Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism as Predictors of the Tendency to Objectify Other People

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Abstract

Until recently, objectification was described mainly in the sexual context. However, it has become clear that the objectification of other people can arise in any social relationship. We studied objectification as a general tendency to perceive and treat other people in an instrumental way, that is, only as a tool for fulfilling one's own goals and interests. People high in trait narcissism seem especially prone to perceiving and treating others in an objectifying way because of their strong self-focus, tendency to ignore the needs of other people, and lack of a sense of obligation to reciprocate when other people act in their interest. Therefore, we examined whether a tendency towards objectification of others is related to grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem among 376 participants. We found that both subtypes of narcissism were related to a tendency to objectify others, while self-esteem was not. Through an analysis of the links of objectification with specific dimensions of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, we discuss the various potential mechanisms of developing a tendency to objectify other people.

Keywords Objectification of other people · Instrumentality · Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Self-esteem

Introduction

The tendency to perceive and treat others as objects can have a strong impact on interpersonal relations (e.g., Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Nussbaum 1995). The phenomenon of objectification has traditionally been studied in the context of negative consequences of sexualization, which can lead to self-objectification (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Grippo and Hill 2008; Jones and Griffiths 2015; Tiggemann and Lynch 2001). However, it has become clear that it can also occur in almost every interpersonal relation, such as close relationships, economic relations, or in work or medical contexts (e.g., Baldissarri et al. 2014; Gruenfeld et al. 2008; Moradi and Huang 2008; Trifiletti et al. 2014; Vaes and Muratore 2013; Wang and Krumhuber 2017). When people see others as objects, they concentrate on their usefulness, thereby

depriving them of human attributes such as autonomy, agency, and subjectivity (Nussbaum 1995). Recent studies have shown that objectification can have even more severe implications: It can lead to the denial of people's moral status and to the perception of people as less competent and less sensitive to pain, all of which can increase the readiness to violate and abuse them (e.g., Heflick and Goldenberg 2009; Loughnan et al. 2010; Vasquez et al. 2018). Through these pathways, objectification can hamper or even preclude the creation of satisfactory relationships and bonds based on mutual trust, in which both parties can feel secure and feel that their needs can be satisfied. Utilizing another person's interests to achieve one's own goals is incompatible with experiencing a sense of relatedness and/or closeness to that person (Fiske 1993; Haslam 2006), which can inhibit the development and strengthening of that relationship. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it can also lead to self-objectification, i.e., the process by which the target of objectification begins to internalize the perception that they have less worth and are less competent, less effective, and even less human (Baldissarri et al. 2017; Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Loughnan et al. 2010). Because objectification is so damaging to interpersonal relations and can frustrate so many individual needs of the objectified person, it is imperative to identify the factors responsible for this attitude and way of treating others.

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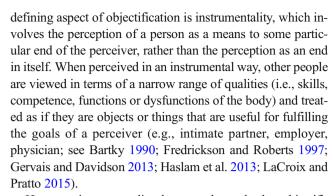[2] WSB University in Toruń, Toruń, Poland

Existing studies indicate that objectification is rooted in many social and situational circumstances which cause the perceiver to concentrate on one's own goals and/or on a target person as a tool for realizing that goal. For instance, people tend to perceive others in an objectifying way when they are in a higher position in hierarchical working relations (Gruenfeld et al. 2008) or are engaged in interpersonal conflict wherein their own goals are being threatened by the interests and goals of others (Bastian and Haslam 2010).

However, the objectification of other people hypothetically does not arise only as a result of the surrounding circumstances but also as a result of the personal disposition of the perceiver. That is, certain dispositions may cause an individual to concentrate more on their own goals and ignore the needs and goals of others. People high in trait narcissism may possess such a disposition, given their excessive concentration on the self, feeling of entitlement, and the tendency to exploit others (Brunell et al. 2013; Campbell et al. 2005; Dickinson and Pincus 2003; Lamkin et al. 2014). All these may make them prone to perceive and treat other people in an objectifying manner. Despite this, there are no studies examining narcissism as a predictor of the tendency to objectify others.

