

For health or for clout? An investigation of the influence of narcissism on exercise addiction among collegiate students

Anthony Antonio*

College of Sports, Exercise, and Recreation, Bulacan State University, Philippines.

* Correspondence: Anthony Antonio; anthony.antonio@bulsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The aims of the study were to describe the levels of narcissism, both grandiose and vulnerable, and exercise addiction among Filipino collegiate students, and to investigate the influence of both forms of narcissism on exercise addiction. This study employed a quantitative predictive design, using multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism on exercise addiction among 103 randomly selected university students (mean age 19.61 ± 1.29). Participants completed a Google Form survey containing three validated instruments measuring grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and exercise addiction. The results showed that male students exhibited higher levels of narcissistic grandiosity (52.72 ± 18.55 vs. 45.29 ± 14.20 ; $t=2.20$, $p=.030$) and exercise addiction (28.14 ± 6.58 vs. 23.44 ± 7.11 ; $t=3.43$, $p<.001$) compared to females, whereas narcissistic vulnerability levels were identical across sexes (36.76 ± 11.40 vs. 36.76 ± 12.14 ; $t=0.001$, $p=.999$). Regression analyses revealed that among females, both narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability significantly predicted exercise addiction ($p<0.05$), whereas among males, only narcissistic grandiosity was a significant predictor ($p<0.05$), with both traits emerging as significant predictors across the full sample. These findings highlight how societal pressures related to physical appearance and social image influence fitness behaviors among Filipino youth.

KEYWORDS

Grandiose Narcissism; Vulnerable Narcissism; Exercise Addiction; Filipino Collegiate Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Narcissism generally refers to an excessive belief in one's superiority. Psychodynamic and classical psychoanalysis define it in two ways: as a libidinal investment in oneself tied to ego preservation, and as either a normal or pathological state (Auerbach, 1990; Gottschalk, 1988). Trait-based psychological frameworks view narcissism as two-dimensional: grandiose traits like dominance and entitlement, and vulnerable traits like insecurity and emotional fragility. This is collectively known as the Janusian model (Jauk & Kanske, 2021). Modern personality psychology identifies three traits: entitlement (belief of deserving special treatment), grandiosity (inflated self-image), and vulnerability (low self-worth masked by defensiveness) (Ackerman et al., 2018). Pathological narcissism involves fluctuations between feelings of superiority and worthlessness (Wright & Edershile, 2018) and may act as a self-regulatory strategy involving blame externalization and validation-seeking (Wright, 2016). It can also function as a compensatory mechanism for lacking internal reward (Chester et al., 2016). Culturally, narcissism is both a trend and a taboo, driven by social media's promotion of curated self-image and instant feedback (Gabbard & Crisp-Han, 2016). Theologically, it is seen as a broken sense of self stemming from spiritual downfall (Bergner, 2016). For this study, narcissism is conceptualized using its duality: grandiosity, referring to overt expressions of superiority, dominance, and self-confidence, and vulnerability, referring to hypersensitivity, defensiveness, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal (Wink, 1991). Whereas earlier conceptualizations focused on internal dynamics of ego and self-preservation, more recent frameworks emphasize how narcissism manifests in social behavior, public appearance, and external validation (Ackerman et al., 2018; Chester et al., 2016), particularly in modern cultures shaped by digital platforms (Gabbard & Crisp-Han, 2016). This study compares these layers of understanding by examining both classic and contemporary interpretations within a Filipino cultural context.

The link between narcissism and exercise addiction can be explained through self-determination theory and the addiction-to-esteem model. These frameworks highlight how both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism influence behavior through extrinsic motivation and self-regulatory mechanisms (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021; Baumeister & Vohs, 2001). Grandiose narcissists, driven by admiration and status, tend to engage in exercise compulsively to maintain idealized self-images and receive public validation (Bruno et al., 2014; Cook et al., 2020). In contrast, vulnerable narcissists exercise to reduce anxiety and mask insecurity. They often use physical activity as a maladaptive coping strategy for shame and low self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021; Chen, 2016). These two types of narcissism therefore relate to exercise addiction through distinct pathways.

