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AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NARCISSISTIC INJURY

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To my beloved family and those who do not lose hope despite everything…

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ÖZET

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Bu çalışmada, yetişkin bireylerde narsistik yaralanma deneyiminin derinlemesine araştırılması hedeflenmiştir. Kişilerin öznel deneyimlerini derinlemesine anlamak adına nitel araştırma stratejisi tercih edilmiş ve bu kapsamda Beş Faktör Narsisizm Ölçeği Kısa Form puanları doğrultusunda amaca uygun 7 kişi ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yürütülmüştür. Veriler Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonuçlarına göre "kırılgan benliği bir arada tutmak için grandiyöz zırh", "sarsılmaz benlik imajı sunmak", "incinmemek için duygulara temastan kaçınmak", "mağdur olarak hak görmek", "kendine yönelen yıkıcılık", "ötekinin eksikliğinden benliğin yeniden inşası" ve "yaralanmış benliğin onarım ihtiyacı" olmak üzere yedi tema oluşturulmuştur. Oluşan temalar ile klinik etkiler ilgili literatür doğrultusunda tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Narsistik yaralanma, narsisizm, travmatik deneyim, yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik analiz, nitel metodoloji

ABSTRACT

Köroğlu, Deniz. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of The Narcissistic Injury, Başkent University, Institute of Social Sciences, Clinical Psychology Master's Program with Thesis, 2024.

The current study aimed to examine in-depth the experience of narcissistic injury in adults. A qualitative research strategy was preferred to understand individuals' subjective experiences in-depth. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 individuals suitable for the purpose in line with the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory Short-Form scores. The data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method. According to the analysis results, seven themes were created, including "Grandiose Armor to Hold the Broken Self Together", "Presenting an Unshakable Self-Image", "Avoid Emotions to Avoid Getting Hurt", "Feeling Entitled as A Victim", "Self-Directed Destructiveness", "Reconstruction of The Self with The Lack of The Other", and "The Wounded Self's Need for Repair". The emerging themes and clinical effects were discussed in line with the relevant literature.

Keywords: Narcissistic injury, narcissism, traumatic experience, interpretative phenomenological analysis, qualitative methodology

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

The word "*narcissism*" is rooted etymologically in the ancient Greek myth of Narcissus. Even though the earliest known examples date back to 50 BCE and there are various versions, one of the most common versions of the myth is based on Ovid. Accordingly, Narcissus is a young and beautiful boy who rejects the love of Echo and others as unworthy. One day, he bends down to the edge of a lake to quench his thirst and can't help looking at his reflection in the water. He was fascinated by the beauty of the face he saw in the reflection. Narcissus, who thinks his reflection in the water is a real body, loves a skinless dream. Over time, Narcissus, who was unable to leave away from the beauty of his reflection in the water due to falling in love himself, could not meet his basic needs such as food and sleep. Thus, unable to get out of this loop, and he turned into a narcissus flower in time which bears his name, he faded away trying to reach himself (Ovid, AD 8/1717). This term is related to the ancient Greek word *narke*, which means bluntness or insensitivity. Besides that, the narcissus oil extracted from the plant is a narcotic, and the word narcotic was derived from the ancient Greek narcissus word for sleep or numbness which is rooted *narke*. With reference to this, the myth of Narcissus can also be considered in terms of the narcissistic bliss and euphoric effects of narcotics. It is not surprising, therefore, the psychoanalytic theories refer to drug addiction as a narcissistic disorder. (Wurmser, 1974). Also, the place of Echo, which lost its own voice and was punished as only echoing what was said to it, should not be overlooked in the myth of Narcissus. According to Juliet Mitchell, Echo is the absolute other who could tell Narcissus where he is if she could speak (Mitchell, 2000). At the same time, this narrative inspired art and literature in Western civilization. For instance, *Narcissus* by Caravaggio, *Echo and Narcissus* by Waterhouse,

Metamorphosis of Narcissus by Dali, *Narcissus* by Cossiers, *La Mort de Narcisse* by Fabre, *Echo and Narcissus* by Poussin and as a modern interpretation, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* by Hockney. Seeing traces of the myth of narcissus in a line extending from the Baroque period to neoclassicism, from surrealism to pop art shows the power of the narrative. In addition to this, narcissism is a theme that has also been studied heaps of times in cinema and literature. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* written by Oscar Wilde, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Tolstoy, and *Sunset Blvd.*, a film by Billy Wilder, exemplify narcissism's strong influence on art and culture.

Narcissism is a concept that has been studied extensively from mythology to Freud, from Kernberg to Kohut, extending from there to psychiatric diagnostic books, and constitutes a voluminous literature. Havelock Ellis first used the concept of narcissism in 1898 in association with the myth of narcissism. Ellis defines this concept as the subject's directing their sexual feelings to themselves as a result of self-admiration for themselves (Ellis, 1898; Pulver, 1970). Afterward, Paul Näcke was the first credited to use the term narcissism in psychiatry in 1899 to explain the concept of autoeroticism in which the self as a sexual object is present. Accordingly, the term narcissism has been chosen to describe the attitude of a person who treats their own body in the same way that a sexual object's body is treated (Näcke, 1899; Vogeler, 1997). Sadger, on the other hand, associates narcissism with perversion as one chooses one's own body as the object of love (Pulver, 1970). Moreover, Freud discussed the concept of narcissism for the first time in his “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” and defined it as the inversion of libidinal development. Later, in his work “On Narcissism”, he interpreted it as a decrease in object libido and an increase in investment in ego libido (Freud, 2017; 1957; Gençöz, 2022). Furthermore, due to the multidimensional disagreements between Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg in the 1970s and 1980s, different manifestations of etiologies of narcissism emerged (McWilliams, 2011).

Narcissism is a form of organization in the personality structure. Getting approval, admiration, and sensitivity to criticism is normal up to a certain level. People try to live in such a way that they can feel good about themselves (McWilliams, 2011). Approval of behaviors strengthens their self-esteem, while disapproval hurts self-esteem. A healthy narcissistic investment has optimal functionality (Eissler, 1971). Narcissism is not only desirable but necessary for survival (Volkan & Ast, 2007). It differs from the normal nature of enjoying approval and sensitivity to criticism. In the narcissistic personality or pathological narcissism, this preoccupation reaches a disproportionate level that leaves behind all other issues (McWilliams, 2011). Personality can be defined as the composition of one's permanent traits and unique characteristics that make the person unlike others in several ways and similar to them in other ways (Feist & Feist, 2008). In other words, it reflects a person's unique way of thinking, feeling, acting, and connecting with others. Narcissistic personalities can be defined as personalities organized around an effort to maintain their self-esteem by obtaining approval received from outside themselves (McWilliams, 2011). Kernberg, Kohut, and Millon agree on the origins of the fragile but grandiose self as a reaction to incoherent and unemphatic early childhood interactions (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

1.2. Diagnostic Criteria for Narcissism

Narcissistic personality disorder can be defined as the pathological image of narcissism. Today, various diagnostic classification systems exist such as the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (International Classification of Diseases) (ICD), the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and The Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM). It is also possible to mention an alternative

dimensional classification system such as the Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology (HiTOP). Each system diagnoses according to its own systematic approach.

ICD includes narcissism in the unspecified category of personality disorders but does not detail it. Criteria for diagnosing narcissistic personality disorder are listed in the sixth chapter of the latest version of ICD-11, it is coded under the category of "personality disorder, severity unspecified" in the mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders section. Although a general definition of personality disorder has been made, there are no specific criteria for narcissistic personality disorder. According to ICD-11, personality disorders are characterized by a pattern of self-related loss of function such as identity, self-worth, self-view, and interpersonal dysfunction, also regulation difficulties in areas of cognition, emotions, and behaviors for at least 2 years or more for the diagnosis (World Health Organization, 2022).

Although based on a more rooted history, narcissistic personality disorder was officially recognized in the third edition of the DSM, and criteria were established for its diagnosis in 1980. DSM discusses it in detail as narcissistic personality disorder and also offers an alternative model for personality disorders. It is included in axis II, personality disorders section of the DSM. In the current edition of DSM-5-TR, narcissistic and other personality disorders remain relatively unchanged in their diagnostic criteria from the previous editions. In addition, an alternative model for personality disorders is offered in axis III. DSM approaches personality disorders as inflexible and pervasive enduring inner experiences and behavioral patterns that lead to impairments and stress that are stable over time. Personality disorders are divided into clusters in the DSM, and narcissistic personality disorder, along with antisocial, histrionic, and borderline personality disorders, is in cluster B, which is characterized as dramatic, emotional, or erratic. Narcissistic personality disorder

is specifically described as a pattern of grandiosity, lack of empathy, and need for admiration. Diagnostic criteria, defined in the DSM-5-TR includes the following: Individuals have a pervasive pattern of grandiosity which can be in fantasy or behavior level, and need for admiration. Also, includes their request for excessive admiration, unreasonable expectations of entitlement, exploitative, and interpersonally manipulative behaviors. There are accompanying feelings of arrogance, jealousy, and unlimited desire to be perfect, unique, and special. Additionally, these individuals lack a sense of empathy (APA, 2022; 2013; 1980).

The Alternative DSM-5 Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) is based on each personality disorder characterized by a specific pattern of personality dysfunctions and traits. In the case of narcissistic personality disorder, there is a unique pattern of self-impairment in identity and self-direction, and of impaired interpersonal functioning in empathy and intimacy. Diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder is justified when at least two of these four elements are moderately or severely impaired. The specific traits to be assessed are grandiosity and attention-seeking. (APA, 2022; Schalkwijk, et. al., 2021).

On the other hand, PDM considers personality as structure in terms of functioning and type and draws the pathological image as a narcissistic personality structure. Narcissistic personalities is included in the personality syndromes in P axis section in the latest version of the PDM-2. Accordingly, the focus is on personality styles rather than personality disorders. In this respect, can be mentioned PDM's classification as a taxonomy of people rather than a taxonomy of diseases. Personality is a phenomenon more about who one is rather than about what disorder has (Lingiardi & McWilliams, 2017). The P-Axis is classified at two levels, the level of personality organization and the personality style or type. Also, it includes the relevant age ranges for all chapters.

Narcissism exists along a continuum of severity from the neurotic through the psychotic level of organization. Toward the neurotic end of the spectrum, individuals may be seen as charming, successful, adaptable, and socially appropriate despite having problems with intimacy. On the other hand, with the increasing level of psychotic organization, individuals can suffer from identity diffusion and also can act destructive and toxic to others. On narcissism, individuals characteristically experience an inner sense of emptiness and meaninglessness that requires the ongoing affirmation of their worth and importance. They frequently fantasize about limitless success, power, glory, and beauty, but they lack of real pleasure in either work or love. Although an arrogant and grandiose sense of entitlement is seen in the face of success in these individuals, when the environment does not meet these conditions, they may feel embarrassed, jealous, and depressed towards those who have achieved the success they do not have (Lingiardi & McWilliams, 2017).

In addition to these, there is also discussed dimensional alternative to traditional nosologies as the Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology (HiTOP). HiTOP is a new classification system approach that aims to be empirically driven nosology based on improvements in quantitative research for the psychopathological organization introduced by Roman Kotov and colleagues. According to that model, six spectra are included: internalizing or negative affectivity, thought disorder or psychoticism, disinhibited externalizing, antagonistic externalizing, detachment, and somatoform. Narcissistic personality disorder is included in the category of antagonistic externalization with histrionic, paranoid, and borderline personality disorders (Kotov et. al., 2017). Disorders or syndromes in externalizing antagonistic spectra shares traits like attention-seeking, callousness, deceitfulness, dominance egocentricity, grandiosity, and manipulativeness (Conway et. al., 2022). In this sense, it is seen that narcissism from mythology to

contemporary psychology has been classified by various perspectives over time and is still a subject that is being discussed.

1.3. Subtypes of Narcissism

Throughout history, several subtypes of narcissism have been described. Commonly, the clinical literature discusses narcissism in two ways. Gabbard distinguished between the "*oblivious*" and "*hypervigilent*" type (1989). Masterson was conceptualized as the "*exhibitionistic*" versus the "*closet*" type (1993). On the other hand, Akhtar was defined as the "*overt*" versus the "*covert*" or "*shy*" type (2000) while Rosenfeld distinguished between the "*thick-skinned*" versus the "*thin-skinned*" type (1987). Subsequently, Russ and colleagues, divided narcissism into three groups as "*grandiose/malignant*", "*fragile*", and "*high-functioning/exhibitionistic*" (2008). Moreover, Theodore Millon divides narcissism into four groups as "*unprincipled*", "*compensatory*", "*amorous*", and "*elitist*" narcissism. These groups are defined through the combination of narcissism with other personality patterns. While unprincipled narcissism is similar to antisocial traits; negativist or avoidant traits are observed in compensatory narcissism. Amorous narcissism is a mixture of narcissism with histrionic traits. Finally, elitist narcissism is a derivative of the pure pattern and resembles the features of Wilhelm Reich's phallic narcissistic character. According to Millon, individuals with narcissism have suffered narcissistic injuries through traumatic events in the first years of their lives (Millon et. al., 2012).

On the other hand, Pincus and colleagues described the subtypes of narcissism as "*grandiose*" and "*vulnerable*" in the context of the hierarchical model of narcissism (Pincus, Cain, & Wright, 2014; Pincus & Roche, 2011). According to Pincus and Lukowitsky's the hierarchical model of narcissism, pathological narcissism primarily consists of three elements. These elements are respectively dysfunctional self-regulation, emotion regulation,

and interpersonal relations (2010). In contrast to DSM-5 classification, the hierarchical model situates narcissism on a continuum between two prototypes as grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. While the qualities of a grandiose narcissist can be defined as arrogant, shameless, entitled, and oblivious, qualities of a vulnerable narcissist can be defined as shame-prone, hypervigilant, depleted, depressed, envied, aggressive, helpless, empty, shamed, low self-esteem, and social avoidant. In addition, according to this model, narcissism can manifest itself in both extremes, either overt or covert. In this sense, it can be evaluated emotions, behaviors, and expressed attitudes as overt while cognitions, motives, needs, and fantasies as implicitly (Pincus, 2011; 2013). In this sense, the DSM classification of narcissistic personality disorder includes more of the arrogant or grandiose version of narcissism. The common aspect of narcissism behind all these types is an inner sense of insufficiency, weakness, shame, and a sense of inferiority. Although the compensatory behaviors of subtypes may diverge greatly from each other, yet their behaviors are shaped around similar issues and preoccupations (Cooper, 1984).