Existing studies linking narcissism and objectification concern only the tendency to self-objectification. Their results are inconsistent, with some studies showing that narcissism and a tendency to self-objectification are positively associated, while other studies indicate no linkage between these two variables (Fox and Rooney 2015; Lipowska and Lipowski 2015; for a review see Carrotte and Anderson 2018). Objectification of the self and others may be studied from the theoretical perspectives describing the conditions of treating a target person in an objectifying manner. However, the focus on the perception of *self* makes the studies on self-objectification only partly helpful in formulating predictions for relations between narcissism and objectification of others. Thus, the main premise of our study is the tendency of people high in trait narcissism to concentrate on their own needs and goals, to feel entitled, and to have the tendency to exploit others. Due to these tendencies, individuals high in narcissism could also have a propensity to objectify other people. To verify this assumption, we examined whether the general tendency to objectify others is associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as well as self-esteem (a correlate of both types of narcissism).

Defining Objectification

Many approaches to objectification studied in various social relations (e.g., romantic, sexual, job, medical, intergroup) refer to Martha Nussbaum's (1995, 1999) theorizing about this phenomenon (Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Gervais and Davidson 2013; Haslam et al. 2013; LaCroix and Pratto 2015; Orehek et al. 2018). According to her theory, the defining aspect of objectification is instrumentality, which involves the perception of a person as a means to some particular end of the perceiver, rather than the perception as an end in itself. When perceived in an instrumental way, other people are viewed in terms of a narrow range of qualities (i.e., skills, competence, functions or dysfunctions of the body) and treated as if they are objects or things that are useful for fulfilling the goals of a perceiver (e.g., intimate partner, employer, physician; see Bartky 1990; Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Gervais and Davidson 2013; Haslam et al. 2013; LaCroix and Pratto 2015).

However, instrumentality does not always lead to objectification. According to Nussbaum, "What is problematic is not instrumentality per se, but treating someone primarily or merely as an instrument" (Nussbaum 1995, p. 265). This idea is mirrored in other approaches to objectification (LaCroix and Pratto 2015; Orehek et al. 2018), and is confirmed by the results of studies in which the perceived usefulness of a partner (who facilitates goals' fulfillment) led to greater romantic satisfaction (Cappuzzello and Gere 2018) or strengthened family, romantic, and friendship relations (Fitzsimons and Shah 2008). Thus, instrumentality is not necessarily objectifying as long as the perception of those other persons is not reduced to their "usefulness" (LaCroix and Pratto 2015; Nussbaum 1995). However, having such a reduced perspective of instrumentality (i.e., viewing others as primarily or merely useful) is a condition for objectification and manifests in several ways (Nussbaum 1995, 1999). Specifically, it can manifest as treating the other person as an object—fungible, violable and owned, and not as a subject—deprived of subjectivity, autonomy, and agency (Holland and Haslam 2013; LaCroix and Pratto 2015). As studies show, perceiving others in an objectifying way might lead one to ignore those others' needs, as well as to promote violation and abuse (Gervais et al. 2014).

Objectification of others is studied and conceptualized in many ways: as a process of focusing attention on some part of a person (one's appearance or one's body), and not on the person as a whole (Anderson et al. 2018a; Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Gervais et al. 2013; Holland and Haslam 2013), and/or as an outcome of the process of objectification involving perceiving a person as an object deprived of human qualities, such as mental attributes (capacity for thought and experience of emotions) and moral status (Gray et al. 2007; Gray and Wegner 2009; Holland and Haslam 2013). At the same time, the tendency to perceive others in an objectifying way is examined as a state instigated by specific conditions (such as body-focus [Vasquez et al. 2018], power position [Gruenfeld et al. 2008], or having a short-term mating strategy in online dating [Anderson et al. 2018b]) or a general tendency of an individual to objectify other people (Wang and Krumhuber 2017). In this research, we will study the objectification of others as a general tendency of an individual to perceive another person as an object, instrumental to fulfilling the

perceiver's goals, accompanied by depriving that person of human attributes.

