
An Italian validation of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ): Further evidence for a two-dimensional model of grandiose narcissism

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✎ **ABSTRACT.** Lo studio si propone di fornire un contributo alla validazione italiana del *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire* (NARQ), uno strumento self-report che consente di operationalizzare il modello bidimensionale proposto da Back e colleghi (2013). Tale modello differenzia gli aspetti agentici ed assertivi del narcisismo “grandioso” (*Admiration*), da quelli che hanno origine dalla tendenza all’antagonismo nelle relazioni interpersonali (*Rivalry*). I risultati dello studio, condotto su 300 partecipanti (età media = 31.20, *DS* = 11.6, 30% maschi) supportano la validità e l’attendibilità della versione italiana del NARQ.

✎ **SUMMARY.** *The present study aims to validate an Italian version of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ), which operationalizes the two-dimensional model of grandiose narcissism recently proposed by Back et al. (2013). The model differentiates between Admiration and Rivalry, two dimensions that entail the agentic and antagonistic aspects of narcissism, respectively. Three hundred individuals participated in the study (mean age = 31.20, SD = 11.6, 30% males). A confirmatory factor analysis supported the expected two-factor structure. Adequate levels of internal consistency were found for the overall NARQ scores, as well as for the Admiration and Rivalry scale scores. Although Admiration and Rivalry were positively correlated, they showed a distinctive pattern of correlations with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the Big Five Inventory. These results replicate Back et al.’s (2013) original findings and thus provide support for the validity and reliability of the Italian version of the NARQ.*

Keywords: *Narcissism, Admiration, Rivalry, Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

Narcissism is among the most important constructs in psychology, but also among the most controversial ones. From early psychoanalytic theories (e.g., Freud, 1914) to current conceptualizations of clinical and social-personality psychologists (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009), narcissism has been described in terms of contradictory processes and consequences. Typically, narcissists exhibit charisma and self-confidence, which tend to fascinate and attract others. At the same time, they show aggressiveness and lack empathy, which often leads to unpopularity and social conflict.

Back et al. (2013) have recently highlighted that many of the apparent contradictions related to narcissism can be resolved by adopting the *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC)*, a two-dimensional process-oriented model of the personality trait grandiose narcissism. The basic idea is that narcissistic self-regulatory processes include two related but distinct dimensions, Admiration and Rivalry, which entail assertive and antagonistic aspects, respectively.

As Back et al. (2013) wrote, “the narcissist’s overarching goal to maintain a grandiose self can be achieved by two separate social strategies: the tendency to approach social admiration by means of self-promotion (assertive self-enhancement) and the tendency to avoid social failure by means of self-defence (antagonistic self-protection). These two strategies are conceptualized as activating distinct affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioral pathways: admiration and rivalry” (p. 1015). According to the authors, failing to differentiate these two aspects does not permit a full understanding of the manifestations of narcissism and its underlying dynamics.

Reporting results from seven studies, the authors proposed and validated the NARC, by developing and using the *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ)*, a new self-report instrument aimed at assessing the two hypothesized dimensions of narcissism. The NARQ comprises 18 items, with half of them assessing the dimension of Admiration and the other half assessing the dimension of Rivalry. Each dimension includes three facets, which capture different cognitive, affective-motivational, and behavioral aspects of the respective dimension (Back et al., 2013). The facets of narcissistic admiration include the tendencies to have a grandiose view of the self, to strive for uniqueness, and to exhibit charming behavior. The facets of narcissistic rivalry include the tendencies to devalue others, to affirm one’s own superiority, and to display aggressive behaviour toward others (see Back et al., 2013, for a more detailed review).

Exploratory (pre-test, $N = 158$) and confirmatory factor analysis (Study 1, $N = 953$) supported the expected two-factor structure. Internal consistencies were adequate (Study 1, $N = 953$). Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients were .88 for the overall NARQ score, .87 for Admiration and .83 for Rivalry. Alphas for the six facets ranged from .66 to .83, which is still acceptable given that these facets were measured with only three items. Test-retest reliabilities were also adequate. Correlation coefficients were .79 for Admiration and .76 for Rivalry, and ranged from .62 to .79 for the six facets (Study 2, $N = 93$).