Grandiose narcissism operates through perfectionism and performance, while vulnerable narcissism functions through emotional regulation and avoidance. These theoretical perspectives reinforce the view that narcissism is not a monolithic construct but a dual mechanism with unique behavioral expressions that contribute to compulsive exercise. While earlier studies (e.g., Baumeister & Vohs, 2001; Spano, 2001) emphasized motivation and esteem regulation, newer findings (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021; Cook et al., 2020) further differentiate the behavioral tendencies of grandiose versus vulnerable narcissists. This study adds to the comparison by exploring whether those same motivational patterns persist in a collectivist society like the Philippines, where social harmony and humility may shape narcissistic expression differently.

Exercise addiction is commonly defined as a compulsive engagement in physical activity that persists despite physical, psychological, or social harm. Clinically, it is described as a behavioral pattern resembling substance addiction, involving loss of control, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and significant life impairment (Szabó et al., 2016; Ordu, 2022; Colledge & Meyer, 2022; Griffiths, 1997). As a behavioral addiction, it is marked by compulsive routines and an inability to reduce the behavior despite awareness of its negative consequences (Khazaal et al., 2024; Çakın et al., 2021). Psychosocially, it can lead to significant disruptions in daily life, including strained relationships, neglected responsibilities, and continued activity despite injury or distress (Landolfi, 2013; Maceri et al., 2019). Furthermore, exercise addiction is often intertwined with other psychological conditions, particularly eating disorders and perfectionism, suggesting a complex and comorbid profile (Márquez & de la Vega, 2015). Recent research has explored how variations in exercise protocols (such as low-intensity steady-state training versus high-intensity interval training) and AI-generated fitness programs influence physical fitness and potential exercise dependence (Masagca, 2024a; Masagca, 2025d). The conceptualization of exercise addiction used in this study includes two domains: health relevance, which comprises exercise habits, relevance, and quantity, and addiction tendency, which is computed based on the consequences of excessive exercise (Granziol et al., 2023). Although many of these patterns have been observed in Western samples (Szabó et al., 2016; Landolfi, 2013), research remains limited on whether the same predictors hold true in more collectivist societies. For instance, in the Philippines, group norms, religiosity, and body modesty may alter both exercise motives and the interpretation of "addiction" symptoms, calling for greater cross-cultural analysis.

The association between narcissism and exercise addiction is strongly supported by psychological theories and empirical research, particularly through its two key dimensions: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. According to self-determination and motivation-based theories,

narcissistic individuals, whether grandiose or vulnerable, are driven by extrinsic motives such as appearance, social recognition, and fitness image, which contribute to compulsive exercise behaviors (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021). The addiction-to-esteem model further explains how both forms of narcissism use exercise as a self-regulatory tool for maintaining self-worth and external validation, functioning similarly to behavioral addictions (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001). Grandiose narcissism, marked by dominance, entitlement, and admiration-seeking, has been consistently linked to exercise addiction, especially in public or performance-oriented settings where attention and praise are maximized (Bruno et al., 2014; Cook et al., 2020). Individuals with high grandiose traits often exhibit overcommitment and push through pain to maintain an ideal physique, particularly in appearance-focused sports like bodybuilding and wrestling (Miller & Mesagno, 2014; Altunhan & Ünsal, 2021). Systematic reviews confirm that grandiose narcissism contributes to exercise dependence by reinforcing perfectionism and competitive self-presentation (Bircher et al., 2017; González-Hernández et al., 2022). These findings are further supported by evidence linking perfectionism to physical fitness interventions (Masagca, 2024b; Masagca, 2025a; Masagca, 2025b). In contrast, vulnerable narcissism, characterized by insecurity, low self-esteem, and emotional fragility, influences exercise addiction through avoidance-based motives such as reducing anxiety, masking inadequacy, and managing body dissatisfaction (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021; Chen, 2016). Vulnerable individuals often use exercise as a coping mechanism not for admiration but to escape shame or emotional discomfort, which can lead to withdrawal symptoms and compulsive behavior. Additionally, interventions such as the manipulation of music tempos during training have shown promise in enhancing exercise experiences and possibly mitigating compulsive tendencies (Masagca, 2025c). The evidence reviewed suggests that narcissism's dual dimensions predict addiction through separate but overlapping mechanisms. While this has been well-documented in Western populations, there is still limited research examining how collectivist cultures may reinforce or inhibit these mechanisms differently.

