical constraints of the study, including the absence of external funding, which

necessitated benefitting from pre-existing platforms for data collection. The exact number of recipients of the survey is unknown.

The minimum accepted sample size was determined as 119 with power analysis for NPI-40 with medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) for ANOVA. Additionally, according to Wilson et al. (2007), 110 would be the minimum accepted sample size for the regression analysis that will work with six indicators ($N=104+k$).

2.2.1 Measurement and Data Collection

The questionnaire form consisted of NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory), demographics, and questions about students' grades, GPAs, future career choices, and Agency in Business School Choice (perception of free choice about attending a business school). The data collection tools and research were found applicable by Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Institute of Ethics of Social and Human Sciences on 19.03.2019.

For measuring narcissism, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was used, which is a self-report scale that consists of forced-choice options. Participants have to choose a narcissistic or not narcissistic alternative for each question. During filling, participants should be unaware of what specifically NPI measures. There are no categories or limits on the scale; the mean of the scale is measured and compared. Within the context of this study, subfactors of NPI are ignored because narcissism is analyzed as a single holistic construct. (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988). NPI's adaptation to the Turkish language was made by Kızıltan (2000). During translation, he found a high correlation between Turkish and English scales ($N=34$, $r=.90$, $p=.000$) and he found Cronbach Alpha value as .84 while the re-test correlation was .89 (Kızıltan, 2000).

2.3. Findings

As can be seen in Table 1, the research sample of the study is comprehensive and well-balanced in terms of the gender, family income, and age characteristics of the sample. Participants' mean age is 23,63, and %59 of the participants are female. The average family income is 4486,91⁵ Turkish Liras.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	106	40,2
Female	158	59,8
Years in Business School		
1	16	6,1
2	31	11,7
3	58	22,0
4	69	26,1
4+	90	34
Total	264	100
	\bar{x}	SD
Age	23,636	3,66
Family Income	4486,91 TL	3098,88

⁵ During the period of data collection (around May 2019), the gross minimum wage in Turkey was set at 2,558 TL, while the net wage was 2,020 TL. During this period, the exchange rate for the US dollar was approximately around 6.05 TL.

Business students from 31 different Turkish universities have participated in the study. Appendix A lists the universities and the number of students attending from each institution. As can be seen, the universities are not equally represented, and some are inadequately represented for making comparisons. The mean GPA was found to be 2.502 out of 4 (Table 2). Summary statistics of the responses to the item about students' perceptions of free choice in attending business school are presented in Table 2, which shows a mean response of 58.33%. If a student answers 100%, it means that they were entirely motivated by their own feelings and thoughts about attending business school. If the answer is 60%, it indicates that several other people or reference groups (e.g., family or friends) influenced their decision to attend business school by 40%. Participants' mean narcissism score is 17,25 out of 40 for NPI-40 scale. As mentioned above, there are no cut-off points at scale, and it works by comparing means. The mean of the narcissism scale of the sample of this research can be accepted as quite high if compared with research that analyzes celebrities' narcissism scores and MBA students' narcissism scores in the United States of America. In that research, it was found that celebrities' narcissism scores mean 17,84, and MBA students' narcissism scores mean 16,18 (Young & Pinsky, 2006). Moreover, at the same year this study's data was collected, Briganti & Linkowski (2019) collected data from university students from the French-speaking part of Belgium and found the mean of the NPI-40 to be 13. The distribution of students based on their future career choices illustrates that most of the students are interested in a career in human resources management (22.7%) and general management (16.7%). Marketing (14.8%), accounting (12.5%), and finance (9.5%) are other popular choices.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	\bar{x}	SD
GPA (Range 0-4)	2,50	,56
NPI (Range 0-16)	17,25	6,75
Agency in Business School Choice (Range 0-100)	58,33	30,10
Future Career Choice	Frequency	Percent (%)
Research and Development (R&D)	10	3,8
Finance	25	9,5
General Management	44	16,7
Public Relations	15	5,7
Human Resources Management (HRM)	60	22,7
Logistics	9	3,4
Accounting	33	12,5
Marketing	39	14,8
Operational Research	2	,8
Numerical Methods	4	1,5
Production Management	6	2,3
Management Information Systems	9	3,4
Unclassified or Invalid	8	3,0
Total	264	100,0

As NPI-40 is the only scale that is used in this research, only the reliability of NPI is tested. For testing the internal consistency of the scale Cronbach's Alpha value is

calculated via SPSS software and the alpha value was found as 0,834, which indicates that the scale is highly reliable (Hair et al., 2010).