A significant degree of self-other agreement was found for the NARQ scores (.51 for Admiration, and .27 for Rivalry), quite similar in magnitude to that observed in the literature for the Big Five personality traits (Study 3, $N = 96$). This seems to suggest that Admiration and Rivalry are observable characteristics that can be rated by acquainted informants.

Importantly, although Admiration and Rivalry were positively correlated, they had a differentiated pattern of relations with the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979)*, the Big Five, self-esteem, and other traits related to narcissism, such as Machiavellianism, psychopathy, self-enhancement, and impulsivity (Study 4, $N = 510 - 1814$). Specifically, Admiration was more strongly correlated than Rivalry with the leadership/authority NPI facet (enjoying being seen as a leader and an authority), whereas Rivalry was more strongly correlated with the exploitativeness/entitlement NPI facet (manipulating and exploiting others, expecting favors from others). Admiration was positively related to extraversion, openness, self-esteem, and agentic self-enhancement, and negatively related to neuroticism. Rivalry was positively related to neuroticism and impulsivity, and negatively related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, self-esteem, and communal self-enhancement. The two narcissistic dimensions were similarly related to psychopathy, but rivalry showed a stronger association with Machiavellianism.

Furthermore, Admiration and Rivalry have shown distinct effects on several social and interpersonal outcome variables. It has been found that the negative consequences of narcissism on close relationships were mostly due to rivalry (Study 5, $N = 854$), that the two dimensions have unique and independent effects on perceiving and being perceived as narcissistic in group interactions (Study 6, $N = 202$), and that admiration predicted agentic behaviors, such as the use of self-assured facial expressions, whereas rivalry predicted a lack of communal behaviors, such as the use of authentic smiling (Study 7, $N = 96$).

A growing number of studies support the usefulness and the validity of the two-dimensional conceptualization of grandiose narcissism proposed by the NARC (e.g., Dufner et al., 2015; Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler & Back, 2015; Wetzel, Leckelt, Gerlach & Back, 2016). Moreover, the corresponding questionnaire, the NARQ, has been translated into various languages, including English, Polish, Dutch, Danish, Chinese, and Turkish (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Rogoza, Piotrowski & Wyszyńska, 2016; Zhang, Zhang & Li, 2017).

The present study provides the first validation of an Italian version of the NARQ, by examining its psychometric properties. We first examined the factor structure of the instrument using a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). We expected to replicate the two-factor structure observed in the original validation study (Back et al., 2013). The posited model, represented in Figure 1, consists of two correlated second-order dimensions, Admiration and Rivalry, each with three first-order variables representing the facets of the NARQ. We then examined the reliability of the scale scores in terms of internal consistency.

We investigated the construct validity of the NARQ by calculating Pearson correlations with the NPI, a well-established measure of narcissism, as well as with several variables conceptually related to narcissism. Specifically, we examined a number of variables included in the original validation study (the Big Five and self-esteem) and derived a