Despite the rich literature explaining how narcissism predicts exercise addiction, important gaps remain. Empirically, there is a lack of data on the predictive relationship between narcissism and exercise addiction among Filipino collegiate students. In terms of population, existing studies overlook Filipino cultural traits such as social harmony (Saito, 2013), conciliation (Mintu-Wimsatt, 2000), and low assertiveness (Hamilton & Kuchinka, 2022), which may influence how narcissistic traits manifest and relate to addictive behaviors. Methodologically, few studies differentiate the dual types of narcissism (Wink, 1991) and their distinct impacts on the health relevance and addiction

tendency components of exercise addiction (Granzio et al., 2023). The lack of culturally specific research may lead to incomplete or inaccurate generalizations. Moreover, future research should investigate other cultural moderators—such as religiosity, social class, or family dynamics—that might influence how narcissism translates into behavior in non-Western contexts.

With these gaps, the aims of the study were developed, which are: to describe the level of narcissism, both grandiose and vulnerable, and exercise addiction of Filipino collegiate students; to investigate the influence of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism on exercise addiction in the domains of health relevance and addiction tendency. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Narcissism grandiose has a direct influence on exercise addiction

H2: Narcissism vulnerable has a direct influence on exercise addiction

2. METHODS

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The study utilized a quantitative research approach, as the variables were measured using validated and reliable instruments that generate numerical data. Additionally, a predictive analysis was conducted to thoroughly investigate the capability of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism to influence exercise addiction

The study utilized simple random sampling to select 103 students (45 females and 58 males) from a state university in Region 3, Philippines. All participants were enrolled in the Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness 1 course during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. To ensure the rigor and appropriateness of the sample, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Students were eligible if they were bona fide enrollees of the university at the time of the study and were officially registered in the designated course. Additionally, participants should not have had any prior experience in formal athletic training to maintain a uniform baseline of physical fitness exposure. Students from satellite campuses of the university were excluded to maintain consistency within the study population and to ensure that all participants shared similar academic and institutional contexts.

The sample size of 103 students is deemed sufficient for conducting a multiple linear regression analysis with two predictors, as the guideline of $N > 50 \pm 8m$ requires a minimum of 66 participants (Green, 1991), and detecting medium effect sizes with a statistical power of 0.80 requires at least 80 participants (Cohen, 1992). Thus, the present sample size exceeds both thresholds,

ensuring adequate statistical power, validity, and reliability. For sex-specific investigations, the number of participants per group—45 females and 58 males—remains acceptable for multiple regression analysis. Although at least 66 participants per group are ideal for testing individual predictors (Green, 1991), a sample size above 50 per group is acceptable for detecting medium effects (Cohen, 1992). In this study, the male group exceeds this threshold, while the female group falls slightly below but remains sufficiently close for valid analysis of medium to large effects, provided results are interpreted with caution.

2.2. Research Instruments

Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale

Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (Rosenthal et al., 2020) was used to measure narcissism which is characterized by behaviors like arrogance, entitlement, dominance, and unrealistic self-views (Price, 1989). A meta-analysis of 40 datasets ($N = 14,938$) supported the NGS's strong convergent and discriminant validity, with items correlating moderately with grandiose narcissism even after controlling for self-esteem and entitlement (Rosenthal et al., 2022). Factor analysis and item response theory confirmed its unidimensional structure and internal consistency (Crowe et al., 2016). NGS scores also predicted narcissistic behaviors while distinguishing them from healthy self-esteem, supporting concurrent validity (Rosenthal et al., 2020). It contains 16-item adjective-rating scale designed to measure the said variable. This uses a Likert scale (like 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "extremely"). Scores are summed to give a total grandiosity score, higher scores reflecting higher narcissistic grandiosity. Figure 1 shows the Likert scale used by the instrument.

