

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
MASTER PROGRAM IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VULNERABLE NARCISSM AND FEAR
OF INTIMACY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF FRUSTRATION
TOLERANCE**

MASTER'S THESIS

SELIN BAKTIR

ISTANBUL 2025

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
MASTER PROGRAM IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VULNERABLE NARCISSM AND FEAR
OF INTIMACY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF FRUSTRATION
TOLERANCE**

MASTER'S THESIS

SELIN BAKTIR

THESIS ADVISOR

ASST. PROF. ÇIĞDEM KOŞE

ISTANBUL 2025



T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

.../.../...

MASTER THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Program Name:	Clinical Psychology
Student's Name and Surname:	Selin Baktr
Name Of The Thesis:	The Relationship Between Vulnerable Narcissism and Fear of Intimacy: The Mediating Role of Frustration Tolerance
Thesis Defense Date:	26.05.2025

This thesis has been approved by the Graduate School which has fulfilled the necessary conditions as Master thesis.

Assoc. Prof. Yücel Batu SALMAN
Institute Director

This thesis was read by us, quality and content as a Master's thesis has been seen and accepted as sufficient.

	Title/Name	Institution	Signature
Thesis Advisor's	Asst. Prof. Çiğdem Koş	Bahçeşehir University	
Member's	Asst. Prof. Aliye Canan Taşlıoğlu Sayiner	Bahçeşehir University	
Member's	Asst. Prof. Pınar Arslantürk	Okan University	



I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Selin, Baktr

Signature:

ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VULNERABLE NARCISSISM AND FEAR OF INTIMACY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

Baktır, Selin

Master's Program in Clinical Psychology

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Çiğdem Koş

May 2025, 61 pages

Vulnerable narcissism involves the disturbance of self-esteem and dependence on the outside world for approval and affirmation. There are many theories and clinical observations about the influence of narcissism on relationships from different perspectives, but there has been limited empirical research on fear of intimacy and especially its association with frustration tolerance. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy, and the mediating role of frustration tolerance. An online survey was used to collect data. Total number of 305 participants between ages of 18 to 35 were included in the study. The instruments used in the study were Demographic Information Form, the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS), Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), and the Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS). The results showed positive correlations of vulnerable narcissism with fear of intimacy. Also, positive correlations of frustration intolerance with vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy were found. The result of regression analyses showed that vulnerable narcissism predicts both fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance while frustration tolerance also predicts fear of intimacy. The results did not support the mediating role of frustration tolerance for the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. The results of this study provide preliminary findings and were discussed about the existing literature on the relationship between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance and the mediating role of frustration tolerance.

Keywords: Narcissism, Fear of Intimacy, Frustration Tolerance



ÖZET

KIRILGAN NARSİSİZM VE YAKINLIK KORKUSU ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ: FRUSTRASYON TOLERANSININ ARACI ROLÜ

Baktır, Selin

Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı

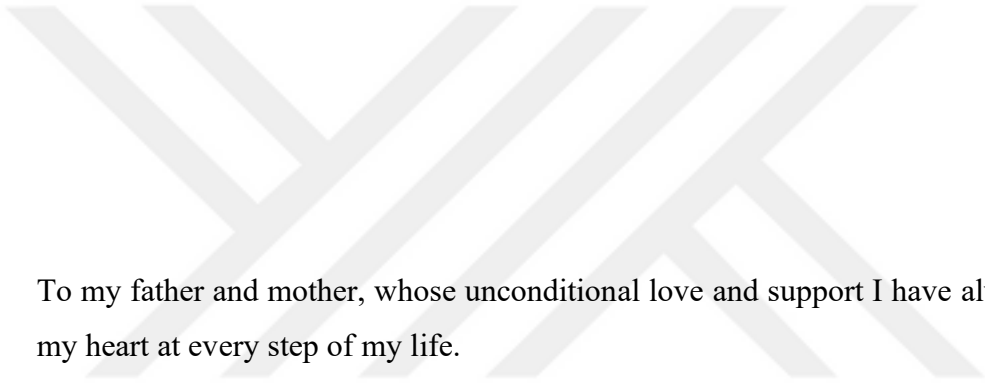
Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Çiğdem Koşe

Mayıs 2025, 61 sayfa

Kırılğan narsisizm, bireyin öz saygısında sürekli dalgalanmalar, onay ve tasdik için dış dünyaya bağımlılık ile karakterize edilir. Narsisizmin ilişkiler üzerindeki etkisini ilişkilerin farklı boyutlarıyla ele alan birçok teori ve klinik gözlem bulunmaktadır, ancak yakınlık korkusu ve özellikle frustrasyon toleransı ile ilişkisi konusunda yapılan deneysel çalışmalar sınırlıdır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kırılğan narsisizm ile yakınlık korkusu arasındaki ilişkiyi ve frustrasyon toleransının aracılık rolünü incelemektir. Verileri toplamak için çevrimiçi anket kullanılmış olup çalışmaya 18-35 yaş aralığında toplam 305 katılımcı katılmıştır. Araştırmada Demografik Bilgi Formu, Kırılğan Narsisizm Ölçeği (KNÖ), Yakınlık Korkusu Ölçeği (YKÖ) ve Engellenme Rahatsızlık Ölçeği (ERÖ) kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar kırılğan narsisizm ile yakınlık korkusu arasında pozitif korelasyon olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, frustrasyon intoleransı ile kırılğan narsisizm ve yakınlık korkusu arasında da pozitif korelasyonlar bulunmuştur. Regresyon analizleri sonucunda, kırılğan narsisizmin hem yakınlık korkusunu hem de frustrasyon toleransını anlamlı şekilde yordadığı; ayrıca, frustrasyon toleransının da yakınlık korkusu üzerinde yordayıcı bir etkisinin olduğu görülmüştür. Sonuçlar, kırılğan narsisizm ile yakınlık korkusu arasındaki ilişkide frustrasyon toleransının aracılık rolünü desteklememiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları kırılğan narsisizm, yakınlık korkusu ve frustrasyon toleransı arasındaki ilişkiye ve frustrasyon toleransının aracılık rolüne dair ön bulgular sağlamış, bu bulgular mevcut literatürle ilgili olarak tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Narsisizm, Yakınlık Korkusu, Frustrasyon Toleransı





To my father and mother, whose unconditional love and support I have always felt in my heart at every step of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to present my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Asst. Prof. Çiğdem Koşer for her containing and supporting attitude. Her contributions and support guided me through every step of this challenging experience.

I am grateful to my mother and father, who have always supported me in every decision I've made throughout my life. Their love has been a constant source of strength, and their contributions have played a significant role in helping me stand where I am today.

I want to express my gratitude to Kerem, whom I feel fortunate to walk this challenging path with, sharing both the struggles and the joys. It has been a privilege to stand with him on our journey of becoming clinical psychologists.

Lastly, Berhan, thank you for being by my side and making every moment of my life beautiful. Your support and love have made me feel strong throughout this journey, just as in any other.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ETHICAL CONDUCT.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZET.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS/ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	16
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	16
1.2 Purpose of the Study.....	17
1.3 Hypotheses.....	18
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	19
1.5 Definitions.....	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	22
2.1 Vulnerable Narcissism.....	22
2.1.1 Developmental Bases of Vulnerable Narcissism.....	24
2.2. Fear Of Intimacy.....	26
2.2.1 Vulnerable Narcissism and Fear of Intimacy in Relationships.....	28
2.3 Frustration Tolerance.....	29
2.3.1 Frustration Tolerance and Vulnerable Narcissism.....	31
2.3.2 Frustration Tolerance and Fear of Intimacy.....	32
2.3.3 Relationship between Fear of Intimacy, Vulnerable Narcissism and Frustration Tolerance.....	34
Chapter 3: Method.....	36
3.1 Research Design.....	36
3.2 Participants.....	36
3.3 Data Collection.....	37
3.3.1 Instruments.....	37
3.3.1.1 Demographic Information Form.....	37
3.3.1.2 Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS)	38

3.3.1.3 Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS)	38
3.3.1.4 Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS)	39
3.3.2 Procedure.....	40
3.3.3 Data Analysis.....	40
3.4 Limitations.....	41
Chapter 4: Results.....	42
4.1 Descriptive Statistics.....	42
4.2 Correlation Analyses.....	42
4.2 Regression Analyses.....	44
4.3 Mediation Analysis.....	46
4.3 Comparison of Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, Fear of Intimacy Scale, and Frustration Discomfort Scale Scores by Demographic Variables.....	49
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	53
5.1 Discussion on Main Hypotheses.....	53
5.2 Discussion on Group Differences.....	57
5.3 Conclusion.....	59
5.3 Recommendations.....	60
REFERENCES.....	62

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

Table 1 Demographics of the Participants.....	36
Table 2 Descriptives of the Scales and Subscales.....	42
Table 3 Pearson Correlations and Reliability Information of Hypersensitive Narcissism, Fear of Intimacy, and Frustration Tolerance Scales and Subscale.....	43
Table 4 Vulnerable Narcissism predicted Fear of Intimacy.....	46
Table 5 Vulnerable Narcissism predicted Frustration Tolerance.....	46
Table 6 Frustration Tolerance predicted Fear of Intimacy.....	46
Table 7 The Mediation Role of Frustration Tolerance.....	48
Table 8 The Mediation Role of Discomfort Intolerance.....	48
Table 9 Independent Groups t-Test Results for the Analysis of the Variables by Gender.....	49
Table 10 One-Way ANOVA Results of the Fear of Intimacy According to Relationship Status, Duration of Current Relationship, the Duration of Longest Past Relationship, Duration of Time Passed Since Last Relationship Ended, Average Amount of Lifetime in a Relationship.....	51

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

- Figure 1 The Proposed Model for the Mediator Role of Frustration Tolerance on the Relationship Between Vulnerable Narcissism and Fear of Intimacy..... 19
- Figure 2 Mediator Role of Frustration Tolerance on the Relationship between Vulnerable Narcissism and Fear of Intimacy..... 48



LIST OF SYMBOLS/ABBREVIATIONS

β	Beta Coefficient
B	Beta Coefficient
F	F-statistics
FDS	Frustration Discomfort Scale
FIS	Fear of Intimacy Scale
HSNS	Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale
M	Mean
Max.	Maximum
Min.	Minimum
p	probability
r	Pearson Correlation
R ²	R Square
SD	Standard Deviation
SE	Standard Error

SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

t t statistic

VIF Variance Inflation Factor

% Percentage



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Narcissistic personality characterized by persistent attention seeking, arrogance, assertiveness, and lack of empathy for others fails to identify the shy narcissistic individuals with their secret wish to exhibit themselves in a grandiose manner which is hidden in their self-effacing attitude; and their hypersensitivity to others' reactions (Gabbard, 1989). Akhtar (2000), while illustrating the similarities between ordinary narcissists and shy narcissists, mentioned that shy narcissists are also involved with fantasies of glory and fame, lacking in empathy for others and deficits in their capacity for deep object relationships. However, in contrast to open and grandiose narcissism, which is easier to understand and causes lower levels of anxiety, the grandiose thoughts associated with vulnerable narcissism evoke feelings of shame. Narcissistic vulnerability is associated with low self-esteem, shyness, inhibition, self-doubt, and sensitivity to others' reactions and criticism. Inferiority feelings and shame are central issues in vulnerable narcissists (Kohut, 1966). Experiencing great difficulty in consciously coping with their vulnerability and insecurity, they have a deep fear of rejection and abandonment, which causes them to adopt a defensive attitude towards intimacy, ultimately leading to feelings of isolation.