The Tendency to Objectify Others and Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

Narcissism, treated as one of the individual differences, was defined on the basis of clinical narcissistic personality disorder, based on the assumption that psychopathological phenomena can be observed to a lesser extent in the non-clinical population (Miller and Campbell 2008). The development of research on this construct led to the conclusion that narcissism is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Currently, most narcissism researchers distinguish two of its main forms—grandiose and vulnerable. The two types differ in many aspects, and possess unique characteristics (Miller et al. 2011; Pincus and Lukowitsky 2010). Grandiose narcissism is connected with an inflated sense of self-importance, entitlement, dominance, high self-esteem, extraversion, and positive affectivity (Miller et al. 2011; Rose and Campbell 2004). Individuals exhibiting this type of narcissism often set approach goals aimed at obtaining gratification (Foster and Trimm IV 2008). Conversely, people high in vulnerable (or hypersensitive) narcissism show high introversion, anxiety, and shyness when interacting with others, and manifest humility and inhibition which masks an underlying sense of entitlement and disregard for others (Dickinson and Pincus 2003). They are often easily hurt and oversensitive to criticism (Cooper and Maxwell 1995; Pincus et al. 2009), and exhibit lower self-esteem, agency, and communion (Brown et al. 2016; Findley and Ojanen 2013; Miller et al. 2012).

Despite clear differences in self-esteem and motivational orientations, both groups are self-centered, perceive themselves as extraordinary, and have a strong sense of privilege and entitlement (Dickinson and Pincus 2003). When pursuing success, people high in grandiose narcissism easily sacrifice others for their own benefit, even when aware of the negative consequences for others (Campbell et al. 2005). For people high in vulnerable narcissism, the antagonistic attitude manifests as persistent feelings of envy coupled with feelings of hostility and resentment (Krizan and Johar 2012).

Individuals high in either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism are egocentric and strongly focused on their goals. Thus, they may be prone to seeing other people mainly through the prism of their instrumentality towards the fulfillment of their own goals, thereby objectifying others. For example, in relations with others, individuals high in the grandiose narcissism dimension tend to focus not on the quality of mutual relations or becoming acquainted but rather on using others to strengthen their own sense of power and greatness (Jonason and Schmitt 2012; Rhodewalt and Morf 1995). Individuals high in the vulnerable narcissism dimension, in contrast, concentrate on other people as a source of evaluation of themselves and external

validation of their worth (Besser and Priel 2010; Hendin and Cheek 1997), expecting others' approval (Pincus et al. 2009) and avoiding others' rejection (Besser and Priel 2009).

Furthermore, behavioral manifestations of narcissism add support to the idea that some aspects of the objectification of others may be common in people high in either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism. Both groups of people are egocentric, feel entitled, have a sense of privilege towards others, and are ready to exploit others (Brown and Brunell 2017; Cain et al. 2008; Dickinson and Pincus 2003). Individuals high in narcissistic traits are prone to reacting aggressively when provoked or when others do not fulfill their expectations (Krizan and Johar 2015; Lobbestael et al. 2014; Reidy et al. 2008), which reveals that they have a general tendency to perceive others as violable. Both groups of people show tendencies to ignore the subjective states, feelings, and needs of others. Those high in vulnerable narcissism exhibit a cold interpersonal style and lack empathy (Pincus et al. 2009), whereas those high in grandiose narcissism can understand others' emotions and needs. In fact, they appear to have some degree of cognitive empathy (Konrath et al. 2014), but this social competence is used merely to manipulate others' emotions, dominate others, and effectively build their image (Nagler et al. 2014).

As found by Gruenfeld et al. (2008), the tendency to engage in objectification increases with power, that is, when perceivers have a higher position in a social hierarchy. Thus, one might expect that while focusing on agentic goals and striving for power and domination of others, individuals high in grandiose narcissism might be especially prone to objectify others.

Like people high in grandiose narcissism, those high in vulnerable narcissism are preoccupied with the self and expect others to fulfill their needs (Cain et al. 2008; Dickinson and Pincus 2003). However, they fear that others will not do so, and lack trust in their own ability to maintain social relations and consequently experience high stress when forging new interpersonal relations (Miller et al. 2017; Wink 1991). Thus, compared to people high in grandiose narcissism, those high in vulnerable narcissism lack the tools to subjugate others to realize their own goals. However, as mentioned above, the goals of individuals high in vulnerable narcissism are fulfilled mainly when others behave in a way they expect—by not hurting them emotionally and not being a source of painful contact. Thus, despite their less developed abilities in influencing others, they might objectify other people as well by perceiving them through the prism of avoidance needs and goals.

Current Study

The current study aims to examine the tendency to objectify others as a general phenomenon (i.e., not limited to specific social relationships) in the context of its dispositional

underpinnings. As described above, many characteristics of individuals who score high in grandiose or vulnerable narcissism seem to predispose them to perceive and treat other people (irrespective of the specific form of interpersonal relations) in an instrumental and objectifying way. As no studies, until now, have directly studied the relationships among these phenomena, we sought to fill this gap in the literature.

