



UNVEILING THE TIKTOK PERSONA: EXPLORING NARCISSISM, SELF-PRESENTATION, AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AMONG USERS

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationships between narcissism, self-presentation, and personality traits among TikTok users. A cross-sectional study was used by using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS), and a Self-Presentation Scale for data collection from a diverse sample of TikTok participants. Correlation analyses revealed significant relationships, with self-presentation negatively correlated with hypersensitive narcissism and personality traits, while a positive correlation existed between narcissism and personality traits. Independent t-tests indicated that users under 30 exhibited higher self-presentation levels and lower narcissism scores compared to those over 30. Furthermore, users with more than 1,000 followers demonstrated higher self-presentation and personality traits than those with fewer followers. Linear regression analyses confirmed that personality traits positively predicted self-presentation and negatively predicted narcissism. These findings suggest that individuals with stronger personality traits engage in more effective self-presentation while displaying lower narcissistic tendencies. The results contributed to understanding TikTok personas, emphasizing the dynamic interplay of personality and self-presentation in social media contexts. Future research should further explore the implications of these relationships on mental health and social dynamics among diverse age groups.

Keywords: Narcissism, self-presentation, personality traits, TikTok, social media

INTRODUCTION

Social networking platforms served as arenas for individuals to craft their online identities, influenced by their network connections. Users aimed to share relatable content for self-improvement, catering to both close contacts and distant peers (Zheng et al., 2020). TikTok, Byte Dance's video-sharing app,

was designed to foster creativity and bring joy to users, as stated on its homepage (TikTok Actual Short Videos, 2020). TikTok users engaged in viewing, posting, and commenting on others' videos. The platform facilitated diverse user experiences, allowing individuals to express their thoughts and narratives creatively (Ryan Miller, 2018). TikTok, launched in 2017, swiftly rose to become one of the world's most popular social media platforms (Sensor Tower, 2019). Particularly popular among young users, with 60% of successful TikTok users in the USA aged between 16 and 24 years (Reuters, 2019). Notably, users in the US access the app approximately 8 times a day, spending an average of 46 minutes per day on it (Flynn, 2019). Yang et al. (2020) delved into TikTok's appeal, noting its role in escapism and social interaction alongside concerns about potential addiction due to its immersive nature. The study emphasized the complexities of online communication, where users balance authenticity with self-presentation strategies to shape their digital identities, reflecting on the nuanced nature of managing one's online presence (Schlosser et al., 2020). Omar et al. (2020) found that consumer motivations, rather than personality traits, significantly influence TikTok usage, with various intentions behind behavior such as archiving and social interaction. Active Instagram use positively had impact on life satisfaction; passive Facebook use negatively affects well-being through social upward comparison, highlighting the need to understand the unique effects of different social networking sites on human relationships (Masciantonio et al., 2020).

Spanish teenagers on Instagram and TikTok focus on three main things when presenting themselves online are teens consider how their posts will be received by others, but the number of followers or likes isn't as important as it used to be. There's a growing trend for teens to be more genuine and truthful in their online self-presentation. Teens use various tools and strategies to carefully manage how they look and are perceived online (Hernández-Serrano et al., 2022). Social media like tik tok influencer involves changing and adapting self-presentation to meet the expectations and preferences of their audience (Dotson, 2022). Among tik tokers a positive connection has been found between personality traits and desire of fame (Kanwal & Saeed, 2024).

Teenagers' self-presentation on social media can be summarized in three main points. First, they create a virtual identity that reflects their real selves. Second, they have the freedom to choose how they present themselves, often experimenting with different roles. Third, they tend to idealize their image, using various tools to enhance how they appear online (Volkova, 2024). It's possible to assume that maintaining a positive online persona and engaging in more social media contact overall (Bergman et al., 2011). As previously noted, Narcissism is specifically associated with uploading pictures, as evidenced by self-reports of posting selfies on social media and the amount of time spent editing one's own photos on these platforms (Fox and Rooney, 2015).

According to another research, individuals with high narcissistic scores are more likely to take their own photos and to have candid, candid photos (DeWall et al., 2011). Further investigation reveals a correlation between narcissism and increased exposure messages on Facebook, including self-referential tweets, remarks, and frequent check-in locations (Wang & Stefanone, 2013). Thus, these social networking sites foster a genuine belief that other people are interested in their profiles permit self-promotion, and are linked to narcissistic traits such as self-admiration and a range of "superficial relationships" (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Carpenter (2012) found that using shared images, status, and associates disproportionately for self-promotion is associated with narcissistic tendencies on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory scale. Four characteristics of the Facebook profile were examined: the number of pictures, the self-presentation of the photo, status updates, and the size of the social network. Blackwell and colleagues (2017) has discovered a connection between social media addiction and the personality traits of its users. Social media allows individuals to show their aspirations and achievements to a vast audience, and those with high levels of narcissism are more likely to use these platforms for self-promotion (Burnay et al., 2015).

