



Regulatory focus and regulatory mode – Keys to narcissists' (lack of) life satisfaction?

Stephanie Hanke*, Elke Rohmann, Jens Förster

Ruhr University Bochum, Germany



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Grandiose narcissism
Vulnerable narcissism
Regulatory focus
Regulatory mode
Life satisfaction

ABSTRACT

The current study was conducted to examine the influence of regulatory focus and regulatory mode on narcissists' subjective well-being considering the differentiation between narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability. Across two samples ($Ns = 297, 143$), grandiosity is positively correlated with life satisfaction and this positive relation is mediated by a high promotion focus (samples 1 & 2). Vulnerability is negatively correlated with life satisfaction and this negative relation is mediated by a low promotion and a low prevention focus (sample 1) and by a low promotion focus and high assessment orientation (sample 2). The current study indicates that promotion focus and assessment strength, have different implications for narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability and provides new insight into how narcissistic self-regulation strategies affect life satisfaction.

1. Introduction

For many years, the study of narcissism was characterized by contradictory conclusions about the psychological costs and benefits associated with narcissism (Rose, 2002): for example, narcissism has been demonstrated to show contradictory associations with subjective well-being (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Rose, 2002).

The current study adds to this discussion by examining whether the divergent self-regulating strategies associated with narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability mediate the link between narcissism and life satisfaction.

1.1. Narcissism

Non-clinical narcissism is characterized by a grandiose self-view, excessive need for admiration, and the use of self-enhancing self-regulation strategies (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Indeed, self-regulation plays a major role in narcissism: narcissists' daily actions¹ are geared toward obtaining positive feedback from their social environment to self-enhance (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

Research indicates the need to differentiate between two representations of narcissism (e.g. Wink, 1991). Whereas *grandiosity* is characterized by overt grandiosity, feelings of entitlement, the need for admiring attention from others, and exploitative behaviors, *vulnerability*

reflects a more covert form of narcissism associated with anxiety and dependence on others. However, despite being interpersonally shy and hypersensitive to slight provocations, vulnerable narcissists harbor underlying grandiose expectations (Caligor, Levy, & Yeomans, 2015; Wink, 1991). Even though grandiosity and vulnerability are easily distinguished as from a theoretical point of view, they do share core features of narcissism such as arrogance and disregard of others (Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012).

We assumed that narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability would be differentially associated with regulatory foci and regulatory modes, and that these divergent self-regulatory strategies would have a major impact on life satisfaction.

1.2. Regulatory focus theory

Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) delineates how people engage in self-regulation: they may do so with a promotion focus or a prevention focus. When *promotion-focused*, people's growth and advancement needs motivate them to bring themselves into alignment with their ideal selves, thereby heightening the salience of potential gains to be attained. Hence, promotion-focused individuals are motivated to employ approach strategic means to attain their goals (see Förster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998). Conversely, when *prevention-focused*, people's security and safety needs prompt them to bring themselves into

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, Ruhr University Bochum, 44780 Bochum, Germany.

E-mail address: stephanie.hanke@rub.de (S. Hanke).

¹ We will refer to individuals scoring high on measures assessing the personality trait of narcissism as “narcissists”, even though this trait is conceptualized as a continuous dimension.

alignment with their ought selves, thereby increasing the salience of potential losses to be avoided. Thus, prevention-focused individuals are motivated to employ avoidance strategic means to attain their goals (Higgins et al., 2001; see Förster et al., 1998). Importantly, the two foci are conceptualized as two independent dimensions (Gorman et al., 2012).

1.2.1. Regulatory focus and narcissism

Grandiose narcissists are thought to be highly motivated to approach matches to their ideal-selves to maintain their grandiose self-views (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Studies indicated a positive correlation between grandiosity and promotion orientation (e.g., Boldero, Higgins, & Hulbert, 2015) as well as between grandiosity and approach motivation (e.g. Foster & Trimm, 2008).

Hence, we hypothesize that grandiosity will be positively associated with promotion focus strength (H1a). In contrast, vulnerable narcissists are too insecure to demand admiration and validation overtly (Morf, Horvath, & Torchetti, 2011). They show only weak motivation to approach matches to their ideal-selves because they are more concerned with managing their insecurities and craving for the attention they need to self-regulate. Boldero et al. (2015) found grandiosity to be positively and vulnerability to be negatively correlated with promotion. Thus, we hypothesize that vulnerability is negatively correlated with promotion focus strength (H1b).

1.3. Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is comprised of global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life, including domains such as health, job, relationships, and finances (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985). Several studies indicate that grandiose narcissism is associated positively whereas vulnerable narcissism is associated negatively with life satisfaction (e.g., Rohmann, Hanke, & Bierhoff, 2018; Ng, Cheung, & Tam, 2014). In the present study, we examine which self-regulatory variables mediate associations between narcissism and life satisfaction.