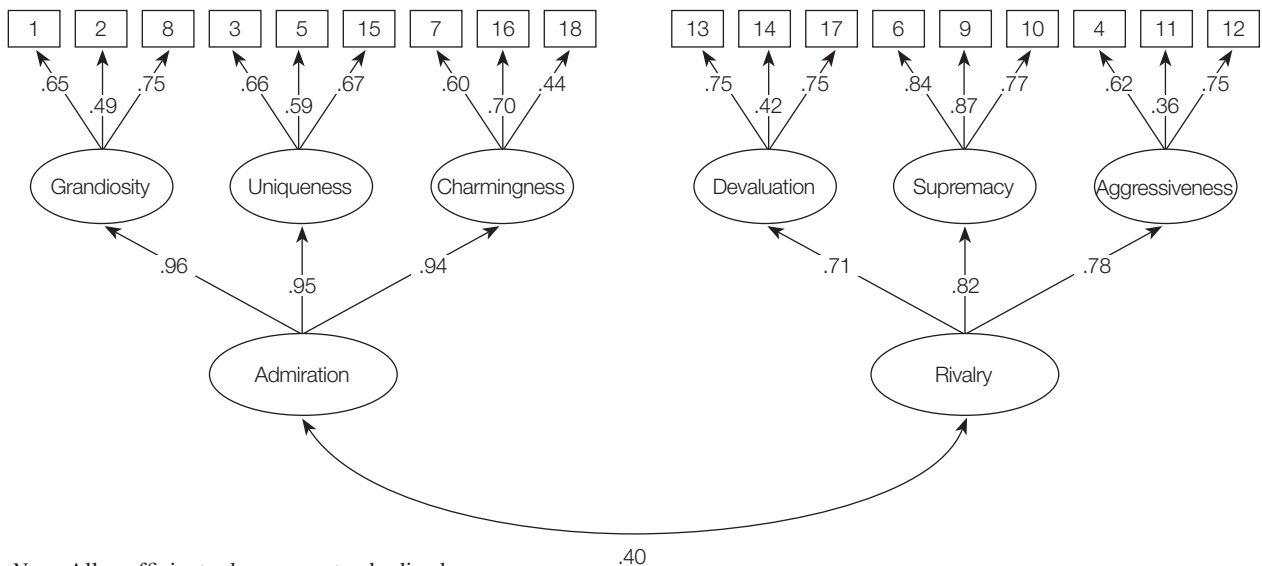
number of hypotheses from this study. We expected to replicate the pattern of results reported by Back et al. (2013). Most importantly, in accordance with the agentic and antagonistic aspects of the two dimensions, we expected Admiration to be most strongly related to high extraversion and Rivalry to be most strongly related to low agreeableness (i.e., aggression/hostility). Moreover, we expected self-esteem to be positively related to Admiration and negatively related to Rivalry. As the authors have argued, “admiration is conceptualized as originating from a self-enhancing strategy, it is characterized by self-praise and assertive actions, and it predicts social potency that comes along with ego boosts. By contrast, Rivalry is thought of as being fuelled by a defensive tendency to self-protect; its antagonistic nature leads to social conflict that comes along with ego threats” (Back et al., 2013, p. 1021).

METHODS

Participants

Three hundred individuals participated in the study. Their mean age was 31.20 years ($SD = 11.6$) and 70% were female. Approximately one fourth of the participants (23%) were university students, 50% were employed, and 27% were unemployed. Education levels were: junior high school 6%, high school 47%, and college 47%.

Figure 1 – A CFA model of the Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire



Note. All coefficients shown are standardized.

Procedure

The study was part of a larger project on personality assessment that was conducted at the University of Rome (Italy). Participants individually completed a self-report questionnaire, which included the NARQ, the personality correlates, and other measures that are not relevant to this study. Each participant was informed about the aim of the study and signed an informed consent form. Participation was voluntary, with no compensation.

Measures

- *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire.* The NARQ (Back et al., 2013) was developed for the assessment of “normal” narcissism, namely narcissism as a personality trait in the general, nonclinical population. The instrument contains 18 items that are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Each dimension comprises three facets, with three items per facet. The facets of narcissistic admiration are: *Grandiosity*, *Uniqueness*, and *Charmingness*. The facets of narcissistic rivalry are *Devaluation*, *Supremacy*, and *Aggressiveness*. The instrument was translated from English to Italian following standard procedures for translation and back-translation. The English and Italian versions of the scale are shown in Table 1.
 - *Narcissistic Personality Inventory.* The NPI is the most commonly used measure of grandiose narcissism. It contains 40 items with a forced-choice response format which requires respondents to choose between a narcissistic and a non-narcissistic alternative. We used the validated Italian adaptation of the instrument (Fossati, Borroni, Marchione & Maffei, 2011). As Back et al. (2013), we followed the approach by Ackerman et al. (2011) and derived three facets from 25 of the 40 NPI items: leadership/authority was measured by 11 items (e.g., “I have a natural talent for influencing people vs. I am not good at influencing people”); grandiose exhibitionism was measured by ten items (e.g., “I prefer to blend in with the crowd vs. I like to be the center of attention”); entitlement/exploitativeness was measured by 4 items (e.g., “I insist upon getting the respect that is due me vs. I usually get the respect that I deserve”).
- Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients were adequate for leadership/authority (.70) and grandiose exhibitionism (.77), but remarkably low for the entitlement/exploitativeness dimension (.28). This result replicates Ackerman et al.’s (2011) findings on the problematic internal consistency of the subscale and it is consistent with concerns expressed in the literature about the psychometric properties of the NPI (e.g., Brown, Budzek & Tamborski, 2009).
- *Big Five.* To assess the Big Five, we used a shortened, 15-item version of the *Big Five Inventory (BFI-S)*; Lang, John, Lüdtke, Schupp & Wagner, 2011; see also Ubbiali, Chiorri, Hampton & Donati, 2013, for the Italian adaptation of the BFI). The same questionnaire was used in the validation study by Back et al. (2013, Study 4). For each item (e.g., “has an assertive personality”), participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Cronbach’s reliability coefficients were .53 for scores on extraversion, .58 for agreeableness, .56 for conscientiousness, .59 for neuroticism, and .58 for openness to experience. The relatively low internal consistency of the five factors might be due to the use of a small number of items for measuring rather broad traits.
 - *Self-esteem.* Global self-esteem was assessed with the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*, a widely used 10-item questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants were instructed to respond to each item by indicating how strongly they agree with items like “I feel that I have a number of good qualities.” The response scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. We used the Italian adaptation of the instrument (Prezza, Trombaccia & Armento, 1997). Cronbach’s alpha was .86.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