1.4. Narcissism Perspectives of Psychoanalytic Theories

Narcissism is a theoretically and technically central domain to all psychoanalytic movements from, drive theory to the relational model (Mitchell, 1988). The concept of narcissism was first used in literature by Havelock Ellis for one's directing their sexual feelings to themselves, following Paul Näcke mentioned it for autoeroticism in which the self is the sexual object (Ellis, 1898; Näcke, 1899; Pulver, 1970; Vogeler, 1997). Sadger relates narcissism with perversion because one chooses their own body just like another one's body as the object of love (Pulver, 1970). On the other hand, Freud defines narcissism as a libidinal investment in the self and considered the infant's investment in the self before the other as primary narcissism. According to him, narcissism appears as a libidinal

complement to the selfishness of the self-preservation instinct and as a trait that can be justifiably attributed to every living thing to some extent. Actually, the development of a healthy ego or self-esteem requires some degree of narcissism. Nevertheless, the early experiences of the infant are fantastical. The infant feels oneself be perfect and all-powerful as a result of the omnipotence of thought. Freud sees a contrast between ego libido and object libido. As one is used, the level of the other decreases as inversely proportional. In this regard, someone's greater involvement in their own self means having less energy for attachment to others (Freud, 1957; 2017). Freud was comparing the libido with the protoplasm of the amoeba. The more protoplasm in the main body of the amoeba, the fewer extensions of pseudopodia, and vice versa. The greater individual's self-involvement, the less energy individual has to attachments to others and conversely valid too. On the other hand, schizophrenic states are defined by Freud as the product of a massive withdrawal of the libido from its objects into a state of secondary narcissism and back into a self-absorption state in the early months of life. The individuals cannot transfer their libidinal attachments to their parents or analyst because there are no attachments left to transfer (Mitchell & Black, 2016). Namely, narcissism is turning the libidinal investment into oneself rather than the external object. If approaching the narcissus myth with Freud's interpretation can be mentioned that Narcissus invested all his libido in himself. At the same time, Echo idealizes the other as an analytic attachment type with Freud's definition and made all his libidinal investment in narcissus thus losing her voice and echoing to the void (Ogrodniczuk, 2013).

Subsequently, object relations theorists who advocated the concept of primary relatedness saw narcissism as compensation for disappointment in early relationships rather than a fixation on infantile grandiosity (McWilliams & Lependorf, 1990). Besides that, Karen Horney's view of narcissism focused on a cultural rather than the biological basis of narcissistic needs and tendencies and regard narcissism as the product of a certain character

temperament or early environment (1939). Horney thought that narcissism is essentially self-inflation, just as with economic inflation, tools seem to have a greater value than what they actually are, and self-love and admiration are not sufficient grounds for expecting this from others (Millon et. al., 2012). She views narcissistic striving conversely as a sign of self-hatred, deprivation, and expression of weakness rather than the function of self-love, self-glorifying, and arrogance (Ogrodniczuk, 2013). Shame and envy are the major emotions of the narcissistic personality. Melanie Klein has stressed envy in her work. So much so that if the person in the narcissistic structure has an internal belief that they have deficiencies in certain aspects and that their inadequacies are at risk of being exposed, they may envy those who seem satisfied with themselves or those who believe that they will make up for the deficiencies (McWilliams, 2011). Lou Andreas-Salomé describes narcissism as a dual orientation toward the formation of the self and dissolution of the self as the whole. According to Salomé, narcissism is based on the re-appropriation of the object up to self-annihilating expansion. In a sense, she mentioned a concept of narcissism that presupposes self-dissemination close to depersonalization, dissolving oneself into the surroundings and denying the boundaries of one's image. Her approach to the myth of narcissism also supports this. According to Salomé, Narcissus looks at himself through the mirror of nature. He dissolves his own image in the natural surroundings. Beyond seeing only his reflection here, he sees himself as everything with nature. In other words, it can be said that he sees the absence of his own image as the boundaries become blurred (1962).

In the psychodynamic approach, the views of narcissism were shaped mainly between Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg. Kohut radically formulated Freud's concept of narcissism and the reciprocal relationship between the love of others and self-love in Freud's theory of libido reconsidered. According to him, the source of narcissistic and object libido was not the only one but had separate lines of development. That was, a person's self-love did not

have to affect their capacity to love others. In that sense, he approaches narcissism from a developmental point of view. Kohut, at first like Freud, treats the beginning of development as primary narcissism. In this period, there is a caregiver, mostly a mother who will meet every need of the infant, but the infant realizes that the rewards come from the outside world, not from the inner world of the infant, and creates self-objects (1968; 1972; 1978). While Freud considered narcissistic individuals unsuitable for psychoanalysis since the libidinal transference is directed toward oneself, and there is no place to transfer to the analyst, unlike Freud, Kohut considered psychoanalysis possible with narcissistic individuals due to narcissistic transferences.

Kernberg, on the other hand, approaches narcissism from a more structural perspective and considers the main problem as impairments in self-esteem associated with impairments in object relations (1970; 1985). According to him, patients have been left with their primitive defenses. Narcissism is a libidinal investment in the pathological self-structure rather than an integrated self-structure and the narcissistic personality is a defensive structure. Individuals in a narcissistic structure, who are unable to develop a coherent image of themselves or others, have their images split into either all-good or all-bad, just as in the borderline personality structure. In this sense, narcissism can be thought of as a defense and a form of compensation against an early inhibition. Over time, the infant realizes that not all of his/her needs can be met at all times and becomes a vulnerable state. To compensate for this vulnerability, the infant tries to return to primary narcissism by idealizing their parents (Kernberg, 1985;1993; 1995). According to Kernberg, individuals in a narcissistic structure may not exhibit critical behavioral impairments on the surface, may have relative impulse control and may be socially functional. They have a great need to be admired and loved by others, but their emotional life is shallow. When external sources do not feed their self-esteem, they feel restless. While they idealize those from whom they expect narcissistic

support, they tend to despise and disdain their former deities, from whom they did not expect anything. Although they are eager to receive appreciation and admiration from others, they lack empathy and concern for others. They have a limited capacity to understand their own emotions just as they cannot understand the feelings of others and lack emotional depth. In narcissism, the relationship with the other is experienced as exploitative, as if squeezing a lemon and throwing the rest away. It either contains potential food that needs to be extracted or is already hollowed out and worthless. They do not feel particularly sadness and mournful longing and are unable to experience depressive reactions. Although they may show similar reactions to depression on the surface when they are disappointed or abandoned, they actually reveal resentment and loaded anger rather than sadness at the loss of someone they care about. In narcissism feelings like boredom and emptiness are closely related to stunted ego development, which is connected with the inability to experience depression. A significant prerequisite for emotional development and depth is the capacity to tolerate depression, which is connected to the capacity to grieve a lost object or one's lost ideal image. The tragedy of these people is the feeling of emptiness that arises because they need to receive something from others but cannot accept that they are receiving something (Kernberg, 1985).

While Kohut argues that empathy for the patients' experience, idealization, and devaluation can be accepted softly, Kernberg argues that the patient's defenses should be interpreted and persistently confronted. Kohut's view of narcissism can be compared to a plant experiencing developmental layover due to insufficient waer and sunlight. In Kernberg, on the other hand, it can be thought of as a plant engaged in a hybrid transformation. For this reason, while self-psychology theorists think that the plant will grow when sufficient water and sunlight are provided to the plant, ego psychology and object relations theorists argue that the damaged parts of the plant need pruning in order to become

what they should be. While self-psychology theory tries to stay within subjective experience, ego psychology and object relations theory act fluidly within internal and external positions (McWilliams, 2011). Masterson agrees with Kohut on the etiology of narcissism and emphasizes that narcissism is a developmental arrest. However, he is close to Kernberg in terms of the clinical picture and psychotherapeutic approach (Masterson, 2013).

On the other hand, Lacan associates his thoughts about narcissism with the theory of the mirror phase. According to this theory, the baby recognizes himself/herself with his/her image in the mirror and feels pleasure from it. This mirror can also be the mother's face or a reflective surface (Homer, 2005; Gençöz, 2022; Gençöz & Özbek-Şimşek, 2020). Thus, the baby sees their own body as an independent whole in the mirror and realizes that it is recognized by others as in the mirror. This is the beginning of ego formation (Bowie, 1993; Homer, 2005). In the mirror phase, Lacan points out that ego is what the baby sees as a whole that is capable of omnipotence. In this context, Narcissus' reflection in the water in the myth is similar to this. According to Lacan, narcissism is a developmental stage related to the mirror stage rather than a pathological condition (Gençöz, 2022; Lacan, 1977).

Psychoanalysis defines narcissism with its roots in traumatic frustrations, unfulfilled desires, deprivations, and deficiencies. From the psychoanalytic point of view, narcissism is the effect of the relationship of the subject with the other, who needs the other, a caregiver from the beginning. The sine qua non of this relationship is deprivation. Especially in the early life of the subject, feelings such as helplessness and terror, in other words, frequent, intense, and continuous narcissistic injuries can lead to pathological narcissism. In pathological narcissism, the subject cannot develop the skill of integrating negative experiences, emotions, and memories with positive ones because the positive experiences in their inner world and memory about themselves and others are so few that when they

integrate them with negatives, will be lost in negative experiences, namely helplessness, humiliation, anger, and aggression. The precaution that the subject can take against this chaos is to sharply separate their experiences of themselves and others (Kaptanoğlu, 2020).

1.5. Narcissism Perspectives of Other Theories

Narcissism continues to be studied within different psychotherapy approaches, theories, and therapeutic orientations. One of these is the schema therapy approach, developed by Young and colleagues, rooted in cognitive behavioral, gestalt, and psychodynamic therapy, whose primary goal is to treat personality disorders such as borderline and narcissistic personality disorder (Young et. al., 2006). Early life experiences are vital for schema therapy because the cognitive structures that make up the individual's current behavior patterns, that is, the foundations that make up the individual's schemas, develop in childhood. The foundations of maladaptive schemata that continue in a pattern in adulthood were laid in early childhood experiences. Namely, schemata are often based on toxic childhood experiences. These traumatic experiences in childhood are thought to be the basis of characterological problems and personality disorders. Traumatic experiences such as abandonment, rejection, neglect, and abuse are the source of these schemas. In adulthood, schemata are triggered by life events that they perceive as similar to childhood traumatic experiences. When schemata are triggered, emotions such as grief, shame, fear, or rage arise. These emotional responses to traumatic events are similar to narcissistic injury. Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder are prone to vulnerable emotions in reaction to narcissistic injuries, even though they usually do not directly show these emotions. Instead, they use schema modes, which are maladaptive coping strategies that result in emotional states (Dieckmann & Behary, 2015). Schema modes are a set of schemata or practices of schema activities that are active for the individual today. Schema modes in the individual

with narcissistic personality disorder are lonely child, self-aggrandizer, and detached self-soother. Schema therapy explains narcissism through the individual's early traumatic experiences and losses. According to this, the individual is swinging a continuum from smugness and arrogance to feelings of shame and worthlessness. Among these processes, there is an effort to overcompensate, and the therapist aims to strengthen their healthy adult modes in psychotherapy.

On the other hand, the cognitive behavioral therapy approach aims to change behavior patterns by working with thoughts and beliefs. From the cognitive-behavioral perspective, narcissism often parallels the DSM definition. Narcissistic individuals lack empathy, have grandiosity patterns, and are hypersensitive to criticism. These individuals oscillate between feelings of omnipotence and worthlessness. In the cognitive behavioral approach, it is pointed out that individuals' desire to be unique in narcissism paves the way for cognitive distortions (Freeman & Fox, 2013).

Beyond this, humanistic-existential approaches center on the individual, meaning, and existence rather than specific symptoms and diagnoses. Narcissism is also considered within this understanding. Although a direct relationship with narcissism is not mentioned in this context, it is possible to relate the experience of narcissistic injury within the existential framework. Existential psychotherapy focuses on the conflict of the individual facing the ultimate concerns of existence. These ultimate concerns can mainly be described as death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. In this sense, death has a specific importance and meaning in narcissism. So that, death itself is a narcissistic injury. As Tolstoy masterfully wrote in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, a person with a narcissistic structure, where everything in his life works as perfect, should not die. Death means a narcissistic injury for the individual with this personality structure and is experienced as traumatic. Death should be something

that happens to someone else, not to this omnipotent person because death transcends all this idea of being special (Yalom, 2020).

Moreover, in mythologies, the god figure is seen as omnipotent as well as immortal while death is specific to ordinary people. Therefore, it can be said that the person with the narcissistic structure strives for some kind of immortality, even in a symbolic way such as being successful to be permanent. In this context, it can be said that the experience of narcissistic injury is also a kind of death from the existential perspective.

1.6. Narcissistic Injury

Narcissistic injury can be defined as harm or damage to one's narcissistic structure of self due to an internal or external situation (Akhtar, 2018). Terms like narcissistic scar, narcissistic wound, narcissistic blow, narcissistic collapse, and wounded ego can be used interchangeably.

Freud mentions that humanity has suffered three great narcissistic injuries throughout history. The first was by Copernicus, who stated that the center of the universe was the sun instead of the Earth. Thus, rather than being at the center of the universe, humans became the residents of an average planet in one of a nearly infinite number of galaxies. The second great narcissistic injury was by Darwin. The idea of humans becoming a product of evolution, a part of nature, raged people just as much as the response to Copernicus. This rage is a response to narcissistic injury. The third one was by Freud, through the discovery of unconscious drives (Levin, 1995). Even though Freud did not directly associate narcissism with trauma but refers to early injuries in the ego of children as narcissistic mortification (1938). He points out individuals who experience an awareness that diametrically contrasts with their affirmed or ideal view of self. In one case, in *The Wolf-Man,* Freud stated that the blow to the narcissism of the patient was too much for him, and

as a result, he went to pieces and shattered (Freud, 1918; Campbell & Miller, 2011). Freud also states that loss of love or failures leave persistent traces on the sense of self as a narcissistic injury, and this contributes more than anything else to the feeling of inferiority commonly in neurotics (1955). The inner sense of inferiority causes feelings of envy and shame in narcissistically organized people, and these are central emotions that reflect their internal experiences (McWilliams, 2011).

On the other hand, Kohut characterizes narcissistic injury as disturbances of narcissistic balance. Narcissistic injury leads to intense feelings of shame and inferiority (Kohut, 1966; 1972). Levin emphasized that intense shame leads to a disruption of narcissistic equilibrium that is manifested as not just an unpleasant shame but also as a feeling of being hurt, accompanied by anger and a lowering of self-esteem (Levin, 1982; Morrison, 2014). Narcissistically vulnerable individuals are highly responsive to narcissistic injury. When a narcissistic injury is experienced, one may react with shy withdrawal or narcissistic rage (Kohut, 1966; 1972). Kernberg defines this as splendid isolation and states that there is a difference between normal narcissism and pathological narcissism in that sense (Akhtar, 2018).