In our study, we follow the approach to objectification developed by Nussbaum (1995, 1999) and by Gruenfeld et al. (2008), concentrating on instrumentality as an essential aspect of objectification. In the studies on objectification and power, Gruenfeld et al. (2008), following the definition of objectification developed by Nussbaum (1999), proposed that objectification is the perception of another person only in terms of their instrumentality, that is, their usefulness toward fulfilling the perceiver's own goals. In their Objectification Scale, they measured to what extent the perceiver limits his or her interest in a person based upon that person's instrumentality, and also to what extent the perceiver exhibits little interest in the person's feelings, shows a reluctance to reciprocate the efforts of the other person, and perceives the other person as fungible. To our knowledge, it is the only measure that allows the measurement of so many aspects of objectification as defined by Nussbaum's theory.

In our aim to examine whether individuals higher in grandiose or in vulnerable narcissism tend to perceive others mainly in an instrumental way, irrespective of the specific relations, we have used Gruenfeld et al.'s (2008) scale to measure the general tendency of an individual to treat others in an instrumental and objectifying way (see also Wang and Krumhuber 2017). To determine whether objectification is specifically connected with both types of narcissism, we also examined the relationship of objectification with global self-esteem.

Method

Participants

We recruited 425 participants (296 women) from a pool of Polish university students using a convenience sampling technique. None were offered any compensation for participating. We analyzed only the results of participants who completed all study measures. Accordingly, the final sample was comprised of 376 students (288 women), ranging in age from 17 to 48 years ($M = 22.20$ years, $SD = 3.13$).

Design and Procedure

The study was conducted at several universities in groups of 10–25 persons. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous. All participants provided

informed consent and completed the following questionnaires.

Grandiose Narcissism The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Hall 1979, 1981) measures grandiose narcissism as a personality trait. We employed the Polish adaptation of this scale (Bazińska and Drat-Ruszczak 2000), which consists of 34 items grouped into 4 subscales: demand for admiration, vanity, self-sufficiency, and leadership. Sample items include "I like being the center of attention" and "I am an extraordinary person." Participants marked on a 5-point scale the answer that they considered closest to the manner in which they perceived themselves, ranging from 1 (*it is not me*) to 5 (*it is me*). The factor structure of the Polish adaptation differs from the original scale (Bazińska and Drat-Ruszczak 2000). While two of the subscales—self-sufficiency and vanity—contain the same items as the original, the authority subscale of the original was renamed leadership in the Polish version and complemented with items relating to a tendency to manipulate others (which in the original scale formed a separate subscale of exploitativeness). Items belonging to the subscales of superiority and entitlement in the original scale were combined into the subscale of demand for admiration in the adaptation. Confirmatory factor analysis, using the generalized least squares method, demonstrates that the ratio of the chi-square ($\chi^2 = 1140.34$, $p < .001$) to the degrees of freedom ($df = 527$) is 2.16, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .06, and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and adjusted GFI (AGFI) are .82 and .80, respectively. The GFI and AGFI values are slightly below the criteria (>.90; e.g., Kline 2015). However, considering that the rest of the fit indices remain within the limits recommended for an acceptable adjustment (the ratio χ^2/df is not greater than 3, and RMSEA value does not exceed .08), as well as the knowledge that GFI and AGFI indices decrease as complexity of a model increases (Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003; see also Marsh et al. 2004), it can be concluded that this sample has an acceptable fit to the 4-factor model. All reliability values, assessed with Cronbach's alpha, are provided in Table 1.

