Check for updates

Research Paper

The Role of Narcissism on Problematic Social Media Use in Emerging Adulthood Instagram Users

Dela Meiriza Usman[1*], Aisyah Syihab[1], Andri Setia Dharma[1]
[1] Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Pancasila, Indonesia

Abstract

The increasing use of social media, particularly among emerging adults, has brought attention to the issue of problematic social media use (PSMU). PSMU is characterized by excessive engagement and dependency. Previous studies have suggested a relationship between narcissism and problematic social media behavior. However, limited research has explored this relationship in the Indonesian context. This study aims to determine the role of each dimension of narcissism in problematic social media use by Instagram users emerging adulthood. The participants of this study were active Instagram users aged 18 to 25 years. This research was conducted using a quantitative approach. This study used convenience sampling and obtained 224 participants. The measuring instruments used in this study were the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ) to measure narcissism variables in each dimension and the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) to measure problematic social media use variables. The analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression. The results of this study indicate that narcissism in the dimensions of admiration and rivalry dimensions ($p<0.05$) plays a significant and positive role in problematic social media use by emerging adulthood individuals who use Instagram. These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic traits, especially those seeking admiration or engaging in rivalry behaviors, are more likely to exhibit problematic social media behaviors.

Keywords *emerging adulthood, Instagram users, narcissism, problematic social media use*

INTRODUCTION

The use of the internet in Indonesia has experienced significant growth every year. According to the latest report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024), the number of internet users has reached 221,563,479 people, equivalent to 79.5% of Indonesia's total population, which reached 278,696,200 in 2023. Internet users aged 12-27 dominate with a percentage of 34.40%, indicating that late adolescence to early adulthood is the primary group of internet users in Indonesia. According to Arnett (2015), the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood is referred to as emerging adulthood, which is a stage between 18 and 25 years. During this phase, individuals strive to analyze their identity, live independently, and build social relationships (Petrescu et al., 2014). The internet has become essential for supporting social interactions among emerging adults, with social media serving as the primary platform.

Nasrullah (2015) stated that social media is an internet-based platform that enables users to communicate, collaborate, share, and interact, creating virtual connections. The We Are Social report (2024) noted that the average time spent by Indonesian netizens on the internet is 7 hours and 38 minutes per day, with social media being the most accessed platform, with an average of 3 hours and 11 minutes per day. This duration exceeds the recommended usage limit of less than 2 hours per day (Limbong, 2018). Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia, where the country ranks fourth in the world in terms of the number of Instagram users, with more than 104.8 million active users.

Instagram is a social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos and engage in social interactions through features like direct messaging, comments, and mentions (Ellison,

2007). With continually evolving features, such as Instagram Live, Stories, IGTV, and Reels, Instagram has become increasingly popular as an interactive entertainment platform (Nuraini et al., 2023). According to Brailovskaia et al. (2020), many individuals use social media to avoid negative feelings and seek entertainment through engaging content.

Kircaburun and Griffiths (2018), in their research, argued that social media addiction can negatively impact social well-being, such as causing social isolation and excessive dependency (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). The easy accessibility of social media platforms like Instagram encourages individuals to overuse them, leading to disruptions in focus and concentration (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). This condition is known as problematic social media use (PSMU), which describes situations in which social media use interferes with daily routines and other aspects of life (Bányai et al., 2017).

According to Griffiths (2005), PSMU is characterized by several key indicators, including salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal symptoms, and conflict. Instagram users exhibit significantly higher PSMU behaviors than Facebook users. Individuals experiencing PSMU tend to struggle with real-life social interactions (Kircaburun et al., 2018), whereas individuals without usage issues possess better social skills (Mariano et al., 2018).

Andreassen and Pallesen (2014) explained that PSMU occurs when a person becomes overly attached to social media, feels compelled to continuously access it, and spends significant amounts of time on it, which negatively impacts their social life, psychological health, personal life, professionalism, and well-being. This dependency is often driven by the need for validation and recognition from others, such as through likes, comments, and followers (Andreassen et al., 2017). This view is linked to narcissism, where individuals feel the need for attention and admiration to enhance their self-esteem.