Literature focuses on intimacy, which has long been a vital need that serves as an important characteristic of close relationships, determining the quality of these relationships and satisfaction for the partners. Although, people who fear and resist intimacy may lack the ability to form satisfying relationships with others (Martin & Ashby, 2004). Fear of intimacy is defined as the inhibited capacity of an individual to exchange thoughts and feelings that are significant for the person with another individual who is highly valued due to the anxiety (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). The fear of intimacy experienced by an individual not only prevents establishing new relationships, but also negatively affects the quality and sustainability of existing relationships.

Frustration intolerance is associated with the rigid demands of a person seeking satisfaction and comfort, as well as the ego's vulnerability due to its dependence on social approval and perfect wellbeing (Harrington, 2005). The rigidity or flexibility of beliefs which are mostly self-imposed determines the low/high frustration tolerance (Dryden & David, 2008). Low frustration tolerance refers to the inability to bear uncomfortable emotions or demanding circumstances. Individuals with low frustration tolerance often experience considerable emotional discomfort when they encounter unresolved frustration and disappointment. As a result, they tend to avoid situations that might trigger these feelings. Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of human relationships, such uncomfortable or challenging situations are commonly encountered in close relationships. In these cases, the level of stress experienced due to frustration may result in avoidance behaviors or a fear of intimacy. Previous findings also indicate that frustration tolerance is correlated with avoidant behavior (Harrington, 2005).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy in romantic relationships and the mediating role of frustration tolerance. The examination of these relationships is important to understand the experience of individuals with narcissistic vulnerability in forming and maintaining close relationships. In literature, narcissism is widely discussed from a relational perspective, however, there has been little investigation regarding the relationship between narcissistic vulnerability, frustration tolerance and specific avoidance behavior in regard to interpersonal relationships. As discussed above, narcissistic vulnerability is characterized by hypersensitivity to others' reactions and a self-effacing attitude that includes a hidden wish to exhibit themselves in a grandiose manner since it brings out unbearable shame to reveal grandiosity. Vulnerable narcissists, just like their counterpart, believe in their own uniqueness and that they can only be recognized by other special people. While they are dependent on the feedback and approval of others, these individuals devalue themselves and idealize others. They often avoid situations that may make them feel vulnerable and withdraw from social relationships as a way to regulate their self-esteem (Hendin & Cheek,

1997; Luchner, Mirsalimi, Moser, & Jones, 2008). However, intimacy requires opening up to another person, revealing the emotions and to enjoy closeness. Fear of exposure and abandonment are listed as different reasons for fear of intimacy (Haltfield, 1984). Thus, narcissistic vulnerability is expected to be associated with fear of intimacy.

According to developmental psychology, after the critical period of identity formation in adolescence, the young adult who emerges from the search for identity seeks to merge their identity with that of others (Erikson, 1975). Thus, young adulthood is marked by a strong desire for intimate relationships, indicating a readiness for intimacy, which involves the ability to make concrete commitments. Due to the heightening need to relate to others and establish intimacy young adulthood is selected as the developmental period of focus in this study.

The relationship between the development of pathological narcissism and frustration, as discussed in psychoanalytic literature, is evident. However, there appears to be a lack of empirical research focusing on the frustration tolerance of individuals with narcissistic vulnerability. This study will also illuminate the examination of this relationship and explore how the fear of intimacy associates with narcissistic vulnerability in maintaining romantic relationships.

1.3 Hypotheses

Within the scope of this study, following hypotheses are specified. The proposed model that suggests frustration tolerance as a mediator in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy is shown in Figure 1.

H1: There will be a significant relationship between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance.

H2: Individuals with higher level of narcissistic vulnerability will be more likely to experience fear of intimacy in their romantic relationships.

H3: Individuals with higher level of narcissistic vulnerability will be more prone to have lower frustration tolerance.

H4: Individuals with lower level of frustration tolerance will be more likely to experience fear of intimacy in their romantic relationships.

H5: Frustration tolerance have a significant mediating effect in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy in relationships.

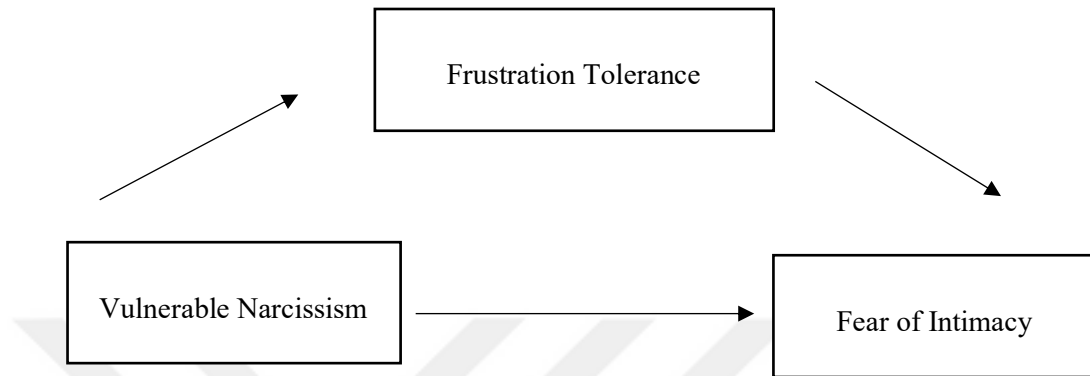


Figure 1. The proposed model for the mediator role of frustration tolerance on the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Although there is comprehensive literature indicating the effect of narcissistic characteristics on close relationships from various viewpoints, there are few studies that empirically investigate the intimacy dynamics and potential mediating pathways of narcissistic vulnerability. Considering that intimacy is a complex and often unclear yet crucial aspect influencing the quality and longevity of close relationships, this study aims to understand the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy in young adults.

Additionally, while the relationships between frustration tolerance, achievement, anxiety, and academic performance have been widely studied, there is a lack of research focusing on the connections between frustration tolerance, narcissism, and interpersonal relationships. Further, this study aims to understand how narcissistic vulnerability predicts fear of intimacy and explores the role of frustration tolerance in this relationship. Within the scope of this topic, in the first part of the thesis, a detailed

literature review and the hypotheses based on the existing literature are presented. In the second section the methodology of this study is described and in the following section results are presented. Lastly, in the final section the findings of the study in relation to the existing literature and suggestions for further research are discussed.

1.5 Definitions

1.5.1 Vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerable narcissism, which is also defined as thin-skinned or covert narcissism, characterized by low self-esteem, shyness, inhibition, self-doubt, and sensitivity to others' reactions and criticism has been identified as one of the two dimensions of pathological narcissism, in contrast to grandiose narcissism, characterized by grandiosity, openness, and arrogance (Akhtar, 2000; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). It is also associated with the chronic feeling of helplessness, avoidance, and self-consciousness, these individuals hide their arrogance, fulfill their narcissistic needs through others, and gain satisfaction by receiving the admiration of others. (Masterson, 1993; Van Buren & Meehan, 2015).

1.5.2 Fear of intimacy. Descutner and Thelen (1991) define fear of intimacy as the individual's capacity to be inhibited due to the anxiety of exchanging thoughts and feelings of personal importance with another person who is highly valued, and it includes not only the current relationships but also the fear of an expectation of a relationship that does not yet exist. Fear of intimacy, which is explained through the feelings of avoiding intimacy and the behaviors shaped by this feeling, influences interpersonal relationships while it contains a fear of establishing closeness in the unconscious (Morrant, 1999).

1.5.3 Frustration tolerance. The concept of frustration has been defined as a very common emotional response characterized by disappointment, anger, and confusion, resulting from a perceived obstacle to achieving a goal (Crossman et al, 2009). Similarly, in a different definition, it has been said that it is an emotion that arises from obstacles encountered in the process of meeting a vital need for individuals and cannot be overcome (Rosenzweig, 1941). Frustration tolerance is defined as the

individual's ability to resist the frustration he or she encounters without losing psychobiological adaptation (Rosenzweig, 1944).



Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Vulnerable Narcissism

Pathological narcissism is usually defined in relation to self-esteem fluctuations, unproportioned need for affirmation and glorification from others and self-involved interpersonal relationships. Here, personality is formed around the need to uphold self-esteem, which depends on the approval and admiration received from others, due to the challenges individuals face in regulating and maintaining their self-regard (McWilliams, 1994). Individuals with pathological narcissism suffer from regulatory deficits and maladaptive coping strategies with disappointments that threaten the maintenance of a positive self-image (Kealy & Rasmussen, 2012). Feelings of shame and fear of embarrassment are pervasive in the subjective experience of narcissistic individuals. Two dimensions underlying the dual nature of pathological narcissism that differs regarding on the conceptualization are identified as grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. While both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism share same core dynamics of low self-esteem, entitlement, and disregard for others, they differ significantly in internal experiences and external appearances. Grandiose narcissists tend to regulate their self-esteem by denying their weaknesses and devaluing people which threatens their self-esteem. They are unaware of the dissonance between reality and their expectations of entitlement and the impact on their relationships. That is, conflicts are always perceived as external to these individuals, not related to their unrealistic expectations (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Their intimidating demands of entitlement and consistent anger in unmet expectations are very apparent in contrast with vulnerable narcissists. Their grandiose fantasies are an aspect of their presentation of themselves. However, vulnerable narcissists' grandiose fantasies and entitled expectations of others are often unconscious, contrasting with their conscious feelings of emptiness, shame, and insecurity. In contrast to grandiose narcissism, which is characterized by an exhibitionistic tendency, vulnerable narcissism is conceptualized as a cycle between feelings of superiority and inferiority and fragile self-confidence (Rohmann et al., 2012). To cope with their inferiority, they mostly depend on positive feedback from others. Still, their extreme sensitivity to criticism causes them to avoid receiving feedback, even when it is

constructive, and to develop a defensive attitude. These individuals are highly sensitive to how others behave toward them, and they constantly focus on the actions of those around them. They carefully tend to avoid from being the center of attention in events and relationships due to a fear of rejection and humiliation. Deep down, they struggle with feelings of shame stemming from their desire to express themselves assertively.

Vulnerable narcissists are like grandiose narcissists in terms of their lack of empathy for others and their inability to form deep and meaningful relationships. Though, their withdrawal from social relationships enables them to hide their impaired capacity for deep relationships (Akhtar, 2000). Developing relationships with others brings out much greater anxiety in vulnerable narcissists because of the tenuous nature of their self-esteem (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). The negative attitudes of those who expect much from others without putting in effort gradually lead to the deterioration of interpersonal relationships. Their avoidance of relationships is mostly related to the shame and disappointment they experience when their expectations are not met by others, rather than the fear of rejection and the anxiety of being perceived negatively. Narcissistic vulnerability involves being overly sensitive to others' evaluations and excessive shyness which results in interpersonal avoidance and to adopt an aggressive attitude in situations such as rejection. However, individuals with narcissistic vulnerability tend to deny underlying disappointment and entitlement when their entitled needs and expectations are unmet by others. This disavowal leads to anger outbursts, which in turn triggers shame—a crucial emotion for vulnerable narcissists. Kohut suggests that the anxiety that exists in narcissistic people is an anxiety about not being able to control one's own grandiosity (Kohut, 1971, as cited in Siegel, 1996). Social withdrawal is a result of the intolerable disappointments that comes from unmet and unconscious entitled expectations (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Also, showing great sensitivity to other people's unspoken feelings and thought, groundless belief that the other person might be criticizing them inwardly, makes it difficult to be visible in social settings. Although they secretly believe they are different and important, they hide this and avoid attracting attention due to their hypersensitivity.

