

## CHAPTER 3

# THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

### PECULIARITIES OF THE MANIFESTATION OF DEPRESSION IN NARCISSISTIC INDIVIDUALS

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**Abstract.** *Modern psychology regards narcissism as one of the greatest problems of personality. Although narcissistic traits are characteristic of all people, they are considered normal only when they do not acquire a leading role in personality functioning. A person with narcissistic disorder has formed an image of an ideal self; moreover, their defense mechanisms are aimed at preserving this image from criticism by others and from their own awareness of it as flawed and imperfect. In psychology today, narcissistic personality disorder is a mental illness characterized by a lack of compassion, a willingness to use others, and a heightened sense of self-importance. And in popular discourse, narcissism is a commonly used term for egoistic behavior. Narcissistic people are also characterized by excessive self-love, preoccupation with success, and emotional instability. The aim of the research is to theoretically investigate and empirically verify the relationship between depression and the level of narcissism of a personality. Also hypothesized: it is likely that there is a relationship between the level of narcissism of the personality and its propensity to a depressive state associated with the unsatisfied needs for recognition, respect and love; assume that individuals with medium and high levels of narcissism will show aggression and sensitivity, which will lead to depressive states of different levels. The methodology of this study involves the use of general scientific (induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, generalization) and special (questionnaires; graphic, tabular) research methods to achieve this goal. Considering different approaches to the study of depression in the context of narcissism in domestic and foreign scientists, it is decided to rely on the understanding of depression by N. McWilliams, who identified the concept of depression as a state and depression as a character trait. This understanding of depression provides a broad understanding of the phenomenon. In particular, depressive manifestations include: a tendency to periodically exhibit chronic depressed mood, negative self-esteem, negative perceptions of the past and future, as well as deterioration of physical health.*

**Keywords:** *depression, depressiveness, depressive manifestations, narcissism.*

**JEL Classification:** *I10, J10*

**Formulas:** *0; fig.: 9; tabl.: 1; bibl.: 20*

**Introduction.** According to the World Health Organization, 40 million people in the European region suffer from depressive disorder. Despite the prevalence of this disorder, even today there are cases when it is not diagnosed at the right time or when

its causes are not correctly recognized. Causes of depression include biological tendencies, losses, life crises and psychological personality traits. Such features include the narcissistic nature of personality. Among other categories of psychologist's clients, narcissistic individuals constitute a significant proportion. This situation is ordered by the tendency of modern society to support and endorse narcissistic patterns of behavior. These include an unrestrained desire for success, leadership and ideality, as well as self-assertion through the acquisition of material values. People with such tendencies are "convenient" for modern capitalist society, since they are willing to put a lot of effort into maintaining the image of a strong and successful person. Thus, everyone today receives many stimuli from an early age to form and maintain narcissism [4]. Obviously, the psyche is not capable of withstanding the constant tension that such behavioral patterns require. The tendency of narcissistic personalities to set unrealistic goals and the unmet need for respect and love from others contributes to people's frustration with their environment and themselves. As a result of this tension and unmet bizarre needs, narcissistic personalities are more prone to develop depressive states against a background of emotional burnout, frustrations, and narcissistic traumatization. In this connection, there is a need for a more detailed study of the phenomenon of narcissism. That is why we chose depression as a psychological phenomenon of personality as an object of our research, and the peculiarities of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism as a subject.

**Literature review.** Depressionism and narcissism have been studied by Z. Freud, O. Krenberg, N. McWilliams, C. Leonhardt, Gaakel, T. Miller, H. Kohut, X. Henseler, A. Golov, E. Sokolova, L. Korol, E. Kalitievskaya, D. Khlomova, A. Kerechan, A. Sklar, T. Bogdan, A. Lazarenko [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13]. Psychodynamic studies of narcissism prove that this character trait is formed in childhood under the influence of upbringing, in particular the relationship with the mother, who due to her psychological immaturity or narcissism can be cold, cruel, judgmental to the child or use the child as a narcissist proper [13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20].

**Aim.** The aim of the research is to theoretically investigate and empirically verify the relationship between depression and the level of narcissism of a personality. Also hypothesized: it is likely that there is a relationship between the level of narcissism of the personality and its propensity to a depressive state associated with the unsatisfied needs for recognition, respect and love; assume that individuals with medium and high levels of narcissism will show aggression and sensitivity, which will lead to depressive states of different levels.

**Methods.** The methodology of this study involves the use of general scientific (induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, generalization) and special (questionnaires; graphic, tabular) research methods to achieve this goal.