Narcissism itself refers to behavior where a person admires themselves, often characterized by an inflated sense of self, a need to be the center of attention, a dislike for criticism, a lack of empathy, and a tendency to exploit others (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Although narcissism is often considered a personality disorder, Crowe et al. (2019) emphasize that not all forms of narcissism fall under Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). In this study, the focus is on non-clinical narcissism, not NPD.

In psychological literature, non-clinical narcissism is often divided into two types: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). This study uses the concept of narcissistic admiration and rivalry, which conceptualizes grandiose narcissism in two dimensions: narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (Back et al., 2013). Narcissistic admiration involves a strong motivation to gain admiration from others on social media, which is reflected in efforts to attract attention and praise. On the other hand, narcissistic rivalry involves behaviors of comparing and demeaning others to protect oneself from threats.

Buffardi and Campbell (2008) found that individuals with narcissistic traits routinely check profiles and upload stories on social media. Instagram's engaging features also enhance excessive usage because of the impulsive drive to check notifications about their posts (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2018). This impulsivity is evident when individuals frequently open Instagram to check the number of viewers, likes, or comments as a means of fulfilling their need for recognition, a hallmark of narcissism. Casale et al. (2016) added that individuals with narcissistic traits tend to be more active on social media to promote themselves through status updates and photos.

Previous research by Andreassen et al. (2017) on 23,532 people in Norway found that as PSMU increases, the level of narcissism displayed by individuals also rises. Akdeniz (2022), in a study of 705 individuals aged 18 to 61 who had two or more social media accounts, showed that narcissistic admiration and rivalry had a significant and positive impact on social media addiction. Another study by Casale and Fioravanti (2018) on 535 University of Florence students found a positive

relationship between grandiose narcissism and Facebook addiction, but no relationship was found between vulnerable narcissism and Facebook addiction.

Although research has been conducted on the relationship between narcissism and PSMU, theoretical and systematic studies on the role of narcissism in PSMU remain limited, particularly in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study utilized the NARC model, which conceptualizes grandiose narcissism in two distinct dimensions. The NARC model provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how the two dimensions of narcissism can influence the behavior of emerging adults on Instagram.

Additionally, this study features variations in participant characteristics and locations, potentially yielding findings different from those of previous studies. The focus of this research is on emerging adults who are transitioning to adulthood. This age group was chosen because it is the most active Internet user, according to data from APJII (2024). Therefore, this study examines the role of narcissism (admiration and rivalry) in PSMU among emerging adults who use Instagram.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Problematic Social Media Use

Research on problematic social media use (PSMU) has yet to reach a consensus on a definitive definition because of conceptual confusion between PSMU and problematic internet use (Wegmann et al., 2015). Various terms have been used to describe social networking addiction (Griffiths, 2018), social media addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017), and compulsive use of social media (De Cock et al., 2014). Although these terms are conceptualized with different labels, they refer to the same issue: the misuse of social media.

According to Andreassen and Pallesen (2014), PSMU is a condition in which an individual becomes overly involved in social media use, experiences a strong or uncontrollable urge to continue using it, and spends excessive time and energy. This results in disruptions to social interactions, work, studies, interpersonal relationships, individual well-being, and mental health. Blackwell et al. (2017) added that PSMU is characterized by uncontrollable and excessive social media use that impacts a person's daily activities and functioning.

Bányai et al. (2017) stated that PSMU is the use of social media that causes problems for individuals, including disruptions in various aspects of life and mood changes when individuals cannot access social media. Based on Griffiths' (2005) biopsychosocial model, PSMU can be identified through several addiction symptoms, including obsession with social media (salience), using social media to reduce negative feelings (mood modification), increasing the frequency of use to achieve the same satisfaction (tolerance), returning to excessive social media use after trying to reduce it (relapse), experiencing negative feelings when social media use is restricted (withdrawal symptoms), and interpersonal problems arising from social media use (conflict). Griffiths (2018) also identified several factors contributing to the development of PSMU, including unpredictable rewards, social affirmation and validation, fear of missing out, smartphone sounds and vibrations, social connection, reciprocal liking, social competition, and psychological investment.