According to the study, individuals with higher levels of narcissism tend to have more images on their social media-driven blogs, also discovered that an individual's level of narcissism is correlated with the number of selfies they post online. A collection of images from social networking sites shows signs of narcissism (Fox & Rooney 2015). Some women who wear the hijab display a form of

narcissism on social media. They focus on self-love without worrying about others' opinions and often make trending videos on TikTok while wearing the hijab. They might use excessive filters, like lipstick, false eyelashes, or skin lightening, to enhance their appearance and show off their beauty (Maretha, 2024). A study in Pakistan concluded that narcissism appeared to be a positive predictor of online deceptions in tiktokers (Farooq & Ashraf, 2022).

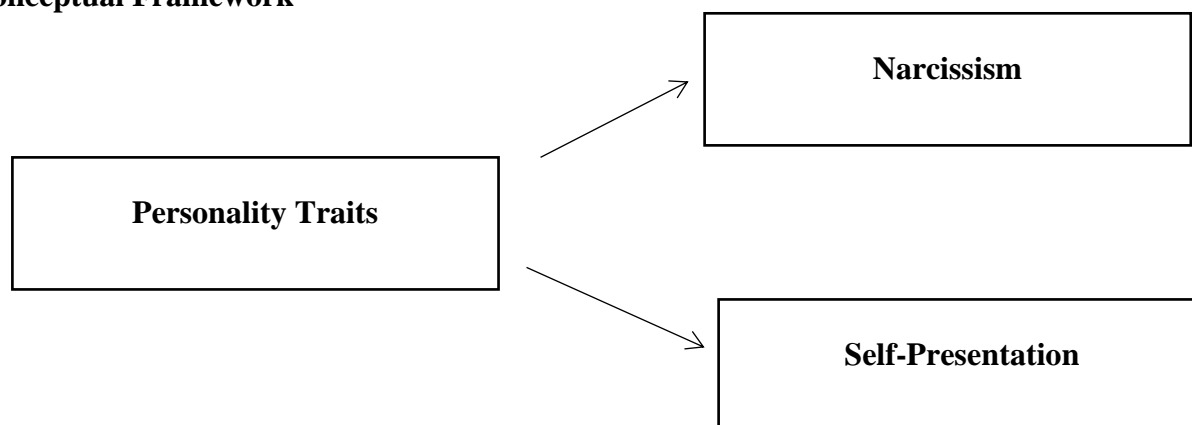
Rationale of the study

The increasing popularity of TikTok among youth has transformed it into a prominent social media platform, with TikTok influencers attaining celebrity status. However, despite its widespread usage and influence, there exists a significant gap in the research literature concerning TikTok users, particularly regarding their narcissism, self-presentation tendencies, and personality traits. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the association between narcissism, self-presentation, and personality traits among TikTok users.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There would be an association of narcissism, self-presentation, among tiktok users
2. There would be an impact of personality traits on narcissism and self-presentation among tiktok users.
3. There would be differences in demographic variables (Age, education, number of followers, hours spent on tiktok) in terms of narcissism, self-presentation and personality traits among tiktok users.

Conceptual Framework



METHOD

Research design

Quantitative research design was used. A cross-sectional study was used to fulfill the objectives of the study.

Sample

Selected population of interest for study was TickTock stars and users. The sample consisted of 210 tik tok users from in two age categories (below & above 30 years). 210 participants were selected by simple random sampling technique (144 below 30 and 66 above 30) through applying G power for sampling.

Instruments

1. Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

The TIPI consists of two items for each of the Big Five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability (inverse of neuroticism), and openness to experience. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 7 (Agree strongly) (Gosling et al., 2003)

2. The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale

The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale consists of 10 items Likert scale, typically ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) that assess various facets of narcissism, including vulnerability to criticism, grandiosity, and a sense of entitlement (Hendin et al., 1997).