Firstly, for testing H₁, H₂, and H₃, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 3). VIF statistics (expected to be lower than 4) are checked for identifying multicollinearity problems, and Durbin-Watson value (expected to be 2 or close to 2) are checked for identifying autocorrelation problem and both of them found as appropriate (Hair et al., 2010; Doğan & Yılmaz, 2017).

Table 3. Regression Analysis

	F	p	R²	Adj. R²	b	t	p
	4,248	,000	0,9	,069			
(Constant)					-	5,598	,000
Grade (year)					,046	,740	,460
Agency in Business School Choice					,196	3,153	,002
GPA					,051	,840	,402
Family Income					,126	2,056	,041
Gender					-,062	-1,032	,303
Age					-,145	-2,333	,020

Dependent Variables: NPI-40

Independent Variables: Grade, Agency in Business School Choice, GPA, Family Income, Gender, Age

The significance level is taken as $p < .05$

VIF statistics in between; 1,026- 1,108

Durbin-Watson value: 1,989

Overall, the regression model found as significant ($p = .00$; $F = 4,248$). Adjusted R² value found as .069, which means independent variables can explain business students' narcissism level of around at %7. H₁ (There is a significant and positive relationship between business students' grades and narcissism level) and H₃ (There is a negative relationship between business students' GPA and their narcissism level) are rejected ($p > .05$).

On the other hand, H₂ (There is a significant and positive relationship between business students' narcissism level and the degree that shows business students' individualistic motivation to prefer to study in business school) is supported. The beta value of the Agency in Business School Choice variable (.196) indicates that students' intrinsic motivation to attend a business school is positively related to their narcissism level.

H₄ (There is a significant relationship between business students' demographic characteristics and narcissism level) is supported for age ($p = .02$, $b = -.145$) and family income ($p = .041$, $b = .126$) variables. Beta (b) values of those variables indicate that narcissism increases as age decreases and increases as family income increases. Further, participants' narcissism scores were compared based on their gender via an independent sample t-test. Levene's Test statistics were controlled. Results of Levene's test indicated that variances are homogeneity ($0.3 > 0.05$) but for both conditions- equal variances and not- there are no significant differences among groups ($p < 0.05$). Although male participants' narcissism is higher than female participants, this difference is not significant; thus, H₄ is rejected for gender.

Table 4. The mean difference in individualistic motivation between gender groups

	Gender	N	\bar{x}	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
NPI-40	Male	106	17,9811	7,02781	,68260
	Female	158	16,7595	6,53694	,52005

For making comparisons among groups that were created based on business students' future career choices, the Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test is applied. Since there are very few participants, the related discipline groups of operations, logistics, numerical methods, and production management have been merged and named Production and Operations Management. Further, since there are not many participants in the Management Information System and considered as a more independent division/discipline it is not included in the analysis. NPI-40 for each department is calculated as listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Business students' narcissism means based on their career choices

Future Career Choices	N	NPI-40		
		\bar{x}	SD	Min. Max.
Research and Development (R&D)	10	12,60	7,01	2,00 27,00
Finance	25	17,60	6,37	6,00 32,00
General Management	44	19,23	6,30	2,00 37,00
Public Relations	15	16,60	6,29	8,00 28,00
Human Resource Management (HRM)	60	17,01	6,41	5,00 29,00
Accounting	33	15,58	6,95	3,00 33,00
Marketing	39	19,18	6,87	8,00 33,00
Production and Operations Management	21	15,85	7,08	4,00 30,00

Business students who are planning to have a career in the General Management and Marketing department have the highest narcissism score ($\bar{x} = 19,23$, $\bar{x} = 19,18$ respectively). Students who consider a career in Research and Development (R&D) have the lowest narcissism score ($\bar{x} = 12,60$). The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically

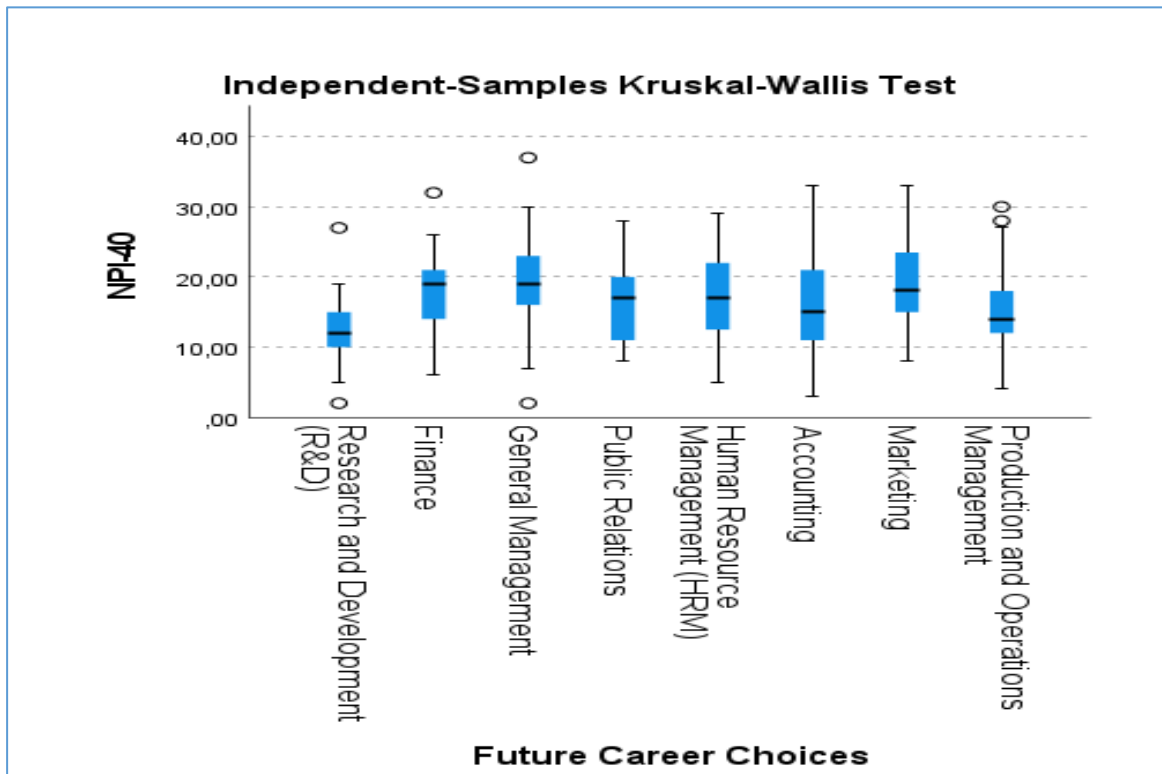


Figure 1. NPI-40 scores across the groups

significant difference in the distributions across the groups, $\chi^2(7) = 14.88$, $p = .038$. Given the significance, further comparisons between sub-groups will be explored to better understand the differences.

Table 6. Pairwise Comparisons of Students' Narcissism Levels Based on Future Career Choices

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.
R&D-Accounting	-30,823	25,763	-1,196	,232
R&D-Production and Operations Management	-31,145	27,421	-1,136	,256
R&D -Public Relations	-41,950	29,137	-1,440	,150
R&D - HRM	-47,975	24,378	-1,968	,049
R&D -Finance	-54,750	26,704	-2,050	,040
R&D -Marketing	-65,153	25,298	-2,575	,010
R&D -General Management	-71,595	25,003	-2,863	,004
Accounting-Production and Operations Management	-,323	19,923	-,016	,987
Accounting-Public Relations	11,127	22,225	,501	,617
Accounting- HRM	17,152	15,468	1,109	,267
Accounting-Finance	23,927	18,924	1,264	,206
Accounting-Marketing	-34,330	16,881	-2,034	,042
Accounting-General Management	40,773	16,435	2,481	,013
Production and Operations Management-Public Relations	10,805	24,128	,448	,654
Production and Operations Management- HRM	16,830	18,096	,930	,352
Production and Operations Management-Finance	23,605	21,126	1,117	,264
Production and Operations Management-Marketing	34,007	19,318	1,760	,078
Production and Operations Management-General Management	40,450	18,930	2,137	,033
Public Relations- HRM	-6,025	20,603	-,292	,770
Public Relations-Finance	12,800	23,310	,549	,583
Public Relations-Marketing	-23,203	21,684	-1,070	,285
Public Relations-General Management	29,645	21,339	1,389	,165
HRM -Finance	6,775	16,990	,399	,690
HRM -Marketing	-17,178	14,680	-1,170	,242
HRM -General Management	23,620	14,166	1,667	,095
Finance-Marketing	-10,403	18,286	-,569	,569
Finance-General Management	-16,845	17,875	-,942	,346
Marketing-General Management	6,443	15,696	,410	,681

The pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences in NPI-40 scores based on business school students' departmental choices for their future careers. Specifically, students who are willing to pursue careers in R&D exhibited significantly lower narcissism scores compared to those in HRM ($p = 0.049$), Finance ($p = 0.040$), Marketing ($p = 0.010$), and General Management ($p = 0.004$), suggesting that individuals inclined toward R&D tend to be less narcissistic. Additionally, Accounting students displayed lower narcissism scores than those considering Marketing ($p = 0.042$) and General Management ($p = 0.013$). Lastly, a significant difference was found between Production and Operations Management and General Management ($p = 0.033$), indicating that students prefer Production and Operations Management have lower narcissistic tendencies than who prefer General Management. It is seen that departmental choice of

business students is associated with varying levels of narcissism, which could have implications for career paths and interpersonal dynamics within professional settings.

3. Conclusion

This study was designed to analyze the relationship between narcissism and business education. After briefly summarizing the aim and the context of the study in the first part, in the second part, the concept of narcissism and narcissism culture, with its one of the most critical elements i.e., competitive business world, are summarized. Within the same part, narcissistic consumption and narcissism's relationship with organizational behavior are explained. Following this, a quantitative study was designed to test five different hypotheses that developed within the scope of this research. A questionnaire was used that included the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, demographics, business students' GPAs, future career choices, and individualistic motivation to attend a business school. Data was collected from 264 business students from different Turkish universities.

Findings showed that there is no significant relationship between students' grades (years) and narcissism level which means there is no significant clue about whether business education makes students more narcissistic or not. However, it is found that there is a significant relationship between students' individualistic motivation to study in a business school and their narcissism level. On the other hand, as students' age decreases, their narcissism level increases, and as their family income increases, their narcissism increases too.

In general, based on the findings, we may infer that business education is not making students narcissistic; instead, narcissistic students are more inclined to study business within the Turkish Universities context. Also, findings related to the relationship between age and narcissism level support this notion. It is possible to talk about the same self-selection bias about business schools similar to the entertainment industry (Young & Pinsky, 2006) however we need more robust pieces of evidence with more comprehensive samples. Findings about gender also support this notion because there is a common idea about narcissism that implies men, in general, are more narcissistic than women (Carroll, 1987; Haaken, 1983; Young & Pinsky, 2006; Ames et al., 2006; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), however, in this study, men did not significantly differ from women in terms of NPI scores. The relationship between narcissism and income is consistent with findings from German, Austurian and Turkish samples (Paleczek et al. 2018; Spurk et al. 2016; Yabancı, 2019) suggesting a strong connection between narcissism and wealth across different cultures.

Findings related to GPA can be interpreted together with Westerman et al.'s (2016) study which illustrated that narcissistic students get better grades from narcissistic professors (Westerman et al., 2016). Also, according to Wallace et al. (2024), business professors were perceived as more narcissistic than professors in other fields across measures of admiration, rivalry, and explicit narcissism. They also received higher ratings in admiration and explicit narcissism compared to adults who were not professors or teachers. This can be an attractive fact for candidate students. Thus, higher narcissism in business schools can be linked to more positive GPAs. Overall, narcissism should be approached holistically in business schools.

The findings suggest that business students' departmental choices are linked to varying levels of narcissism, with those pursuing careers in R&D and Accounting exhibiting lower narcissism compared to fields like Marketing, HRM, and General Management. This is not surprising since the promotional opportunities are higher in

those departments. These differences could influence both career trajectories and workplace dynamics, as narcissistic traits may affect leadership, collaboration, and decision-making (e.g., Mills & Tsamenyi, 2000; Aytaç et al., 2016). A better understanding of these dynamics can offer insights into how personality traits align with specific business functions.