Narcissism

Narcissism refers to an individual's excessive admiration of oneself, often characterized by behaviors such as unrealistic self-assessment, a desire to be the center of attention, an inability to accept criticism, self-centeredness, a lack of empathy, and a tendency to exploit others (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Non-clinical narcissism differs from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), where individuals with non-clinical narcissism may not have a mental disorder but still exhibit superior behavior and a need for recognition (Crowe et al., 2019).

Narcissism can be divided into two main dimensions: admiration and rivalry (Back et al., 2013).

Narcissistic admiration involves an individual's efforts to promote themselves to receive praise from others, while narcissistic rivalry involves an individual's efforts to protect himself from criticism and maintain a positive image. The admiration dimension includes grandiosity (the belief that one is extraordinary and deserving of praise), uniqueness (the belief that one is unique and different), and charmingness (the ability to attract attention through charm). Meanwhile, the rivalry dimension includes devaluation (belittling others), supremacy (feeling superior and satisfied by others' failures), and aggressiveness (a tendency to become aggressive when threatened or criticized). Overall, narcissism functions as a self-regulatory mechanism to maintain a positive self-viewpoint through the regulation of perceptions and responses to oneself and others (Foster & Campbell, 2007).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study involved 224 participants using a convenience sampling technique. Participant criteria included being between 18 and 25 years old, using Instagram for a minimum of 2 hours per day, residing in the JABODETABEK area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi), and being an Indonesian citizen. The research design employed was a non-experimental quantitative approach, as there was no manipulation of the variables.

PSMU was measured using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), developed by Andreassen et al. (2016), which is a modification of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS). This scale covers six dimensions: salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal symptoms, and conflict, using a 5-point Likert scale. The higher the total score, the higher the individual's PSMU level. Narcissism was measured using the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ), which was developed by Back et al. (2013) and comprises 18 items divided into two dimensions: Admiration and Rivalry. The Admiration dimension includes three aspects: grandiosity, uniqueness, and charmingness, while the Rivalry dimension includes devaluation, supremacy, and aggressiveness. This scale uses a 6-point Likert scale, where higher total scores indicate higher levels of narcissistic admiration and rivalry.

This research was conducted in three main stages: preparation, pilot testing, and implementation. In the preparation stage, the researcher identified the research problem, established variables, and selected and adapted measurement tools. The adaptation process involved forward and backward translation by graduates of English Language Education, which was then evaluated by four experts through expert judgment to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness for Indonesian participants. After revisions, the measurement tools were reviewed by five individuals to ensure ease of understanding. The pilot testing stage was conducted with 39 participants to assess the validity and reliability of the instruments. The results indicated that all items in both the NARQ and BSMAS were valid and reliable. The implementation phase occurred from June 9 to July 16, 2023, and data were collected online through various social media platforms. The data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 25, employing descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis, including demographic differences analysis with related variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the dimensions of narcissism, admiration, and rivalry have a significant and positive impact on problematic social media use (PSMU) among emerging adults using Instagram. The F-test indicated significant effects of narcissism admiration and rivalry on PSMU ($F = 8.166$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.069. This result indicates that these two dimensions of narcissism impact 6.9% of the variance in PSMU, with the remaining 93.1% explained by other factors not included in this study. The overall model fit of the

regression model is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Model Summary

R	R^2	F	df1	df2	p
0.262	0.069	8.166	2	221	<0.001

The t-test results further demonstrated that both dimensions of narcissism have a significant individual influence on PSMU. Narcissistic admiration (B = 0.086, t = 2.289, p = 0.023) and rivalry (B = 0.136, t = 3.201, p = 0.002). Both positively and significantly affect PSMU. This result indicates that higher levels of admiration and rivalry traits are associated with increased problematic social media behaviors. The regression coefficients of each predictor are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Admiration	0.086	0.038	2.289	0.023
Rivalry	0.136	0.042	3.201	0.002