Due to the repeated frustration and traumatization of their self-esteem when growing up, vulnerable narcissists fear rejection and abandonment and are isolated, insecure, sensitive, painfully aware of their inner emptiness, and susceptible to chronic feelings of shame and humiliation (Cain et al., 2008; Gabbard, 1989; Kohut, 1971). Since they experience high anxiety in interpersonal relationships, they do not feel confident about maintaining a relationship and they experience fear of disappointment in regard to their needs in their relationships. When they become overwhelmed by their chronic hypersensitivity and the frequent frustration that arises when their entitled expectations are unmet, they often withdraw from social interactions and adopt an avoidant attitude to protect their self-esteem. As a result, forming intimate relationships can become nearly impossible when this type of vulnerability is intense.

2.1.1 Developmental bases of vulnerable narcissism. In psychoanalytic theory, many different contributions discuss the concept of pathological narcissism, and early relationships with caregivers were seen as a crucial factor. When Freud discussed narcissism in 1914, he suggested that all individuals begin life in a state of primary narcissism in which the infant perceives the self as the center of the world before turning to external objects. This investment in the self, although gradually directed toward others in the external world, fundamentally persists throughout life. A person can succeed in loving themselves in proportion to their capacity to love others as separate individuals. Secondary narcissism, on the other hand, refers to this investment returning to the self. Thus, it involves a withdrawal of investment from relations with others, because of frustration (Kealy & Rasmussen, 2012). Horney (1960) posits that ego inflation typically arises from broken relationships during childhood. This can lead to a child's feelings of alienation, compounded by experiences of disappointment, fear, and sadness. Individuals exhibiting narcissistic traits often struggle with forming strong emotional connections with others and may feel a profound emptiness due to their diminished capacity to love. To maintain their self-esteem, they seek admiration and approval from others, attempting to fill the emotional void left by the absence of genuine love. Similarly, in Reich's (1960) definition of narcissism, it is a fundamental issue of self-esteem regulation. It becomes pathological when an individual is unable to tolerate frustration which leads to a vulnerability of the self. Caregivers' responses to the infant's developing demands play a role in

narcissism and are considered as a determiner of the child's experience of the nature of the developing self.

Pathological narcissism was associated with early maladaptive experiences, inadequate maternal care and experiencing overwhelming frustrations in early object relationships (Sorefi, 1995). According to self-psychology pathological narcissism involves insufficient responses to early emotional needs, leading to a self-concept characterized by fluctuations in self-esteem. Kohut (1971,1977) considered pathological narcissism as a developmental process and emphasized a problem experienced while meeting the normal idealization and devaluation needs that exist in the developmental process of the person. The child seeks to see their vitality reflected in the caregiver's eyes. They need affirmation through a mirroring experience, confirming their uniqueness and value. The child needs to idealize dependable and calm caregivers; identifying and merging with these naturally existing objects, known as self-objects, is critical for the maturation process of the self (Bacal and Newman, 1990). During a certain stage of development, when a child's natural needs—such as seeking attention from their mother and the approval and appreciation they expect in return—are unanswered, the child struggles to express themselves. This deprivation prevents their ability to form an idealized image of their mother. At various levels, all individuals perceive others as sources of self-satisfaction or as extensions of themselves, rather than as separate individuals. Self-objects are experiences of a person's life that involve behaviors such as approval, appreciation, and support, which help in developing and maintaining a sense of self-worth. They exist as both an other outside the self- and a part of the person's definition of self. Responsive and empathic self objects and optimal frustration are necessary to develop a cohesive self. The lack of response from the self-object or inappropriate reactions, along with unshared emotionality and frustration at an intolerable level, can cause a person to remain trapped in archaic self-objects, leading to narcissistic disturbances.

According to Fairbairn (1952), who also focused on withdrawal from others the child seeks to maintain a powerful bond with caregivers under all circumstances. Even when the relationship that the child tries to maintain is full of complicated and traumatic experiences due to the neglect or poor care of the parents, the child continues

to see parents as ideal caregivers, assuming that a defect in their self is responsible for the negative experience. Because it is preferable to accept one's own self as defective rather than confronting the idea of being under the care of neglectful or brute parents.

Fairbairn thus suggests that an internal bad object is permanently embedded in the structure of the self and that the subject is constantly criticized by the representation of an "internal saboteur." To compensate for this melancholy, the individual turns to omnipotent fantasies and, as a partial compensation, to a withdrawal from objects. Thus, maltreatment encountered in childhood explains the compensatory grandiosity encountered in pathological narcissism, the experience of a vulnerable internal saboteur, and—underlying both—the further vulnerability of the self because of identification with the bad object. Frustration was seen as associated with the development of narcissistic vulnerability. A constant need to protect the fragile self, formed by early experiences of being neglected and emotionally deprived by caregivers and feelings of helplessness against feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness, arises. Feeling worthless, the frustrated child develops narcissistic defenses to counteract the feelings of shame. Denial of grandiose needs since childhood because of the intense disappointment and shame that occur if failed to meet expectations becomes one of the main issues in vulnerable narcissism.

2.2 Fear of Intimacy

Different definitions that include different understandings of intimacy in literature emphasize the multidimensionality of the term. Intimacy is often considered as sense of closeness and support between partners in relationships which requires revealing emotions, opening up and the ability to communicate own thoughts and feelings with each other (Prager, 1995; Timmerman, 1991). It appears as a property of the dyadic relationship and is associated with disposition to care for each other, to expose oneself to the other person, and to enjoy the closeness, as well as with empathy. Mutual expression of emotions is considered crucial for establishing intimacy, as it creates a safe environment that encourages individuals to share their personal desires, fears, fantasies, and inner thoughts. Fear of intimacy is defined as the unconscious fear and avoidance of closeness, which affects people's interpersonal relationships (Catlett

& Firestone, 1999). It may cause avoidance or less desire to the closeness. It limits the individual's capacity to exchange emotions and thoughts with others due to the anxiety they feel. This inhibits the deep connection that can only be formed through three key characteristics: content, which involves sharing personal information; emotional value, which reflects the strong feelings associated with the information shared; and sensitivity, which emphasizes a deep respect for others.

Opening up to someone and sharing personal information means revealing our vulnerabilities and weaknesses to others while trusting them not to exploit these against us. Individuals who resist emotional closeness often struggle to form warm and fulfilling relationships. Their difficulty in opening can lead to relationships that lack emotional value and remain superficial. However, a fear of self-disclosure can prevent not only intimacy in existing relationships but also the individual's expectations of forming new close relationships (Ingersoll et al., 2008). Considering that humans need intimacy with one another in a state of nature, it has been observed by many research that the lack of intimacy has many minus effects on psychological well-being such as depression, stress and anxiety. It has been stated by Sherman and Thelen (1996) that the fear of intimacy can, in a sense, also be explained as a fear of rejection. Individuals who experience difficulties with intimacy tend to avoid establishing and maintaining close relationships not solely due to a lack of desire for such connections, but because the anxiety elicited by the anticipated pain of rejection is perceived as intolerable and incompatible with their self-concept. Intimacy involves emotional risks, and the fear of vulnerability that these risks may create in individuals can affect their desire for it. Those who fear intimacy may either not desire it at all or may want it but lack the social skills and self-confidence to do so. The inability to form close relationships makes the experience itself increasingly tricky for individuals because they lack the experience to develop and maintain close relationships. Intimate relationships are defined by attachment bonds where partners seek closeness and support from one another. The ability of a partner to be emotionally available and responsive when needed is a key indicator of whether the relationship is built on a secure base. If these attachment needs are not met, it can lead to feelings of anxiety and discomfort, making it challenging to maintain the relationship. Barış et al. (2023) investigated the predictors of fear of intimacy among university students. Their findings showed that

as the demand for approval and high self-expectations increase among these students, their fear of intimacy may also increase. The desire for less closeness involves a feeling of excessive influence from others, particularly when individuals view those others as a threat to their self-concept and identity. As a result, the need to reduce this influence is closely linked to the desire to decrease the level of closeness in the relationship (Mashek & Sherman, 2004).

2.2.1 Vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy in relationships. Many studies have shown that the mutual expression of emotions plays a crucial role in people's well-being by creating a safe environment that enables disclosure of personal desires, fantasies, concerns, and emotions which is superior to developing intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988, Besharat et al., 2014). Also, there are various studies in literature that investigate the issues regarding relational aspect of vulnerable narcissism. The sense of shame that is central to the inner world of vulnerable narcissists makes it nearly impossible for them to be open and genuine in their relationships. This difficulty with openness eliminates one of the core characteristics of intimacy: disclosure. Since they are unable to tolerate criticism, even the possibility of feedback can lead to frustration for them. Furthermore, being open in a relationship poses a risk of exposing the emptiness of their inner world to others. These individuals constantly seek approval and admiration from those around them and want to be treated as if they are special, even if they haven't done anything to deserve such treatment. In this mindset, they often fail to recognize what others are experiencing or how their behavior affects those around them. Discussing narcissism in 1914, Freud fundamentally describes narcissistic individuals as being drawn into their selves. Their desires are aimed at preserving their own sense of self rather than toward the preservation of others. Essentially, narcissists seek out relationships with others not to fulfill those people's needs but to provide supply for their own needs. Despite the importance of others in maintaining a state of equilibrium, the narcissistic person's need for others leaves them with no energy other than to function as self-objects and narcissistic extensions. In close relationships, their constant search for affirmation and validation from others leads to an inability to recognize or respond to the needs of those around them. In relation to this, a study by Dickinson and Pincus (2003) revealed that the attachment styles of vulnerable narcissists are mostly fearful and

preoccupied. The high levels of anxiety they experience, and the constant focus on themselves hinder their ability to make sacrifices for others, adhere to meaningful values, and form deep connections. As a result, their relationships often remain superficial. Fairbairn noted that patients who had suffered from early traumatic interactions tended to bring their fears—essential of being retraumatized—into subsequent interpersonal relations, with genuine closeness being avoided in favour of superficial or distant relations (Bacal and Newman 1990; Fairbairn 1952). The relationships formed during childhood lay the basis for how individuals will connect with others throughout their lives. The first internalized representations of relationships influence whether a person feels safe in their interactions and whether they believe they are deserving of love (Ainsworth, 1989). For those with anxious attachment, the constant need for approval and love can lead to intense feelings of anxiety and frustration during conflicts or uncertainties in their relationships. This fear of abandonment and rejection, when viewed collectively, can be linked to the fragile aspects of narcissism. Previous research also clarifies that vulnerable narcissism and anxious attachment is positively associated (Smolewska & Dion, 2005). Another point is that the trait of narcissism, in both its grandiose and vulnerable forms, was seen to be associated with favorable attitudes towards infidelity. Individuals with higher vulnerable narcissism tend to commit infidelity when they believe they are not receiving enough attention and affirmation threatening their self-perception (Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). This view of infidelity further supports the notion that highly narcissistic individuals often seek out and prefer short-term relationships.