Moreover, Herbert Rosenfeld stated that narcissistic withdrawal states and ego disintegration states, which are common in narcissistic structures where death is idealized as superior to life, follow each other (Steiner, 2009). In this context, narcissistic rage is a response to a real or perceived threat to a narcissistic one's self-esteem or self-worth. Narcissistic injury lies at the root of narcissistic rage. Namely, narcissistic rage is a reaction to narcissistic injury (Kohut, 1972).

Narcissistic injury causes defensive actions like dissociation, withdrawal, or splitting as part of a self-protective struggle while trauma creates a hole in the internal state which

threatens the coherence, well-being, stability, and continuity of the self (Gerzi, 2005). Threats or injuries to the functioning of the self are narcissistic to the extent that they interfere with self-protection or maintaining one's self-perceptions and are particularly associated with strong responses such as aggression, shame, rage, or withdrawal. Narcissistically structured individuals may become distressed by challenges to their narcissistic struggles. They can react to the perceived loss or threat of losing the narcissistic rewards with frustration, aggression, anger, or rage. They can try to compensate for perceived loss and heal the injury. The individual may be experiencing these, which seem like an *emotional tsunami*, as traumatic (Ogrodniczuk, 2013). When it comes to narcissistic illusions as opposed to psychopathology in determining emotional health, the attitude of the person towards this content is more important than the actual content of these illusions. In narcissism, rather than what the person thinks and does, the attitudes of the person towards what the person thinks and does are significant (Mitchell, 1988).

In this context, the perception of traumatic experience may differ from the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Even if the individual does not develop specifically PTSD, they may experience it as traumatic. For this reason, the focus will be on narcissistic injury through the trauma, grief, and loss experiences perceived by the individual.

1.7. Trauma, Grief, and Loss

The term trauma, whose etymologically origins mean wound, damage, defeat, and hurt in ancient Greek, can be defined as events that involve extreme stress and potentially threaten psychological integrity and life (Berger, 2015). Traumatic events can be as diverse as war, natural disasters, accidents, sexual abuse, and torture (Yılmaz, 1999). Rather than the nature of the traumatic events, the perceptions, experiences, and reactions of the

individuals exposed to this experience are significant (Berger, 2015). Trauma types are classified in various ways in the literature, such as simple and complex, primary and secondary, natural or human-made, betrayal, early childhood, and social trauma (Berger, 2015; Herman, 1992, 1997). Regardless of its type and reason for development, it is known that trauma negatively affects the psychological integrity of individuals and societies. Not all individuals exposed to traumatic events do not always have to develop psychological symptoms or disorders, but exposure to traumatic events is directly associated with PTSD. Although it was first included in the DSM-III diagnostic system under anxiety disorders in 1980, it was later listed under Trauma and, Stressor-Related Disorders with the DSM-5 and is still there (APA, 1980; 2013; 2022). PDM and ICD diagnostic systems include diagnostic criteria for Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD), unlike DSM besides PTSD. CPTSD was developed by Herman and focused on a chronic history of neglect, abuse, and trauma throughout childhood due to providing a broader range of post-traumatic conditions than PTSD (Herman, 1992; 2015). Moreover, the HiTOP system classifies PTSD in the internalizing spectra under the subfactor of distress (Conway et. al., 2022).

In PTSD, individuals may develop dissociative reactions such as flashbacks related to traumatic experiences and may avoid stimuli associated with these experiences. This avoidance may occur in the context of thought, emotion, behavior, or phantasy and may cause significant changes in the reactions of individuals. In addition to these, the inability to remember an aspect or all of the traumatic experiences, persistent negative beliefs about the unreliability of people and the world, accompanying feelings of detachment and alienation, dissatisfaction, attention, sleep problems, exaggerated startle responses, and angry outbursts may occur. These symptoms must last more than one month to be evaluated within the scope of PTSD diagnosis (APA, 2022). Which symptoms individuals will experience and how long these symptoms will last are related to various variables such as the type of traumatic

event, the duration of exposure, social support, individual differences, past traumatic experiences, and abilities to cope with stress (Hacıoğlu et. al., 2002; Carlson & Ruzek, 2001).

Traumatic stress also plays a role development of acute stress disorder, major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. Victims of prolonged, repeated abuse develop characteristic personality changes, including relationship and identity deformations (Herman, 2015). Moreover, traumatic experiences and narcissistic injuries also contribute to the personality structure (Forman-Hoffman et. al., 2016; Karaırmak, 2008; McWey, 2022).

In the psychodynamic formulation, trauma is defined as a neurotic syndrome resembling hysteria in origin. Understanding trauma is built on research lines of the study of hysteria, combat neurosis or bomb shock, and sexual and domestic violence (Herman, 2015). Accordingly, there is tension in the id-ego-superego system in the face of stress, and suppression is observed for the ego to regain its function (Yılmaz, 1999). Experiences that cause emotions such as fear, shame, or embarrassment can also resemble trauma. The trauma, or the memory of it, acts as an alienated object in the individual's psyche, even after long periods.

On the other hand, trauma can be classified as external or internal. While external trauma refers to traumatic events such as abuse, terror, or torture, internal or intrapsychic trauma involves the distortion or loss of ideals and meanings and is of specific importance for understanding the narcissistic personality. Internal trauma results from the change or loss of bond between the subject and a good object on which the ideals are based. Trauma results in damage or destruction of the idealized object along with the idealized aspects of the self associated with the object. While coping with the loss of ideals, a false ego organization including narcissistic strategies such as denial, omnipotence, invulnerability, and

limitlessness emerges as a result of traumatic experience. Separately from trauma, it also produces fantasies. When faced with negative experiences, there is a tendency to repeat aspects of the traumatic experience, especially those that cannot be symbolized or given a specific meaning, through repetition compulsion (Maldonado, 2006). Lacan expressed in that sense: "*In so far as a task is not completed the subject returns to it. The more abject the failure, the better the subject remembers it"* (1991).

Narcissistic vulnerabilities contribute to PTSD. Narcissism and its connection to developing PTSD after exposure to a traumatic event were mentioned in the literature (Freud, 1919; Bachar et. al., 2005). However, the literature indicates that the etiological role of narcissism in the development of PTSD needs further study. Individuals with narcissism are prone to develop PTSD after traumatic events exposure because these events are experienced as narcissistic injuries and blow to their narcissistic illusion of invulnerability. Traumatic events can threaten their narcissistic image of themselves as strong, brave, omnipotent, and resist any stress or danger. Traumatic experiences, that is, narcissistic injuries, can create vulnerabilities in this sense because their feelings of inadequacy or fears undeniably surface. Thus, their sense of invulnerability and uniqueness is shattered, and they find it hard to feel as vulnerable and ordinary as any other human being (Abraham, 1921; Bachar, Hadar, & Shalev, 2005; Freud, 1955; Kelman,1946; Simon, 2002; Ulman and Brothers, 1987). Gerzi pointed to the confusion between trauma, which has an active destructive component, and narcissistic injury, which is an indicator of deprivation and deficiencies. He states that there is a narcissistic injury in every trauma, but not every narcissistic injury creates trauma (2005). On the other hand, Symington considers narcissism as a post-traumatic reaction. According to him, narcissism is almost always the product of trauma (1993).

Any inhibition, especially traumatic experiences, that reminds the ego that it is not the subject or dominant of its act, confronts the ego with its powerlessness. After trauma, the ego experiences varying degrees of feelings of powerlessness, inadequacy, loss of control, helplessness, and anger. After a traumatic event, the ego comes to terms with the trauma. What an individual is trying to do is rewrite the story of the traumatic event in a way that will hurt their narcissism the least (Kaptanoğlu, 2000).

On the other hand, "grief" is from the Latin meaning heavy and weighty. Loss and the resulting grief are phenomena that will be experienced as long as humanity exists. Every person grieves for a loss they have experienced at some point in life. It can be a lost person, a relationship, an object, or a situation. Grief involves accepting the truth about loss and learning to live with that truth. Life, which is a journey full of losses from the loss of the mother's womb to the loss of life, is a series of losses. Although loss and grieving are mainly thought of as death, the experience of loss is more than that. Loss of a relationship, loss of occupation or status, or loss of health due to a chronic illness is also included in mourning. Freud emphasized that intangible losses such as goals or expectations no longer exist can also be considered as an experience of loss (1917).

The grieving process is a natural and adaptive response to a loss. Actually, this process supports growth and development, but when it is not terminated appropriately for various internal and external reasons, it can result in depression, PTSD, and prolonged grief.

Although grief dates back to the history of humanity, prolonged grief disorder was only recognized in 2022 by the DSM-5-TR in the trauma and stressor-related disorders section. DSM approaches prolonged grief mostly in the frame of a deceased person and death. In this sense, symptoms such as preoccupation with thoughts or memories of the deceased, intense longing, yearning, loneliness, intense emotional pain, numbness, death-related denial, decreased functionality, identity disruption, and meaninglessness were

determined for diagnostic criteria. From a psychoanalytic point of view, symptoms and defense mechanisms such as shock, distrust, numbness, anxiety, sorrow, anger, reproach, longing, preoccupation, guilt, regret, avoidance, idealization, identification, dissociation, and denial are seen in the grieving process.

Every grief experience is as personal as a fingerprint. The meaning of the loss, what symptoms it gives, and what old wounds it touches vary. Grief can be thought of as a psychological wound. In this sense, the ability to grieve is similar to the healing process of a physical wound. Those who cannot grieve may not be able to maintain long-term bonds of love. As Yalom points out, grieving is the price paid by those who dare to love others (2021). People whose emotional nature childhood needs are not adequately met, or who have suffered a series of losses may have difficulty in grieving. Also, a relationship that is overly dependent or burdened with unfinished issues is more difficult to end (Volkan & Zintl, 2008).

On the other hand, in melancholia, there are features such as a decrease in the capacity to love, loss of interest in the outside world, deep sadness, and a decrease in self-regard. There is no impairment in self-regard in grieving. While the world is perceived as poor and empty during the grieving process, in melancholia, this situation is experienced as a loss based on the ego. In grieving, the individual may leave the lost object and withdraw his/her libido from it. Thus, Libido can be freed and attached to a new object. In melancholia, the individual cannot withdraw libido from the object s/he lost. In order not to be separated from the object in fantasy, the self tends to become one with the object by swallowing it. According to Freud, this is a path to narcissistic identification. In other words, in melancholia, the ego identifies with the lost object, and object-loss shades into ego-loss (Freud, 1917; Terbaş, 2016).

Grandiosity, idealization, and devaluation are narcissistic defenses that are used to struggle to avoid an experience of unbearable loss, with the failures of such defenses an individual experiences narcissistic rage (Frosch, 2015). As stated earlier, this rage is a way to respond to narcissistic injuries.

Freud emphasizes the idea that unconscious hostility and guilt inhibit mourning (Freud, 1917). On the other hand, Ogden, claims that Freud's idea that when grieving is not possible, the relationship was based on narcissistic assumptions. That is a relationship not with a separate other but with another who functioned as a part of the self (2002). In such a situation, the person may go into a state of narcissistic deflation, in which life lacks a sense of aliveness, meaning, and joy. This loss is less a death rather than a loss that results in narcissistic injury with the accompanying feelings of shame, helplessness, and humiliation (Frosch, 2015). Moreover, Fayek (1981) states that the concept of death is a "*narcissistic wound*" since the rejection of one's thinking about one's own death (as cited in Akhtar, 2011, p. 98).

This study aims to examine in-depth narcissistic injury experiences through interpersonal dynamics in narcissistically personality organizations. The study examines how individuals with narcissistic personality traits experience the narcissistic injury process within the framework of trauma, grief, and loss experiences. It tries to understand how the narcissistic injury, shaped by the narcissistic subject's experiences and perceptions, such as trauma, grief, and loss, constructs meaning through interpersonal dynamics. In this context, individuals' perceptions of traumatic and grieving experiences in the interpersonal and relational dimensions will be qualitatively investigated through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In this respect, IPA is the most appropriate research methodology for understanding the experience of narcissistic injury in-depth.

2. GENERAL METHODOLOGY

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1. The reason for choosing qualitative research methodology and interpretative phenomenological analysis for studying narcissism

Although quantitative approaches based on cause and effect have been used predominantly in the psychology literature, qualitative approaches focusing on experience have gained ground in recent years. While personality is expressed based on positivist experimental methods in most psychology studies, humans are much more complex than this (Harré & Gillett, 1994). Meaning is constructed through language, and it is impossible to transcend language's limits. People perform their acts through speech. Therefore, language and speech are the fields of study of psychology.

The current study aims to examine in-depth how individuals experience narcissistic injury experiences. Recent studies of narcissism are based on quantitative research through self-report questions within the frame of DSM-5, and it is seen that they deal with personality in linear and cause-effect terminology rather than personality as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon. In this sense, this study aims to focus on how narcissistic injury through perceived trauma, grief, and loss is experienced in individuals with narcissistic personality organization and their meaning for them. In other words, how do these individuals perceive, experience, and interpret the experiences of narcissistic injury? When considered in the context of the research questions, qualitative research methods are more suitable for in-depth exploration of the experience of narcissistic injury and the meaning it creates.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is rooted in the philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger. It is related to individuals' experiences and how they make sense of them. IPA is an interrogative, flexible inductive, and idiographic qualitative research methodology

(Smith, 2004). It aims to understand the participants' world, considering the cultural and social contexts, and accordingly develop an interpretative analysis through their discourses (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this respect, IPA is the most appropriate research methodology for understanding narcissistic injury experience. Therefore, the IPA method was used to deeply examine individuals' narcissistic injury experiences and what these experiences mean for them and their social worlds in this study.

2.1.2. The ontology: relativism

Ontology asks what is to be known. Psychology is based on the Newtonian natural science ontology, a positivist-empirical understanding of science. According to this realist ontology, there is a cause-effect relationship between all beings in time and space. In contrast, qualitative psychology diverges from the way of thinking in traditional psychology.

According to Harré and Gillett, to understand the symbolic meaning world that people establish with language, there is a need for a relativist ontology that separates the categories of being from the cause-effect relationship and focuses on the dynamism of the categories of being. In this context, the objects of study for researchers should not be events and things but the speech acts of people themselves (1994).

2.1.3. The epistemology: social constructivist approach

Epistemology draws the boundaries of knowledge within the ontology. It defines what we can describe as knowledge and how much we know. Social constructivist epistemology claims that knowledge produces images rather than actual representations. According to social constructivist epistemology, the individual is the builder of meaning and making sense rather than the perceiver (Arkonaç, 2017).