**Results.** Psychological researchers have identified different types of narcissism, in particular E. Fromm spoke of individual and social or group narcissism and that each of them can manifest itself in benign and malignant forms. For his part, T. Miller described the following types of narcissistic personalities: unprincipled

narcissism, love narcissism, compensatory narcissism, elitist narcissism, constructive narcissism, destructive narcissism, deficient narcissism. Considering different approaches to the study of depression by domestic and foreign scientists, it was decided to rely on

N. McWilliams' understanding of depression, who identified the concept of depression as a condition and depression as a character trait. Such an understanding of depression provides a broad understanding of this phenomenon. In particular, depressive manifestations include a tendency to periodically exhibit chronic depressed mood, negative self-esteem, negative perceptions of the past and future, and deterioration of physical health [19].

Narcissistic individuals need praise, feel like the center of the universe, and have a constant need for fascination. Most of all, they fear rejection, loss of self-esteem, criticism, or unexpected and strong feelings. The loss of self-esteem can be traumatic for them and can even cause aggression. These characteristics of narcissistic people, as well as the lifestyle of modern society, where the focus on success, leadership and uniqueness contributes to the development of their depression.

Based on numerous clinical observations, depression in persons with narcissistic personality disorder has a coloring of defeat, failure, and is associated more with feelings of deep shame and emptiness. This condition is seen in mature individuals between the ages of 25 and 55, and instead of a richness of inner emotional life that can be empathically "listened to," is often characterized by numerous descriptions of unpleasant bodily sensations and somatic manifestations. Unpleasant bodily sensations against a background of deep anhedonia replace descriptions of emotions or experiences, thus severing the connection with the social situation and its mental reflection. Such individuals typically experience depression after a series of disappointments in the external world: either in their relationships with others (they describe others in a more superficial, devaluing manner, as imperfect, non-ideal people) or in their own abilities - career or academic achievement [14; 15].

Because the psychodynamics of narcissistic personality disorder lie in the paradox of grandiosity and the exaggeration of one's own importance and the inability to recognize the influence of others on one's life, depression means that the grandiose self has failed and there is a strong disappointment in the self, which can be framed inward. Even if disappointment in relationships is present in the emotional sounding of the depression of the narcissistic personality, they are still ascribed to themselves, refracted by feelings of insignificance - "I am not so to be loved" [15, 20].

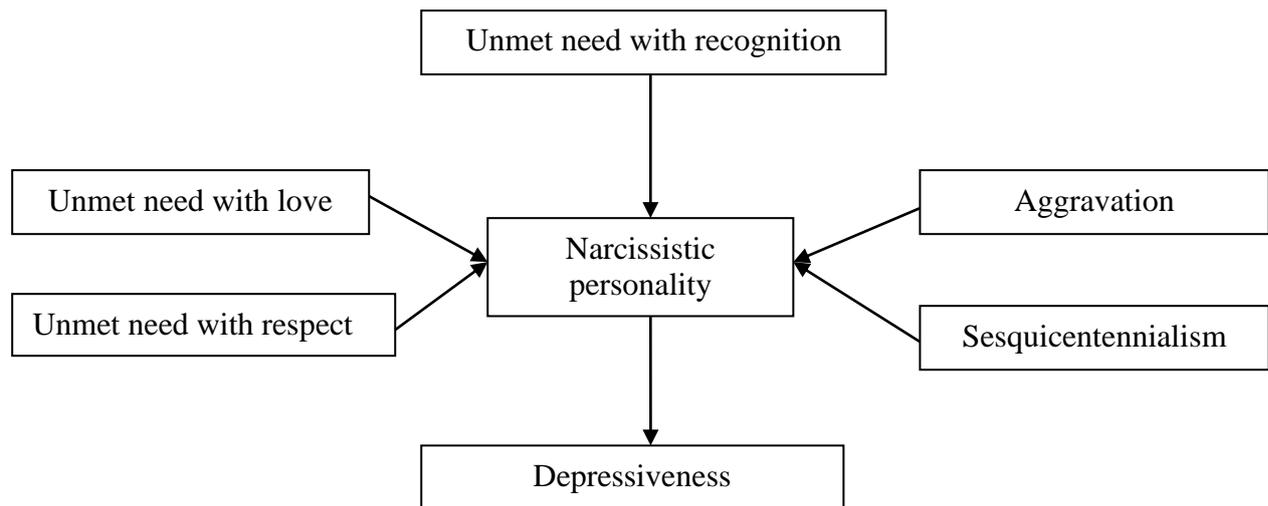
A. Beck distinguished two kinds of depression: depression associated with deprivation and depression of defeat (failure to achieve goals). Since for narcissistic personalities defeat, "failure" is "not to be the first", the tendency to depression of defeat is obvious. But there are also views of narcissistic individuals as incapable of depression. It is most consistently defended by A. Kernberg, stressing what on the surface looks like depression is anger and resentment, laden with vengeful feelings rather than sadness over loss. M. Jesovic-Gesich and J. Wesel argue that when an object is lost the narcissistic personality is sad about the loss of a "mirror," the lack of

fascination leads to dysphoria and self-hatred. A. Kernberg also believes that it is not the loss of the object, but the loss of narcissistic reinforcement that is experienced. The researcher considers that even a slightly expressed capacity for sadness and depression with elements of guilt is a favorable prognostic indicator of the results of treatment [16].