2.3 Frustration Tolerance

Frustration is defined as a reaction characterized by disappointment and anger that arises from perceived obstacles in pursuing one's needs (Crossman et. Al, 2009). When internal or external factors block the pursuit of a need, dissatisfaction arises, leading to feelings of discontent. Frustration tolerance is defined as an individual's ability to persist and remain emotionally resilient in the face of obstacles or difficulties encountered while striving for a goal or solving a problem. It involves the capacity to delay gratification and maintain determination when confronted with challenges in fulfilling one's desires and wants. According to Rozenweig (1938), frustration

tolerance can be understood through the pleasure and reality principles in psychoanalytic theory. While the pleasure principle seeks immediate satisfaction of desires, individuals learn to limit and postpone gratification as they encounter reality throughout their development. The ability to wait for gratification is critical in this process, which is what defines frustration tolerance. Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the frustration experiences that a child faces during development, along with how these experiences are perceived, play significant roles in shaping frustration tolerance.

The individual's internal conflicts may cause the situation that prevents goal-related satisfaction to pose a threat to the individual's ego integrity (Rosenzweig, 1944). Frustration intolerance involves irrational beliefs associated with an inability to tolerate situations that cause discomfort and frustration and a constant and certain desire for conditions to be easy and comfortable. At the basis of the irrational beliefs that shape the different psychological disturbances experienced by individuals lie the "absolutistic musts" that characterize these disturbances and beliefs in the face of events such as rejection, failure, and mistreatment by others (Ellis & Dryden, 1997). Frustration intolerance is a complex concept that describes the emotional strain a person feels when they cannot achieve their desired outcomes or when they perceive a threat to their general comfort in life. Harrington (2005) examined this concept through a multidimensional scale that identifies four key factors: emotional intolerance, entitlement, discomfort intolerance, and achievement. The common thread among these factors is that when the frustration becomes too overwhelming for an individual to manage, they seek immediate relief from that distress which may lead them to distance themselves from the situations or people causing their frustration. Emotional intolerance occurs when a person perceives their emotional distress as excessive and feels an urgent need to eliminate it. Discomfort intolerance is characterized by the expectation that life should be free of challenges and obstacles. The entitlement subscale reflects a desire for immediate gratification and includes the expectation that others in the person's life will adapt to their needs. This subscale can be summarized as "I must get what I want".

Frustration intolerance can vary from person to person and may differ across various aspects of an individual's personality. Its impact on a individual's life is closely related to how they perceive frustration. When emotional distress becomes overwhelming, individuals may feel compelled to distance themselves from the emotionally stressful situation or person. However, avoiding frustration is considered as impossible, as reality inevitably generates feelings of frustration (Fenichel, 1974). Consequently, a person's ability to tolerate frustration plays a crucial role in their behavior. One response individual might have to frustration caused by others or external factors is known as extra-punitive response (Rozenweig, 1944). These responses often involve feelings of aggression, anger, and resentment. Individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits tend to have high demands and expectations from those in their relationships, leading to repeated experiences of frustration. This cycle can evoke deep feelings of shame, which in turn can make these individuals fear intimacy in their relationships.

2.3.1 Frustration tolerance and vulnerable narcissism. It has been emphasized that two different beliefs underlie the emotional problems experienced by individuals: frustration tolerance and self-worth (Ellis, 1979). While these beliefs have distinct effects on an individual's psychological state, they share a common characteristic—absolute evaluations. Absolute evaluations of self-worth rely on the belief that self-worth is contingent on meeting rigid criteria. In contrast, frustration intolerance stems from the inability to accept the distinction between desire and reality, leading to a state of intolerance and refusal to accept the inability to achieve one's desires. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies often remain unaware of the dissonance between their reality and their expectations of entitlement. This lack of awareness can negatively impact their relationships, as their thoughts rooted in frustration intolerance may create further difficulties in interpersonal interactions.

Individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits tend to avoid relationship situations that they perceive as risky to maintain their sense of self. While these individuals secretly believe they are unique and important, they do not openly express this belief. Instead, they experience deep feelings of shame related to their desire to assert themselves. This internal conflict generates intense frustration and anger

particularly when others fail to meet their expectations. Although no studies have been conducted specifically on this relationship, it is anticipated that individuals with higher level of vulnerable narcissistic traits will exhibit lower frustration intolerance—specifically concerning the subscales of emotional intolerance, discomfort intolerance, and entitlement—compared to individuals with lower level of narcissistic vulnerabilities. Entitlement is based on the pervasive belief that one deserves more than others and involves the expectation of special treatment. Individuals with a strong sense of entitlement are more susceptible to emotional distress when their expectations are not met compared to others. Those exhibiting vulnerable narcissistic traits are also fixated on grandiose fantasies and believe that others do not fully recognize their uniqueness. They are highly sensitive to feedback, as it directly impacts their self-esteem, and they frequently demonstrate avoidance behaviors (Besser & Priel, 2010). Previous studies have shown that both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are linked to strong feelings of entitlement (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2008). The current study also predicts that entitlement, a subscale of frustration tolerance, is greater in individuals high in trait narcissism compared to others. In their Narcissism Spectrum Model, Krizan and Herlache (2017) identified entitlement as a fundamental feature of narcissism. They noted that individuals with vulnerable narcissism often express their entitlement through reactivity. This reactivity, which is marked by an inability to express emotions either verbally or nonverbally and a sense of emotional dullness, may explain why those with vulnerable narcissism are often perceived as introverted and shy by others. The relationship between individuals with vulnerable narcissism and their fear of intimacy in relationships may be linked to emotional reactivity.

2.3.2 Frustration tolerance and fear of intimacy. While the importance of close relationships in human life is widely recognized, the necessity for partners to protect their identities within these relationships is also crucial (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). This need involves feeling validated, approved, and accepted for all of one's emotions and thoughts. A person's perception of their own identity is significantly influenced by how others perceive them. Consequently, individuals are deeply concerned about whether their partners accept them as they truly are and how they are viewed by them. When identity needs are not met—such as feelings of disapproval or being overlooked, which directly affect self-worth—this can lead to a

breakdown in one's sense of self and, subsequently, their relationships. Naturally, in any relationship, there will be instances where needs are not fully satisfied, and partners may exhibit feelings or behaviors that they do not approve of. However, when such disappointments coincide with low frustration tolerance, it is expected that individuals will develop a higher level of fear of intimacy in their relationships.

According to self-determination theory, the needs that play a critical role in the development of individuals are "relatedness," which is related to forming an intimacy with others, and a sense of belonging, "competence," which reflects one's ability to use his/her own abilities effectively, and "autonomy," which is related to the capacity to manage himself/herself independently (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The failure to meet these essential and universal needs sufficiently due to internal and external factors creates frustrations. Relatedness frustration refers to the difficulty an individual has in forming close relationships with others, often leading to feelings of exclusion. This inability to develop intimacy can create a direct correlation with the sense of being left out, resulting in a profound sense of loneliness over time. Frustrations related to competence and autonomy can lead individuals to feel inadequate and believe they lack management abilities independent of others. Research by Vanhee et al. (2018) has shown that the frustration stemming from unmet needs can create difficulties and conflicts in an individual's relationships. When attachment needs are threatened or frustrated in a relationship, it often leads to primary emotions like sadness and fear. These feelings may be hidden behind expressions of anger, which is considered a secondary emotion. For individuals with vulnerable narcissism, this anger is quickly followed by feelings of shame once it has been expressed. Frustration should be recognized as a significant factor in the relationships formed with others, as social experiences are also susceptible to frustration. Different aspects of frustration intolerance have been linked to specific behaviors. For example, a study by Harrington (2005) found that avoidant behaviors were associated with discomfort and emotional intolerance but not with feelings of entitlement or achievement. Individuals tend to exhibit certain behavioral reactions in their interpersonal relationships to manage the frustration they encounter and to cope with the anger and anxiety it generates. These reactions may include a constant effort to please others to mask their vulnerabilities, outward expressions of anger to conceal feelings of inadequacy, or complete

avoidance of closeness as a self-protective strategy (Vanteenkiste et al., 2020). Consequently, it is anticipated that people with low frustration tolerance are more prone to experience a greater fear of intimacy than those with high frustration tolerance.

Both loving support and gradual frustrations are necessary for helping infant manage their exhibitionistic needs and grandiose fantasies in favor of goal-directed activities. Although caregivers cannot meet every child's needs completely and immediately, experiencing optimal frustrations during childhood is crucial for developing a healthy sense of self. Occasional lapses in parental empathy are inevitable and, in fact, essential for the child's development, as they help the child engage with external reality. On the necessity of passing beyond the limits of narcissism for mental life and need for others, Freud (1914) argues that one's ego strength creates protection against getting ill, but at the end of the day, loving is necessary to avoid psychological disturbances "we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love."

2.3.3 Relationship between fear of intimacy, vulnerable narcissism, and frustration tolerance. As discussed above, in vulnerable narcissism, others' failure to meet entitled expectations in a relationship originates a constant sensitivity against their actions, behaviors, unexpressed feelings and beliefs. When vulnerable narcissists' expectations of their unrealistic needs to be met by their partner fail, the frustration they experience makes it hopeless for them to maintain intimate relationships. In fact, the anxiety caused by the mere possibility of such frustration may keep them entirely away from forming such intimacy. Therefore, it is conceivable that an individual's tolerance for frustration mediates the fear of intimacy in relationships experienced by those with vulnerable narcissistic traits. Frustration tolerance is considered as an absolute evaluation which is based on the refusal of differentiating the reality and desire (DiGiuseppe, 1996). Thus, it includes an intense intolerance and denial of not being able to obtain what is desired. Narcissists' willingness to claim benefits at others' expense is facilitated by their inflated sense of entitlement (Emmons, 1984). As low frustration tolerance refers to the incapacity to bear uncomfortable emotions or demanding circumstances, it is related to the belief

that everything should go as planned and that problems should be managed swiftly and simply (Abooie&Amiri, 2019). The emotional distress experienced by people with low frustration tolerance when frustration and disappointment are not resolved causes them to avoid such situations. Human relationships, especially close ones, are rarely black and white. In this context, vulnerable narcissists may struggle with the uncertainty that comes with these relationships. Consequently, they frequently experience frustration, which leads them to avoid intimacy. Harrington (2006) investigated the relationship between subscales of frustration intolerance and how they are related to specific emotions such as anger, depressed mood and anxiety. Results indicated that, the entitlement subscale was specifically linked to anger, discomfort intolerance correlated with depressed mood, and emotional intolerance associated with anxiety. It has also been observed that when emotions such as anxiety, unhappiness and shame caused by the continuity of self-esteem by focusing on others and the disappointments experienced in this direction cannot be controlled, these emotions are followed by outbursts of anger (Besser & Priel, 2010; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Vulnerable narcissists frequently experience fluctuations in their self-esteem, and their ability to tolerate emotional distress impacts how they perceive the seriousness and intensity of situations in their relationships. Ultimately, these dynamic influences their fears of forming intimate connections.

Chapter 2

Method

3.1 Research Design

The main aim of the current study is to investigate the associations between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy, and the mediating role of frustration tolerance with its subdimensions. It is a correlational study that includes one independent variable: vulnerable narcissism and one dependent variable: fear of intimacy. Also, there is one mediating variable, frustration tolerance, with four subscales of discomfort intolerance, emotional intolerance, entitlement, and achievement.