Although this research serves as an initiative for further inquiries in the field, it has several limitations. First of all, data was collected among very different universities, and the amount of the data was limited. Also, it is not entirely possible to test the role of business education in business students' narcissism with such methodology. A longitudinal design or panel data is necessary. Future studies should take these considerations. In addition to those, the context of the study may have manipulated the findings. Business schools' prestige is not as high as in the West in Turkey. Moreover, at the time that this study was conducted, the unemployment rate was high among business students. As students close to graduation, their anxiety about unemployment may have risen, and it may decrease their narcissistic attitudes. To the best of our knowledge, no study tested unemployment stress and narcissism. Future studies should also investigate and compare business students' narcissism levels together with students from other faculties and departments. Also, the level of the subfactors of narcissism (e.g., entitlement, superiority) among business students can be analyzed in another study. Additionally, the narcissism level of students from different universities can be tested (see Appendix A).

As narcissism is increasing in the 21st century (Twenge et al., 2008) and as we have more environmental and humanitarian problems on our planet, some researchers sought to way for motivating narcissists to positive behaviors; such as buying green products (Naderi & Strutton, 2014) and some others shared some strategies fighting against the adverse outcomes of narcissism (Bergman et al., 2014; Twenge & Campell, 2015). In this study, a clue was found that implies business schools are attracting students with high narcissism, but as discussed before, today, businesses need more responsible workers and leaders with more communal focus rather than narcissistic. Based on this, business schools should seek ways to attract not only individuals with a high narcissistic focus but also those who are more prosocial. Currently, many business schools emphasize their ability to teach leadership and other competitive skills in their marketing appeals. Therefore, managers should reconsider their marketing strategies to focus more on promoting prosocial outcomes.

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Appendix A. Business students' narcissism level based on their universities

University	NPI-40 \bar{x}	N	SD	Max.	Min.
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University	16,9500	20	7,86381	29,00	2,00
Adnan Menderes University	20,000	1	.	20,00	20,00
Akdeniz University	23,0000	3	13,2287	33,00	8,00
Aksaray University	15,6250	24	7,35919	29,00	6,00
Anadolu University	15,2105	19	6,87652	25,00	5,00
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	21,6250	8	7,26906	37,00	11,00
Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University	17,2667	30	6,44303	33,00	6,00
Boğaziçi University	19,6000	5	10,7377	31,00	6,00
Çankırı Karatekin University	22,0000	1	.	22,00	22,00
Düzce University	19,0000	1	.	19,00	19,00
Ege University	26,0000	1	.	26,00	26,00
Fırat University	7,0000	1	.	7,00	7,00
Gaziantep University	17,9167	12	4,35803	25,00	13,00
Gebze Institute of Technology	19,0000	2	2,82843	21,00	17,00
Hacettepe University	12,6667	3	4,93288	16,00	7,00
Hitit University	24,0000	1	.	24,00	24,00
Istanbul University	14,3333	12	6,45732	23,00	1,00
Istanbul Technical University	25,5000	2	7,77817	31,00	20,00
Kafkas University	16,1818	22	6,98731	33,00	4,00
Karadeniz Technical University	17,8276	29	5,79451	32,00	9,00
Kırıkkale University	17,0000	2	11,3137	25,00	9,00
Marmara University	17,2000	5	3,42053	22,00	13,00
Necmettin Erbakan University	26,0000	1	.	26,00	26,00
Middle East Technical University	21,0476	21	5,21993	30,00	13,00
Ordu University	15,0000	1	.	15,00	15,00
Sakarya University	17,8571	7	5,55063	25,00	10,00
Selçuk University	13,0000	14	5,36370	20,00	3,00
Trakya University	24,5000	2	7,77817	30,00	19,00
Uludağ University	10,0000	1	.	10,00	10,00
Yalova University	18,0000	1	.	18,00	18,00
Yıldız Technical University	21,5000	2	,70711	22,00	21,00
Unclassified or Invalid	13,7143	7	6,39568	26,00	5,00
Total	17,2500	264	6,75185	37,00	2,00