C. Kavalier-Adler also argues that the blocking of despondency in boundary and narcissistic personality disorder is a rejection of the affective experience of intense pre-trauma. The real or imagined loss of the mother in early childhood "triggers" mechanisms of idealization and imagination fusion with her to protect against the anguish of love and simultaneously the anguish of intense guilt over childhood hatred. The intensity of the guilt makes the memories of the lost object unbearable and where the work of grief is required, there is an affective block. Kavalier-Adler comments on O. Kernberg's assertion about the inability of narcissistic patients to be depressed as follows. While considering the interpretation of primitive aggression as the analyst's main contribution to the narcissistic patient's movement toward grief, A. Kernberg, according to Kavalier-Adler, does not focus on the creation of a supportive environment for the "containerization" of grief. The author describes the fear of crying typical of the narcissistic personality. Patients with narcissistic personality disorder consistently exclude the fear of absorbing their own pain. The unreported tears, the repressed pain for decades, create an unconscious threat of "drowning in their own tears," so the theme of drowning is often present in the dreams of narcissistic patients. Narcissistic personalities experience the fear of constant weeping during the grief affect; the tears are caused by the terror of losing the object of fantastic fusion and at the same time by the terror of being absorbed by the one with whom one wants to fuse. Cavalier-Adler emphasizes the need for interpersonal contact in order to transform the endless crying of pathological grief into "grief work. Supporting the therapist in an external dialogue allows one to move from a structure of protective fusion to a structure of internal dialogue.

According to the researcher, it is the presence of the structure of internal dialogue that provides the ability to be despondent in the absence of an external object. Initiation of an internal dialogue through an external dialogue leads to liberation from the affect of sadness [5].

On the basis of the theoretical analysis of the manifestations of depression in narcissistic individuals a theoretical model of the features of depression in narcissistic personalities was built (see fig. 1). According to this model narcissistic personality is characterized by unsatisfied needs for respect, love and recognition, as well as aggression and sensitivity, provoking in them the development of depression. According to our hypothetical model, we chose research methods that would result in either confirming or denying our scientific views on the psychological phenomenon of narcissism.



**Figure 1. Theoretical hypothetical model of depression peculiarities in narcissistic personalities**

Source: author Katolyk G.V.

*Organizational and methodological bases of research of features of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism.* An empirical study of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism involved 50 subjects from 19 to 30 years old, men and women with different levels of education and different occupations (students, unemployed, working, business owners). Data collection for the study was conducted using the Internet through the Google Form, such organization of the study allowed to form a randomized sample, which provides greater reliability of the study.

Taking into account the previous theoretical studies, peculiarities of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism and taking into account the task set for the collection of empirical data the following research methods were chosen:

- Individual-typological questionnaire, L. Sobchik's methodology. The technique is aimed at diagnosing self-awareness, self-esteem, personality self-control, personality traits and character traits;