3.2 Participants

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	206	67.5
	Male	97	31.8
	Didn't specify	2	.7
Age	18-23	76	24.9
	24-29	128	42
	30-35	101	33.1
Education Level	High School	50	16.4
	Associate's Degree	18	5.9
	Undergraduate Degree	195	63.9
	Graduate Degree	39	12.8
	PhD	3	1

Table 1 (cont.d)

Demographic Characteristics	Groups	N	%
Relationship Status	Married	78	25.6
	Not in a relationship	95	31.1
	In a relationship	124	40.7
	Divorced and not in a relationship	2	.6
	Divorced and in a relationship	6	2

Individuals between the ages of 18-35 were eligible to participate in this study and convenience sampling was used to determine the participants. A total number of 352 participants responded to the online survey. 45 of the participants who were out of the age restriction were excluded. 2 of the participants were removed as outliers. The final sample consisted of 305 participants with ages ranged from 18 to 35 ($M=27$, $SD=4.79$).

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. Participants were mostly individuals with a high level of education, 83.6% were either graduates of or still enrolled in associate, bachelor, master, or PhD programs, 16.4% were graduates of high school. Most of the participants were currently in a romantic relationship, 68.3% were either married or in a relationship more than 1 month, 31.7% were single.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Instruments. The instruments included in this study to collect data were Demographic Information Form, Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS), Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) and Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS).

3.3.1.1 Demographic information form. The form includes questions regarding the participants' age, gender, education level, relationship status, the duration of their current relationship (if applicable), the duration of their longest past relationship (if applicable), duration of time that has passed since their last relationship ended (if applicable), the average amount of time they spend in a relationship

throughout their lives, the importance they attribute to being in a romantic relationship, measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

3.3.1.2 Hypersensitive narcissism scale (HSNS). The 10-item self-report measure created by Hendin and Cheek (1997) assesses vulnerable characteristics linked to narcissism as a single factor. Responses are recorded on a scale from 1 (very uncharacteristic) to 5 (very characteristic), higher scores obtained from this scale are associated with higher levels of vulnerable narcissistic characteristics. The total scale score has a possible range of 10 to 50, obtained by the sum of item scores. In the original study, internal consistency reliability for the HSNS composite score (Cronbach's alphas of .72, .75, and .76) for three different adult nonclinical samples, indicated adequate consistency.

Similarly, study conducted by Fossati et al. (2009) with the Italian sample also provided adequate internal consistency for the HSNS ($\alpha = .71$). Additionally, it reported moderate test-retest reliability over 3 months, with coefficients of 0.63 for clinical samples and 0.82 for nonclinical samples. The criterion-related validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by demonstrating low correlations with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), which is a tool commonly used to assess grandiose narcissism. Additionally, similar correlation patterns were observed with an MMPI-based measure of covert narcissism on the Big Five Inventory. In the current study, Turkish adaptation of the scale developed by Şengül et al. (2015) was used. Total of two items (items 1 and 4) were removed as a result of factor analysis since they did not contribute to the simple factor structure resulting in a final scale of 8 items. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .66 of Turkish version indicating an adequate internal consistency. In the Turkish version of the HSNS, there was nearly zero correlation between the HSNS and the NPI which ensures a good discriminant validity in delineating between overt and covert narcissism.

3.3.1.3 Fear of intimacy scale (FIS). The Fear of Intimacy scale, is a self-report measure developed by Descutner and Thelen to assess whether individuals have a fear of intimacy in their relationships with others, consists of 35 items. (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). Aiming to measure the attitude of avoiding intimacy in relationships,

FIS is a 5-step Likert-type scale (1 = Not at all suitable for me, 5 = Definitely a characteristic of me) that rates the stated situations reflecting the person's fear of intimacy. The Turkish adaptation study was done by Elibol and Sevi Tok (2019) as 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 35 items. The highest and the lowest scores that can be obtained from this scale are 175 and 35 obtained by sum of the item scores, higher scores obtained from this scale are associated with higher levels of fear of intimacy. There are 15 reversed items (Item 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 29, 30) in this scale. Although a three-dimensional factor structure emerged as a result of the validity and reliability study as fear of imaginary closeness, fear of imaginary openness and fear of past closeness, the idea that the concept measured can be used in studies by taking a total score due to its structure, as emphasized in all studies including the original study on the scale, was supported (Elibol&Sevi Tok, 2019).

In the Turkish adaptation study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the total score of the scale was found to be 0.81, and the test-retest reliability score was found to be 0.76 indicating an adequate internal consistency. Findings regarding the construct validity, it was found that the model, which was created based on exploratory factor analysis and tested with confirmatory factor analysis, showed a good fit.

3.3.1.4 Frustration discomfort scale (FDS). Frustration Discomfort Scale was developed by Harrington (2005) and consists of 28 items with four subscales (emotional intolerance, entitlement, discomfort intolerance, and achievement) that include seven items in each scale. It is a 5-point likert-type scale (1: absent, 2: mild, 3: moderate, 4: strong, 5: Very strong) to rate the strength with which people hold certain beliefs. The lowest possible score on the scale is 24, while the highest is 120, obtained by sum of the item scores. There are no reverse items in this scale. A higher score on this scale indicates a lower frustration tolerance. Turkish adaptation of FDS done by Özer and Demir (2012) consists of 28 items with four subscales (emotional intolerance, entitlement, discomfort intolerance, and achievement) that include seven items in each scale. The FDS showed a reliability with an internal consistency coefficient of .86, and a test-retest reliability over four weeks of .70. The analyses'

results indicated adequate internal consistency in the subscales, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .63 to .73. Corrected item-total correlations varied between .22 and .53 for all subscales. The same method was used as in the original study by using self-esteem and procrastination measures to test the validity of the scale.

3.3.2 Procedure. First the institutional ethics approval from Bahçeşehir University Ethics Committee was taken and following the approval an online survey created via Qualtrics is used to collect data. Before collecting data, a pilot study was done to make sure that any potentially confusing parts and typos were detected. The data was collected by convenience sampling. The online survey link leading to the survey package was shared via e-mails, social media posts, and personal contacts. Participation in this study was voluntary, and an informed consent was obtained from all the participants. They were informed about the aim of the study, the content of the scales in the study, duration of the study, their right of withdrawal, confidentiality of their information and contact information of the researcher. After obtaining approval for the informed consent form, participants first completed the Demographic Information Form. They were then instructed to proceed with the remaining questionnaires: the HSNS, FIS, and FDS, respectively. At no point were participants asked for identifying information and participating in the study took approximately 15 minutes. Data collection took place between January and March 2025.

3.3.3 Data analysis. The main aim of this study is to investigate the associations of vulnerable narcissism with fear of intimacy in romantic relationships, and the mediating role of frustration tolerance. To conduct the statistical analyses, 30th version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. To analyze the reliability of the scales Cronbach's Alpha values were examined. In the data analysis process, descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values of scale scores and frequency distribution of demographic variables were presented following the reliability analysis. A recent study has concluded that using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for 5-point Likert-type digital survey data is not appropriate. It has also demonstrated that skewness and kurtosis coefficients within the range of -1 to +1 are acceptable indicators of normality (Haşiloğlu & Haşiloğlu

Çiftçiler, 2023). In the current study, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were considered to assess normality, and scores obtained from a continuous variable within ± 1 boundaries indicated that the data were normally distributed. Then Pearson correlation analysis was conducted on scales and subscales to examine the relationship between narcissistic vulnerability, fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance. Analyzing the relationship between demographic variables and dependent variable, One-Way ANOVA and Independent Samples T-Tests were used. Later, Simple Linear Regression Analyses were conducted to test the strength of the associations between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance. Lastly, Multiple Linear Regression analyses was conducted to examine the mediating role of frustration tolerance in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy.

3.4 Limitations. This study offered significant insights into the relationship between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance; however, it also had some limitations. One primary limitation is that the majority of participants were women. This may have resulted in findings that represent a population with limited gender diversity. Another limitation involves the self-report measures used during data collection. As noted in the discussion and existing literature, individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits often feel entitled to special treatment, believing that life should be easier for them. However, expressing these feelings can lead to intense shame, which may have influenced their willingness to report on their problems and weaknesses. This bias may have affected the results. Additionally, while this study was conducted with a non-clinical sample, it may not fully capture the experiences of individuals exhibiting pathological traits of narcissism. Nonetheless, it does provide broader insights into the patterns of vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy in relationships in general.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

First, the scale scores were computed as instructed by the authors for the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, the Fear of Intimacy Scale, and the Frustration Discomfort Scale. The scale scores and descriptive statistics were examined and the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values for scale and subscale scores of the variables are provided in the Table 2. For HSNS (M=21.30), FIS (M=75.81) and FDS (91.48) the total score was calculated by summing all scores and the mean scores was calculated according to the sample. Data is considered acceptable to be approximately normally distributed for the skewness and kurtosis values between -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2010). The normality of the distributions in this study was also checked based on skewness and kurtosis values and all variables were approximately normally distributed.

Table 2

Descriptives of the Scales and Subscales

Scale and subscale	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
HSNS	10	35	21.30	4.64	.25	.01
FIS	35	133	75.81	20.68	.40	-.64
FDS	28	140	91.48	19.86	-.25	.62
Discomfort Intolerance	7	35	20.12	6.3	.16	-.19
Emotional Intolerance	7	35	23.39	5.5	-.27	.12
Entitlement	7	35	24.32	5.57	-.30	.20
Achievement	7	35	23.64	5.53	-.33	.22

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The first hypothesis of this study expected a significant positive correlation between narcissistic vulnerability, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance. To investigate these correlations, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted. Table 3

displays the results of the Pearson correlation analysis among vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance. There is a significant ($p < 0.05$) and positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations and Reliability Information of Hypersensitive Narcissism, Fear of Intimacy, and Frustration Tolerance Scales and Subscales

Variable	α	1	2	3
HSNS	.58	1		
FIS	.91	.34**	1	
FDS	.92	.35**	.11*	1
Discomfort Intolerance	.83	.33**	.21**	
Emotional Intolerance	.74	.31**	.08	
Entitlement	.76	.29**	.04	
Achievement	.77	.27**	.04	

* $p < .05$., ** $p < .01$.

The results indicate a significant positive relationship between fear of intimacy in romantic relationships and vulnerable narcissism ($r = .34$; $p < 0.01$). Specifically, this correlation indicated that higher levels of fear of intimacy in romantic relationships was associated with higher levels of narcissistic vulnerability. Additionally, a significant positive relationship was found between fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance ($r = .11$; $p < 0.05$). Since a high score in the Frustration Discomfort Scale indicates low frustration tolerance, it was found that individuals lower levels of frustration tolerance was associated with higher levels of fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. Similarly, there is also a significant positive correlation between vulnerable narcissism and frustration tolerance ($r = .35$; $p < 0.01$), suggesting that as narcissistic vulnerability increase frustration tolerance decrease. In conclusion, according to findings, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 3 also presents the correlations between the subscales of the frustration tolerance scale and the constructs of vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. The results indicate that discomfort intolerance has a significant and positive correlation with both vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy ($r = .33$; $p < 0.01$, $r = .21$; $p < 0.01$). Additionally, emotional intolerance, entitlement, and achievement also show a significant positive relationship with vulnerable narcissism. However, while there is a positive relationship between these three variables and fear of intimacy, this relationship is not significant.