3. Self-presentation scale

The assessment of self-presentation encompassed five dimensions, which were evaluated using adapted versions of the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale developed by Yang and Brown (2016). The depth scale comprised 9 items, positive scale included 4 items, authenticity scale consisted of 5 items, and deliberate (intentionality) scale comprised 4 items. Each multi-item scale underwent evaluation to ensure internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha threshold of greater than 0.70 deemed acceptable (Ables, 2013).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from the user base of TikTok, a popular social media platform known for short-form video content, ensuring representation across demographics such as age, gender, and geographical location. The survey instrument measured narcissism, self-presentation, and personality traits among TikTok users, incorporating established scales such as the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS), the Self-Presentation Scale, and the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI). Online administration of the survey facilitated accessibility, with participants invited to voluntarily participate through targeted advertisements on TikTok and other social media channels. Data analysis involved quantitative methods using statistical software to explore the relationships between narcissism, self-presentation, and personality traits among TikTok users.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations ensured confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, with results disseminated through academic publications and presentations to contribute to the literature on social media behavior and personality.

RESULTS

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between variables. Regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of personality traits on the outcome variables through SPSS 25 version. Independent t test was used to analyze the difference between users on the basis of personality traits.

Table No. 1: Correlation between Self-Presentation, HSNS, and Personality Traits

	Self-Presentation	HSNS	Personality Traits
Self-Presentation	1	-.470*	-.318**
The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale		1	.513**
Personality Traits			1

** $p < 0.001$, $p > 0.05$

Table 1 showed Self-Presentation is negatively correlated with Hypersensitive Narcissism ($r = -0.47$, $p < .05$), indicating that individuals who present themselves in a hypersensitive manner tend to have lower levels of self-presentation. Self-Presentation also has a negative correlation with Personality Traits ($r = -0.32$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with certain personality traits may present themselves less self-confidently or assertively. There is a positive correlation between Hypersensitive Narcissism and Personality Traits ($r = 0.51$, $p < .01$), indicating that individuals with higher hypersensitive narcissism scores tend to exhibit more pronounced personality traits.

Table No. 2: Mean, Std. Deviation, t value, p value, to show the difference in age on scale of Self-Presentation-Scale, The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, Big five Personality traits

	Age	N	T	P	MD	SD	95% CL	
							Lower	Upper
Self-Presentation	< 30	144	6.02	.000***	.14	.02	.098	.19
	> 30	66	5.5		.14	.02	.094	.19
Narcissism	<30	144	2.2	.020**	-.21	.09	.39	.40
	> 30	66	2.3		-.21	.08	.38	.43
Personality traits	<30	144	2.16	.000	.01	.09	.17	.20
	>30	66	2.15		.01	.10	.18	.21

P<0.00, p<0.005, p>0.005

Table 2 showed that there is a significant difference in self-presentation between individuals below and above the age of 30 ($t = 6.02, p < .001$), with individuals below 30 showing higher levels of self-presentation (Mean Difference = 0.14, 95% CI [0.09, 0.19]). A significant difference in narcissism was found between the two age groups ($t = -2.2, p = .020$), indicating that individuals below 30 score lower in narcissism compared to those above 30 (Mean Difference = -0.21, 95% CI [-0.39, -0.02]). A significant difference in Big Five personality traits was found between the age groups ($t = 0.162, p = .000$), suggesting that personality traits significantly differ by age in this sample (Mean Difference = 0.01553, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.20]).

Table No. 3: Mean, Std. Deviation, t value, p value, to show the difference in No. of followers on scale of Self-Presentation-Scale, The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, Big five Personality traits

	No. of followers	N	T	p	MD	SD	95% CL	
							Lower	Upper
Self-Presentation	100-1000	92	3.8	.000***	.091	.02	.044	.138
	1001-Above	118	3.9		.091	.02	.045	.137
Narcissism	100-1000	92	2.2	.001	.019	.08	.153	.192
	1001-Above	118	2.9		.019	.08	.151	.190
Big five Personality traits	100-1000	92	2.3	.019**	.201	.08	.029	.379
	1001-Above	118	2.3		.202	.02	.034	.374

P<0.00, p<0.005, p>0.005

Table 3 showed that there is a significant difference in self-presentation between individuals with 100-1000 followers and those with 1001 or more followers ($t = 3.8, p < .001$). Individuals with more followers (1001 and above) exhibit higher self-presentation (Mean Difference = 0.091, 95% CI [0.044, 0.138]). A significant difference in narcissism was found between the two follower groups ($t = 2.2, p = .001$), with individuals having more followers (1001 and above) showing slightly higher narcissism scores (Mean Difference = 0.019, 95% CI [0.153, 0.192]). There is a significant difference in Big Five personality traits between the groups ($t = 2.3, p = .019$), with individuals having 1001 or more followers showing higher Big Five personality traits (Mean Difference = 0.201, 95% CI [0.029, 0.379]).