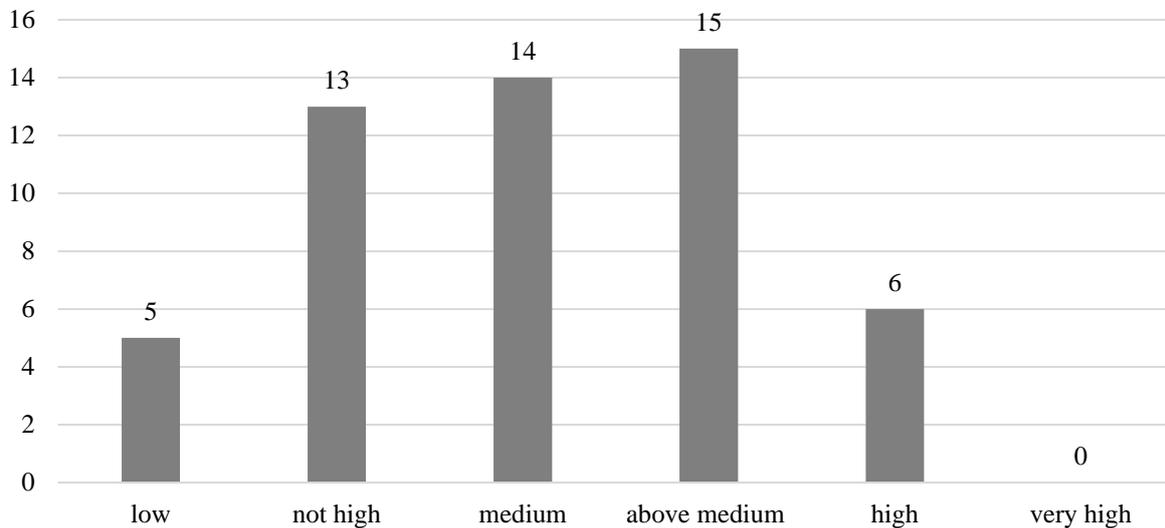
- A. Maslow motivational questionnaire (MMT-32) modified by D. Kashirsky and A. Motkov. The purpose of the technique is to study the level of importance and satisfaction of personal needs according to A. Maslow's theory of needs.

- NPI non-clinical narcissism questionnaire. This questionnaire allows diagnosing the level of narcissism as a personality trait, as well as such manifestations of narcissism as superiority, vanity, using people, uniqueness, demonstrativeness, authority, self-sufficiency.

- V. Zhmurov's method of diagnosing the level of depression. Zhmurov. The purpose of the technique is to establish the level of depression at the time of study. The peculiarity of this technique is that it allows to diagnose melancholic depression, which, according to the previous theoretical studies, narcissistic personalities are susceptible to.

- A questionnaire to collect general information about the subjects (age, gender, education, employment).

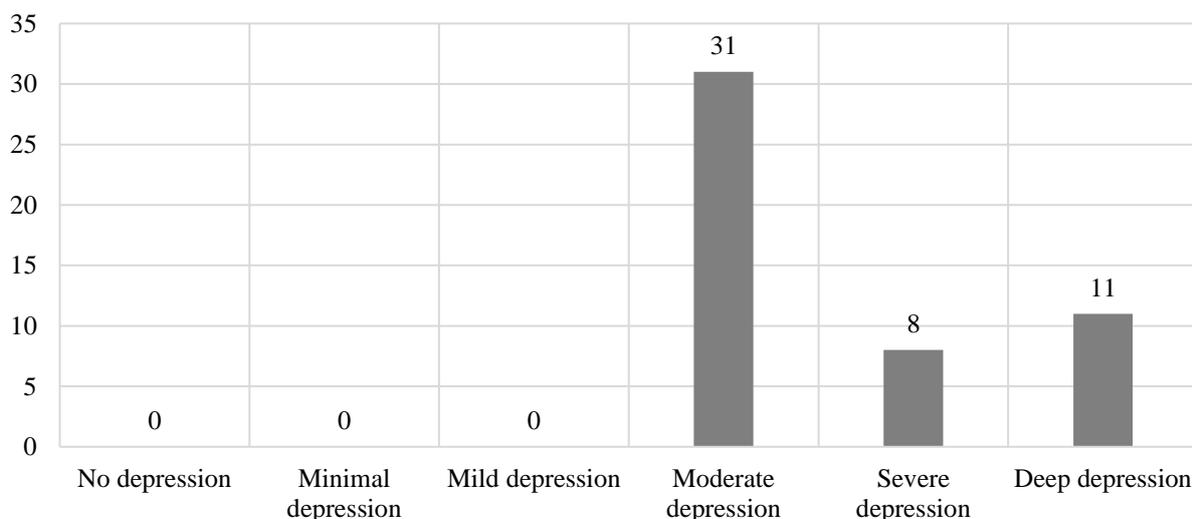
*Description of the results of the empirical study of the peculiarities of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism.* Descriptive statistics, correlation and factor analysis methods (Microsoft Exel and SPSS) were used to process empirical data obtained as a result of the study. After calculating the results of the NPI non-clinical narcissism questionnaire, we used descriptive statistics to plot the distribution of narcissism levels in the study group (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Distribution of the results of the NPI non-clinical narcissism questionnaire in the study group**

