

## Differences between Low and High Narcissistic People in Selfie-sticks in Korea\*

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**Abstract:** In South Korea, selfie sticks became so popular and heavily used everywhere that triggered debates as to why people took this selfie and how are they feeling. It is not clear as whether majority of Koreans have acts of narcissism or just representing a better side of themselves since many Koreans care too much about how they are perceived in other people's eyes. Therefore this study aims at revealing the truth about "selfie-stick" in Korea and its connection to narcissism behaviors. This study employed two-stage methodology. The first stage of research involved using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) test to select individuals with either high or low level in narcissism. The second stage tested whether there are differences, consistent with the NPI, between narcissistic and non-narcissistic participants with respect to the views of selfie-stick obtained from a different developed questionnaire. Data were collected from 242 undergraduate students of different universities in Korea. MANOVA results shows that there is statistically significant difference between the means of self-needs and aspiration for better self representation for low and high narcissistic groups.

**Key words:** selfie; selfie-sticks; narcissisms

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### 1. Introduction

In Korea recently "selfie-sticks" have been hugely popular as so sometimes back in other Asian countries and popularly known as "monopod" in Singapore. They are extendable arms that place a phone in a cradle — thus allowing someone to take selfies<sup>1</sup> from a greater distance. This way someone can capture more of what's in the background. For a group selfie there is an assurance for everyone to appear in a photo. In South Korea, selfie sticks became so heavily used that even the government stepped in because those sticks use Bluetooth devices and therefore considered to be a "telecommunication device" and must be tested and registered with the South Korean agency that oversees such gadgets. The Office can impose fines or jail terms on those making and selling unregistered sticks (BBC Technology, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> A selfie is a self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a hand-held digital camera or camera phone. Selfies are often shared on social networking services such as Face book, Google+, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr and Twitter. They are usually flattering and made to appear casual.

As widely known, narcissism is named after the mythological Greek character Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to obtain the object of his desire, he died there in sorrow. That means Narcissus had personal beliefs in that matter. Dunning (2007a) argued that consumers are not merely rational or “cold” decision-makers, who evaluate and choose consumer alternatives according to standard economic principles. Rather, consumers are motivated agents, driven to make decisions consistent with their “*sacrosanct beliefs*”, *self-images*, and *self-motives*. Kim and Kim (2004) noted the concept of the “Me Generation” and “Selfism” is showing a tendency to develop into narcissism what is also known in Korea as the “princess syndrome” or narcissistic personality disorder.

## 2. Objectives

In Korea some people call the act of using selfie-sticks a narcissstick. However other Korean people do believe selfies that are being taken by the majority of Koreans are hardly acts of narcissism but rather represent a better side of them since many Koreans care too much about how they are perceived in other people’s eyes (Arirang, 2014). Therefore this study aims at revealing the truth about “selfie-stick” in Korea and its connection to narcissism behaviors.

## 3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

### 3.1 Narcissism and Fashion

Kim and Kim (2004) studied what influences “narcissism” or “narcissitic personality” of fashion brands in the fashion industry and society, and what interrelations they have. They found that narcissitic fashion brands clearly show complex mental state of modern women in Korea and well describes the recent era. They further proved that fashion is prominent in present days, which means that the narcissistic fashion brand is the turning point of new era for women, rather than a temporary phenomenon that explains women’s psychological state. Lambert and Desmond (2013) investigated whether there are consistent differences in orientation to people and brands. Findings show that narcissistic and non-narcissistic participants relate differently to both people and brands.

H1: Fashion brands do contributes to the behaviors of people. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on the fashion between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

### 3.2 Narcissism and Self-needs

Self-congruity theory states that various products and brands are perceived as having certain “personality” traits that in turn reflect the traits of their users. Therefore, consumers are making their buying decisions attempt to choose brands that match their own self-image. The theory is guided mostly by two self-related motives of self-consistency and self-esteem (Malhotra, 1988; Kressman et al., 2006). Complementing self-congruity theory further shows purchasing and using of material goods is regarded by symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982) as a compensation strategy.

H2: Self-needs contribute to the behaviors of people. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on self-needs between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

### 3.3 Narcissism and Popularity/Advertisement

Cisek et al. (2014) conducted a study on how narcissism influences eye movement behavior during consumer decision-making. Results show that task instruction can drive inspection behavior for product advertisements. Materialism theory recognizes the importance of consumers’ attachments to worldly possessions” (Belk, 1984).