Vulnerable Narcissism We measured vulnerable narcissism using the Polish translation of the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; Hendin and Cheek 1997). The HSNS is comprised of 10 items, each answered on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*very uncharacteristic or false; strongly disagree)* to 5 (*very characteristic or true; strongly agree*). Higher total scores indicate stronger vulnerable narcissistic tendencies. The original authors assumed a one-factor structure, but later research (Fossati et al. 2009) identified two weakly correlated factors: egocentrism (i.e., self-centeredness and low ability to regulate self-esteem) and oversensitivity (i.e., weak skills in social functioning, such as social anxiety, alienation, and hurt-proneness). Five statements refer to egocentrism (e.g., "I

Table 1 Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, and Pearson's correlation coefficients for both subtypes of narcissism, self-esteem, and objectification tendency

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Gender	–										
2. NPI	.12*	–									
3. DA	.04	.89***	–								
4. Vanity	.02	.70***	.57***	–							
5. SS	.16**	.68***	.41***	.36***	–						
6. Leadership	.17***	.91***	.74***	.50***	.60***	–					
7. HSNS	.01	.22***	.30***	.19***	−.05	.17***	–				
8. Oversensitivity	−.18***	.04	.18***	.08	−.22***	−.01	.78***	–			
9. Egocentrism	.21***	.30***	.29***	.22***	.15**	.29***	.76***	.20***	–		
10. RSES	.19***	.47***	.28***	.42***	.54***	.41***	−.23***	−.36***	.01	–	
11. Objectification	.28***	.27***	.32***	.19***	.06	.23***	.37***	.03	.56***	.03	–
M		103.85	31.15	14.99	24.62	33.09	30.02	16.85	13.17	28.89	23.73
SD		20.38	8.27	4.10	4.32	7.85	5.62	3.70	3.57	4.75	8.64
Cronbach's α		.93	.87	.78	.74	.87	.65	.64	.63	.86	.82

Female = 0; Male = 1. *NPI* Narcissistic Personality Inventory, *DA* Demand for Admiration, *SS* Self-Sufficiency, *HSNS* Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, *RSES* Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

easily become wrapped up in my own interests and forget the existence of others," "I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others") and the other five statements refer to oversensitivity (e.g., "My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or the slighting remarks of others," "I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way"). We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using the generalized least squares method, confirming that the two-factor structure is a better fit than the one-factor structure. Specifically, the ratio of the chi-square ($\chi^2 = 106.06$, $p < .001$) to the degrees of freedom ($df = 35$) is 3.03, the RMSEA is .07, and the GFI and AGFI are .94 and .91, respectively. All these values indicate an acceptable model fit (Browne and Cudeck 1993). The Cronbach's alpha is .65 (.63 for the egocentrism scale and .64 for the oversensitivity scale) and, although this result indicates relatively low reliability, it should be noted that the Cronbach's alpha value increases with the number of items (Kline 2015) and the number of the HSNS items is relatively small. Also, similar Cronbach's alpha estimates were observed in many other studies wherein internal consistency of the HSNS ranges from .63 to .75 (e.g., Fossati et al. 2009; Hendin and Cheek 1997; Miller et al. 2011). However, other reliability indices, like test-retest reliability, show the scale to have moderate to high temporal reliability (Fossati et al. 2009).

Global Self-Esteem Global self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg 1965), using its Polish adaptation (Dzwonkowska et al. 2008). It is comprised of 10 items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") to which participants responded using a 4-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*).

Tendency toward Objectification To measure subjects' tendency toward objectification of other people, we used the Objectification Scale by Gruenfeld et al. (2008). The scale was originally used to measure the objectification of a work partner with whom each participant had a specific professional relationship (hierarchical or not). It contains 10 statements that refer to perceiving a work partner in an instrumental and objectified way. In line with the theoretical assumptions, this scale concentrates on measuring instrumentality (i.e., treating the partner mainly as a tool for fulfilling one's own goals) as a defining aspect of objectification. It also measures other manifestations of objectification, such as perceiving the person as fungible and ignoring the individual's human attributes (i.e., uniqueness and subjective feelings; Gruenfeld et al. 2008). We reworded these statements to express a more general tendency to engage in objectification (e.g., "I evaluate other people on the basis of their usefulness to me," "I tend to contact other people only when I need something from them," "I could replace a significant relationship with one person with a relationship with another person who has the same set of skills that are important to me"). The participants answered on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*I totally disagree*) to 7 (*I totally agree*). To verify the factor structure of the scale, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the generalized least squares method. The one-factor structure adequately fit the data. Specifically, the ratio of the chi-square ($\chi^2 = 123.51$, $p < .001$) to degrees of freedom ($df = 35$) is 3.53, the

RMSEA is .08, the GFI is .94, and the AGFI is .90. All measures indicate acceptable levels (Browne and Cudeck 1993).