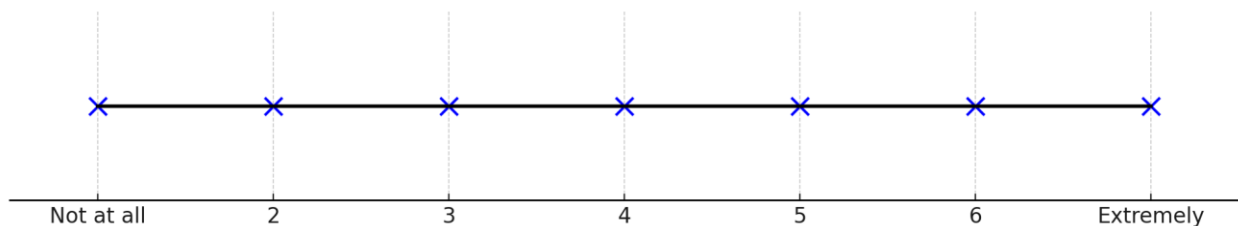


Figure 1. 7-point Likert Scale of Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (Rosenthal et al., 2020)

Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale

The Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale (Crowe et al., 2018) was used to measure narcissistic vulnerability, which is characterized by hypersensitivity, insecurity, shame, and fragile self-esteem.

A validation study across three samples ($N = 1,613$) supported the NVS's strong unidimensional factor structure and demonstrated its convergent validity with existing vulnerable narcissism measures and self-esteem (Crowe et al., 2018). Another study confirmed that the NVS shows strong construct and predictive validity when used to assess both stable traits and momentary fluctuations in vulnerable narcissism (Edershile et al., 2019). Furthermore, psychometric analyses supported the internal consistency and ecological validity of the NVS across different contexts (Henttonen et al., 2022). It contains an 11-item adjective-rating scale designed to measure the said variable. This uses a Likert scale (like 1 = "not at all like me" to 7 = "very much like me"). Scores are summed to give a total vulnerability score, with higher scores reflecting higher narcissistic vulnerability. Figure 2 shows the Likert scale used by the instrument.

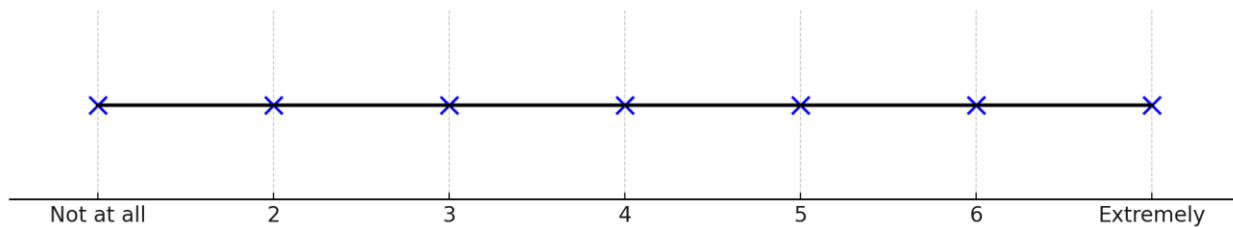


Figure 2. 7-point Likert Scale of Narcissistic Vulnerable Scale (Crowe et al., 2018)

Expanded Exercise Addiction Inventory (EAI-3)