There is a belief that acquiring conspicuous goods is a major route to success, esteem, and happiness (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The relation between the self and materialism may have become more prevalent in contemporary life with the rise and dominance of globalization (Dunning, 2007b).

Thomaes et al. (2010) tested whether peer approval and disapproval experiences can cause immediate change in children's state of self-esteem when judged by popular and unpopular peers. Peer disapproval decreased self-esteem, especially in children with high narcissism but disapproved children's self-esteem recovery was dependent on the extent to which they subsequently viewed positive feedback from popular judges.

H3: Advertisement and product popularity contribute to behaviors of people. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on the popularity issues between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

### **3.4 Narcissism and Social Media**

Choi et al. (2013) studied the impact of public self-consciousness, narcissism, and brand concept on brand fan page share intentions. The study suggested that public self-consciousness, narcissism, and brand concept were significantly related with the share intention of the self-congruent brand fan page. Specifically, users with a high level of public self-consciousness and narcissism are more likely to share their fan page than those with low level of self-consciousness and narcissism. Köseoglu (2015) explored the relationship between the Big Five (openness to new experiences, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and two psychological needs, namely belonging and self-presentation, manifested during the use of Face book which is one of the famous social medias in the world. Findings revealed that, conscientious individuals are prudent in their online self-presentation and one's actual hidden ideal selves as parts of the relationship between face book and personality.

H4: Social media like face book, twitter and kakao talk contribute people's personality and narcissism influences. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on the roles of social media between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

### **3.5 Narcissism and Representation**

Watson et al. (2005/2006) tested an assumption of the continuum hypothesis that, representations of the self are coordinated with representations of others, or "objects" using "supportive Object" that promoted the experience of a "good and happy self" or "destructive object" associated with a "bad and unhappy self". For both groups, self-esteem instability predicted greater overall self-representation instability, but evidence of instability was more obvious in the "destructive" than in the "supportive object" condition. The continuum hypothesis rests upon characterization of narcissism. Köseoglu (2015) noted that, the need to self-present may be driven either by the motive of seeking attention or by the motive of presenting some form of self, actual, idealized or hidden. These two motives may be demonstrated by means of disclosing feelings or emotional exposure.

H5: Seeking better one self's representation contributes to human behaviors. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on the representation matter between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

### **3.6 Narcissism and Convenience**

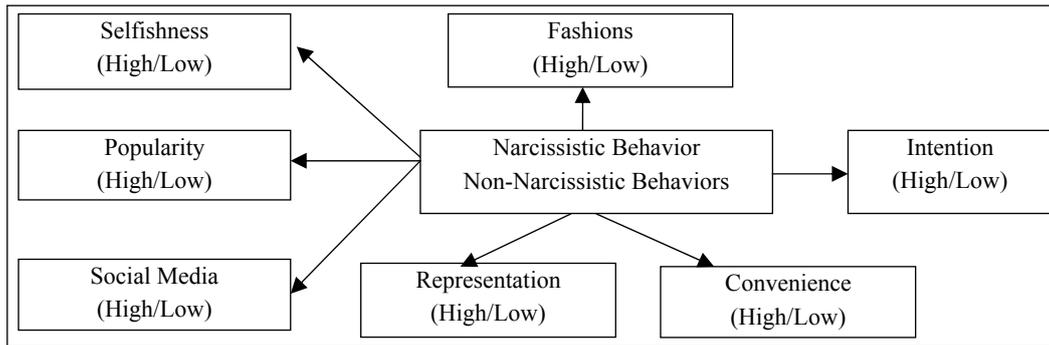
TOA (2009) discussed about the principle "my convenience comes first" issue and called profoundly selfish. "My convenience comes first" includes how someone construes events, other people and even himself. It is generally true for people with personality disorders; narcissist's feelings make facts. So, what is convenient for them to believe about something is what they believe. Grimes (2015) reported that, some museums in USA have banned the use of selfie stick. Tourists are therefore asked quietly to put them away because it is one thing to take a picture at arm's length, but when it is three times arm's length, museums management believe that is invading someone else's personal space. Hence, selfie-sticks bring about inconveniences to others.

H6: Narcissism contributes to the need for convenience. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect on the need for convenience between high and low narcissistic groups of people.