The results suggest that narcissistic traits, namely, admiration and rivalry, contribute to the tendency of emerging adults to engage in excessive social media use. This finding aligns with previous research, emphasizing the role of narcissism in promoting behaviors that focus on social validation and recognition. The relatively low R^2 value of 0.069 implies that while narcissism plays a role, many other factors may also contribute to PSMU. Other factors that may contribute to PSMU include fear of missing out (FOMO), emotional regulation, and social anxiety. Admiration is associated with a desire for positive recognition on social media. This pushes individuals to seek likes and followers. Rivalry, on the other hand, reflects a competitive mindset where individuals may use social media to outperform others. These results align with the features of Instagram. Many Instagram features facilitate validation seeking and competitive behavior. These insights highlight the complex interactions between personality traits and social media behaviors. These findings suggest areas for further investigation into the psychological mechanisms underlying social media addiction among young adults.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that narcissism in the dimensions of admiration and rivalry plays a significant and simultaneous role in PSMU among emerging adults who use Instagram. This indicates that the higher the level of admiration and rivalry narcissism in an individual, the higher the level of PSMU in that individual. Conversely, if the levels of admiration and rivalry narcissism are low, the level of PSMU in the individual is also low.

This study offers several methodological and practical recommendations. Researchers are encouraged to expand the types of social media being studied, consider variations in demographic data, and include attention-check mechanisms to ensure respondents provide accurate answers. Instagram users in emerging adulthood are encouraged to limit their social media usage time and focus more on meaningful interactions. Relevant institutions can develop intervention programs that help individuals manage social media use and social validation. Furthermore, governments and policymakers should raise awareness of the negative impacts of excessive social media use and provide guidelines for managing narcissism healthily.

REFERENCES

Akdeniz, S. (2022). Personality Traits and Narcissism in Social Media Predict Social Media *Addiction. Ahmet Keleşoğlu Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 4*(2), 224-237.

Andreassen, C. S., & Pallesen, S. (2014). Social Network Site Addiction - An Overview. *Current Pharmaceutical Design, 20*(25), 4053-4061.

Andreassen, C. S., Billieux, J., Griffiths, M. D., Kuss, D. J., Demetrovics, Z., Mazzoni, E., & Pallesen, S. (2016). The Relationship between Addictive Use of Social Media and Video Games and Symptoms of Psychiatric Disorders: A Large-Scale Cross-Sectional Study. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 30*(2), 252-262. https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000160

Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). The Relationship between Addictive Use of Social Media, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem: Findings from A Large National Survey. *Addictive Behaviors, 64,* 287-293. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.03.006

APJII. (2024, Februari 7). *APJII Jumlah Pengguna Internet Indonesia Tembus 221 Juta Orang*. https://apjii.or.id/berita/d/apjii-jumlah-pengguna-internet-indonesia-tembus-221-juta-orang

Arnett, J. J. (Ed.). (2015). *The Oxford Handbook of Emerging Adulthood*. Oxford University Press.

Back, M. D., Küfner, A. C., Dufner, M., Gerlach, T. M., Rauthmann, J. F., & Denissen, J. J. (2013). Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry: Disentangling the Bright and Dark Sides of Narcissism. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *105*(6), 1013.

Balakrishnan, J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2018). An Exploratory Study of "Selfitis" and the Development of the Selfitis Behavior Scale. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 16*(3), 722-736. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-017-9844-x

Bányai, F., Zsila, Á., Király, O., Maraz, A., Elekes, Z., Griffiths, M. D., ... & Demetrovics, Z. (2017). Problematic Social Media Use: Results from a Large-Scale Nationally Representative Adolescent Sample. *Plos One, 12*(1), e0169839. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0169839

Blackwell, D., Leaman, C., Tramposch, R., Osborne, C., & Liss, M. (2017). Extraversion, Neuroticism, Attachment Style and Fear of Missing Out as Predictors of Social Media Use and Addiction. *Personality and Individual Differences, 116*, 69-72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.04.039

Brailovskaia, J., Schillack, H., & Margraf, J. (2020). Tell Me Why are You Using Social Media (SM)! Relationship Between Reasons for Use Of SM, SM Flow, Daily Stress, Depression, Anxiety, and Addictive SM Use – An Exploratory Investigation of Young Adults in Germany. *Computers in Human Behavior, 113*, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106511

Buffardi, L. E., & Campbell, W. K. (2008). Narcissism and Social Networking Websites. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin, 34*(10), 1303-1314. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672083200

Casale, S., & Fioravanti, G. (2018). Why Narcissists are at Risk for Developing Facebook Addiction: The Need to be Admired and the Need to Belong. *Addictive Behaviors, 76*, 312-318. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.08.038

Casale, S., Fioravanti, G., & Rugai, L. (2016). Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissists: Who is at Higher Risk for Social Networking Addiction? *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 19*(8), 510-515. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0189

Crowe, M. L., Weiss, B., Lynam, D. R., Campbell, W. K., & Miller, J. D. (2019). Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Moving Toward a Trifurcated Model. *Journal of Personality*.