The Expanded Exercise Addiction Inventory (EAI-3) (Granziol et al., 2023) was used to measure exercise addiction, which is characterized by excessive exercise, lack of control, guilt, exercising despite injury, and resulting harm. A validation study conducted across an international sample ($N = 1,931$) supported the EAI-3's strong two-factor structure (positive and pathological aspects of exercise) and demonstrated excellent reliability, configural and metric invariance across languages and sexes (Granziol et al., 2023). Another study confirmed the EAI-3's good convergent validity and internal consistency in Hungarian samples, with the scale correlating strongly with obsessive passion and distinguishing exercise addiction risk by exercise frequency and intensity (Szabo et al., 2024). Furthermore, psychometric analyses across different cultural contexts supported the robustness and reliability of the EAI-3 for international screening of exercise addiction (Granziol et al., 2021). It contains an 8-item adjective-rating scale designed to measure the said variable. This uses a Likert scale (like 1 = "strongly disagree" to 6 = "Strongly Agree"). Scores are summed to give

a total exercise addiction risk score, with higher scores reflecting greater risk for exercise addiction. Figure 3 shows the Likert scale used by the instrument.

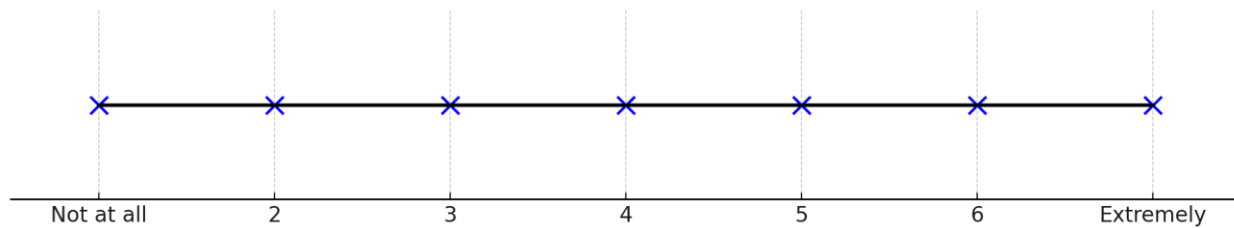


Figure 3. 6-point Likert Scale of Narcissistic Vulnerable Scale (Granziol et al., 2023)

2.3. Procedure

Data collection began after securing ethical clearance from the College of the specified State University in Region III, Philippines. The respondents completed a Google Form survey, which was distributed randomly. The form contained the digital versions of all the enumerated research instruments used in the study.

The study was conducted following ethical approval from the in-house ethics committee of the college at the state university in Region 3, Philippines. After receiving clearance, permission for data collection was obtained through coordination with the College's research coordinator. Participants were then thoughtfully invited to provide informed consent, ensuring they clearly understood the study's objectives and the measures taken to protect their confidentiality. They were informed that study results would be made available to both them and the institution's administration upon request, promoting transparency and fostering trust throughout the research process.

2.4. Statistical Analyses

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine whether the two forms of narcissism (grandiose and vulnerable) significantly predict exercise addiction. The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30. A significance level of $p < .05$ was used to determine statistical significance. The results include standardized beta coefficients, 95% confidence intervals, and model fit indicators such as R^2 and adjusted R^2 to evaluate the predictive strength of each variable.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The sample number was a small sample from a single university, but statistically acceptable.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographics	Female	Male	Total
Age	19.31±1.21	19.84±1.31	19.61±1.29
Height	157.09±7.01	170.21±8.66	164.48±10.30
Weight	54.46±13.77	63.87±12.21	59.76±13.73
Body Mass Index	21.94±4.61	22.25±5.69	22.12±5.25

The mean age of the participants is 19.61 ± 1.29 years. The mean height of the respondents is 164.48 ± 10.30 cm, while the mean weight is 59.76 ± 13.73 kg. The Body Mass Index (BMI) has a mean of 22.12 ± 5.25 . When disaggregated by sex, females have a mean age of 19.31 ± 1.21 years, a mean height of 157.09 ± 7.01 cm, and a mean weight of 54.46 ± 13.77 kg. Their mean BMI is 21.94 ± 4.61 . Meanwhile, males have a mean age of 19.84 ± 1.31 years, a mean height of 170.21 ± 8.66 cm, and a mean weight of 63.87 ± 12.21 kg. Their mean BMI is 22.25 ± 5.69 .