The 18 items of the NARQ, with descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) are reported in Table 1. Univariate skewness ranged from $-.25$ to 2.31 ($M = .91$, $SD = .89$) and univariate kurtosis ranged from $-.83$ to 5.69 ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 1.97$). This indicates that the normality assumption was moderately violated (West, Finch &

Table 1 – Means and standard deviations for the NARQ items

#	English version	Italian translation	Facet	M	SD
1	I am great	Sono un grande	Grandiosity	3.14	1.31
2	I will someday be famous	Un giorno sarò famoso	Grandiosity	1.91	1.07
8	I deserve to be seen as a great personality	Merito di essere considerato una persona molto importante	Grandiosity	2.82	1.25
3	I show others how special I am	Mostro agli altri quanto sono speciale	Uniqueness	2.90	1.30
5	I enjoy my successes very much	Mi compiaccio molto dei miei successi	Uniqueness	3.48	1.42
15	Being a very special person gives me a lot of strength	Sentirmi una persona speciale mi dà molta forza	Uniqueness	3.67	1.45
7	Most of the time I am able to draw people's attention to myself in conversations	Nella maggior parte delle conversazioni sono in grado di attrarre l'attenzione degli altri	Charmingness	3.42	1.27
16	I manage to be the center of attention with my outstanding contributions	Riesco a pormi al centro dell'attenzione grazie alle mie imprese straordinarie	Charmingness	1.87	1.09
18	Mostly, I am very adept at dealing with other people	Sono in genere molto abile nel trattare con le altre persone	Charmingness	3.98	1.30
13	Most people won't achieve anything	La maggior parte delle persone non realizzerà mai niente di importante	Devaluation	1.85	1.32
14	Other people are worth nothing	Le altre persone non valgono niente	Devaluation	1.40	.79
17	Most people are somehow losers	La maggior parte delle persone è perdente, per un motivo o per l'altro	Devaluation	1.94	1.30
6	I secretly take pleasure in the failure of my rivals	Gioisco segretamente dei fallimenti dei miei rivali	Supremacy	1.98	1.33
9	I want my rivals to fail	Voglio che i miei rivali falliscano	Supremacy	1.86	1.22
10	I enjoy it when another person is inferior to me	Provo piacere quando un'altra persona si dimostra inferiore a me	Supremacy	1.59	1.07
4	I react annoyed if another person steals the show from me	Mi irrita quando un'altra persona mi ruba la scena	Aggressiveness	2.04	1.24
11	I often get annoyed when I am criticized	Spesso mi infastidisco quando vengo criticato	Aggressiveness	3.71	1.34
12	I can barely stand it if another person is at the center of events	Mi è difficile sopportare che un'altra persona sia al centro degli eventi	Aggressiveness	1.83	1.04

Note. Items are numbered in the order of their appearance in the questionnaire. The first nine items (1, 2, 8, 3, 5, 15, 7, 16, and 18) relate to narcissistic admiration. The last nine items (13, 14, 17, 6, 9, 10, 4, 11, 12) relate to narcissistic rivalry.