Table 3 presents their Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS), Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) and Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was indicated as .90 for the entire scale for FDS, and .83, .74, .76, .77 for its subscales respectively, .91 for Fear of Intimacy Scale, and .58 for Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale. In Taber's (2018) study, alpha values ranging from 0.58 to 0.97 were considered "satisfactory". The reliability analysis showed that all three scales used in this study had internal consistency and were reliable.

4.3 Regression Analyses

The fifth hypothesis of this study proposed that frustration tolerance mediates the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. In addition to this mediation effect, the second, third, and fourth hypotheses, which were partially supported by the correlation analysis, required an examination of the strength of the associations between vulnerable narcissism and issues related to frustration tolerance with fear of intimacy and between narcissistic vulnerability and frustration tolerance itself. To obtain standardized, comparable coefficients and to test the mediation hypotheses, Simple and Multiple Linear Regression analyses were conducted. To analyze the data, since linear regression analysis will be used, the skewness and kurtosis values were assessed to determine whether the predictor and outcome variables are normally distributed, as the sample size exceeds 100. In testing for multicollinearity among the predictors in accordance with regression analysis, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was required to be between 1 and 10, and the tolerance levels to be between 0.2 and 1 (Kim, 2019). Values within these specified ranges

indicate the absence of multicollinearity. The current study found that both criteria were satisfied for the variables included in the regression analysis, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue.

To test the second hypothesis, which assumed that vulnerable narcissism will positively predict fear of intimacy, Simple Linear Regression analysis was conducted with the fear of intimacy as dependent variable and vulnerable narcissism as predictor variable. Simple Linear Regression indicated that vulnerable narcissism explained 11.6% of the variance in fear of intimacy scores. ($R^2 = .116$). The results presented that the model was significant $F(1,303) = 39.63, p < .001$. The effect of vulnerable narcissism on fear of intimacy was positive and significant ($B = 1.51, SE = .24, \beta = .34, p < .001$). It means that a one unit increase in vulnerable narcissism is associated with 1.51-point increase in the fear of intimacy of scores. Thus, individuals with higher level of narcissistic vulnerability will be more likely to experience fear of intimacy in their romantic relationships, and Hypothesis 2 was supported.

To test the third hypothesis, which assumed that vulnerable narcissism negatively predicts frustration tolerance, a Simple Linear Regression analysis was conducted using vulnerable narcissism as the predictor variable and frustration tolerance as the criterion variable. According to the analysis, 12.4% of individuals' frustration tolerance scores are predicted by vulnerable narcissism scores ($R^2 = .124$). While the results indicate that the model was significant $F(1,303) = 42.92, p < .001$, it is also evident that the impact of vulnerable narcissism on frustration is negative and significant ($B = -1.50, \beta = -.35, SE = .23, p < .001$).

Similarly, Simple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to test the fourth hypothesis, which posited that fear of intimacy would increase as frustration tolerance decreases. The results indicated that the model was significant, $F(1,303) = 4.09, p < .05$, demonstrating that 1.3% of the variance in fear of intimacy scores could be explained by frustration tolerance ($R^2 = .013$). This hypothesis was supported, as the analysis showed that frustration tolerance negatively predicted fear of intimacy ($B = -0.12, \beta = -.11, SE = 0.05, p < .05$).

Table 4

Vulnerable Narcissism predicted Fear of Intimacy

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	t	p
HSNS → FIS				.116	.113	39.63		
Constant	43.52	5.24					8.29	<.001
HSNS	1.51	.24	.34				6.29	<.001

Table 5

Vulnerable Narcissism predicted Frustration Tolerance

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	t	p
HSNS → FDS				.124	.121	42.92		
Constant	59.35	5.01					11.82	<.001
HSNS	1.50	.23	.35				6.55	<.001

Table 6

Frustration Tolerance predicted Fear of Intimacy

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	t	p
FDS → FIS				.013	.010	4.09		
Constant	64.81	5.56					11.65	<.001
FDS	.12	.05	.11				2.02	.044

4.4 Mediation Analysis

Current study also examined the mediating role of frustration tolerance (FDS) in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism (HSNS) and fear of intimacy in romantic relationships (FIS). For Hypothesis 5, which defended that frustration tolerance would mediate the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of

intimacy, it was aimed to do mediation analysis with vulnerable narcissism as predictor variable, fear of intimacy as criterion variable, and frustration tolerance as mediator variable.

After the necessary preliminary tests which were conducted in accordance with regression analysis as mentioned above, it was expected that the four conditions established by Baron and Kenny (1986) would be met. Specifically, in the simple linear regression analysis, the predictor variable should significantly predict both the mediator and the outcome variable. The mediator variable should also explain the variance on the outcome variable at a significant level. Furthermore, when controlling for the predictor variable, the level at which the mediator variable explains the variance in the outcome variable should still be significant (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Once these conditions are met, if the regression coefficient obtained from the simple linear regression analysis of the predictor variable is significant in a multiple linear hierarchical regression analysis but becomes insignificant when the mediator variable is included in the model, this indicates a full mediation effect. Conversely, if the coefficient remains significant but is lower than the original value, this indicates a partial mediation effect. In the simple linear regression analyses conducted according to these criteria, it was found that each predictor variable significantly explained the variance in the outcome variable. However, the Multiple Linear Regression analysis conducted to test the mediation effect indicated that, when the predictor variable was controlled, the significant predictive value of the mediator variable didn't remain ($B = -.005$, $SE = .06$, $p = .93$). Considering these values, fifth hypothesis was not confirmed ($p > 0.05$).

The correlation between the predictor, mediator and outcome variable measured using the Pearson Correlation Test, with an expected significant correlation coefficient of at least $r = .20$. When the correlation of total frustration tolerance scores was examined with fear of intimacy, it was found to be significant, though the strength was below $.20$. However, since only the discomfort intolerance subscale of frustration tolerance had a correlation strength above $.20$, it was tested whether discomfort intolerance acted as a mediator in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. When vulnerable narcissism and discomfort intolerance were

considered together, it was seen that the effect of discomfort intolerance on fear of intimacy was significant, but the direct effect of vulnerable narcissism on fear of intimacy did not disappear. Thus, discomfort intolerance is a partial mediator.

Table 7

Mediation of Frustration Tolerance

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	ΔR ²	F	df	p
1	.34 ^a	.11	.11	.11	39.63	1,303	<.001
2	.34 ^b	.11	.11	.00	19.75	1,302	.931

^a Predictors: (Constant), HSNS Total Score

^b Predictors: (Constant), HSNS, FDS Total Score

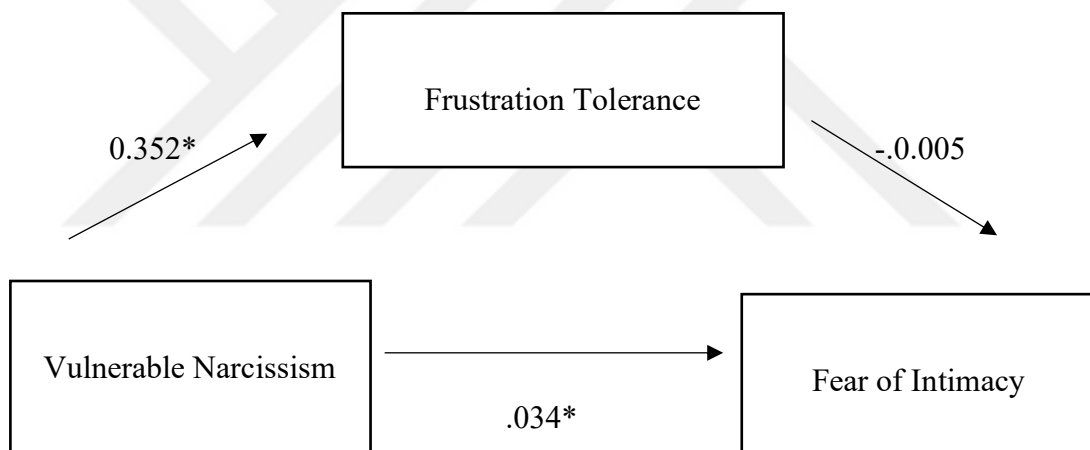


Figure 2. Mediator Role of Frustration Tolerance on the Relationship between Vulnerable Narcissism and Fear of Intimacy, *p <.001.

Table 8

Mediation of Discomfort Intolerance

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	ΔR ²	F	df	p
1	.34 ^a	.11	.11	.11	39.63	1,303	<.001
2	.35 ^b	.12	.12	.01	19.75	1,302	.045

^a Predictors: (Constant), HSNS Total Score

^b Predictors: (Constant), HSNS Total Score, DI Total Score

4.5 Comparison of Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, Fear of Intimacy Scale, and Frustration Discomfort Scale Scores by Demographic Variables

Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to assess the differences in scores for vulnerable narcissism, frustration discomfort, and fear of intimacy between the groups of gender. It was found that the total score of vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy did not show significant differences based on gender ($p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference was found in the total score of FDS and all the subscales by gender $t(301) = 3.63, p < .001$. According to the results, females ($M = 94.12, SD = 19.36$) scored significantly higher than males ($M = 85.45, SD = 19.30$), indicating that their frustration tolerance was significantly lower.

Table 9

Independent Groups t-Test Results for the Analysis of the Variables by Gender

Scale	Group	M	SD	P (t-test)
HSNS	Female	21.41	4.38	.48
	Male	21.01	5.18	
FIS	Female	74.79	21.29	.25
	Male	77.67	19.29	
FDS	Female	94.12	19.36	< .001
	Male	85.45	19.3	

To examine the group differences in fear of intimacy (the dependent variable in this study) based on participants' current relationship status, the time passed since their last relationship ended, the longest duration of their past relationships, the average time spent in relationships throughout their lives, and the importance they attribute to romantic relationships, One-Way ANOVA was used.

In terms of total fear of intimacy scores, there were significant differences found between individuals' current relationship status ($F=3.56, p<0.05$). The post-hoc analysis indicated that individuals who were married ($M=73.26$) or currently in a romantic relationship ($M=72.90$) have significantly lower levels of fear of intimacy compared to those who were currently not in a romantic relationship ($M=82.08$). Similarly, individuals who were currently not in a romantic relationship have a significantly higher fear of intimacy compared to those who have been in a romantic relationship for 1-2 years ($M=68.09$) and 2-5 years ($M=68.15$). Furthermore, results indicated that there is a significant difference between total scores of fear of intimacy and duration of time that has passed since individuals' last relationship ended ($F=3.61, p<0.05$). According to the post-hoc analysis, individuals whose last relationship ended 1 to 5 months ago ($M=88.55$) have a significantly higher fear of intimacy than those who are currently in a romantic relationship ($M=73.12$). A significant difference was observed between the total score for fear of intimacy and the duration of individuals' longest past relationships ($F=2.52, p<0.05$). However, the post hoc analysis did not reveal a significant difference between the groups.