**3.7 Narcissism and Purchase Intention**

Purchasing intention is the probability that customers in a certain purchasing situation choose a certain brand of a product category (Crosno et al., 2009). Purchase intention also defined as the decision to act or physiological action that shows an individual’s behavior according to the product (Wang & Yang, 2008).

H7: Personal behavior has considerable influence on the consumers’ purchase intention. Therefore, there is a statistically significant effect between narcissistic behavior and consumers’ purchase intention.



**Figure 1 Summary of Conceptual Model for Factors Associated with Narcissism**

Source: Author using survey data (May 2015)

**4. Study Approaches**

This study employed two-stage methodology. The first stage of research involved using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) to select individuals either high or low in narcissism. The NPI-16 measure used as suggested by Ames et al. (2006) with reference to widely used questionnaire of Raskin and Terry (1988). All sixteen questions were posed to individual participants. NPI-16 questions in details can be seen in Table 1 below. The second stage tests whether there are differences, consistent with the NPI, between narcissistic and non-narcissistic participants with respect to the views of selfie-stick obtained from another developed questionnaire. Questionnaires data collected from a sample of 242 undergraduate students of different universities in South Korea. All participants were generally youth with ages ranging from 18 to 32 years and income of greater than 300,000 Korean Won (approximately 300\$) per month. Girls were 134 (55.4%) and boys were 108 (44.6%). All collected data variables were screened under preliminary tests before taken over for further “Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)” using Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) v.19.

**Table 1 Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16)**

npi1	I really like to be the center of attention	npi9	I like to be the center of attention
npi2	I think I am a special person	npi10	I am an extraordinary person
npi3	Everybody likes to hear my stories	npi11	I always know what I am doing
npi4	I insist upon getting the respect that is due me	npi12	I find it easy to manipulate people
npi5	I like having authority over people	npi13	People always seem to recognize my authority
npi6	I am going to be a great person	npi14	I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so
npi7	I can make anybody believe anything I want them to	npi15	I am apt to show off if I get the chance
npi8	I expect a great deal from other people	npi16	I am more capable than other people

Source: Ames et al. (2006)

According to the widely used seven traits of Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40), “authority” refers to a person’s leadership skills and power. People who score higher on authority are likely to be in charge often for power’s sake alone. “Self-Sufficiency” trait refers to how self-sufficient a person is, that is, how much you rely on others versus your own abilities to meet your needs in life. “Superiority” trait refers to whether a person feels more superior to those around them. High scores in superiority, suggests feelings for superiority to others. “Exhibitionism refers to a person’s need to be the center of attention, and willingness to ensure they are the center of attention (even at the expense of others’ needs).

“Exploitativeness shows how someone is willing to exploit others in order to meet own needs or goals. “Vanity” trait refers to a person’s vanity, or their belief in one’s own superior abilities and attractiveness compared to others. “Entitlement” refers to the expectation and amount of entitlement a person has in life; that is, unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with one’s expectations. People who score higher on this trait generally have a greater expectation of entitlement, while those who score lower expect little from others or life. Since this study used NPI-16 instead, the outcomes of six studied are presented in Figure 2 below.