Source: developed by the authors

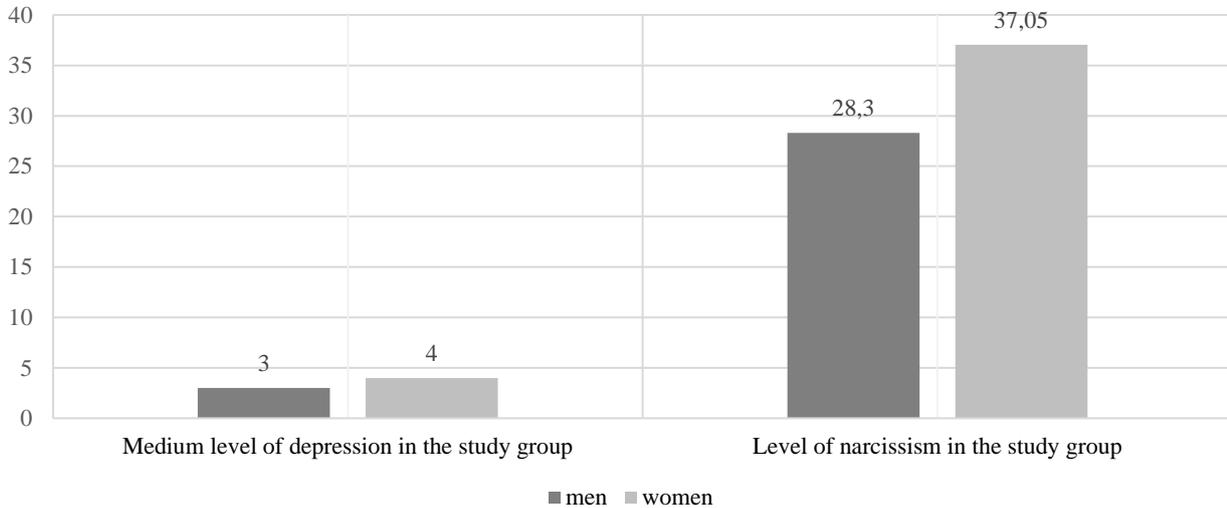
The graph shows that this group is mostly characterized by low, medium, and above-average levels of narcissism. Given that the high level of narcissism in this group predominates over the low level, we can assume that narcissism is a fairly typical trait for personalities between the ages of 19 and 30. Having counted the results of the studied by the method of diagnosing the level of depression V. Zhmurov plotted the distribution of the level of depression in the group of subjects.



**Figure 3. The results of studied by the method of diagnostics of the level of depression V. Zhmurov**

Source: developed by the authors

Analyzing the graph of the distribution of the results by the method of diagnosing the level of depression V. Zhmurov. (See Fig.3), we can conclude that at the time of the interview the subjects were depressed, as the majority of the subjects appeared to have a moderate level of depression, and a significant part of them showed pronounced and deep depression.



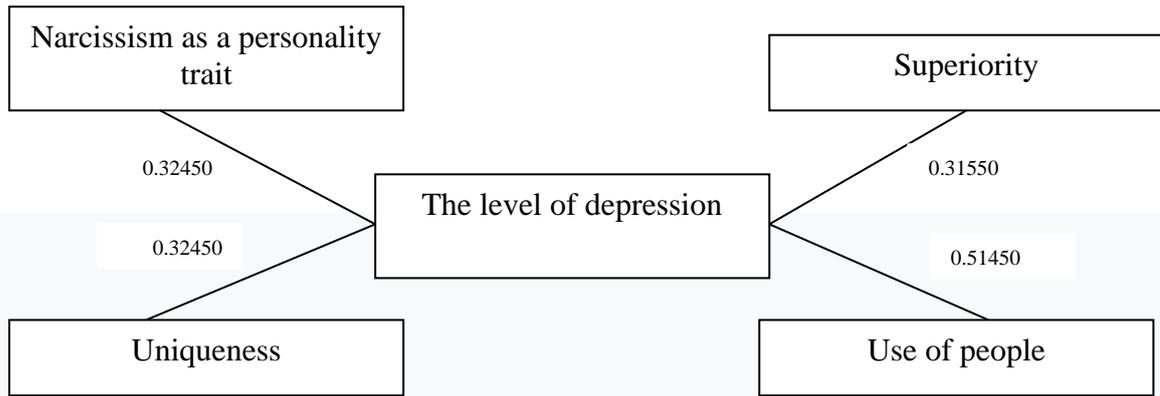
**Figure 4. Comparison of the mean values of the results of the methods for diagnosing the level of depression V. Zhmurov and the NPI non-clinical narcissism questionnaire between men and women**

*Source: developed by the authors*

Having analyzed the results of the research by the method of descriptive statistics according to the method of diagnostics of the level of depression V.. NPI non-clinical narcissism questionnaire, a graph comparing the average values of the results between men and women was plotted (see Fig. 4). According to this graph, we can assume that a higher level of narcissism and depression is inherent for men than for women at the time of the survey. In our opinion, this can be explained by the peculiarities of the boys' upbringing, as well as the tendency of men to mask their own feelings and ignore problems.