Curran, 1995). Table 2 reports descriptive statistics, gender differences, and intercorrelations for the NARQ scales. As can be seen, males scored significantly higher than females on both Admiration and Rivalry. This replicates the results of the original validation study performed in Germany (Back et al., 2013, Study 1).

Dimensionality

A second-order CFA was estimated to test the posited model, which is represented in Figure 1. Parameters were estimated by means of robust maximum likelihood estimation (MLR), using Mplus version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). The two-dimensional higher-order model showed close to acceptable fit on all criteria, $\chi^2(130) = 244.59$, $p < .001$, CFI = .906, TLI = .890, RMSEA = .055, 90% CI [.044, .065], SRMR = .067, except for the chi-square statistic, which was significant, and the TLI, which was slightly below the minimum requirement of .90.¹ Two alternative models were also tested: (1) a model with a single higher-order factor, $\chi^2(131) = 326.93$, $p < .001$, CFI = .840, TLI = .813, RMSEA = .072, 90% CI [.062, .081], SRMR = .103; (2) a model with two uncorrelated higher-order factors, $\chi^2(131) = 265.96$, $p < .001$, CFI = .890, TLI = .871, RMSEA = .059, 90% CI [.049, .070], SRMR = .109. These models did not meet the criteria for adequate fit. Moreover, according to the chi-square difference test, the posited model yielded a significantly better fit than both model 1 [$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 82.34$, $p < .001$] and model 2 [$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 21.37$, $p < .001$]. This provides further support for the expected factor structure.

Standardized loadings of items on first-order factors were all significant ($p < .001$) and greater than .35 ($M = .67$). First-order factors had substantial standardized loadings on the respective higher-order factor, ranging from .71 for devaluation to .97 for grandiosity ($M = .86$). The two second-order factors (Admiration and Rivalry) showed a latent correlation of .40 ($p < .001$). This correlation is consistent with the presence of a broad narcissistic trait at the apex of the hierarchy, which reflects a general tendency to create and maintain a grandiose self (Back et al., 2013).

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha for the overall NARQ score was .84, it was .83 for Admiration and .81 for Rivalry. The alphas of the six facet domains are reported on the main diagonal of Table 2. Coefficients are in the range of .58-.86. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .29 to .79 ($M = .50$; $SD = .14$).

Construct validity

Table 3 reports Pearson correlations between the NARQ and the NPI dimensions. Narcissistic admiration correlated substantially with NPI Leadership/Authority ($r = .56$, $p < .001$) and NPI Grandiose Exhibitionism ($r = .52$, $p < .001$). The correlation with NPI Entitlement/Exploitativeness was smaller ($r = .23$, $p < .001$). Rivalry, by contrast, was moderately correlated with all NPI scales (values of r were in the range of .27-.29, all $p < .001$).

Table 4 reports Pearson correlations of the NARQ with the Big Five and self-esteem. Among the Big Five, narcissistic admiration correlated positively with extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness, and negatively with neuroticism. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry correlated negatively and strongest with agreeableness, and to a lesser extent with conscientiousness and openness. As expected, self-esteem was positively correlated with Admiration, and negatively correlated with Rivalry.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current study, we tested the psychometric properties of an Italian version of the *Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire* (NARQ). Confirmatory factor analysis supported the proposed factor structure. The model consists of two second-order factors, admiration and rivalry, which reflect two core aspects of narcissism, each encompassing three lower-order facets. Admiration and rivalry were moderately correlated (.40 in the present study, .61 in Back et al.'s study - 2013, in a German sample).

1 When we ran the model, a negative error variance estimate was observed for the grandiosity first-order factor. The 95% confidence interval around the estimate includes zero (-.253, .184). Moreover, the standard error of this parameter has approximately the same magnitude as that of the other standard errors. Accordingly, this improper solution can be reasonably attributed to the random sampling variability around a population value variance that is close zero (Dillon, Kumar & Mulani, 1987). We therefore re-estimated the model by constraining the error variance of grandiosity to be equal to those of the other first-order factors that loaded on admiration. The model yielded proper estimates and the overall fit was not affected: $\Delta\chi^2(2) = .07$, $p = .97$.