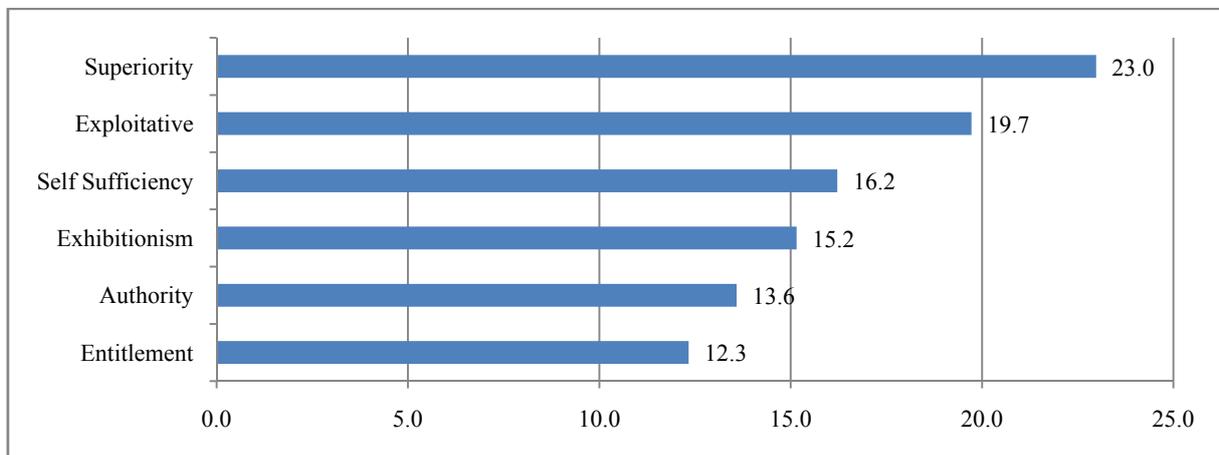


Figure 2 Average Trait Score (%) for Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16)

Source: Author using survey data, May 2015

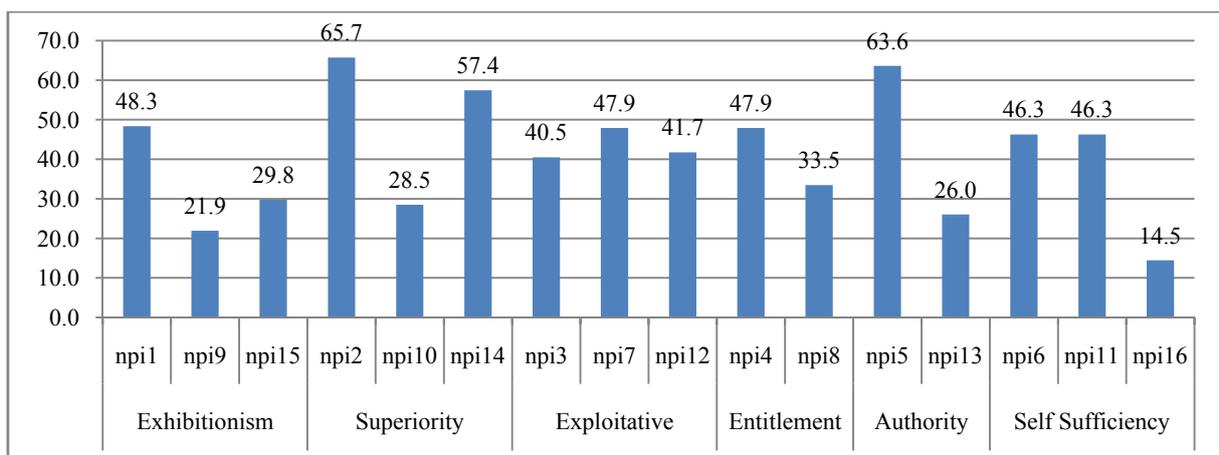


Figure 3 Trait Score Distribution (%) over Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16)

Source: Author using survey data, May 2015

Majority of respondents (23%) belong to a group of superiority followed by exploitative (19.7%) and further self sufficiency (16.2%). Therefore more than half of all 242 participants are generally fall under the three traits altogether while the least group fall under entitlement trait. More over more than half of all participants consider themselves as special persons (npi2); know that they are good because everybody keeps telling them so (npi14) and they like having authorities over people (npi5). About 48% of all participants feel can make anybody believe anything they want and keep on insisting upon getting the respect that is due to them (npi4 & npi7). Others 46.3% believe they are going to be great persons and always know what they are doing (npi6 & npi11). Few participants (14.5%) believe to be more capable than others. See figure 3 below for details.

## 5. Results and Discussion

Before analysis was carried out, high narcissistic group was selected as those who scored between 50% and 100% in the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) initial test and happened to be 84. To get rid of unequal sample size, same number was opted for the low narcissistic group as counted from bottom and all fall between 0% and 30% NPI scores. Therefore results and discussions for 168 participants who qualified for the second stage test are presented below.

**Fashion:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis (MANOVA) shows that fashion variable has no statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 0.392, p > .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.998$  with means of 3.15 and 3.11 respectively. Therefore H1 is rejected. This suggests that all groups believe the same that selfie-stick like others, is a fashionable product that will last no longer. However, the mean for considered low narcissist group is slightly higher than the other indicating partial denial of the fact that selfie-stick is just for fashion.

**Self-needs:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that aspiration for fulfilling self-needs has statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 5.334, p < .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.969$  with means of 2.30 and 2.68 respectively. Therefore H2 is accepted. The need to carter for personal needs seems to be a strong determinant for the different views on selfie-sticks in Korean society. However, as generally expected, the means for high narcissistic group is higher compared to the other; this suggests difference in levels of needs.