Figure 4 and Table 2 present the mean $\pm$ standard deviation scores for narcissism grandiosity (NG), narcissism vulnerability (NV), and exercise addiction (EA) among male and female participants.

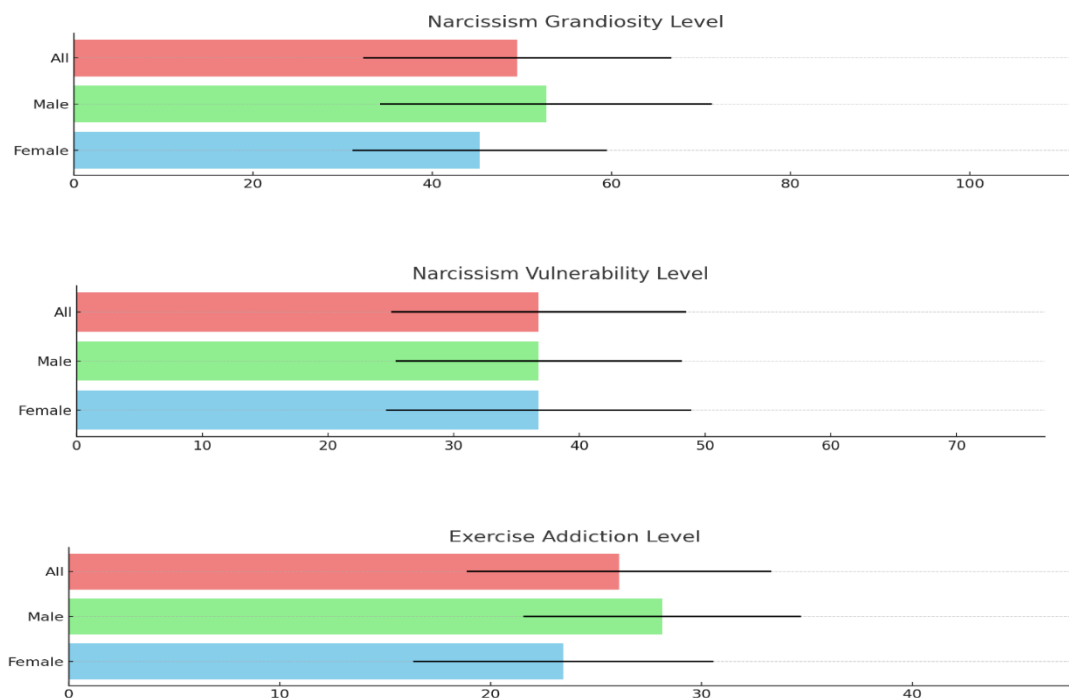


Figure 4. Level of narcissism and exercise addiction of the respondents

Table 2. Gender differences in narcissism grandiosity, narcissism vulnerability, and exercise addiction

	Female	Male	All	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
NG	45.29±14.20	52.72±18.55	49.48±17.19	2.2	0.03	16.95
NV	36.76±12.14	36.76±11.40	36.76±11.73	0.001	0.999	11.84
EA	23.44±7.11	28.14±6.58	26.09±7.21	3.43	<.001	6.89

Note. NG = Narcissism Grandiosity; NV = Narcissism Vulnerability; EA = Exercise Addiction.