By comparing fear of intimacy scores by the average amount of time individuals spend in a relationship throughout their lives, it was found that the total score of fear of intimacy showed significant differences considering the average amount of time individuals spend in a relationship throughout their lives ($F=6.73, p<0.05$). According to the post-hoc results, individuals who had been in a relationship for less than one year during lifetime ($M=82.37$) demonstrated a significantly higher fear of intimacy compared to those who had been in a relationship for 5 to 10 years ($M=71.27$) or more than 10 years ($M=63.62$). Additionally, individuals in relationships lasting 1 to 2 years ($M=79.66$) also exhibited a significantly greater fear of intimacy than those who had been in a relationship for 10 years or longer ($M=63.62$), based on their lifetime duration of relationships.

No significant relationship was found between fear of intimacy scores and the importance individuals place on being in a romantic relationship ($p<0.05$). However, a significant relationship was identified between individuals' scores on vulnerable narcissism and the importance they attribute to romantic relationships ($F=5.25,$

$p < 0.05$). Examining the results of the post hoc test, it was demonstrated that individuals who considered being in a relationship "very important" had significantly higher scores ($M = 22.63$) for vulnerable narcissism compared to those who viewed it as merely "important" ($M = 20.28$). The analysis of total scores for frustration discomfort revealed a significant relationship with the importance that individuals place on being in a romantic relationship. ($F = 3.77$, $p < 0.05$) While significant relationships were identified for the emotional intolerance ($F = 4.27$, $p < 0.05$), entitlement ($F = 4.61$, $p < 0.05$), and achievement ($F = 3.10$, $p < 0.05$) subscales, no significant relationship was found for discomfort intolerance. Examining the results of the post hoc test, it was demonstrated that individuals who considered being in a relationship "very important" ($M = 24.76$) had significantly higher scores in emotional intolerance subscale than individuals who considered being in a relationship "not important at all" ($M = 20.43$).

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA Results of the FIS According to Relationship Status, Duration of Current Relationship, the Duration of Longest Past Relationship, Duration of Time Passed Since Last Relationship Ended, Average Amount of Lifetime in a Relationship

Variable	Group	M	p (ANOVA)	P (Post Hoc)
Relationship Status	Married	73.26	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
	Single	82.08		
Relationship	In a relationship	72.90	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
	Single	82.08		
Relationship Duration	Single 1-2 years	82.08	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
		68.09		
Relationship Duration	Single 2-5 years	82.08	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
		68.15		
Duration Passed	1-5 months In a relationship	88.55	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
		73.12		
Lifetime Duration	Less than 1 year	82.37	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
	5-10 years	71.27		

Table 10 (cont.d)

Variable	Group	M	<i>p</i> (ANOVA)	<i>P</i> (Post Hoc)
Lifetime Duration	Less than 1 year	82.37	<i>p</i> <0.05	<i>p</i> <0.05
	Above 10 years	63.62		



Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Discussion on Main Hypotheses

First of all, this study expected a significant correlation between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance and it indicated that all three variables are highly related constructs. In line with the second hypothesis, it was found that there was a weak and positive association between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. The results of the regression analysis aimed at exploring the impact of vulnerable narcissism on fear of intimacy showed that vulnerable narcissism explained 11.6% of the total variance in fear of intimacy scores. Since intimacy involves self-disclosure and sharing vulnerabilities which could pose a threat to individuals characterized with vulnerable narcissistic traits by placing them in a fragile position due to the risks of exposing their inner worlds filled with imperfections, defiance, and shame a positive association between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy was expected the observed positive correlation, though significant, was weak. This weakness may be attributed to the strong desire, which could be confounded with the sense of intimacy, narcissistic individuals have for a romantic partner who offers high levels of reassurance, approval, attention, and availability (Day et al., 2020). Hence, when assessing fear of intimacy, individuals may have consciously or unconsciously underreported their feelings of fear. The distinction between engaging in a relationship and establishing intimacy is crucial here. Although individuals with a strong desire to connect with others often seek romantic relationships, the connections they form tend to be superficial and pseudo-intimate. Their constant and intense effort to defend themselves against threats to their self-esteem, without regard to their partners' needs, wants, and desires, and their view of relationships merely as primary sources of support, they are incapacitated to invest in a real relationship. It has been observed that these individuals are less interested in warm, close, communal, and caring relationships (Foster et al., 2006). In a previous study involving spouses, researchers found that traits associated with vulnerable narcissism hinder the development of close

relationships characterized by empathic concern between partners (Campbell et al., 2002).

The third hypothesis of this study stated that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic vulnerability will be more prone to have lower frustration tolerance. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism and frustration discomfort. Since higher scores on the frustration discomfort correspond to lower frustration tolerance, results suggested that as features of vulnerable narcissism increase, frustration tolerance decreases. Regression analysis conducted to assess the predictive power of vulnerable narcissism on frustration tolerance revealed that vulnerable narcissism accounted for 12.4% of the total variance in frustration discomfort scores. A review of the existing literature showed no previous studies examining the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and frustration tolerance. However, this study found a significant positive correlation between overall frustration discomfort scores, as well as scores on all related subscales, and vulnerable narcissism. This relationship was expected to emerge in the first place regarding to the core characteristic features of vulnerable narcissism. Unlike grandiose narcissism, which is marked by open expressions of entitlement and self-importance, vulnerable narcissism is characterized by hypersensitivity to criticism, introversion, social withdrawal, and emotional sensitivity (Pincus & Roche, 2011). Individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits often experience fluctuations in their self-worth making them more likely to perceive ambiguous situations as threats to their self-concept. From this perspective, frustration that arises from unmet expectations, unattainable goals, and perceived injustices related to their sense of entitlement evokes distressing emotions in these individuals. The discomfort that arises from unmet expectations comes from the belief that individuals deserve special treatment from others and that their surroundings should always be comfortable. However, they often don't express these beliefs related to entitlement since their unconscious desire to assess themselves brings out shame. This internal conflict generates intense frustration and anger particularly when others fail to meet their expectations. Consequently, their ability to cope with the distress caused by obstacles is often reduced. Individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits may experience extreme anxiety about being evaluated by others, facing rejection, and feeling ashamed. Extreme anxiety can also intensify their emotional responses, as they often perceive ordinary challenges as personal criticisms or threats rather than viewing

them as situational obstacles. As a result, their frustration tolerance may decrease. Additionally, their repeated internal evaluations of perceived injustices can worsen their frustration. The Frustration Discomfort Scale is used in this study to assess frustration tolerance by measuring individuals' ability to manage emotional and discomfort intolerance, achievement-related, and entitlement-related frustrations based on their explicit thoughts and behaviors. Vulnerable narcissists often struggle to express their true feelings and thoughts, leading them to feel ashamed of their reactions. This can be considered as a limitation in this study that whether their responses to this scale accurately reflect their genuine thoughts. Although it is seen that there are very few studies that specifically address this relationship, vulnerable narcissism is found to be associated with lower frustration tolerance among adolescents, supporting that, individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits may have difficulty managing emotional discomfort (Underwood et al., 2021). Conducting further research to explore and understand this relationship will benefit the clinical practice. It can help address the discomfort experienced by individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits due to frustration and guide the development of appropriate interventions.

Individuals with lower level of frustration tolerance were expected to be more likely to experience fear of intimacy in their romantic relationships according to the fourth hypothesis. As mentioned above, self-determination theory suggests that need for relatedness which consists of forming an intimacy with others is universal for individuals and frustration of these needs when they are unmet create conflicts in relationships. (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This relationship between fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance was expected considering that the individual's capacity to tolerate frustration plays a critical role in shaping the attitudes and expressions of feelings. Thus, low frustration tolerance is expected to impact individuals' ability to manage frustration, influencing their behavior when facing relational challenges regarding to intimacy. The present study supported that frustration tolerance is a relevant factor regarding fear of intimacy and found a positive and significant but weak correlation in between. Different dimensions of frustration tolerance such as discomfort intolerance, achievement, emotional intolerance and entitlement are composed of a range of associated beliefs. Frustration tolerance has been defined as irrational thoughts based

on “absolute musts” that arise when faced with rejection, failure and mistreatment by others and that conditions should always be easy and comfortable (Ellis & Dryden, 1997). Statements associated with frustration tolerance, such as “I can't stand situations where I might feel upset” or “I, can't stand doing things that involve a lot of hassle,” involve a belief in a life free of all difficulties and these beliefs are more likely to consist of rigid cognitive expectations and, in a general sense, reflect a distress in the face of challenges and obstacles. On the other hand, fear of intimacy, and thus the frustrations caused by this intimacy, are not instantaneous and cognitive procedures but a deeper and more complex structure involving unconscious processes that have an impact on people's interpersonal relationships (Catlett & Firestone, 1999). This may also be one reason why the strength of the correlation between frustration tolerance and fear of intimacy, while significant, is weak. No previous study has found that frustration tolerance has been directly studied with fear of intimacy. However, studies have shown that partners’ emotional experiences vary in the frustration of their relational needs. Findings suggested that when individuals experienced frustration in their need for relatedness, they engaged in more negative emotions such as sadness, hurt, and disappointment. Lower levels of relational frustration are associated with more positive emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction, within romantic relationships (Pirrone et al., 2023). Supporting the findings with further research will contribute to clinical practice, helping individuals to better understand and conceptualize their interpersonal issues and fear of intimacy, ultimately improving their close relationships.

In this study, the initial expectation was that frustration tolerance would mediate the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy according to the fifth hypothesis. However, this study failed to support mediating role of frustration tolerance for fear of intimacy. Although both parts in which vulnerable narcissism was found to be significantly correlated with frustration tolerance and frustration tolerance was found to be significantly correlated with fear of intimacy, it was observed that frustration tolerance did not play a mediating role in the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy across in all its dimensions. This suggests that while frustration tolerance plays a role in both vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy independently, it does not explain the mechanism linking the two. Here, the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy cannot be

adequately explained by frustration tolerance, but this relationship may be directly related to other mechanisms and dynamics, such as rejection sensitivity, shame, or perceived self-esteem levels that are more directly related to the core self of these individuals. A mediation analysis was also performed on the subscales of frustration tolerance. Although the total score of the frustration tolerance did not explain the effect of vulnerable narcissism on the development of fear of intimacy, discomfort intolerance, one of its subscales, was found to have a mediating effect in this relationship. Discomfort intolerance leads individuals to avoid any inconvenience and unpleasant situation by consisting of a belief that life should be peaceful and comfortable (Harrington, 2005). Individuals who have higher vulnerable narcissistic tendencies may perceive emotional vulnerability, conflict, and difficulties in relationships as intensely stressful due to their constantly fluctuating self-esteem. These individuals' low discomfort intolerance may cause them to be less willing to deal with these difficulties, and therefore have a higher level of fear of intimacy.

5.2 Discussion on Group Differences

This study also presented findings on the relationship between the gender of individuals, the characteristics of their romantic relationships, and the importance they attribute to romantic relationships, with vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance.