**Popularity:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that popularity variable has no statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 0.000, p > .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 1.000$  with means of 4.32 and 4.40 respectively. Therefore H3 is rejected. This suggests that all groups acknowledge the same that selfie-stick is very popular in Korea and the mean score for all groups are higher compared to the rest of all measured variables. However, the mean score for considered low narcissist group is slightly lower than the other indicating easy acceptance for narcissist group to belong to the world popular products as others.

**Social Media:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that the roles of social media variable has no statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 3.609, p > .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.979$  with means of 4.07 and 4.02 respectively. Therefore H4 is rejected. This suggests that all groups agree the same that selfie-stick uses have been accelerated by the influence of social media like the famous "kakao talk" in Korea. Because many Korean people especially youth are hyper wired and connected all the times, their interactions with social media are definitely higher regardless of their objectives differences including posting selfies taken through selfie-sticks.

**Representation:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that aspiration for fulfilling better self representation has statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 10.045$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.943$  with means of 3.14 and 3.52 respectively. Therefore H5 is accepted. The need for better personal representation seems to be a strong determinant for the different views on selfie-sticks in Korean society. As generally expected, the means for high narcissistic group is higher compared to the other; this suggests difference in levels of thinking about self representations. Some selfie takers show they are partly influenced by their own insecurities about their appearance. So they are taking selfies in a way they think is a good representation of them.

**Convenience:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that need for self convenience variable has no statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 0.122$ ,  $p > .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.999$  with means of 2.76 and 2.73 respectively. Therefore H6 is rejected. This suggests that all groups agree the same those selfie-sticks are perhaps convenient in taking self pictures and there is no need to disturb others if at all there are such that possibilities. Moreover, travelers do believe convenience is an important consideration; hence favor sticks because they can shrink down to shorter lengths for easier packing and are lighter for easier carrying.

**Purchase Intention:** Between subjects effects multivariate analysis shows that purchase intention variable has no statistically significant effects on low and high narcissistic behaviors as  $F(1, 166) = 353$ ,  $p > .05$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.998$  with means of 3.82 and 3.93 respectively. Therefore H7 is rejected. This suggests that all groups have similar standing when making decisions to buy a selfie-stick. However, the mean for considered low narcissist group is slightly lower than the other indicating the presence of selfie-stick higher purchasing intentions level for the high narcissistic group. Perhaps this goes in line with other Koreans suggestions that selfie sticks are one of the by-products commonly bought impulsively where emotions and feelings play a decisive role in purchasing.

**Other Findings:** In Korea girls and boys friends can easily found in many areas using selfie-sticks in taking their photos. Participants were asked to give their opinions as Korean couples are the most uses of selfie-sticks compared to the rest of the society members. Majority (76.2%) of narcissistic group and majority (63.1%) of low narcissistic group agree that couples use those selfie-sticks much. When analyzed by gender influence, majority of female (70.5%) and male (82.5%) who belong to high narcissistic group agreed. Whereas majority of female (66%) and male (60%) who belong to low narcissistic group agree that couples use selfie-sticks much. Therefore, narcissistic group shows higher scores in groups as well as gender classifications. This might have connection to the narcissism and sex roles theories.

Watson et al. (1994) used narcissism model of sex roles to examine empathy and other forms of interpersonal reactivity. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the narcissism model was somewhat superior to a sex roles model in describing the often complex interrelationships among measures of sex roles, narcissism, and interpersonal reactivity. Ma (2013) discussed about "love bombing" which reflects many victims of narcissists experience especially girlfriends. Ma believes girls have more intense feelings of "love" than normal because first they flood with expressions of love and then they withhold and then they give a little, and over time that change their brain chemistry in a form of manipulation, control and brainwashing.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aims at revealing the truth about famous "selfie-stick" in Korea and its connection to narcissism

behaviors by studying differences between low and high narcissistic views in pertaining selfie-sticks in Korea. Apart from other studied narcissistic associated variables; two variables which are the need to cater for self-needs and better representations aspirations happened to be very important determinants influencing differences between the two groups. However high narcissistic group somehow influenced higher in the usage of selfie sticks in Korea compared to the low group. Otherwise all groups suggest selfie-sticks bring about convenience and used much by couples compared to other groups.

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