Results

Bivariate Relations

Pearson's correlation analysis (Table 1) revealed that both subtypes of narcissism positively correlated with objectification, with a relatively similar strength ($r = .27$ for grandiose narcissism and $r = .37$ for vulnerable narcissism; $p < .001$). More detailed analyses revealed that objectification correlated positively with all subscales of grandiose narcissism, except for self-sufficiency. As for vulnerable narcissism, only the egocentrism subscale was significantly correlated. Additionally, we found that self-esteem was positively correlated with grandiose narcissism and all subscales of grandiose narcissism, except for self-sufficiency. By contrast, self-esteem was negatively associated with vulnerable narcissism and its oversensitivity subscale. Objectification was not related to global self-esteem ($r = .03$; $p > .05$).

Multivariate Analysis

To determine the specific predictors of objectification, we conducted a hierarchical linear regression analysis that included gender (coded as: females = 0 and males =1),[1] self-esteem, and all subscales of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as independent variables (Table 2). In step 1, gender alone significantly predicted objectification and explained about 8% of the variance, $F(1, 374) = 30.65$, $p < .001$. Self-esteem was entered in the model in step 2, but did not produce any significant change R^2, $\Delta F(1, 373) = .15$, $p = .70$. All subscales of grandiose narcissism were added in Step 3, contributing an additional 12% to the variance of the objectification, $\Delta F(4, 369) = 13.47$, $p < .001$. In this step, demand for admiration was found to positively predict objectification. In step 4, both subscales of vulnerable narcissism were entered and

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[1] Given that there is evidence for gender differences in narcissism (e.g., Grijalva et al. 2015), we additionally examined gender as a potential moderator of the relationship between narcissism and objectification. To this end, we conducted six separate moderation analyses (model 1), using PROCESS for SPSS (with 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected intervals; Hayes 2018). Specifically, we performed the analysis with each of HSNS and NPI subscales as an independent variable (X), objectification as an outcome variable (Y), and gender as a moderator (M). We found no significant interaction effect of gender and the subscales of grandiose narcissism ($b = -.02$, $SE = .12$, $t = -0.17$, $p = .86$ for demand for admiration; $b = -.08$, $SE = .25$, $t = -0.33$, $p = .74$ for vanity; $b = -.03$, $SE = .27$, $t = -0.10$, $p = .92$ for self-sufficiency; $b = -.03$, $SE = .13$, $t = 0.24$, $p = .81$ for leadership), as well as the subscales of vulnerable narcissism ($b = .12$, $SE = .27$, $t = -0.44$, $p = .66$ for oversensitivity; $b = .07$, $SE = .26$, $t = 0.25$, $p = .79$ for egocentrism). This indicates that gender does not moderate the relationship between any of the narcissism subscales and objectification.

Table 2 Hierarchical multiple regression analysis of objectification

Variables		b	SE	β	t	ΔR^2
Step 1	(Constant)	22.41	.49		45.73***	.076***
	Gender	5.61	1.01	.28	5.54***	
Step 2	(Constant)	23.42	2.66		8.80***	<.001
	Gender	5.69	1.03	.28	5.50***	
	Self-esteem	−.04	.09	−.02	−.38	
Step 3	(Constant)	18.95	2.81		6.74***	.12***
	Gender	6.05	.99	.30	6.12***	
	Self-esteem	−.15	.11	−.08	−1.44	
	Demand for admiration	.37	.08	.35	4.68***	
	Vanity	.14	.13	.07	1.08	
	Self-sufficiency	−.21	.13	−.10	−1.62	
	Leadership	−.02	.09	−.02	−.22	
Step 4	(Constant)	14.04	3.60		3.90***	.21***
	Gender	3.67	.88	.18	4.17***	
	Self-esteem	−.08	.10	−.04	−.80	
	Demand for admiration	.34	.07	.33	4.93***	
	Vanity	.04	.11	.02	.34	
	Self-sufficiency	−.28	.11	−.14	−2.54*	
	Leadership	−.11	.08	−.10	−1.37	
	Oversensitivity	−.34	.11	−.15	−3.05**	
	Egocentrism	1.22	.11	.50	11.28***	

Female = 0, Male = 1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

accounted for an additional significant 21% of the variance, $\Delta F(2, 367) = 64.21$, $p < .001$. The complete model at step 4, with adjusting for gender, self-esteem and all subscales of both subtypes of narcissism, was well fitted to the data, $F(8, 367) = 30.94$, $p < .001$, and explained about 40% of the variance in objectification, which can be considered a large-sized effect (Cohen's $f^2 = .69$). In step 4, egocentrism was the strongest positive predictor of objectification, followed by demand for admiration. The oversensitivity and self-sufficiency subscales were slightly weaker, but still significant, negative predictors of objectification (i.e., a higher level of oversensitivity and self-sufficiency related to a lower level of objectification).