Female participants had a mean NG score of 45.29 ± 14.20 , an NV score of 36.76 ± 12.14 , and an EA score of 23.44 ± 7.11 . Male participants showed a higher NG score of 52.72 ± 18.55 , the same NV score of 36.76 ± 11.40 , and a higher EA score of 28.14 ± 6.58 . Descriptively, males scored higher than females in narcissism grandiosity and exercise addiction, while narcissism vulnerability scores were identical between sexes, although females exhibited slightly greater variability. Considering all participants, the overall mean NG score was 49.48 ± 17.19 , the NV score was 36.76 ± 11.73 , and the EA score was 26.09 ± 7.21 . Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between males and females in narcissism grandiosity ($t(98) = 2.20$, $p = 0.03$), with a small to medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.44$), indicating that males scored moderately higher in NG. For narcissism vulnerability, no significant difference was found ($t(98) = 0.001$, $p = 0.999$), and the effect size was negligible (Cohen's $d \approx 0$), suggesting similar levels across genders. In contrast, exercise addiction scores differed significantly between males and females ($t(98) = 3.43$, $p < .001$), with a moderate to large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.69$), indicating that males were considerably more prone to exercise addiction.

Table 3 presents multiple linear regression analyses conducted to examine whether narcissistic grandiosity (NG) and narcissistic vulnerability (NV) predict exercise addiction (EA) among male and female respondents.

Table 3. Predictive capability of narcissism on exercise addiction across gender

Hypothesis		Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Decision
Female							
H ₁	NG→EA	.271	.292	17.739	4.212	<.001	Accepted
H ₂	NV→EA	.271	.214	11.726	3.424	.001	Accepted
Male							
H ₁	NG→EA	.174	.240	17.732	4.211	<.001	Accepted
H ₂	NV→EA	.040	.005	.276	.526	.601	Rejected
All							
H ₁	NG→EA	.224	.285	40.313	6.349	<.001	Accepted
H ₂	NV→EA	.148	.058	6.266	2.503	.014	Accepted

Note. NG = Narcissism Grandiosity; NV = Narcissism Vulnerability; EA = Exercise Addiction

For female respondents, NG significantly predicted EA, $\beta = .271$, $F(2, 42) = 17.739$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .292$, leading to the acceptance of H₁. Similarly, NV significantly predicted EA, $\beta = .271$, $F(2, 42) = 11.726$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .214$, resulting in the acceptance of H₂. For male respondents, NG significantly predicted EA, $\beta = .174$, $F(2, 55) = 17.732$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .240$, thus supporting H₁. However, NV did not significantly predict EA, $\beta = .040$, $F(2, 55) = 0.276$, $p = .601$, $R^2 = .005$; therefore, H₂ was rejected. Across all respondents, NG significantly predicted EA, $\beta = .224$, $F(2, 100) = 40.313$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .285$, leading to the acceptance of H₁. NV also significantly predicted EA in the full sample, $\beta = .148$, $F(2, 100) = 6.266$, $p = .014$, $R^2 = .058$, supporting H₂.

4. DISCUSSION

This study explored the levels of narcissism grandiosity, narcissism vulnerability, and exercise addiction among Filipino collegiate students. Descriptive comparisons showed that male students exhibited higher levels of narcissism grandiosity and exercise addiction compared to females, while narcissism vulnerability levels appeared similar across sexes. These findings align with prior research indicating that males typically demonstrate stronger grandiosity traits linked to social dominance and status-seeking behaviors (Grijalva et al., 2015; Foster et al., 2003), patterns that may be reinforced in the Filipino context where public image, physical attractiveness, and social media visibility are highly valued. In Filipino culture, where collectivist norms emphasize group harmony, the increasing influence of individualistic values through media may be pushing young men to project dominance and social superiority through physical appearance. Fitness and muscularity have become key avenues for this projection, with gym culture and online image curation reinforcing grandiose traits. The comparable vulnerability scores among sexes are consistent with findings by Pincus et al. (2009), suggesting a broader cultural shift among Filipino youth toward greater emotional openness across genders (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). This trend may reflect the Philippines' rising engagement with mental health advocacy and Western cultural scripts promoting emotional expressiveness in both men and women, thus narrowing gender gaps in emotional vulnerability.