Social constructivist epistemology is based on relativistic ontology. In this context, everything that people think and speak is constructed through language (Burr, 2003). Social structuralism is based on two fundamental principles. The first one is that social structure always brings with them a point of judgment for every human being. The second principle is that people's meaning for themselves and others is a product of interpersonal interactions (Harre & Langenhove, 1999).

2.2. Participants and Sampling Method

In the current study, a purposive homogeneous sampling process, suitable with IPA guidelines, was formed (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The first inclusion criterion for participants was being between 23 and 35 years old. This age range was chosen considering Sullivan's theory of development (2015). The second inclusion criterion is the tendency towards narcissism, measured in the short form of the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (Ekşi, 2016; Sullivan, 2015). Moreover, the exclusion criteria for the participants were the presence of a psychiatric or neurological diagnosis. In addition, individuals who had a traumatic experience in less than six months and have experienced the 2023 Turkey Earthquake were not accepted as participants, as it is thought that it may affect the process.

Participants were reached through word-of-mouth referrals, social media announcements, or the researcher's invitation. After the survey phase, the inventory results were evaluated, and the participants who scored between 75 and 225 points were contacted via phone and e-mail for interviews. Interviews were conducted with 7 participants in total. Four of the participants were male, and three of them were female. The ages of participants ranged between 23 and 33, while inventory scores were changed between 156 and 223 over 300 points. The names of the participants have been changed for anonymity (See Table 1). Apart from this, three more participants were interviewed but they were not included in the

analysis because the participant profile was not deemed suitable for the study. The interviews ceased because the sample size was consistent with IPA guidelines and the gathered data allowed for intensive and detailed analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Table 2.1.

Descriptive Information about the Participants

Participants	**Nickname**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Score**
P1	Cem	23	M	223
P2	Ulaş	27	M	195
P3	Defne	25	F	156
P4	Beste	27	F	193
P5	Özgür	30	M	157
P6	Yılmaz	33	M	209
P7	Ezgi	27	F	200

2.3. Materials

2.3.1. Sociodemographic information form

Demographic information such as age, gender, education, socio-economic status, and relationship were obtained from the participants with this form (Appendix 2).

2.3.2. Five-Factor narcissism inventory-short form (FFNI-SF)

FFNI-SF is the short form of the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI) developed by Glover et al. (2012). The short form of the FFNI is developed by Sherman et al. (2015). In the short form, 148 items were reduced to 60 items in total. The inventory consists of 5 Likert-type questions (1: Strongly disagree, 5: Strongly agree) for measuring narcissism within the framework of the five-factor personality model (McCrae & Costa, 2003). It has 15 five-factor traits that fall within the domains of grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism: acclaim-seeking, arrogance, authoritativeness, distrust, entitlement, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, grandiose fantasies, indifference, lack of empathy, manipulativeness, need for admiration, reactive anger, shame, and thrill-seeking. The Turkish validity-reliability study of the inventory was carried out by Ekşi in 2016. The subscale score is obtained by adding the scores of the related items in each subscale, and the total score of the inventory is obtained by adding all the subscale scores. The minimum score that can be obtained from the scale is 60, and the maximum score is 300, and higher scores indicate a higher level of narcissism. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be .87 for the overall score of the scale and ranged from .56 to .79 for the subscales (Appendix 3). Participants who scored within the first and last twenty-five percent intervals of the inventory minimum and maximum scores were not included in the study.

2.3.3. Semi-Structured interviews

Interview questions were created based on the researcher's curiosity, extensive literature research, and the feedback of the thesis advisor. It includes semi-structured, non-directive, and open-ended questions (Appendix 4).

2.4. Procedure

Necessary permissions were obtained from the Başkent University Ethics Committee for the conduct of the research, and the research announcements were delivered to the participants through word of mouth and social media. After the survey phase, the researcher evaluated the inventory scores and contacted eligible participants based on their inventory scores via phone and e-mail for interviews. The number of participants was decided according to the phenomenological interpretative analysis guide based on the data repeating itself and the categories reaching saturation (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this context, a small sample group was preferred for an intensive and detailed analysis. Before the interview, the participants were informed about the research process, and it was stated that the process was completely voluntary. It was also shared with the participants that the interview would end if they felt uncomfortable. Verbal and written consent of the participants was obtained (Appendix 1). A pilot interview was conducted to test the interview questions.

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the participants lasted between 82 and 144 minutes. Interviews were conducted by the researcher at the office of the Stress Management Application and Research Center at Başkent University. The interviews were audio recorded. The associations of the participants were encouraged, and flexibility was provided during the interviews. They were allowed to discuss the issues they thought were essential for them and express themselves outside the research questions. Thus, adding further questions besides the semi-structured interview questions was possible when the participant brought a new factor to the interview. At the end of the interviews, the participants were given a debriefing form and information about the psychological support services they could receive.

2.5. Data Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded. All interviews lasted 727 minutes in total and were then transcribed verbatim. The data was analyzed according to the IPA guidelines (Howitt, 2010; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The analysis process started with the first participant. The interview transcript of the first participant was read and digested over and over again. Thus, it was aimed to increase familiarity with the data. Notes were taken in the margins along with the feedback from the advisor as a research team member. Then, the coding process started. In this way, initial themes began to be developed from the comments from the transcripts. These emerging themes were listed by establishing a meaningful connection between them. Some themes were grouped and extracted based on their similarities. Themes were continually restructured and rearranged for each case. Then, the superordinate themes were developed with their subordinate themes and associated with the relevant passages in the texts. These steps were repeated for all transcriptions, creating a final table of the master theme list. Finally, again the advisor reviewed the results, and the final version of the superordinate and subordinate themes were determined. MAXQDA 24 software was used during the analysis process (VERBI Software, 2023). A list of master themes emerged consisting of seven themes across seven cases.

2.6. Trustworthiness of the Study

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research accepts the subjectivity of the nature of data and analytical processes. In quantitative research methods based on the positivist and determinist approaches, the researcher aims to reach the information that can be generalized by considering observable and measurable phenomena. On the other hand, qualitative research methods have a structuralist approach. In qualitative research, the researcher tries to understand and explain the phenomena in their natural environment by using the

subjective data of individuals, such as thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Qualitative research methods aim to deal with the facts within the framework of the subjective experiences of individuals, rather than to explain an objective reality, and to provide the reliability of qualitative research with subjectivity, reflexivity, and theoretical interpretation (Morrow, 2005). The environment and context are always dynamic. As it changes, it changes and transforms the meaning. Meaning is constantly reconstructed. Events, situations, individuals, and the researcher are also included in this dynamism. For this reason, the qualitative researcher follows the process of change.

Subjectivity finds an essential place in qualitative research; in this context, the personality and past experiences of the researcher affect the research process. In this sense, reflexivity is crucial for the researcher to consider the effect of the research. Since it is not possible to be in a neutral position as a researcher, it is regarded as an essential issue for the researcher to be aware of their thoughts, feelings, values, and judgments to increase the reliability of the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

It is acknowledged that qualitative research has a subjective nature. In this context, trustworthiness in qualitative research is provided by subjectivity, reflexivity, and the adequacy of data and interpretation (Morrow, 2005). Subjectivity is not limited and even encouraged in the research process. The reflective stance can be obtained through bracketing. In this context, bracketing can be described as the process of becoming reflectively aware of the researcher's interests, experiences, ideas, background, and any cultural factors that may influence the researcher's approach to the phenomenon under examination (Fischer, 2009). Different bracketing methods can be mentioned. Six types of bracketing methods are classified in the literature: analytical, descriptive (eidetic), existential, reflexive (cultural), ideal (philosophic), and pragmatic bracketing (Gearing, 2004). The focal point of bracketing is to make transparent and visible the researchers'

personal values, background, professional factors, and cultural influences that may affect the research process (Ahern, 1999). Throughout the study, the researcher took notes as a reflexive diary about interviews, observations, participant interactions, and thoughts and feelings evoked during the research process. Thus, it was possible to approach the process reflexively.

I, Köroğlu, define myself as a psychologist and researcher. Personality, narcissism, and psychological traumas have been topics that have interested me since the beginning of my undergraduate life. I often observe the role of narcissism either in my academic background, in my clinical practice, or in making sense of my relationships. So much so that if we did not talk about the existence of narcissism, it was not possible to mention the self. As a researcher, I suppose my intellectual and theoretical background influences my studies. Therefore, it was meaningful for me to undertake a research initiative that would allow me to integrate both my theoretical knowledge and clinical expertise. My professional field and the psychoanalytic approach have notably influenced my perspective on life, working style, and relationships. As I saw the importance of narcissism in the field from the beginning texts of psychoanalysis, my desire to study deeper into this subject increased. At the same time, as I saw the theme of narcissism in many areas of art, from cinema to literature, from painting to music, my curiosity on this subject increased. I wanted to work on a topic that contributed to my clinical practice and academic perspective. The fact that a deep sense of emptiness and worthlessness lies beneath narcissism, which theoretically seems majestic and invulnerable, so the way of existence and presenting oneself through contrast intrigued me and led me to ask the following question: How do narcissistically organized individuals experience narcissistic injury? In this sense, studying the experience of narcissism and narcissistic injury became a reference point in making sense of the mentioned areas, as well as the psychotherapeutic process and my relationships. Taking a deep look at the

phenomenon of narcissism, which has been portrayed as one-dimensional and purely evil lately, has provided me with a new perspective, understanding, and compassion.

Although I knew the theoretical background, the limited tone of emotion in the interviews was surprising and challenging. It was painful to observe the stress, distress, and helplessness the participants experienced when talking about the situations in which they were hurt and injured. From time to time, it became challenging to delve into the narcissistic injury experience as I encountered the grandiose armor as an "other" in the interviews. Besides this, the data analysis phase was perhaps the most challenging time for me. As I read the interviews repeatedly and was deeply immersed in the subject, I felt the desperation of the participants pouring into me occasionally. Furthermore, I could remember the difficult times in my personal history. Therefore, I avoided the interviews and then forced myself to return. As the study progressed, it was revealed that narcissistic injury operates cyclically. My experiences in the field and curiosity were instrumental in enriching the study process.

3. RESULTS

"Broken, mend broken."

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Voices*

According to the results of the analysis, seven superordinate themes were revealed across seven cases, namely *"Grandiose Armor to Hold the Broken Self Together", "Presenting an Unshakable Self-Image", "Avoid Emotions to Avoid Getting Hurt", "Feeling Entitled as A Victim", "Self-Directed Destructiveness", "Reconstruction of The Self with The Lack of The Other",* and *"The Wounded Self's Need for Repair".* Each superordinate theme and its subordinate themes can be seen in Table 2. For each theme, the following sections will include quotations from the participants' sentences and narratives.

Making a reminder before moving on to the results would be appropriate. Readers should be aware that participants were not included in the clinical sample and were not studied at the level of psychopathology.

Table 3.1.

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

1st Superordinate Theme: **Grandiose Armor to Hold the Broken Self Together**
Subordinate Themes:
- Grandiosity
- Not Having the Right to Exist Outside of Success
- Perfectionism
- Desire for Power and Control
- Idealization
- Approval-Seeking
- Not Seeing Others as Equal to Oneself
- Glorify Oneself by Thinking of Others

Table 2. (continued)

2nd Superordinate Theme: **Presenting an Unshakable Self-Image**
Subordinate Themes:

- Staying Strong by Denying It
- Need To Present Oneself Better
- Need To Protect Self-Image
- Devalue To Cope
- Not Beginning Something Who Cannot Do

4th Superordinate Theme: **Feeling Entitled as A Victim**
Subordinate Themes:

- Blaming The Other
- Need For Self-Justification
- Being A Victim
- To Be Imposed as If It Were, Even Though It Is Not

5th Superordinate Theme: **Self-Directed Destructiveness**
Subordinate Themes:

- Feeling Of Inadequacy
- Depressive Symptoms
- Blaming Oneself
- To Experience Difficulty
- Feeling Of Worthlessness
- Be Defeated

6th Superordinate Theme: **Reconstruction of The Self with The Lack of The Other**
Subordinate Themes:

- Anger Developed with Boundary Violation
- Comparing Oneself
- Being Satisfied with the Others' Lack

7th Superordinate Theme: **The Wounded Self's Need for Repair**
Subordinate Themes:

- Shame
- Recovering The Shattered Ego
- Mending With Compensation

3.1. Grandiose Armor to Hold the Broken Self Together

The first theme indicates the participants' need and effort to keep their egos together to avoid breaking. In this sense, grandiosity is used as armor to prevent the ego from being damaged. To understand the narcissistic injury experience in-depth, it was observed that all participants used grandiosity as armor when the individuals were asked questions about the subjects and experiences they had difficulty with. In this way, it is possible for the individual to protect her/his ego by showing grandiosity when s/he is having difficulty. This contributes to grandiosity by combining the person's inability to exist outside of success and believing that the person deserves the best. To illustrate, Beste, who resorts to grandiose discourse precisely when she thinks she has failed. Thus, by adding a splendid discourse to a subject she was having difficulty with, she was protecting herself from being perceived as unsuccessful, that is, from being hurt.

> B: I wasn't even aware of it at Cambridge, and then I realized that I had received the highest classification. I even got an 88 once, and when I told my friends, their eyes widened, asking: "Did you get an 88?" because it was such a grade, you were treated like you were a genius and applause. I said thank you to them.
>
> *Original*
>
> *B: Cambridge'dekinde hiç farkında bile değildim sonra bir baktım hakikaten en üst klasifikasyonu almışım zaten yani hani. Ben- hatta bir kere 88 mi ne aldım da arkadaşlarıma söyleyince böyle gözleri falan açılmıştı 88 mi aldın? falan diye... çünkü öyle bir notmuş 88 orda hani geniusmışsın gibi davranıldı falan böyle bir alkış malkış falan. teşekkürler falan dedim kendilerine.*

It has been observed that individuals have a strong need for success, being at the top, and being the best to maintain a stable self-image. This glorious seemed to be needed for the self to endure. Otherwise, the self could not reveal its existence. Defne described as:

D: There is pressure as if my family is always expecting academic success from me. Well, for example, at the end of the fifth grade, I took the college scholarship exam. I studied at college from the sixth grade to the twelfth grade without paying a penny, so as I said, it is obvious that I am already in the academically successful group. This is not like bragging, but there is always such an expectation, for example, in things where I feel very stressed or bad. For example, when I call home, I suddenly feel like I'm complaining about other things. My father said something once. This made me pretty upset. He said we raised you without any difficulty. He said that the only thing I could worry about was academic things, and should keep studying, so I don't have anything else to worry about. I think it's a very unpleasant thing... I mean, I don't know. Let it be successful... Exemplary child, star child, science child is around... He pretends to do so.