1.3.1. Regulatory focus, narcissism and life satisfaction

Manczak, Zapata-Gietl, and McAdams (2014) reported that a promotion focus was more favorable than a prevention focus in terms of life satisfaction. Thus, we assume a positive relation between promotion focus and life satisfaction (H3) besides the positive association between grandiosity and life satisfaction (H2a). We assume that promotion strength will mediate the association between grandiosity and life satisfaction (H4a) because the occupation with ideal goals should lead to a more positive evaluation of one's own life. Further, we expect a negative relation between vulnerability and life satisfaction (H2b). We propose this negative association is mediated via low promotion focus (H4b). Generally, we assume that vulnerable narcissists cannot regulate their self and their subjective well-being effectively through a promotion focus. Indeed, studies demonstrate that grandiosity predicts higher and vulnerability predicts lower life satisfaction (e.g., Rohmann et al., 2018; Ng et al., 2014).

1.4. Regulatory mode theory

Regulatory Mode Theory assumes that two components must be considered in every act of self-regulation: *Assessment* is conceptualized as the “comparative aspect of self-regulation concerned with critically evaluating entities or states, such as goals or means, in relation to alternatives in order to judge relative quality” (Kruglanski et al., 2000; p. 794) and is therefore considered the comparative and evaluative component of self-regulation. *Locomotion* is conceptualized as the aspect of self-regulation “concerned with movement from state to state and with committing the psychological resources that will initiate and maintain goal-related movement in a straightforward and direct manner, without undue distractions or delays” (Kruglanski et al., 2000; p. 794) and is

therefore considered the action component of self-regulation concerned with making progress toward a goal. Importantly, assessment and locomotion are independent dimensions of self-regulation.

1.4.1. Regulatory mode, narcissism, and subjective well-being

Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) propose that “getting ahead” is more important to narcissists than either minimizing damage to the self or getting along with others. We assume that these behavioral tendencies are compatible with a strong locomotion orientation. In accordance with results of Boldero et al. (2015), we hypothesize that grandiosity will be positively correlated with locomotion strength (H5a).

Because assessment orientation is positively associated with fear of failure and neuroticism (Kruglanski et al., 2000) as well as with greater sensitivity to information in the social environment, and because this pattern corresponds to vulnerability, we hypothesize that vulnerability will be positively correlated with assessment orientation (H5b).

As individuals in the locomotion mode are concerned with “making something happen” (Higgins, Kruglanski, & Pierro, 2003) which reflects a sense of progress toward their goals, they are more prone to high self-esteem (as a predictor of high subjective well-being), high optimism, and lower depression (De Carlo et al., 2014).

By contrast, individuals in the assessment mode tend to be pre-occupied with highlighting and appraising the discrepancies between their actual state and their desired state to ensure they make the “right” decision before moving forwards (Higgins et al., 2003) – resulting in an increased self-focus and self-evaluation and a critical view of the self and others (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Consequently, they are more prone to low self-esteem, low optimism, and higher depression (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Therefore, we hypothesize that locomotion strength will be positively correlated with life satisfaction (H6a), whereas assessment strength will be negatively correlated with life satisfaction (H6b). Indeed, Hong, Tan, and Chang (2004) found that high subjective well-being is predicted by high locomotion and low assessment strength, whereas low subjective well-being is predicted by high assessment and low locomotion strength.

Further, we hypothesize that the positive correlation between grandiosity and life satisfaction will be mediated by promotion and locomotion orientation (H7a) because grandiose narcissists are goal-oriented and ready to pursue their goals. Furthermore, we expect the negative relation between vulnerability and life satisfaction to be mediated by low promotion and high assessment strength (H7b) because in a low promotion focus approach motivation is reduced which in turn likely leads to low life satisfaction. In addition, vulnerability is positively associated with high assessment orientation (Boldero et al., 2015). This critically evaluating aspect of self-regulation, which is associated with vulnerability, should lead to low life satisfaction.

2. Method

We tested hypotheses 1 to 7 across two samples. The aim of including a second sample in our study was twofold: 1) to replicate the results found in sample 1 and 2) to expand the scope of the research question. Specifically, we included locomotion and assessment into our analyses to investigate whether regulatory mode plays a role when it comes to narcissists' (lack of) subjective well-being.

2.1. Participants and procedure

Sample 1 included 297 participants² (231 women and 66 men) with an average age of 23.31 years ($SD = 5.52$, range from 18 to 60). Most of them were students (89.9%), 5.7% were employed, and 4.3% were

² Altogether, 312 subjects participated. 15 participants did not match the inclusion criteria (participants had to be between 16 and 60 years old) and were omitted from the statistical analysis.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11028789>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11028789>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)