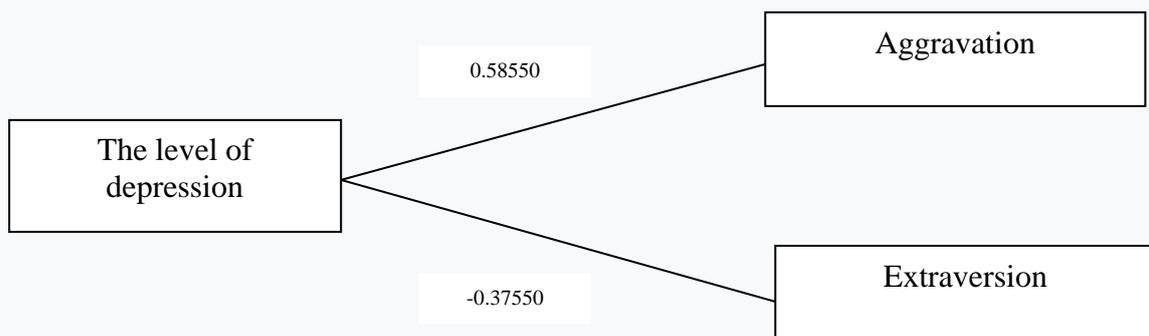
*Description of the results of the correlation analysis.* In order to establish the relationship between depression and narcissism of personality, as well as to identify other significant correlations in the results of the study, a correlation analysis was carried out. The statistically significant relationships reflected in the correlation matrix are described using correlation pleids (see Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7).

On the basis of the correlation matrix a correlation set of the level of depression with such personality traits as superiority, uniqueness, the habit of using people and the general level of narcissism on the NPI questionnaire was constructed. Based on this correlational pleiad, it can be concluded that there is a direct relationship between the level of depression and the level of narcissistic personality. Specifically, the occurrence of depression in narcissistic individuals is influenced by traits such as superiority, uniqueness, and a tendency to use people.



**Figure 5. Pleiad of correlation between the level of depression according to V. Zhmurov's method and the scales of "arrogance", "using people", "uniqueness" and the general level of narcissism as a personality trait according to the NPI method**

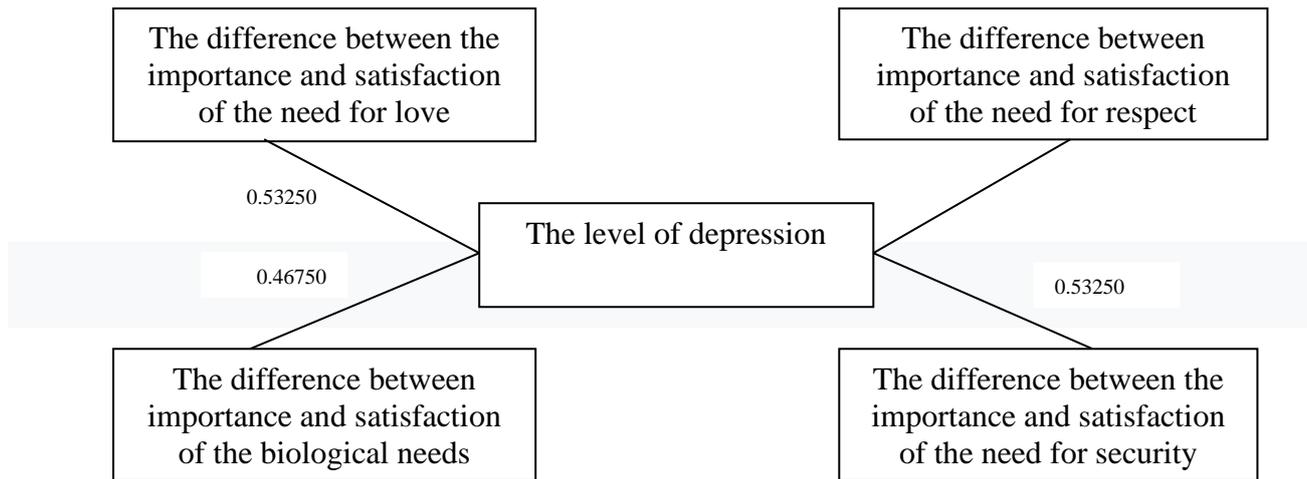
Source: developed by the authors



**Figure 6. Correlation Pleiad between the level of depression according to the method of V. Zhmurov and the scales of extraversion and aggression of the L. Sobchik typological questionnaire**

Source: developed by the authors

Analyzing the results of the correlation relation we built a correlation pleiad between the level of depression according to V. Zhmurov's method and the scales of extraversion and aggression of the L. Sobchik's typological questionnaire. This correlation set shows a direct connection between the level of depression in narcissistic individuals and aggravation, i.e. the tendency of a person to exaggerate his/her problems, and an inverse connection with extraversion. That is, narcissistic individuals who are more focused on the outside world and seek to expand their social circle is less prone to depression.