Original

D: Ya ailem her zaman benden bir akademik başarı bekliyormuş gibi bir hani baskı var. Hoş mesela beşinci sınıfın sonunda kolejin bursluluk sınavına girdim. altıdan on ikiye kadar ben kolejde bir kuruş para vermeden okudum yani dedim ya hani somut olarak zaten akademik olarak başarılı kesimde kaldığım belli oluyor. Hani bu övünme gibi de değil ama hep böyle bir beklenti var mesela şeyde de işte kendimi çok stresli hissettiğim, kötü hissettiğim şeylerde... Mesela evi aradığım zaman hani bir anda başka şeylere de şikayet ediyor gibi oluyorum. Ya babam bir kere şey dedi. Bu beni bayağı bir üzdü kırdı şey dedi. Senin işte... biz senin hiç bir şey böyle zorlanmadan şey yapmadan büyüttük... senin tek hani üzülebileceğin şey, akademik şeyler, çalış falan gibi bir şey yani hani senin başka bir derdin yok gibi bir şey dedi bana. Çok tatsız bir şey bence... yani ne bileyim. şey işte başarılı olsun... örnek çocuk, yıldız çocuk, hani bilim çocuğu böyle ortalıkta... öyle gibi şey yapıyor.

Imposed expectations of success and inability to exist outside the axis of success will likely damage the self by emptying other dimensions of the self over time and making it one-dimensional. Other examples come from Beste:

B: I always felt the pressure of this on me, I constantly thought as if I had to be this successful and, first of all, catch up with their success scale. Secondly, I created a perception in myself that I should be very successful all the time, as if they were successful people and I had to catch up with them.

Original

B: Bunun baskısını hep üzerimde hissettim sürekli sanki böyle başarılı olmam ve işte birincisi onların başarı skalasını yakalamam gerekiyormuş gibi düşündüm. İkincisi de sanki hani böyle benim yani onların derken hani onlar da başarılı insanlardı onlara yetişmem gerekiyormuş gibi ikincisi kendi kendime böyle sürekli çok başarılı olmalıymışım gibi bir algı uyandırdım.

B: At that time, I did not get the results my family expected of me. They were thinking of the first thousand or two thousand ranking results about me, and this was a serious thing for me... Not being able to fulfill their wishes was extra traumatic for me... How can I say? I felt terrible.

Original

B: Ben o dönem işte ailemin benden beklendiği-beklediği sonucu alamadım. onlar benim için hani böyle ilk bin iki bin falan düşünüyorlardı ve bu benim için ciddi bir şekilde şey oldu hani.... onların isteklerini yerine getirememenin de vermiş olduğu ekstra bir travmatik şey oldu bende... nasıl desem... çok kötü hissettim yani kendimi.

Additionally, the participants were so attached to the glorious shield that they portrayed themselves as if everything was working perfectly and smoothly under it. It was as if the grandiose statements that came after talking about a difficult situation for them acted as a shield protecting them from every blow of failure. To illustrate, when asked to talk about challenging experiences, Yılmaz described himself and his life in a glorious tone and talked about how wonderful his life was and how everything always went perfectly:

Y: Happy... I am a happy person. I don't worry much about anything... My work and my friendships are generally always good. People love me. I am advanced social. I mean, there are about 70-80 people in my close circle of contact in society, there are at least 70-80 people whom I see continuously, even if I can't find the time to meet them sometimes. We see each other so often that some don't get their turn. One week is reserved for them, and another is booked for the others. I mean, my monthly schedule is full for every single day. It is always reserved for a friend or my family. I always meet people, have fun, eat, drink, and travel with them.

Original

Y: *Mutlu... Mutlu bir insanım çok kafaya takmam her şeyi... İşlerim, arkadaşlık ilişkilerim genelde hep iyidir. İnsanlar sever. İleri derecede sosyalimdir yani toplumda kontakta olduğum yakın çevrem böyle bir 70-80 kişi vardır en az 70-80 kişi vardır yani sürekli görüşürüm hatta görüşmekten bazen zaman bulamam böyle hani o kadar sık görüşürüz ki yani bazılarına sıra gelmez öbür haftaya onları, öbür haftaya onlar yani ayımın neredeyse her gün doludur hep böyle bir arkadaşıma rezervedir ya da aileme rezervedir. Sabit böyle görüşürüm insanlarla, eğlenirim, yerim, içerim, gezerim.*

On the other hand, participants desired power and control to provide this shield. They felt like they had to be strong and felt vital to the extent that they could control the other. So much so that the more robust their shields were, the more they could protect themselves from being injured and having their egos disintegrate. Establishing control over the other by influencing was also one of the factors that strengthened this armor. Özgür described as:

Ö: Actually, to be effective, to influence people, but I already know that I influence most people because they say. I've heard a lot of “something happened thanks to you, I begin to listen to Brazilian music thanks to you.” There are different kinds from each other. That's why I know I have an influence… but of course, that's not enough.

Original

Ö: *Aslında etkili olmak, influence etmek insanlara ama şimdiden bile biliyorum çoğu insana influence ettiğimi aslında çünkü söylüyorlar hani… Çok duydum senin sayende bilmem ne oldu senin sayende Brezilya müziğini dinliyorum ben de artık hani böyle farklı farklı bide. O yüzden biliyorum hani influence ettiğimi... ama yetmiyor tabi o.*

Participants needed to look perfect and flawless so much that they avoided making even the slightest emphasis or spelling mistakes throughout the interviews. So much so that when they chose a wrong word, they felt the need to correct it by pretending it never happened and let's start over. For instance:

C: Sorry, I understand now. We deleted “I'm talking about in contrast” and nothing like that happened.

Original

C: Özür dilerim şimdi anladım. Tam tersinden bahsediyorumu sildik, öyle bir şey yaşanmadı.

This pursuit of excellence encompassed areas outside the interview, so much so that the material of the grandiose armor was perfection. For instance, Ezgi and Özgür said these respectively:

E: I must achieve the goal I set. Success for me can be working somewhere, earning a certain income, or even making someone happy. I have sharp things like that. I think I have a perfectionist point of view like this must be like this, this must be better. Sometimes I think if something is going to happen, it must be the best, otherwise it is not worth the effort.

Original

E: Koyduğum hedefe kesinlikle ulaşmam gerekiyor benim ya da benim için başarı işte şurda çalışmak veya şu parayı kazanmak falan da olabiliyor veya bir insanı mutlu edebilmek bile olabiliyor öyle keskin şeylerim var. O şöyle olmak zorunda, şu daha iyi olmak zorunda gibi mükemmeliyetçi bir bakış açısına sahibim bence ya da bir şey olacaksa en iyisi olmalı onun dışında çabalamaya değmez diye bir düşüncem de oluyor ara sıra.

Ö: I set myself the goal of getting a 3.00 GPA. 3.00. I got exactly a 3.00 GPA. Why did I set my goal there? It's a little bit out of perfectionism. In case something happens in the future, maybe I will apply somewhere. For meet conditions if they have conditions like a minimum 3.00 GPA, just in case.

Original

Ö: 3.00 yapma hedefi koymuştum kendime 3.00. Tam da 3.00 yaptım. Orda da niye koymuştum? O da biraz mükemmeliyetçilikten işte ilerde bir şey olur da gerekir belki atıyorum bir yere başvuracağım onlarda üç koşulu varsa sağlayayım ne olur ne olmaz gibi.

Although the structure of the armor consisted of perfectionism, strengthening this grandiose armor was possible by seeking approval. For this reason, the participants were looking for approval from the other, did not see the other as their equal due to their need for superiority, and even felt the need to make a reasonable contribution to their superiority by thinking of the other. To give an example of Özgür's statements:

Ö: Someone says something to me on stage, and I feel approved. The effect lasts maybe three days, and then it ends. I need to be approved again, but when I practice alone at home, and there's no one to approve me... That's why I get into that cycle again.

Original

Ö: Hani sahnede biri bana bir şey söylüyor onaylanıyorum. O beni 3 gün götürüyor belki sonra götürmüyor tekrar onaylanmam lazım ama tek başıma evde çalışıyorsam onaylayacak kimse yok ya... O yüzden o tekrar, o döngüye giriyorum.

Ö: When it is said that "You played so well at the concert", I always ask a question, "Was it really well?" It is actually a matter of getting approved again. S/He approved me, that's great, thank you, but by saying that, I actually allow her/him the opportunity to approve me again. When he says "Yes, it was so nice" it's like approval twice, but it looks like modesty. It's the same goes for the presentation. For instance, 30 people made a presentation, and even though mine was by far the best, I would never say "Yes, I presented well", I say "Was it good? Thank you" That's the most I can say.

Original

Ö: Konserde çok iyi çaldın denildiğinde hep bir soru-sorun-soru sorarım en fazla şey ederim ha iyi miydi hakikaten işte biraz şu son ana kaldı ama deyip tekrar onaylatma hani aslında onaylamış beni ne güzel işte teşekkür et... ama onu diyerek tekrar aslında onaylama imkanı veriyorum ona. Evet çok güzeldi oğlum falan dediğinde iki kere sanki onaylanma gibi ama mütevazılık oluyor mesela. Atıyorum sunumda da aynısı mesela 30 kişi sunum yaptı benimki açık ara çok iyi olsun onda da yine böyle ha evet iyi sundum demem hiçbir zaman hani aa iyi miydi? Teşekkürler maksimum bu.

Ö: Why do we have to explain ourselves so much to people? Because even that person's approval... I mean, I want to intervene against him perceiving me as a disrespectful person.

Original

Ö: Niye insanlara karşı bu kadar kendini anlatmak… zorundayız? çünkü o kişinin bile onayı- ben yani beni saygısız biri olarak görmesine karşı müdahalede bulunmak istiyorum.

Özgür's cycle of getting himself approved is like a clock that works by strengthening his defenses simultaneously. There is also a reference to it as if his armor would gradually weaken if deprived of this approval. Other examples come from Ulaş:

> U: There aren't many people I can trust. I can't explain it because they don't understand me, it's a waste of time to explain it. You wonder how well the other person will be able to understand you.
>
> *Original*
>
> *U: Güvenebileceğim çok fazla kişi yok. Anlatamıyorsun da çünkü seni anlamıyor hani anlatmak boşa gidiyor, boşa vakit kaybı oluyor. Karşımdaki insan beni ne kadar iyi anlayabilecek ki diyorsun.*

Thus, he reinforces his superiority by not seeing the other as his equal and assuming that the other does not have the ability to understand. The situation of glorifying oneself by helping others seems to be a situation that operates more implicitly and through vulnerable narcissism. So much so that the individual contributes to his greatness by positioning himself at a lofty point where he does not spare his help from others and always thinks about their well-being. Thus, the grandiose armor created not to be broken becomes increasingly more robust by these means. Yılmaz illustrates:

> Y: I help my family and friends whenever they are in trouble. How can I help? This is something crucial to me. For instance, if a friend of mine tells me that he has had a lot of problems this month and needs to tell me, for me, that moment s/he takes priority. S/He gets the highest priority. I go and listen to her/him. If there is a solution I can do, I try to implement it immediately and ask how I can help. If they don't hesitate, and ask for help, I will help them in any way. There has never been anyone I have withheld my help from.

Original

Y: Arkadaşlarımla ailem kısmında kim nasıl dara düşerse ben nasıl yardım ederim. Bu benim için çok önemli bir şeydir. Mesela bir arkadaşım dedi ki ya Yılmaz ben bu ay bayağı bir problem yaşıyorum kendi kendime gelemedim biraz dertleşmeye ihtiyacım var. Benim için o an, o dakika, o benim için önemli sırasıdır. En öne geçer. Gider dinlerim eğer yapabileceğim bir çözüm varsa hemen çözümü uygulamaya çalışırım, nasıl yardım edebileceğimi sorarım. Çekinmedikleri yardım istedikleri takdirde her türlü de yardım ederim yani hiç bir zaman yardımımı daha esirgediğim biri olmadı.

3.2. Presenting An Unshakable Self-Image

Participants also emphasized presenting an unwavering self-image. So much so that they must be unwavering and appear invulnerable, no matter the difficulty of their experiences. In this context, protecting and maintaining their image is of vital importance. Ezgi illustrates that as:

E: For instance, what I find most difficult is that. I can't fight. I'm not good at fighting. Instead, I fight a lot inside. If there was a clone of me in the metaverse, she could probably talk much harsher to anybody, and be much more quarrelsome without constantly thinking about the next thing, without considering the future. In this case, she would be at peace, but I couldn't do it. I always felt like I had to try to stay calm like this.

Original

E: Mesela zorlandığım, beni en çok şu, şu vardır. Ben kavga edemiyorum. Ben kavgayı beceremiyorum. İçimden çok kavga ederim hatta benden bir tane daha olsa metaversede bir tane bir şeyim olsa, bir kopyam olsa muhtemelen herkesle böyle çok çok daha sert konuşup hiç gelip devamlı ya da şey düşünmeden bir sonraki şeyi düşünmeden yarınları düşünmeden çok daha kavgacı olabilirdi, içi rahatlardı ama ben bunu yapamadım. Hep böyle sakin kalmaya çalışmak zorunda hissettim.

E: Since I don't want my nature to be misunderstood, I try to keep my calm character in any case. I get enraged sometimes, but I don't shout and exclaim it. I'm overly suppress of that issue. If I didn't suppress it, it would be different, you know, Ezgi, who gets angry all the time. If that were the case, people would know me as angry.

Original

E: Ben bu yapımın yanlış anlaşılmasını istemediğim için sakin karakterimi bozmamaya çalışıyorum her şeye. İlla ki çok sinirlendiğim de oluyor ama böyle bağırıp çağırıp da yapmıyorum. O konuda çok bastırıyorum. Bastırmasam daha farklı olurdu hani sürekli sinirlenen bir Ezgi. İnsanlar beni sinirli tanırdı yani.

E: I mentioned I stay calm. I mostly stay calm, but in fact, I only feel deep down anger on many issues which I try to be calm. Get angry. I suppress anger a lot. Actually, I suppress anger a lot.

Original

E: Sakin kalırım dedim ya çoğunlukla sakin ama aslında birçok sakin kalmaya çalıştığım konuda da içten içe tek hissettiğim şeyi söylüyorum. Öfke. Sinirlenmek. Ben bu siniri çok bastırıyorum. Sinirimi çok bastırıyorum aslında.

As can be seen from the narrative, ensuring and maintaining an unshakable image is of central importance. So much so that, despite the difficulty of the situation and the anger experienced, the price is paid with inexpressible anger to not damage the image presented and to show oneself unshakable and calm. At the same time, this situation can also manifest itself by appearing better than it actually is. Participants repeatedly felt the need to state that they overcame very challenging situations quickly and were not that affected. As can be seen from the example:

Y: I have no trust issues because no one is the same. I never have to worry about someone doing something to me. I can still trust the same way. I don't doubt it. I am not looking for any other intention behind their acts because there is no rule that everyone will behave this way. That's why I don't have any trust issues.