Table 2 – Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations for the NARQ scales, Cronbach's alpha, and gender differences

	Total sample									Gender differences							
	Descriptive statistics		Intercorrelations for the NARQ scales									Males		Females		t-test	
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD	M	SD	t(df)	d
1. NARQ	2.52	.64	.84									2.69	.71	2.45	.60	2.92(290)**	.37
2. Admiration	3.03	.84	.83**	.83								3.19	.91	2.95	.79	2.24(290)*	.29
3. Grandiosity	2.62	.94	.71**	.85**	.63							2.88	.96	2.51	.91	3.10(290)**	.39
4. Uniqueness	3.35	1.09	.73**	.87**	.62**	.68						3.38	1.19	3.34	1.05	.26(290)	.03
5. Charmingness	3.10	.94	.66**	.81**	.56**	.53**	.63					3.32	1.12	3.01	.84	2.35(290)*	.33
6. Rivalry	2.02	.75	.79**	.32**	.28**	.29**	.23**	.81				2.19	.84	1.95	.70	2.31(290)*	.32
7. Devaluation	1.73	.91	.56**	.19**	.22**	.11	.17**	.75**	.65			2.05	1.05	1.59	.80	3.63(290)**	.51
8. Aggressiveness	2.53	.89	.66**	.36**	.26**	.41**	.24**	.73**	.28**	.58		2.57	.93	2.51	.87	.58(290)	.07
9. Supremacy	1.80	1.07	.63**	.20**	.18**	.18**	.15*	.86**	.49**	.86		1.93	1.17	1.75	1.02	1.36(290)	.17

Note. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are on the diagonal of the correlation matrix; t = two-sample t-test for investigating gender differences in the NARQ scales; df = degrees of freedom; d = Cohen's d; positive values indicate higher means for males; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Table 3 – Correlations between NARQ and NPI scales

	NPI Leadership/Authority	NPI Grandiose Exhibitionism	NPI Entitlement/Exploitativeness
NARQ	.52	.51	.32
NARQ Admiration	.56	.52	.23
NARQ Rivalry	.27	.29	.29

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4 – Correlations of NARQ with the Big Five and self-esteem

	NARQ	
	Admiration	Rivalry
Extraversion	.28*	-.09
Agreeableness	-.05	-.45*
Conscientiousness	.26*	-.11*
Neuroticism	-.13*	.08
Openness	.21*	-.16*
Self-esteem	.31*	-.13*

Note. * $p < .01$

Adequate levels of internal consistency were found at each level (i.e., for the overall NARQ score, for the Admiration and Rivalry dimensions, and for the respective subscales). These results suggest that the NARQ can be used as an overall measure of narcissism (i.e., the tendency to create and maintain a grandiose self), or as a measure that differentiates between assertive and antagonistic aspects of narcissism, depending on the aim of the study. Future studies with larger and representative samples are needed to replicate and confirm our results. Moreover, future studies should assess the cross-national invariance properties of the NARQ, examining whether admiration and rivalry have similar meanings across different cultural groups. This would allow to compare across countries the means of both dimensions, as well as their relations with relevant outcomes.

The total NARQ score represents an alternative to the NPI, a widely used instrument that has been subject to criticism regarding its psychometric properties (Grosz

et al., in press). Most importantly, Back et al. (2013) have argued that distinguishing between admiration and rivalry instead of using an overall measure permits a more nuanced understanding of narcissism and accumulating evidence backs up this claim (e.g., Dufner et al., 2015; Leckelt et al., 2015). The two dimensions indeed have different correlates. Narcissistic admiration, for example, which seems to encompass the adaptive aspects of narcissism, is mostly related to agentic traits (extraversion and openness), and to high levels of global self-esteem. Narcissistic rivalry, which appears to capture some maladaptive aspects of narcissism, is substantially related to low agreeableness, as well as to low self-esteem. Although the view of narcissism as a combination of high agency and low communion is not novel (e.g., Bradlee & Emmons, 1992), Back et al.'s (2013) findings have the merit to disentangle the mechanisms underlying these relations, providing a valid and reliable multifaceted measure of narcissism.

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