Discussion

Several characteristics of individuals high in trait narcissism seem to predispose them to perceive and treat others mainly through the prism of the others' instrumentality. The results of the present study confirmed that both subtypes of narcissism are related with a tendency to objectify others. Specifically, the higher the level of vulnerable or grandiose narcissism, the stronger the tendency towards objectification. This finding

means that both groups of individuals high in narcissistic traits tend to perceive others through the prism of their usefulness to fulfilling their own goals, while at the same time ignoring some of the others' human attributes. These tendencies are in line with the essence of narcissistic self-regulation, that is, focusing on achieving personal goals and adopting an egocentric perspective. Moreover, it seems to be a specific feature of narcissism, given that global self-esteem was not related to the tendency to engage in objectification.

These results are especially interesting considering what we know of the differences between these types of narcissism. While individuals high in grandiose narcissism have a strong approach orientation and strive for others' approval and admiration, which might directly facilitate their tendency to see others in terms of their usefulness to fulfilling the narcissist's own goals, those high in vulnerable narcissism are oriented towards avoiding discomfort and negative emotions in social relations. This may lead to the conjecture that individuals who demonstrate intense narcissistic traits treat others instrumentally because the satisfaction of their needs is dependent on other people, regardless of the nature of those needs (i.e., gaining attention and admiration or avoidance of rejection or disapproval). As a result, individuals scoring high in either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism tend to perceive others in an objectified and instrumental way.

Additionally, based on a detailed analysis of the narcissism subscales, we can suggest possible mechanisms that might facilitate the tendency to objectify other people in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. The results for grandiose narcissism, where the demand for admiration had the strongest association with objectification, suggest that seeing others in an objectified way may be fostered by the need to strengthen self-esteem through achieving a sense of admiration and recognition. This finding might suggest that the practice of subordinating others for the purpose of realizing this need might make people lose their individual features in the eyes of the perceiver. However, it is equally possible that the objectification derives from a discomfort caused by the fact that one's self-esteem is dependent on the admiration of others. In fact, people high in grandiose narcissism cannot trust their own high self-esteem and sense of uniqueness unless these are confirmed by other people (Campbell et al. 2006; Morf and Rhodewalt 2001). In such a situation, objectifying others might allow them to become somewhat more independent of the admiration of a *specific person* by perceiving that person as interchangeable with others of the same social status, who might provide a similar level of gratification. This potential mechanism of objectification might also explain why high self-sufficiency (a dimension of grandiose narcissism) is negatively related to the tendency to objectify other people. For individuals having a high sense of self-sufficiency, it is their own opinions and beliefs, rather than those of other people, that strengthen their selves. Thus, self-sufficiency might prevent these individuals

from treating other people as objects, since they are not perceived as a threat to the individuals' own independence.

Individuals high in vulnerable narcissism perceive others in terms of the potential threat of being rejected or criticized (Besser and Priel 2010; Dickinson and Pincus 2003). Notably, when considering both factors of the HSNS measuring vulnerable narcissism, egocentrism turned out to be strongly positively related with objectification, whereas oversensitivity was negatively (and relatively more weakly than egocentrism) related to objectification. This indicates that egocentrism (i.e., being excessively self-absorbed) is responsible for the positive relationship of vulnerable narcissism with the tendency to objectify other people. High egocentrism may directly bias the perception of others and cause to view them only in the ways in which they are useful to the narcissist's current goals. Moreover, egocentrism can limit the narcissist's access to the emotional states and feelings of other people, thereby increasing their tendency to objectification. At the same time, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism may strive to view other people in an objectifying manner and deprive them of their individual characteristics because this diminishes their subjective importance and thus reduces the potential threat they may pose by rejecting or giving negative feedback.

Thus, among those high in vulnerable narcissism, objectification may result not only from striving to fulfill one's current goals but also from a tendency to protect oneself from the experience of negative emotions in interpersonal relationships. Future research would do well to verify these potential mechanisms linking vulnerable narcissism with the tendency to objectify others.