Table No. 4: Linear Regression analysis to analyze the effect of personality traits on self-presentation

Variables	B	SE	Beta	T	P
constant	.50	0.10		8.07	0.000
Personality traits	.58	0.9	0.51	8.62	0.000

$R = .513$, $R\text{ Square} = .263$, $Adjusted\ R\ Square = .260$, $**p < 0.001$

Table 4 showed Personality traits have a significant positive effect on the self-presentation ($B = 0.58$, $SE\ B = 0.09$, $Beta = 0.51$, $t = 8.62$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in personality traits, there is a 0.58-unit increase in the dependent variable, and the effect is substantial and statistically significant.

Table No.5: Linear Regression analysis to analyze the effect of Personality Traits on Narcissism

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	P
(Constant)	2.087	.069		30.3	.000
Personality Traits	-.071	.022	-.218	-3.2	.001**

$R = .218$, $R\text{ Square} = .048$, $Adjusted\ R\ Square = .043$

Table 5 showed that Personality traits significantly negatively predict narcissism ($B = -0.071$, $Std.\ Error = 0.022$, $Beta = -0.218$, $t = -3.226$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that as personality traits increase, narcissism decreases. The negative Beta value suggests a negative relationship between personality traits and narcissism. The model explains 4.8% of the variance in narcissism ($R^2 = 0.048$). The adjusted R^2 , which accounts for the number of predictors in the model, is 0.043, indicating that a small but significant portion of the variability in narcissism is explained by personality traits.

Discussion

The study aimed at unveiling the tiktok persona by exploring narcissism, self-presentation, and personality traits among users. The findings showed significant relationship between these variables. The independent samples t-test results for Big Five personality traits reveal a significant difference in personality traits between users with 100-1000 followers and those with 1001 or more followers. The users with more followers exhibited higher Big Five personality traits. This indicates that higher engagement in self-presentation might be associated with higher levels of positive personality traits, suggesting that individuals who excel in self-presentation may also score higher on traits such as extroversion and openness. This is in line with Carver and Scheier (2001) who found that self-presentation is often linked with higher levels of positive personality traits.

The independent samples t-test results indicate a significant difference in self-presentation between TikTok users with 100-1000 followers and those with 1001 or more followers. Users with a higher number of followers (1001 and above) demonstrated higher levels of self-presentation. This finding suggests that individuals with more followers may engage in more extensive self-presentation strategies, possibly to maintain or increase their follower count. This result aligns with the work of Vasalou et al. (2008) found that social media users often engage in strategic self-presentation to enhance their online image.

Narcissism did not show a significant difference between the groups with different follower counts. This indicates that while the level of self-presentation varies with the number of followers, narcissistic traits are relatively consistent across different follower groups. This finding suggests that narcissism might be a stable personality trait that does not fluctuate significantly with follower count, contrasting with the more dynamic nature of self-presentation on social media. This is consistent with Mehdizadeh (2010) found that narcissism is a relatively stable trait and that social media users with high narcissistic tendencies might not significantly differ in their narcissism based on their follower count.

The linear regression analysis shows a significant negative relationship between personality traits, self-presentation and narcissism. Personality traits positively predict the self-presentation among users. Higher levels of personality traits are associated with lower levels of narcissism. This finding supports Miller et al. (2017) reported that certain personality traits can mitigate narcissistic tendencies. Among tik tokers a positive connection has been found between personality traits and desire of fame (Kanwal & Saeed, 2024). Carpenter (2012) discovered that individuals who heavily use shared images, status updates, and associations for self-promotion tend to exhibit higher levels of

narcissism, as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. The study specifically examined four aspects of Facebook profiles: the quantity of photos, the self-presentational nature of the photos, status updates, and the extent of the social network. Additionally, Blackwell and colleagues (2017) identified a link between social media addiction and the personality traits of its users.

Limitations and Practical Implications

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was restricted to TikTok users, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other social media platforms or broader populations. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants may present themselves in a more favorable light. The cross-sectional nature of the study also prevents the establishment of causal relationships between self-presentation, narcissism, and personality traits. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of understanding how personality traits influence social media behaviors and narcissistic tendencies. For practitioners and educators, recognizing these relationships can inform strategies to address social media addiction and promote healthier self-presentation practices. Moreover, these insights could be valuable for developing interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of narcissism and enhancing overall well-being among social media users.

Conclusion

The results of the study highlight that while self-presentation varies with follower count, narcissism remains stable across different follower groups. Additionally, higher levels of positive personality traits are associated with lower narcissism and higher self-presentation levels. These findings offer valuable insights into the complex interplay between self-presentation, narcissism, and personality traits in the context of social media use. Further research could explore additional factors influencing these relationships and investigate how these dynamics play out across different social media platforms.

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