De Cock, R., Vangeel, J., Klein, A., Minotte, P., Rosas, O., & Meerkerk, G. J. (2014). Compulsive Use of Social Networking Sites in Belgium: Prevalence, Profile, and the Role of Attitude Toward Work and School. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17*(3), 166-171. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2013.0029

Dickinson, K. A., & Pincus, A. L. (2003). Interpersonal Analysis of Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism. *Journal of Personality Disorders, 17*(3), 188-207.

https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.17.3.188.22146

Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210-230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Foster, J. D., & Campbell, W. K. (2007). Are there Such Things as "Narcissists" in Social Psychology? A Taxometric Analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*(6), 1321-1332. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.04.003

Griffiths, M. (2005). A 'Components' Model of Addiction within a Biopsychosocial Framework. *Journal Of Substance Use, 10*(4), 191-197. https://doi.org/10.1080/14659890500114359

Griffiths, M. D. (2018). Adolescent Social Networking: How do Social Media Operators Facilitate Habitual Use? *Education and Health, 36*(3), 66-69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.07.034

Kircaburun, K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2018). Instagram Addiction and the Big Five of Personality: The Mediating Role of Self-Liking. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 7*(1), 158-170. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.15

Kircaburun, K., Jonason, P. K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2018). The Dark Tetrad Traits and Problematic Social Media Use: The Mediating Role of Cyberbullying and Cyberstalking. *Personality And Individual Differences, 135*, 264-269. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.07.034

Limbong, S. T. (2018, Desember 7). *Berapa Lama Waktu Ideal Menggunakan Media Sosial dalam Sehari?* Klikdokter. https://www.klikdokter.com/psikologi/kesehatan-mental/berapa-83lama-waktu-ideal-menggunakan-media-sosial-dalam-sehari

Mariano, M. C. O., Maniego, J. C. M., Manila, H. L. M. D., Mapanoo, R. C. C., Maquiran, K. M. A., Macindo, J. R. B., ... & Torres, G. C. S. (2018). Social Media Use Profile, Social Skills, and Nurse-Patient Interaction among Registered Nurses in Tertiary Hospitals: A Structural Equation Model Analysis. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 80*, 76-82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2017.12.014

Nasrullah, R. (2015). *Media Sosial: Perspektif, Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sosioteknologi*. Bandung: Simbiosa Rekatama Media.

Nuraini, N., Aini, C. N., Lestari, K. A., & Sari, N. A. K. (2023). Penggunaan Media Sosial Instagram oleh Mahasiswa Ilmu Perpustakaan Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga. *JIPIS: Jurnal Ilmu Perpustakaan dan Informasi Islam, 2*(2), 99-104.

Petrescu, S., Pițigoi, G., & Păunescu, M. (2014). The Effects of Practicing Swimming on the Psychological Tone in Adulthood. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 159*, 74-77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.331

Raskin, R., & Terry, H. (1988). A Principal-Components Analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Further Evidence of Its Construct Validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(5), 890–902. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.5.890

Siddiqui, S., & Singh, T. (2016). Social Media Its Impact with Positive and Negative Aspects. *International Journal of Computer Applications Technology and Research, 5*(2), 71-75.

We Are Social. (2024, Januari 31). *Digital 2024: 5 Billion Social Media Users*. https://wearesocial.com/us/blog/2024/01/digital-2024-5-billion-social-media-users/

Wegmann, E., Stodt, B., & Brand, M. (2015). Addictive Use of Social Networking Sites Can be Explained by the Interaction of Internet Use Expectancies, Internet Literacy, and Psychopathological Symptoms. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 4*(3), 155-162. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.4.2015.021