As mentioned earlier, objectification of other people and self-objectification have an important distinctive feature, i.e. different focus of perception. However, both phenomena belong to the same class of tendencies in perceiving a target person, as an object. Thus, referring to past research on relationships of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with self-objectification would build a more complete picture of such tendencies. A study conducted by Carrotte and Anderson (2019), showed that women high in vulnerable narcissism tend to objectify themselves, as opposed to those high in grandiose narcissism. These results, combined with the results of current research, seem to indicate that vulnerable narcissism can be a risk factor for both self- and other-objectification, whereas grandiose narcissism may only favor objectification of others, while protecting from self-objectification.

The results of the current study also showed that the relations between both types of narcissism and objectification are not qualified by gender, which means that women and men high in narcissism are equally prone to objectify other people. However, the tendency to objectify others was stronger in men. These results are inconsistent with past findings suggesting that, in the sexual contest, women and men tend to objectify other people to a similar extent (Gray et al. 2011; Vaes

et al. 2011). One possible reason for the greater tendency of men to objectify others, outside the sexual context, is their higher focus on their own agency, manifested in their higher self-ratings of agentic traits as compared to women (Abele 2003). Such self-perception may also be associated with a tendency to perceive others through their instrumentality in fulfilling one's individual goals, resulting in the objectification of those others.

Limitations and Future Research

Although our study makes a significant contribution to the literature, it does have some limitations. First, the design of our study was correlational. Therefore, further verifications of the suggested mechanisms of objectification—which we explored in terms of the relations with specific characteristics of both subtypes of narcissism—should be conducted in experimental studies in which objectification would be induced by situational factors such as being in a position of power or concentration on appearance of a perceived person. Second, internal consistency of the HSNS turned out to be relatively low. Thus, in future research, it would be worth using additional measures of vulnerable narcissism to examine its relationship with objectification. Further research should also focus on developing a measure encompassing the full range of manifestations of objectification, as the Objectification Scale taps many, but not all, aspects of objectification enumerated in Nussbaum's (1995) theory.

Future research could also explore whether the tendency to objectify others contributes to the development of other dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors towards others presented by individuals with narcissism, such as interpersonal exploitation, and the lack of a sense of obligation or gratefulness to others. Additionally, we propose further investigation of the degree to which narcissism predicts objectification in comparison to other related constructs such as psychopathy and Machiavellianism, which along with narcissism, constitute the Dark Triad of personality.

Practice Implications

As the objectification can yield symptoms of self-objectification (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997), being in a relationship with a narcissistic individual may increase one's risk of perceiving oneself in an objectifying way. The process of self-objectification can not only be destructive for the subject's mental health but, moreover, can have also detrimental effects for interpersonal relationships. In addition, if an intimate partner of a narcissist becomes aware of their partner's objectifying practices, this may also worsen their evaluation of a narcissistic person—one reason why narcissistic individuals become less popular and less liked with time (see Leckelt et al. 2015). Thus, the tendency of

narcissistic individuals to objectify others may be considered during dyadic or individual therapy with such persons, especially when he or she demonstrates difficulty in maintaining interpersonal relationships and suffers from its consequences by experiencing feelings of loneliness and emptiness.

Concluding Remarks

This study is the first to show the role of individual differences in a general tendency to objectify others outside the sexual context. The results obtained here demonstrated that both vulnerable and grandiose narcissism are positively associated with the general tendency to objectify other people. However, it is noteworthy that not all dimensions of narcissistic traits were equally associated with a tendency to objectify others. The strongest predictors turned out to be those dimensions that are rooted in a strong focus on one's own goals and needs (egocentrism in vulnerable narcissism and demand for admiration in grandiose narcissism).

Thus, by studying objectification in the context of individual differences, it was possible to not only establish some of the dispositional conditions of objectification but also to suggest some potential mechanisms underlying this way of perceiving and relating to other people.

As the tendency to objectify others can have a detrimental impact on the objectified persons, as well as on social relations, better knowledge of the aspects of narcissistic traits strongly contributing to objectification of others can be helpful in planning interventions aimed at improving the social functioning of these individuals.

Compliance with Ethical Standards All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee (Committee on Ethics of Scientific Research at the University of Wrocław) and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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