**Figure 7. Pleiad of correlations between the level of depression according to V. Zhmurov's method and the difference between the importance and satisfaction of needs for security, love, respect and biological needs according to A. Maslow's motivational questionnaire**

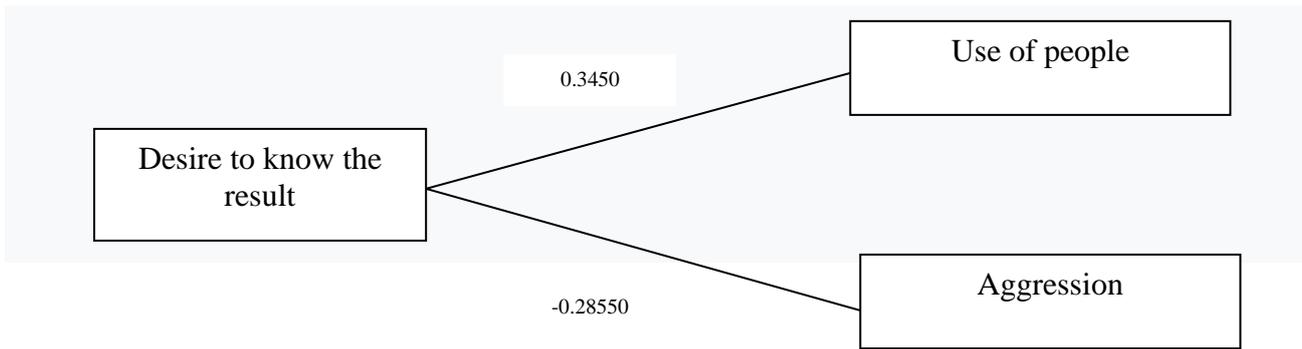
Source: developed by the authors by A. Maslow

Analyzing the results of the correlation relation we built a correlation relation between the level of depression according to V. Zhmurov's method and the difference between the importance and satisfaction of needs for security, love, respect and biological needs according to A. Maslow's motivational questionnaire Maslow's motivational questionnaire (Fig. 7). The Pleiades shows that the level of depression in the individuals studied is related to the unmet basic biological needs, as well as the needs for safety, respect, and love.

**Discussion.** A special feature of our study was that during the collection of empirical data, we invited those studied, if they were interested in interpreting their results, to leave an e-mail address. Twenty of the fifty subjects wanted an interpretation of the results, this trait was taken into account in the correlation analysis, which revealed the correlation relationships shown in Figure 8. This correlational pleiad indicates that studies that want to know their results tend to use people for their own purposes, and the inverse relationship with aggression may indicate that studies do not tend to be aggressive in interpersonal communication. Consequently, the narcissistic individuals in the study group were more likely to be manipulative than openly aggressive in communication.

*Description of the results of the factor analysis of the peculiarities of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism.* On the basis of the correlation analysis performed and the establishment of a relationship between depression and narcissism, as well as the discovery of statistically significant correlations between certain studied values and the level of depression in the study group, which, as already shown, consists of quite narcissistic personalities, it was decided to conduct a factor analysis to more accurately describe the causes of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism. In the course of the study we checked the feasibility of factor analysis with the KMR criterion and the Butlett criterion. In order

to conduct factor analysis, the KMR criterion must be greater than 0.5, and the Butlett criterion below 0.005.



**Figure 8. Pleiad of correlation relationship between the desire to know the result, the scale of the NPI questionnaire of the use of people and the scale of the L. Sobchik method of aggression**

Source: developed by the authors

The characteristics of these criteria: KMO = 0.694, and the criterion of Butlett = 0.000 indicate the appropriateness of factor analysis. To determine the number of factors, we focused on the Kaiser criterion, according to which the number of factors is equal to the number of components whose value is greater than 1. According to this criterion and preliminary analysis of the data, we selected 3 factors.