Original

Y: Hiç bir güven problemi yaratmadı çünkü hiçbir insan birbirinin aynısı değildir. Hiçbir zaman acaba mı veya işte bu da bana bunu yapar mı gibi bir kaygım olmuyor. Aynı şekilde güvenebiliyorum. Herhangi bir şüpheci yaklaşımda bulunmuyorum ha sen bunu yapıyorsun ama acaba bu mu var demiyorum çünkü herkes bunu yapacak diye bir kaide yok. O yüzden herhangi bir güven problemim yok yani benim.

This situation can also manifest itself in a neurotic tone, trying to find a middle ground in case of receiving criticism regarding the grandiose attitude. Thus, the defense is drawn to a more moderate tone, reinforcing the unshakable self-image. To illustrate:

Ö: I don't have that kind of genius; I don't even consider myself very intelligent. I consider myself to be of average intelligence but advanced perception. In fact, I am always surprised at how perception and intelligence do not overlap because some of my very intelligent acquaintances are very unperceptive.

Original

Ö: Bende öyle bir geniouslık yok yani hatta çok zeki bulmam bile kendimi hani orta seviyeli zekada buluyorum ama algımı çok yüksek buluyorum. Hatta algıyla zekanın nasıl örtüşmediğine şaşırırım hep çünkü bazı çok zeki tanıdıklarım çok algısız olur mesela.

Thus, the criticism expected to come will automatically be cut off from the beginning and contribute to the unshakable image of the self by eliminating the points where the participant can be criticized. It was also observed that the participants devalued and denied

the situations in which they faced challenging experiences to present their self-image as unshakable. To illustrate with examples:

B: When something negative happens to me, I cover it up with a laugh and by making a joke about it.

Original

B: Benimle ilgili negatif bir şey olduğunda da ben onu gülerek kapatırım hani onunla ilgili espri yaparak kapatırım.

Y: Actually, I never felt like a failure. I will say again that there is nothing that I failed in this marriage-divorce issue.

Original

Y: Aslında başarısız hissetmedim hiçbir zaman ya. Yani yine aynı şeyi söylüyor olacağım ama hani bu evlilik boşanma muhabbetinde de gene benim başarısız olduğum herhangi bir konu yok.

Y: Have I ever felt insecure? No. So, there is no need to lie. It never happened.

Original

Y: Hiç güvensiz hissettim mi? Yok ya. Yani yalan söylemeye gerek yok hiç. Hiç olmadı.

C: I don't remember. I don't care at all. Something that happened in the past, I took the lesson I needed to learn. The rest is none of my business.

Original

C: Hatırlamıyorum. Çok da umrumda değil. Geçmişte yaşanan bir şey ben dersimi, ben çıkarmam gereken dersi çıkarmışım. Gerisi beni ilgilendirmez.

As can be seen, participants present a self-image that is far from vulnerable by ignoring problems and challenging life experiences through devaluation and denial. Another way to make their image look unshakable is for individuals never to attempt a situation they know they cannot do in the first place. To illustrate with examples from Özgür and Yılmaz, respectively:

> Ö: Why did I quit football now? Maybe because I can't be perfect. However, even if I play badly, I can continue playing. I can play football once a week even if I'm not at my best. This is what I mean by playing bad. It can satisfy me in this way, right? But I don't play because I don't want to do anything with my underdeveloped self if I don't improve myself.
>
> *Original*
>
> *Ö: Şimdi futbolu saldım aslında niye salıyorum çünkü mükemmel olamayacağım için belki. Halbuki kötü şekilde oynamaya devam da edebilirim. Kötü derken yani en iyi oynayan Özgür olmayan halimle de futbol oynayabilirim dimi şimdi haftada bir ve o beni besleyebilir belki ama oynamıyorum çünkü kendimi geliştirmeyeceksem gelişmemiş halimi şey yapmak istemiyorum*.

> Ö: I don't like it if I'm criticized for something I've worked hard on and think I've perfected, but there's no such thing because maybe I'm making it too good to experience. For instance, I always give adorable presentations. Actually, if it is a presentation I care about, it is always appreciated and receives excellent feedback from the lecturer or conference attendees. That's why I tick before being criticized. However, there is a problem with something that I have worked hard for but still get criticized for.
>
> *Original*
>
> *Ö: Çok uğraştığım ve kendimce perfect hale getirdiğimi sandığım bir şeyde eleştirilirsem onu sevmem ama öyle bir şey yok aslında çünkü onu yaşamayacak kadar iyi hale getiriyorum belki. Mesela sunumlarım çok güzeldir hep. Hani daha doğrusu özendiğim sunumsa hep çok beğenilir ve ya hoca ya konferans neyse hep*

bir sonu çok güzeldi şeyi alırım hani. O yüzden tiklemiş oluyorum eleştirilmeden. Demek ki kendi emek verdiğim ama ona rağmen eleştirildiğim bir şeyde sorun oluyor ama.

Y: I give a physical example. Can I lift the building? I can't lift it. Do I need to make an effort to lift the building? Because even if I spend my whole life, I will not be able to lift a building from its place. This is a known thing. I don't make any effort for this. I see this as a waste of effort. I won't get into anything that would waste my effort.

Original

Y: Fiziksel olarak örnek verdim. Binayı kaldırabilir miyim? Kaldıramam. Binayı kaldırmak için çaba sarf etmeme gerek var mı? Çünkü bütün ömrü hayatımı da harcasam bir binayı yerinden kaldıramayacağım. Bu bilinen bir şey. Bunun için çaba sarf etmem ben. Bunu boşa efor olarak görürüm. Boşa efor sarf edeceğim hiçbir şeye de girmem.

3.3. Avoid Emotions to Avoid Getting Hurt

Another theme emerged regarding avoiding contact with emotions. It was observed throughout the interviews that the participants had limited emotional repertoires and expressed their feelings very limitedly. So much so that avoiding emotions in order not to get hurt is of central importance for the participants, and somatizations are observed for this reason. To give an example from the participants' experiences:

Ö: Expressing my love is a bit indirect. It doesn't happen with sentences; it's more like physical intimacy, or finding something successful about the other person, approving it, you did that well, well done, etc. People feel loved like that, but they don't hear the sentence "I love you" that much.

Original

Ö: Sevgimi ifade etme şeyi dolaylı oluyor biraz. Cümlelerle olmuyor daha çok böyle fiziksel sevgi ya da karşıdakinin bir şeyini başarılı bulma, onu onaylama işte şunu ne güzel yaptın aferin falan öyle sevildiğini hissediyor insanlar ama ordan seni seviyorum cümlesini o kadar duymuyorlar.

E: As if I would get away from unpleasant thoughts at that moment. It's like when you drink, and you forget what makes you sad. It is because your consciousness is impaired, but it is temporary, and it lasts as long as the effect of alcohol. There are many things like that anyway. It is something like morphine.

Original

E: Sanki şey gibi o an kötü düşünmekten uzaklaşacakmışım gibi. Şey gibi hani alkol içersin de o sıra canının neye üzüldüğünü unutursun gibi bir şey vardır ya. O bilincin bozulduğu için ama aslında geçicidir yani alkolün etkisi kadar sürüyor. Onun gibi şeyler çoğu zaten. Morfin gibi bir şey sanırım.

U: I experience negative things, but the feeling... I can't feel much at all. Yes, I feel negative things a lot, but I don't express it as much as I used to. I guess it's probably because I'm a little more aware of that.

Original

U: Olumsuz şey yaşıyorum mesela ama ondan yaşadığım hissiyat şey... Çok o hissi, hissi çok yaşayamıyorum. Olumsuz şeyleri çok hissediyorum evet ama yaşama anlamında çok bunu yaşamıyorum eskisi kadar. Biraz daha herhalde bilincine girdiğim içindir diye tahmin ediyorum.

Y: It probably happened, but I don't remember. I'm not someone who cries easily. Chopping onions doesn't count, right? No, I don't cry easily. I don't get anxious easily, I don't get scared of things easily. I am not someone who feels sad about death. I don't get upset because someone dies because we all gonna die. I discovered why people feel sad. That's why I'm not upset. For instance, when my

grandfather died, everyone was crying, but I knew all the reasons for their crying. We will never see him again because human beings are selfish.

Original

Y: Olmuştur herhalde ya. Büyük ihtimal olmuştur ama hatırlamıyorum. Kolay kolay ağlayan biri değilimdir. Soğan doğrama sayılmıyor değil mi? Yok kolay kolay ağlamam. Kolay kolay tedirgin olmam, kolay kolay bir şeylerden korkmam. Mesela ölüme ben üzülen birisi değilim. Birisi öldüğü için üzülmem çünkü hepimiz öleceğiz. İnsanların aslında niye üzüldüğünü bildiğimi keşfettiğim için kendi kendime. Bunu keşfettiğimden kaynaklı üzülmüyorum. Mesela dedem öldüğünde herkes ağlıyordu ama ağlama sebeplerinin hepsini biliyorum ne olduğunu. Bir daha onu göremeyeceğiz çünkü insanoğlu bencildir hani.

C: I'm a rationalist. I'm too rational, and there's nothing I can do. I'm a bit like a robot, though.

Original

C: Rasyonalistim. Fazla rasyonelim yapacak bir şey yok. Biraz robot gibiyim ama.

U: At some point, because of having problems with people, I had a health problem. I had alopecia areata. It was such a significant nervous burden on me.

Original

U: Bir noktadan sonra bende şey olmuştu zaten. İnsanlarla böyle sorun yaşaya yaşaya bende artık sağlıksal problem oldu. Saçkıran başladı. O kadar ciddi bir sinir bir yükü olmaya başladı bende.

B: I had gastritis and ulcers. I feel it often. I experience it almost every two or three days, but its duration has decreased.

Original

Beste: Gastrit mastrit, ülser falan onlar vardı yani. Çok sık hissederim. Neredeyse iki üç günde bir hissederim ama süresi azaldı.

B: I had a friend who was wearing me out a lot, and when we ended our friendship with her/him, I felt better because I was seeing her/him day by day, and I was getting nervous daily. I remember the last time I broke out in a hives-like red rash on my hand due to anger.

Original

B: Beni çok yıpratan bir arkadaşım vardı ve onunla arkadaşlığımızı bitirdiğimizde daha iyi hissettim çünkü gündelik görüyordum ve gündelik olarak geriliyordum yani hani şeyi hatırlıyorum en son böyle elimin üzerinde sinirden kırmızı bir kurdeşen gibi bir şey dökmüştüm yani.

3.4. Feeling Entitled as A Victim

Another theme was defined as victimization and, accordingly, justifying it. Participants felt victimized under challenging situations and stated that although they were not inadequate, others made them feel like they were. This expresses how they feel more justified as they blame the other. To indicate examples from the participants:

U: I'm not insufficient. I mean, they make me feel like I'm not up to scratch, but I'm not. I am aware of that. I am not that kind of person.

Original

U: Yani yetersiz biri değilim. Yani onlar bana sanki yetersizmişsin gibi hissettiriyor ama ben yetersiz biri değilim. Bunun farkındayım. Öyle bir durum var işte ama öyle biri değilim.

E: Most of the time, things happen not because I feel insufficient, but because they try to make me feel that way and they try to humiliate me.

Original

E: Yetersiz hissettiğim değil de öyle hissettirilmeye çalışıldığım, beni küçük düşürmeye çalıştığı şeyler çoğunlukta oluyor.

C: This is what these kinds of people constantly make you feel. On my own... As I said, I felt like I could never do anything on my own, that I would never be able to learn anything on my own, and that I would never be able to decide on my own what was the right thing to do.

Original

C: Sürekli bu tip insanlarla sürekli bir şekilde hissettirdikleri de şuydu. Tek başıma... Dediğim gibi tek başıma hiçbir şey yapamayacakmışım, asla kendi başıma bir şey öğrenemeyecek, doğrusunu, işin doğrusunun ne olduğunu tek başıma kanaat getiremeyecekmişim gibi geliyordu.

C: I remember clearly that I didn't feel inadequate or worthless, that I was made to feel that way, but I didn't feel that way.

Original

C: Yetersiz ya da değersiz hissetmediğimi öyle hissettirildiğimi ama öyle hissetmediğimi çok net hatırlıyorum.

Strikingly, an important finding was that individuals perceived that they were entitled to almost everything, and therefore, in most cases, they perceived that they were treated unfairly and became angry as a result. Thus, the cycle worked as being victimized as one felt entitled and becoming angry as one felt victimized. To look at it from a broader perspective, this was the phase when the self-wrapped in magnificence began to crack.

3.5. Self-Directed Destructiveness

This theme points to the destructiveness that the participants direct towards themselves. The opposite of grandiosity is accompanied by reactions such as inadequacy, self-blame, depressive symptoms, and feelings of defeat. It can be said that this situation creates a bipolarity with grandiosity. There is a destructiveness directed towards the self. Defne illustrates:

> D: I fail to do something, or I do something incompletely because when I'm feeling down, I go around in a spiral. Once you get into it, it becomes like hell to get out.
>
> *Original*
>
> *D: Bir şeyi yapamamış ya da eksik yapmış oluyorum çünkü şey işte moralim de bozuk olunca şey de ya böyle spiral gibi hani dönüp dolaşıyorum. Bir kere içine düştükten sonra çıkması çok zor geliyor.*

> D: I have significant problems about focusing. I told my friend lately as, there are a lot of grasshoppers in my head. It's nice when they all jump in the same direction under normal circumstances. We're going that way but now they all bounce to different sides and hit the walls, and I can never focus on what I'm doing. Even though it is a very simple thing, I cannot do it because I am not focused. This makes me feel terrible again because it makes me feel like I can't do anything.
>
> *Original*
>
> *D: Odaklanmakta çok ciddi problem çekiyorum. Geçen gün arkadaşıma şey diye anlattım. Kafamda bir sürü çekirge var. Hani normalde hepsi aynı yere zıplayınca güzel. O tarafta gidiyoruz. Şu an kafamda hepsi farklı tarafa sekip duvarlara çarpıyorlar böyle hani önümdeki işe asla odaklanamıyorum. Odaklanmadığım için de ya önümdeki işi yapamıyorum çok basit bir şey olmasına rağmen. Bu da işte hiçbir şeyi yapamıyorum hissi uyandırdığı için hop ordan tekrar kötü hissetmeye başlıyorum.*

This self-destructiveness may also include anger, self-insults, and self-destructive behavior. As following:

C: I tried to cut myself when I felt worthless. I cut it a little bit, and so forth.