The association between narcissism grandiosity and exercise addiction further supports studies indicating that individuals with elevated grandiosity often engage in excessive exercise to sustain an idealized self-image (Hausenblas & Symons Downs, 2002; Spano, 2001), a behavior potentially intensified by Philippine societal expectations. However, alternative explanations could include how structured physical activity settings—such as gyms or team sports—serve not only as

performance outlets but also as identity platforms. These environments can validate narcissistic individuals' need for recognition, especially in a culture that places increasing importance on curated digital personas and aspirational lifestyles.

Regression analyses revealed that among female students, both narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability significantly predicted exercise addiction, aligning with research that highlights the role of emotional insecurity in compulsive exercise behaviors under cultural pressures for slimness and physical perfection (Pincus et al., 2009). Among male students, only narcissistic grandiosity significantly predicted exercise addiction, suggesting that Filipino men may be more driven by grandiosity-related motivations than vulnerability-related factors (Grijalva et al., 2015; Foster et al., 2003). This may reflect gendered expressions of narcissism in the Philippines, where men may externalize self-worth through visible achievement and physique, while women may internalize body image concerns and emotional regulation through exercise. Cultural expectations for men to appear strong and successful may amplify grandiose behaviors, while women navigate both appearance standards and emotional insecurities in more complex ways.

Across the full sample, both narcissistic dimensions emerged as significant predictors, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive interventions targeting both appearance-based and vulnerability-driven exercise behaviors. In a Filipino context, where family honor, religious morality, and peer validation are highly influential, interventions should be framed in culturally resonant language. Programs might benefit from integrating communal support, addressing internalized appearance ideals, and challenging extrinsic validation norms, particularly those perpetuated by social media.

While these findings contribute to understanding the psychological underpinnings of exercise addiction among Filipino students, the study is limited by its sample drawn from a single university and its cross-sectional design, which limits generalizability and causal interpretations (Szabo et al., 2015). Additional limitations include the reliance on self-report measures, which may be influenced by social desirability bias—a relevant concern in collectivist cultures like the Philippines, where maintaining a socially acceptable image is emphasized (Saito, 2013; Mintu-Wimsatt, 2000; Hamilton & Kuchinka, 2022). Moreover, unmeasured sociocultural variables, such as religiosity, socioeconomic pressures, or peer modeling, may play mediating roles in the narcissism–exercise addiction link and warrant further investigation.

In summary, the findings of this study highlight the complex relationship between narcissistic traits and exercise addiction among Filipino collegiate students, demonstrating that both narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability play important roles, though with gender-specific patterns. The results emphasize how Filipino cultural values—including public image, body aesthetics, emotional openness, and social conformity—influence the motivations behind compulsive exercise behaviors. While this study adds culturally grounded insight to existing psychological literature, its generalizability is limited by the sample's institutional scope, cross-sectional nature, and lack of broader sociocultural variables. Future studies should diversify samples across regions and institutions, incorporate longitudinal designs, and explore cultural mediators to deepen understanding of this evolving phenomenon among Filipino youth (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Szabo et al., 2015).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrated that narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability are important psychological traits influencing exercise addiction among Filipino collegiate students, with gender-specific patterns emerging. Male students exhibited higher grandiosity-related tendencies tied to exercise behaviors, while both grandiosity and vulnerability predicted exercise addiction among female students, reflecting differing motivational pathways. The significance of these findings lies in their contribution to understanding how culturally reinforced values around physical appearance and social image interact with personality traits to shape compulsive fitness behaviors. Recognizing this interplay is essential for informing early identification and intervention efforts. Practically, the results support the development of university health programs that incorporate psychoeducation on healthy exercise motivations, self-image, and emotional regulation. Interventions should include gender-sensitive counseling services, body image and resilience workshops, and training for educators and health staff to recognize signs of exercise addiction. These initiatives must be culturally responsive and realistically implemented through student wellness centers and integrated mental health support. Although limited by its single-site sample and cross-sectional design, the study provides valuable insights and highlights the need for broader, longitudinal research to deepen understanding of these dynamics across diverse Filipino student populations.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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