**Table 1. Factor loadings for the empirical data of the research in the peculiarities of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism**

№	Factor name	Scales included in the factor	Factor pressures	% of explained variance
1	Self-admiration	The difference between importance and satisfaction of the need for respect	0,802	36,007
		The difference between the importance and satisfaction of the need for love	0,716	
		Uniqueness	0,674	
		Aggravation	0,656	
2	Magnificence	Uniqueness	0,334	14,941
		The difference between the importance and satisfaction of the need for security	0,529	
3	Narcissism	Superiority	0,800	11,319
		Uniqueness	0,412	
Total variance percentage				62,267

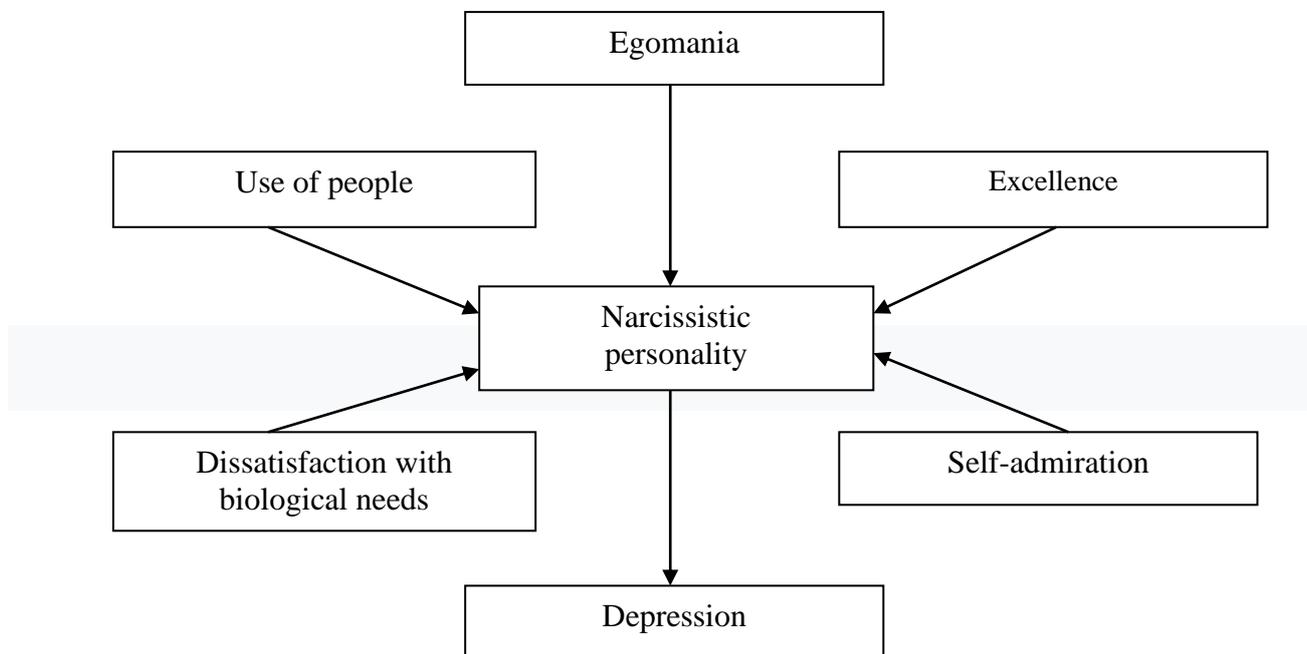
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**Conclusions.** Consequently, we can conclude that three main factors influence the occurrence of depressive states in narcissistic personalities: narcissism, majesty, and narcissism.

Thus, an empirical study was conducted to identify the features of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism. On the basis of the obtained results of

the correlation analysis, we can assert that there is a direct connection between depression and narcissism of personality. As a result of the study and interpretation of the results, it was found that the level of depression in narcissistic personalities is associated with the unsatisfied needs for love, respect, safety, as well as basic biological needs. That is, the first hypothesis was partially confirmed. In particular, it was found that there is a relationship between depression and such traits of narcissistic personalities as uniqueness, neglect, taking advantage of people, a tendency to exaggerate one's own problems (aggravation). It was also found that interviewees who were extroverted and outward-looking were less likely to be depressed regardless of their level of narcissism, as an inverse relationship was found between the level of depression and extroversion.

According to the results obtained, the theoretical-hypothetical model of the features of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism takes on a slightly different appearance.



**Figure 9. Model of features of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism (G.V. Katolik's model)**

*Source: developed by the authors*

Fig. 9 shows a model of features of depression in individuals with different levels of narcissism, based on the results of the study. According to this model, depression in narcissistic personalities is caused by their inherent narcissism, grandeur, narcissism, taking advantage of people and unmet biological needs.

**Author contributions.** The authors contributed equally.

**Disclosure statement.** The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

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**Received: February 01, 2022**

**Approved: March 05, 2022**