Original

C: Değersiz hissettiğim bir ara kendimi kesmeye çalıştım. Birazcık da ucundan kestim vesaire.

E: I also remember coming home and not being able to eat. Not only just consuming harmful things, but also it can cause you to not be able to consume anything at all. There is loss of appetite.

Original

E: Eve gelip yemek yiyemediğimi de hatırlıyorum sadece şey değil yani böyle zararlı şeyler tüketmekten ziyade hiçbir şey tüketememe durumuna da getirebiliyor. İştahsızlık başlıyor.

In a sense, these narratives also pointed out that when the self is not glorious, it passively demands destruction.

3.6. Reconstruction of The Self with The Lack of The Other

The results point to the reconstruction of the self with the lack of the other when the participants are inevitably injured in a narcissistic sense despite all their efforts to remain invulnerable. In a sense, this points to an area where the invulnerable self is hurt, the unshakable ego is shaken, and all defenses are let down. In this context, it was concluded that the participants constantly compared themselves with the other and were satisfied with

the other's inadequacy. Seeing the other's inadequacy makes the self feel superior and makes it possible to rebuild the self. Ezgi, Ulaş, and Beste express it as follows:

E: Most of the time s/he emphasizes that "I can do it, but you can't", but s/he is wrong. I also have many talents that s/he doesn't have. I know. I have experienced a lot. I have no problems with this, I feel at ease. After all, s/he is not my manager or my superior. I think s/he hasn't learned much. I think I have more business experience than her/him.

Original

E: Ben yapabiliyorum bak sen yapamıyorsun gibi hani bunu vurgular bir şekilde çok şey yaşatıyor ama yanılıyor. Benim de çok yeteneğim var onun sahip olmadığı. Görüyorum. Çok da gördüm. Bu konuda hiç sıkıntı çekmiyorum içim rahat yani. Sonuçta müdürüm değil veya amirim değil üstüm de değil yani çok şey de öğrenmediğini düşünüyorum bence benim ondan daha çok iş hayatı, iş tecrübem var.

U: My nature is unlike anyone else's in my family. My father, my mother, and my sibling are almost similar to each other, whether in behavior or personality. I was always different from them. I always noticed this. How was I different? While my family could approach a thing from a narrow perspective, I always had a broad perspective. I had realized clear as a bell.

Original

U: Aile yapısında benim yapım hani kimseye benzemiyor. Öyle de bir durum da var. Hani mesela babam veya annem ya da kardeşim onlar böyle hemen hemen birbirine benziyor davranış olarak olsun yapı olarak olsun. Ben hep onlardan farklıydım mesela. Bunu hep fark ederdim. Nasıl farklıydım? Bizimkiler biraz daha olaya böyle biraz daha dar bakabiliyorken ben biraz daha hep geniş bakardım. Hani bunu çok net fark ediyordum ben mesela.

B: I thought Cambridge's language demands were also very high. Some people had studied in America, but their grades were lower than mine. 50 was a passing grade there, and they had barely got 50's. They got 48 and 45, so they couldn't

pass some assignments. I felt better when I heard them. It was something I experienced positively that made me feel a little better.

Original

B: Cambridge'in dil beklentisinin de çok yüksek olduğunu düşünüyordum. Bazı insanlar mesela Amerika'da okumuş gelmiş ama işte şey falan onların ona rağmen notları benden daha düşüktü işte 50 passti orda, 50'yi zor almışlar falan böyle 48'ler 45'ler geçememişler bazı assignmentlardan falan. Onları duyunca kendimi daha iyi hissetmiştim hani öncesinde bir pozitif yaşadığım şey oydu mesela beni biraz daha iyi hissettiren.

On the other hand, when this situation could not be met or was interrupted, the participants became angry. It has been observed that anger has a special place among other emotions because it is almost the only emotion visible on the surface. Examples are as follows:

U: I'm planning to start a business myself recently. Let me put it this way, I don't plan out work with my family in any way. Same industry as them, but I don't want to work with them.

Original

U: Ben şimdi kendim bir iş yapmayı düşünüyorum. Hani ailemi sokmayı düşünmüyorum hiçbir şekilde öyle söyleyeyim. Aynı sektör ama düşünmüyorum.

C: Then I got up from the ground. I tied up my hair. I gathered myself. I kicked the door exactly twice. The second time I kicked the door split in two. Oh, by the way, when I get angry, a little beastly power comes out. I think it's because of the adrenaline. The door was split in two.

Original

C: Sonra ben kalktım yerden. Bir saçımı topladım. Şöyle bir kendime geldim. Kapıyı tam olarak iki kere tekmeledim. İkinci tekmeleyişimde kapı ikiye bölündü. Ha

bu arada ben öfkelenince biraz hayvani güç gelir. Adrenalindendir diye düşünüyorum. Kapı ikiye bölündü.

Although they were far from expressing many emotions and could not reflect them on their faces, they could express them easily and understandably when the participants talked about anger.

3.7. The Repair Need for the Wounded Self

The last theme represents the need for repair of the wounded self. This theme shows the need of participants who feel ashamed and worthless to repair their selves with the help of compensation. It was observed that the participants experienced intense worthlessness and shame before they started to repair their self. It is the step where the dispersed ego gathers. Ulaş and Cem illustrates:

U: I used to think that people thought about me as how naive and overweight, and so forth. Then, I picked up myself. Afterward, I learned to cope with this.

Original

U: Eskiden insanlar bana çok böyle şey bakar diye düşünüyordum. Yani ne kadar saf ya ne bileyim ne kadar kilolu falan vesaire. Sonra bu durumu tabi derledim toparladım falan. Sonrasında artık şeydi hani bu durumla baş etmeyi öğrendim.

C: The worst part was that I didn't realize it. I realize now that I really felt worthless back then. At the time, I didn't realize I felt worthless at all.

Original

C: En kötüsü de bunun farkında değildim. Şu an farkına varıyorum cidden değersiz hissediyormuşum o zamanlar. O zamanlar hiç de değersiz hissettiğimin farkında değildim.

Compensation with success appears to recharge the grandiosity battery until the following narcissistic injury. In this way, grandiose investment in the self is made again and again. To give examples from Yılmaz and Beste:

> Y: I did sports for eight years after I realized this. One day of exercise, one day of rest, for eight years without a break. I continued like this for eight years. I became the champion of Turkey. I came second in Europe.
>
> *Original*
>
> *Y: 8 sene ben spor yaptım bunu fark ettikten sonra. 8 sene hiç aralık vermeden bir gün spor bir gün dinlenme, bir gün spor bir gün dinlenme. 8 sene boyunca böyle devam ettim. Türkiye şampiyonu oldum. Avrupa ikincisi oldum.*

> Researcher: How did you cope?
>
> B: By being successful academically. I mean, I constantly got high grades, I played for first place, and I compensated for it that way.
>
> *Original*
>
> *Araştırmacı: Peki nasıl başa çıktın?*
>
> *B: Üniversitede başarılı olarak. Yani yüksek notlar aldım devamlı olarak işte birinciliğe oynamıştım onu o şekilde kompanse ettim.*

4. DISCUSSION

"...Let them be helpless like children, because weakness is a great thing, and strength is nothing. When a man is just born, he is weak and flexible. When he dies, he is hard and insensitive. When a tree is growing, it's tender and pliant. But when it's dry and hard, it dies. Hardness and strength are death's companions. Pliancy and weakness are expressions of the freshness of being. Because what has hardened will never win."

Tarkovsky, *Stalker*

This section will present a general discussion, clinical implications, strengths and limitations of the current study, and suggestions for further studies.

4.1. General Discussion

The current study aimed to examine individuals' narcissistic injury experience in-depth, and seven master themes were found in this direction. These themes indicate that the experience of narcissistic injury operates as a cycle. In a sense, like the myth of the phoenix destroying itself and being reborn from its ashes, it has been revealed that the experience of narcissistic injury is a constantly cyclical process of construction and destruction that operates through the self. As the themes indicate, this cycle runs from grandiosity to collapse and collapse to repair as it follows.

The self, surrounded by armor, is guarded against collapse. This armor is surrounded by grandiosity. Individuals make an effort to hide their vulnerable sides by presenting themselves as unwavering via this grandiose armor. They think that this way, they can avoid

getting injured as much as possible. To hide from the other that there is a vulnerable self underneath the armor, they avoid contact with their emotions and become so self-absorbed that they do not allow themselves any space to grieve. However, it will be inevitable for unexpressed emotions to emerge more intensely and, in a sense, for an individual to be crushed under this grandiose armor.

The grandiose armor that holds the broken self together is also perfectionist and idealized. The search for approval and the effort to gain superiority by not seeing others as equal to oneself constitutes the building blocks of this armor. Sometimes, this need for superiority can even be defined as being a superior person who cares about the well-being of the other. The most obvious way to meet this need for superiority is success. Success and being successful are vital for these individuals. The results show that these individuals cannot exist in a field other than success, and they see failure as dead, while success is the only condition for vitality.

Additionally, presenting an unshakable self-image is critical for these individuals. The more unshakable the image is submitted, the more the self is sustained. However, this situation is bound to disappear, just like a sand castle. The presented self-image is considered, and efforts are made to protect it. In this process, individuals strive to show themselves as good and robust as possible. In this sense, individuals avoid situations that thread their authority as much as possible. To cope, they devalue events, situations, people, and even all areas where they have difficulty, or they try to stay strong by denying it. Sometimes, in this context, individuals avoid getting into a situation they know they cannot do before it begins.

It has also been observed that individuals avoid touching their emotions in this sense. Avoiding emotions, refraining from them, not being able to name them, not sharing them,

and being unable to express them constitute a significant part of the process. Loss of emotional expression also reveals somatization.

At the same time, it has been observed that individuals need to justify themselves by positioning themselves at a point where they are victims. Accordingly, the individuals present themself from a reasonable perspective by blaming the other. This victimization also includes the individuals being made to feel inadequate by the other, even though they are not. This situation positions the individuals in a passive position.

When the self is injured, individuals destructively experience this. Narcissistic injury virtually defeats the individual. In this sense, individuals blame themselves and struggle with feeling inadequacy. This situation includes a process that can even extend to severe and self-harming depressive symptoms. The injured individual has difficulty maintaining their self and functioning.

In addition, it has been concluded that the self is restructured with the lack of the other. Individuals compare themselves with others, and as they find others less than themselves, they recharge their grandiose battery by reinforcing their need for superiority. The repair of the self is as much as the glorious structure allows. An opposite result in the competition with the other hurts the self even more and creates anger and narcissistic rage in individuals, along with the violation of boundaries.

Finally, the need for repair of the injured self attracts attention. The feeling of shame and worthlessness is unbearable for individuals at this point. For this reason, it has been concluded that individuals aim to collect and reconstruct their collapsed ego. In doing this, individuals benefit from as much success and compensation as possible. So they invest their grandiose parts until the following narcissistic injury.

In line with the literature, anger and shame were also observed in the process, but participants' experiences describe a cyclical process that includes these but is more detailed

than that (Kohut, 1966; 1972). Like in the grief cycle, the individual does not go through certain stages linearly. Jumps and transitions between phases are possible. The process does not proceed linearly.

Although the results reveal that the experience of narcissistic injury can be considered a cyclical experience, it can also be experienced separately and independently from each other. Participants demonstrated the uniqueness of each experience with specific aspects that differ.

It would also be meaningful to discuss the results in terms of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. In this context, both according to the profile presented by the narcissism inventory and as a clinical observation, participants who showed a personality organization under the umbrella of vulnerable narcissism were able to cope better with the narcissistic injury process and were able to use various defenses in a more mature and middle toned during this process. In a sense, they could experience this process in a more protected way. They were protecting themselves against coups by either compensating themselves from the point they were broken or by adopting a more cautious, neurotic attitude. They had an attitude of trying to find a middle ground, such as criticizing themselves before criticism came and taking precautions against possible injuries from the very beginning. Defense diversity was also wider and more comprehensive compared to the grandiose organization. On the other hand, in a grandiose organization, the individual increases the tone of primitive defenses so that he crashes to the ground from higher and harder in case of a possible fall. Contrary to the name of vulnerable narcissism, it was taking a position more susceptible to being broken.

To sum up, the experience of narcissistic injury is a cyclical process in which the self breaks down and reinvests in grandiose armor when it feels potentially threatened. It is possible to say that they are pretty open to this potential threat due to their entitlement

dynamic. Thus, individuals become victims as they see rights in themselves, and as they become victimized, they become angry. This anger and destructiveness ultimately cause them to direct their anger towards themselves by damaging their shell. After this stage, individuals invest their self-investment in their grandiose armor again and again until the following narcissistic injury.

4.2. Clinical Implications

Although the current study was not conducted with a clinical sample, its clinical implications may be significant. In line with this study, clinicians and psychotherapists can take the process and results into consideration when working with narcissistically structured cases and thus contribute to psychotherapy work.

For instance, it would benefit therapists to work on recognizing and improving emotional expression in their cases. It is also possible for therapists to recognize the grandiose defenses of their cases and carry out the process accordingly. Also, awareness of the behavior pattern can be an excellent opportunity to prevent destructive behavior. Another contribution will be in the direction of victimization and seeking rights. By observing the pattern of victimization, the therapist will be able to invite the patient to study his inner world instead of strengthening his defenses. Awareness of the narcissistic injury experience is thought to contribute to the psychotherapy process positively.

In this sense, during the therapy process, increasing the patient's capacity to tolerate making mistakes and working on opening a space where the patient can exist even when s/he fails can be a therapeutic gain. In addition, the therapist's preparation for situations in which the patient's self feels threatened can be preventive and valuable to preserve the established therapeutic alliance.

4.3. Strengths, Limitations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

One of the strengths of the current study is the use of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method to examine in-depth the experience of narcissistic injury, which is a subject derived from personality structure, by taking a qualitative methodological stance. Since the selection phase of the participants was carried out through inventory, this selection phase is one of the limitations of the current study. Additionally, the fact that participants may need time for self-disclosure is a limitation. Further studies may consider improved participant selection methods and contribute to participants' self-disclosure process by conducting several interviews.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Bu çalışma, Başkent Üniversitesi Psikoloji bölümü öğretim üyesi Dr. Tuğba Uyar Suiçmez ve Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans programı öğrencisi Deniz Köroğlu ile birlikte yürütülmekte olup yetişkinlerde kişilik özellikleri ve yaşantısal deneyimler arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesini amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışma 2 aşamadan oluşmaktadır. İlk aşamada çeşitli demografik ve anket sorularını içermekte ve her ölçekte bulunan soruların nasıl doldurulacağına ilişkin açıklamalar bulunmaktadır. Soruların cevaplandırılması ortalama 10 dakika sürmektedir. İkinci aşamada ise katılımcılarla yaklaşık bir saat sürecek yüz yüze görüşmeler yürütülmesi planlanmaktadır.

Görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazı ile kayıt altına alınmaktadır. Görüşmeler sırasında araştırmacı sorularına verdiğiniz yanıtlar gizli tutulacak ve bilimsel amaçlar dışında kullanılmayacaktır. Çalışmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Eğer soruları yanıtlarken kendinizi herhangi bir sebepten ötürü rahatsız hissederseniz soruları yanıtlamayı anında sonlandırabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Çalışma hakkında bilgi edinmek istediğiniz takdirde Deniz Köroğlu'na adresinden ulaşabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışma hakkında bilgilendirildim. Çalışmaya kendi rızam ile katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman çalışmayı sonlandırabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Ad Soyad: **Tarih:** **İmza:**

APPENDIX 2: SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION FORM

Sosyodemografik Veri Formu

1. Çalışmanın 2.aşaması için sizinle iletişime geçebileceğimiz e-posta adresiniz:

2. Telefon numaranız:

3. 6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depreminde deprem bölgesindeki illerden birinde miydiniz? Depremi deneyimlediniz mi? 1. Evet 2. Hayır

4. 6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depreminde bir yakınınızı kaybettiniz mi? 1. Evet 2. Hayır

5. Yaşınız:

6. Cinsiyetiniz: 1. E 2. K 3. Belirtmek istemiyorum

7. Son mezun olduğunuz eğitim düzeyi nedir? 1. İlköğretim 2. Lise 3. Lisans 4. Lisansüstü

8. İş durumunuz nedir? 1. Tam zamanlı çalışıyorum. 2. Yarı zamanlı (part-time) çalışıyorum 3. Öğrenciyim 4. Çalışmıyorum 5. Diğer (lütfen belirtiniz)

9. Doğduğunuz yerleşim yeri nedir? 1. Büyükşehir 2. Şehir 3. İlçe 4. Köy

10. Yaşamınızın büyük bölümünü aşağıdakilerden hangisinde geçirdiniz? 1. Büyükşehir 2. Şehir 3. İlçe 4. Köy

11. Gelir düzeyinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız? 1. Düşük 2. Düşük-Orta 3. Orta 4. Orta-Yüksek 5. Yüksek

12. Romantik bir ilişkiniz var mı? 1. Evet 2. Hayır

13. Medeni durumunuz nedir? 1. Evli 2. Bekar 3. Diğer (lütfen belirtiniz)

14. Kiminle yaşıyorsunuz? 1. Yalnız yaşıyorum 2. Partnerim ile yaşıyorum 3. Ev arkadaşım ile yaşıyorum 4. Yurtta yaşıyorum 5. Ailemle yaşıyorum

15. Herhangi bir psikolojik/psikiyatrik tanınız var mı? 1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

16. Herhangi bir psikolojik/psikiyatrik destek (psikoterapi) alıyor musunuz veya geçmişte aldınız mı? 1. Hayır 2. Psikiyatrik tedavi görüyorum 3. Psikoterapi alıyorum 4. Hem psikoterapi hem psikiyatrik destek alıyorum 5. Geçmişte aldım

17. Herhangi bir psikiyatrik ilaç kullanıyor musunuz? 1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

18. Sürekli bir tedavi almanızı gerektiren fiziksel/kronik bir rahatsızlığınız (kanser, kalp rahatsızlığı, solunum hastalıkları, yüksek tansiyon, diyabet, otoimmün hastalık vb.) var mı?

1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

19. Psikiyatrik ilaçlar haricinde herhangi bir medikal ilaç kullanıyor musunuz?

1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

20. Ailenizde/ Beraber yaşadığınız kişilerde fiziksel/kronik bir rahatsızlığı olan var mı?

1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz): 2. Hayır

21. Ailenizde/Beraber yaşadığınız kişilerde psikiyatrik bir rahatsızlığı olan var mı?

1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

22. Son 6 ayda hayatınızı etkileyen maddi ya da manevi herhangi bir travmatik yaşantınız veya kaybınız var mı? 1. Evet (lütfen belirtiniz) 2. Hayır

APPENDIX 3: THE SHORT FORM OF THE FIVE-FACTOR NARCISSISM INVENTORY

Beş Faktör Narsisizm Ölçeği-Kısa Form

Değerli Katılımcı,

Bu ölçek 60 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Her bir madde 1 ile 5 arası puanlanmaktadır. Lütfen her bir maddeyi dikkatlice okuyunuz ve sizi en iyi tanımlayan seçeneği işaretleyiniz. Doğru ya da yanlış cevap yoktur. Sizden beklenen içtenlikle cevap vererek bilimsel bir çalışmaya yardımcı olmanız. Lütfen bütün sorularla ilgili görüşlerinizi ifade ediniz.

1-Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum

2-Katılmıyorum

3-Kararsızım

4-Katılıyorum

5-Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

	1-Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	**2-Katılmıyorum**	**3-Kararsızım**	**4-Katılıyorum**	**5-Kesinlikle Katılıyorum**
1. Aşırı hırslı biriyimdir.					
2. Başkaları çok övündüğümü söylerler ama söylediğim her şey doğrudur.					

3. Liderlik yapmak benim için kolaydır.					
4. Birileri bana iyilik yaptığında, acaba benden ne istiyorlar diye merak ederim.					
5. Özel muamele görmeyi hak ediyorum.					
6. Başkalarını eğlendirmekten büyük zevk alırım.					
7. İlerlemek için insanlardan yararlanmak iyi bir şeydir.					
8. Sıklıkla ünlü olmak ile ilgili hayaller kurarım.					
9. İnsanlar beni yargıladığında, bunu hiç umursamam.					
10. Başkalarının ihtiyaçları konusunda kaygılanmam					
11. İnsanları manipüle etmede /kullanmada oldukça iyiyimdir.					
12. Kendimden emin olmak için sık sık başkalarının iltifatlarına ihtiyacım varmış gibi hissederim.					

13. Eleştirilmekten, o kadar nefret ederim ki, olduğunda öfkemi kontrol edemem.					
14. Bir şeyde başarısız olduğumu fark ettiğimde kendimi küçük düşmüş hissederim.					
15. Heyecan duymak için neredeyse her şeyi deneyebilirim.					
16. Başarılı olmak için inanılmaz bir motivasyona sahibim.					
17. Sadece kendi ayarımdaki insanlarla ilişki kurarım.					
18. Otorite pozisyonu alma konusunda kendimi rahat hissederim.					
19. Diğer insanların bana karşı dürüst olacaklarına inanırım.					
20. Kuralların başkaları için geçerli olduğu kadar benim için geçerli olduğunu düşünmüyorum.					
21. Başkaları tarafından fark edilmekten hoşlanırım.					
22. Kendi ilerlemem için insanları birer araç olarak kullanırım.					

23. Sık sık çok başarılı ve güçlü olacağıma dair hayaller kurarım.					
24. Başkalarının benim hakkımda ne düşündüğü gerçekten umursamam.					
25. Başkalarının dertlerine genelde fazla ilgi göstermem.					
26. İnsanları bir şeyler yaptırmak için yönlendirebilirim.					
27. Benlik duygum istikrarlıdır.					
28. Doğru muamele görmediğimde aşırı öfkelendiğim zamanlar olmuştur.					
29. Başkalarının önünde küçük düşürüldüğümde berbat hissederim.					
30. Gözü pek biriyimdir.					
31. Büyük biri olmayı arzularım.					
32. Benden daha aşağı kişilerle takılarak zamanımı boşa harcamam.					

33. İnsanlar genellikle benim liderliğimi ve otoritemi takip ederler.					
34. İnsanlara güvenme konusunda temkinliyimdir					
35. Adaletsiz gibi gözükebilir ancak ihtimam, imtiyaz ve ödül gibi ayrıcalıkları hak ediyorum.					
36. Bir parti ya da toplantıda en popüler kişi olmaktan hoşlanırım.					
37. Başarıya ulaşmak için bazen diğer insanları kullanmanız gerekir.					
38. Başarısıyla tanınmış biri olmayı nadiren hayal ederim.					
39. Başkalarının eleştirilerine karşı oldukça kayıtsızımdır.					
40. Sempati duygum zayıftır					
41. Eninde sonunda benim dediğim olur.					
42. Hayatta yeterince başarıya ulaşıp ulaşamayacağım hakkında kendimi oldukça güvensiz hissederim.					

43. Hak ettiğim şeyi alamamak beni gerçekten çok öfkelendirir.					
44. İnsanlar beni yargıladığında utanırım.					
45. Heyecan verici bir şey yapmak için yaralanmayı göze alabilirim.					
46. Başarılı olmaya motiveyimdir.					
47. Üstün bir insanım.					
48. Çoğu durumda sorumluluk almaya eğilimliyimdir.					
49. Sık sık diğerlerinin bana gerçeğin tamamını söylemediğini düşünürüm.					
50. Özel muamele görmeyi hak ettiğime inanırım.					
51. İnsanları eğlendirmeye bayılırım.					
52. Kendi hedeflerime ulaşmada diğerlerini kullanmaya istekliyimdir					

53. Bir gün benim adımı insanların çoğunun bileceğine inanıyorum.					
54. Başkalarının benim hakkımdaki görüşlerini çok az umurumdadır					
55. Başkalarının acıları beni üzmez.					
56. İnsanlara istediklerimi yaptırmam kolaydır.					
57. Keşke başkalarının benim hakkımdaki düşüncelerini bu kadar umurumda olmasaydı					
58. İnsanlar bana saygısızlık ettiğinde tepem atar.					
59. Başkalarının önünde bir hata yaparsam kendimi aptal gibi hissederim.					
60. Riskli ya da tehlikeli şeyler yapmaktan hoşlanırım.					

APPENDIX 4: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

1. Kendinizden bahseder misiniz? Kendinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Eleştirilmek size nasıl hissettirir?
3. Çevrenizdeki insanlara eleştiride bulunur musunuz? Kendinizi eleştirir misiniz?
4. Mükemmeli nasıl tanımlarsınız? Mükemmel bulduğunuz insanlar var mıdır?
5. Yetersizlik hissi yaşadığınız olur mu?
6. Kendinizi güvensiz hissettiğiniz, zorlandığınız durumlar yaşadınız mı?

Travmatik yaşantı, aşırı stres içeren, dehşet verici ve potansiyel olarak yaşamı tehdit eden olayların <u>yanı sıra</u> dış kaynaklı bir duruma ya da kişisel algılara dayalı içsel bir şekilde de gelişebilir. Bu yüzden işten çıkarılma, akademik başarısızlık gibi yaşantılar ile ilişki, statü gibi her türlü alanda kayıp deneyimini içerebilir. Bu tür yaşantılar bilişsel, duygusal ve davranışsal boyutlarda değişimlere neden olabilir.

7. Yaşamınızda sizin için zorlayıcı, travmatik ya da başarısız hissettiğiniz bir olaydan bahseder misiniz?
8. Olayı deneyimlediğiniz sırada neler hissetmiştiniz? İfade edebildiniz mi?
9. Bu olay sizin için ne anlama geliyor?
10. Başa çıkabildiniz mi? Nasıl başa çıktınız?
11. Olaydan önce ve sonra kendinizi nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?
12. Ayrılıklara (ilişki, nesne, eşya vb.) nasıl tepkiler verirsiniz?
13. Kayıpları nasıl yaşarsınız? İlişkinizi, işinizi, statünüzü vb. kaybettiğinizde ne yaparsınız? Neler hissedersiniz?
14. Duygularınızı isimlendirebiliyor musunuz? Utanç duygunuzu adlandırabiliyor musunuz?
15. Duygularınızı ifade edebiliyor musunuz?
16. Sormadığım ama eklemek istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

APPENDIX 5: DEBRIEFING FORM

Katılım Sonrası Bilgilendirilme Formu

Bu çalışma, Başkent Üniversitesi Psikoloji bölümü öğretim üyesi Dr. Tuğba Uyar Suiçmez ve Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans programı öğrencisi Deniz Köroğlu ile birlikte yürütülmektedir. Katılımcıların yanıtlarının, çalışmanın seyrini ve sonuçlarını etkilenmemesi için çalışmanın amacı başlangıçta tam olarak açıklanmamıştır. Çalışmanın amacı yetişkin bireylerde narsistik yaralanma deneyimini derinlemesine incelemektir.

Görüşmeler sırasında verdiğiniz yanıtlar gizli tutulacak ve bilimsel amaçlar dışında kullanılmayacaktır. Çalışmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek, verinizin kullanılmamasını talep etmek ya da çalışma sonuçlarını öğrenmek istediğiniz takdirde Deniz Köroğlu'na
adresinden ulaşabilirsiniz. Çalışmaya katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz.

Bu çalışma hakkında bilgilendirildim. Çalışmaya kendi rızam ile katıldım. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Ad Soyad: **Tarih:** **İmza:**

APPENDIX 6: BAŞKENT UNIVERSITY ETHICAL COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 23.06.2023-243611

1993
BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Akademik Değerlendirme Koordinatörlüğü

Sayı : E-62310886-605.99-243611
Konu : Deniz Köroğlu'nun Etik Onay Başvurusu Hk. 23.06.2023

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 17.05.2023 tarih ve 232260 sayılı yazınız.

Enstitünüz Klinik Psikoloji Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Deniz Köroğlu'nun, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tuğba Uyar Suiçmez'in danışmanlığında yürüteceği "An Interpretati Analysis of The Narsistic Injury" başlıklı tez çalışması değerlendirilmiş ve bilgilerinize ekte sunulmuştur.

Prof. Dr. M. Abdülkadir VAROĞLU
Kurul Başkanı

Ek: Değerlendirme Formu

Sayı : 17162298.600- 158
Konu : Tez Çalışması

05 HAZİRAN 2023

İlgili Makama

Üniversitemiz Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Klinik Psikoloji Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Deniz Köroğlu'nun, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tuğba Uyar Suiçmez'in danışmanlığında yürüteceği "An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of The Narsistic Injury" isimli yüksek lisans tez çalışması değerlendirilmiş ve yapılmasında bir sakınca olmadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımızla sunarız.

Başkent Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler ve Sanat Araştırma Kurulu

Ad, Soyad	Değerlendirme	İmza
Prof. Dr. M. Abdülkadir Varoğlu	Olumlu/Olumsuz	
Prof. Dr. Gözen Güner Aktaş	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Sadegül Akbaba Altun	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Hasan Tahsin Fendoğlu	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Filiz Kalelioğlu	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Hidayet Hale Künüçen	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Özcan Yağcı	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	