In terms of gender, vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy levels did not differ between men and women. Both emotional distances resulting from fear of intimacy or core features of vulnerable narcissism, such as excessive sensitivity, difficulty handling criticism, and an unstable sense of self-worth, may not be related to biological sex but rather to developmental issues. Previous studies also indicated that gender differences are not a determining factor in either vulnerable narcissism or fear of intimacy. Both men and women can exhibit similar characteristics of vulnerable narcissism and may experience a fear of emotional intimacy, depending on interpersonal factors in non-clinical populations (Kealy et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2010). However, when compared according to gender, it was observed that women's frustration tolerance was found to be significantly lower than men both in a total sense

and all the sub-dimensions. Harrington (2005) mentioned that frustration discomfort could be higher in people with high emotional sensitivity. Although it did not directly assess frustration tolerance, another study investigating gender differences in emotion regulation strategies stated that women could be more emotionally reactive and less tolerant of distress, especially in interpersonal and emotional frustrations (McRae et al., 2008). Another reason why this study has a similar finding may be that women are more emotionally sensitive and reactive, and therefore feel the frustration they experience more intensely than men. Thus, in future studies, the effect of women's emotional sensitivity on the perceived frustration experience can be examined based on these findings.

This study also observed significant relationships between both individuals' current relationship status and past relationship history within their fear of intimacy levels. Individuals who are married or currently in a romantic relationship have significantly lower levels of fear of intimacy compared to individuals who are currently single. Fear of intimacy is considered as an inhibition in the capacity to share personally meaningful thoughts and feelings with someone significant due to the anxiety. In this case, being in a romantic relationship can be considered as a buffer against fear of intimacy and may have a protective effect by providing the individual with an opportunity to create an area where feelings can be mutually expressed with a trusted one (Descutner&Thelen, 1991). Similarly, when looking at the duration of romantic relationships, individuals who have had longer-term romantic involvements have significantly lower levels of fear of intimacy compared to individuals who have had shorter-term relationships. Previous findings also suggested that the longer individuals are involved in romantic relationships, the more they have an opportunity to build an attachment and express emotional vulnerability, which contributes to managing interpersonal intimacy, potentially reducing avoidance tendencies (Freeman et al., 2023) Additionally, individuals who were currently single and whose last relationship ended within the past 5 months were found to have significantly higher fear of intimacy than those who were currently in a romantic relationship. Thus, recent experience of the loss of a relationship increased the fear of intimacy.

When the importance that individuals attribute to romantic relationships is examined, results showed that it doesn't significantly affect fear of intimacy but is associated with frustration tolerance and vulnerable narcissism. As previously mentioned, individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits experience intense feelings of shame that collide with their intense need to exist in a relationship, causing them to oscillate between dependency and avoidance in their relationships. Results also showed that individuals who viewed romantic relationships as "very important" reported higher scores in vulnerable narcissism than those who viewed them as merely "important." However, there is a positive correlation between fear of intimacy and vulnerable narcissism. This suggests that, despite their desire for romantic connections, these individuals may fear getting intimate in their relationships. Similarly, the importance individuals attribute to romantic relationships was positively associated with frustration tolerance, especially in the emotional intolerance, entitlement, and achievement subscales. Individuals with lower levels of emotional tolerance view being in a romantic relationship as "very important", whereas those with higher emotional tolerance view it as "not important at all". Attaching excessive importance to being in a romantic relationship can affect the perceived extent of conflicts and frustrations within the relationship and can make it difficult to manage this frustration. This situation has been similarly stated that emotional vulnerability, especially caused by unmet needs related to intimacy, sometimes leads to complete withdrawal and sometimes to excessive dependence. (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020)

5.3 Conclusion

Various studies in the literature address the relational aspects of vulnerable narcissism; however, this study is among the first to specifically examine the relationship between fear of intimacy and vulnerable narcissism, highlighting the mediating role of frustration tolerance. This study aimed to enhance the understanding of various backgrounds and internal dynamics associated with the fear of intimacy, as well as the relationship between vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy, and frustration tolerance. The mutual expression of emotions in a relationship is essential for people's well-being, as it creates a safe environment where individuals can share their personal desires, fantasies, concerns, and feelings. However, fear of intimacy inhibits individuals' tendency to disclose their self to others whom they value because

of their anxiety and fear of interaction. Similarly, individuals who have higher levels of vulnerable narcissistic traits often experience higher levels of anxiety about their fluctuating self-esteem and have a constant focus on their vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Thus, it becomes almost impossible for them to deeper connection with others since intimacy is perceived as a threat to their self-concept. Nonetheless, lower levels of frustration tolerance may cause individuals difficulty in coping with the uncertainty and emotional distress that often accompany close relationships. Frequently experiencing frustration, which can lead individuals to avoid intimacy altogether or often remain superficial in their relationships. It is crucial to examine the connection between fear of intimacy, vulnerable narcissism, and frustration tolerance to understand how these factors influence each other and how their negative effects can be decreased.

This research provides insights into the roots and representations of fear of intimacy in relation to vulnerable narcissism and frustration tolerance. Although frustration tolerance is closely associated with interpersonal relationships, no previous study has explained the relationship between frustration tolerance and intimacy in romantic relationships. The findings of this study indicate that vulnerable narcissism directly predicts both fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance. In addition, frustration tolerance is a direct predictor of fear of intimacy. However, vulnerable narcissism didn't appear to influence fear of intimacy through frustration tolerance. Since this study failed to explain the mediating role of frustration tolerance between the vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy, the preliminary findings of this study can be expanded further in future research.

5.4 Recommendations

This study aimed to contribute to the existing literature by presenting how vulnerable narcissism, fear of intimacy and frustration tolerance affect each other in a mediation analysis and revealed that these variables are highly related constructs. As mentioned, the fact that most of the individuals participating in this study were currently in a romantic relationship may have been a limitation; therefore, in future

studies, it would be important to consider the romantic relationship status of individuals and include more diverse populations to increase generalizability. In this research, frustration tolerance did not explain the effect of vulnerable narcissism on fear of intimacy, but vulnerable narcissism may influence fear of intimacy through other mechanisms. Further research may explore alternative mediators to better understand the dynamics between vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy. Furthermore, since frustration tolerance was found to be related to vulnerable narcissism and fear of intimacy, it can be investigated whether it can act as a moderator variable rather than a mediator. Future studies could examine under what conditions vulnerable narcissism leads to fear of intimacy and whether this main effect becomes stronger within lower levels of frustration tolerance. In addition, while Frustration Discomfort Scale is a reliable scale to measure frustration tolerance, considering that most of the items in all 4 subscales are related to frustrations against temporary challenges that arise functionally, developing a more detailed scale for detecting frustrations concerning interpersonal relationships would also be beneficial for the field.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), 709–716. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.4.709>
- Abooie, B., & Amiri, M. (2019). Relationship between perceived stress, frustration tolerance, cognitive emotion regulation with depression syndrome. *Middle Eastern Journal of Disability Studies*, 9, 79. <https://jdisabilstud.org/article-1-1032-en.pdf>
- Akhtar, S. (2000) The Shy Narcissist. Changing Ideas in a Changing World: The Revolution in Psychoanalysis. *Essays in Honour of Arnold Cooper*, 111-119.
- Bacal, H. A., & Newman, K. M. (1990). *Theories of object relations: Bridges to self psychology*. Columbia University Press.
- Barış, E., Çıkrıkçı, Ö., & Çıkrıkçı, N. (2023). Predictors of fear of intimacy among university students. *International Journal of Turkish Educational Sciences*, 11(20), 41–63.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/00223514.51.6.1173>
- Besharat M. A., Naghshineh N., Ganji P., Tavalaeyan F. (2014). The moderating role of attachment styles on the relationship of alexithymia and fear of intimacy with marital satisfaction. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 6(3), 106–117.
- Besser, A., & Priel, B. (2010). Grandiose narcissism versus vulnerable narcissism in threatening situations: Emotional reactions to achievement failure and interpersonal rejection. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 29(8), 874–902. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2010.29.8.874>

- Cain, N. M., Pincus, A. L., & Ansell, E. B. (2008). Narcissism at the crossroads: phenotypic description of pathological narcissism across clinical theory, social/personality psychology, and psychiatric diagnosis. *Clinical psychology review, 28*(4), 638–656. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2007.09.006>
- Campbell, W. K., Foster, C. A., & Finkel, E. J. (2002). Does self-love lead to love for others? A story of narcissistic game playing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(2), 340–354.
- Crossman, A. M., Sullivan, M. W., Hitchcock, D. M., & Lewis, M. (2009). When frustration is repeated: Behavioral and emotion responses during extinction over time. *Emotion, 9*(1), 92–100. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014614>
- Day, N. J. S., Townsend, M. L., & Grenyer, B. F. S. (2020). Living with pathological narcissism: A qualitative study. *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation, 7*(19).
- Descutner, C. J., & Thelen, M. H. (1991). Development and validation of a Fear-of-Intimacy Scale. *Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 3*(2), 218–225. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.3.2.218>
- Dickinson, K. A., & Pincus, A. L. (2003). Interpersonal analysis of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. *Journal of Personality Disorders, 17*(3), 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.17.3.188.22146>
- DiGiuseppe, R. (1996). The nature of irrational and rational beliefs: Progress in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behavior Therapy, 14*(1), 5–28.

Dryden, W., & David, D. (2008). Rational emotive behavior therapy: Current status. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 22(3), 195–209. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0889-8391.22.3.195>

Erikson, E. H. (1975). *Life history and the historical moment*. W. W. Norton.

Ellis, A. (1979). *Rational Emotive Therapy: A New Approach to Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Ellis, A., & Dryden, W. (1997). *The practice of rational emotive behavior therapy* (2nd ed.). Springer Publishing Co.

Elibol, Ş., & Sevi Tok, E. S. (2018). The Validity and Reliability Study of the Fear of Intimacy Scale's Turkish Form. *Neuropsychiatric Investigation*, 56(4), 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.5455/NYS.20180905115324>

Emmons, R. A. (1984). Factor analysis and construct validity of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 48(3), 291–300. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4803_11

Fairbairn, W. R. (1952). *Psychoanalytic studies of the personality*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Fenichel, O. (1974). *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Firestone, R. W., & Catlett, J. (1999). *Fear of Intimacy*. American Psychological Association.

- Freeman, K. E., McNulty, J. K., & Karney, B. R. (2023). Romantic Duration, Relationship Quality, and Attachment Insecurity among Dating Couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 124(6), 1257–1273.
- Freud, S. (1914). On Narcissism. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 67-102
- Fossati, A., Borroni, S., Eisenberg, N., & Maffei, C. (2010). Hypersensitive narcissism and difficulties in the regulation of emotions and self-esteem. *Personality and Mental Health*, 4(1), 35–46. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pmh.92>
- Foster, J. D., Campbell, W. K., & Twenge, J. M. (2003). Individual differences in narcissism: Inflated self-views across the lifespan and around the world. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37(6), 469–486.
- Gabbard, G. O. (1989). Two subtypes of narcissistic personality disorder. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 53(6), 527–532.
- Gewirtz-Meydan, A., Estlein, R., & Finzi-Dottan, R. (2023, June 22). The Relationship Between Narcissistic Traits and Attitudes Toward Infidelity: A Dyadic Analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0001126>
- Greenberg, L. S., & Goldman, R. N. (2008). *Emotion-focused couples therapy: The dynamics of emotion, love, and power*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11750-000>
- Hatfield, E. (1984). The dangers of intimacy. In V. Derlaga (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy and close relationships* (pp.207-220) New York: Praeger

- Harrington, N. (2005), The Frustration Discomfort Scale: development and psychometric properties. *Clin. Psychol. Psychother.*, 12: 374-387. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.465>
- Harrington, N. (2006). Frustration Intolerance Beliefs: Their Relationship with Depression, Anxiety, and Anger, in a Clinical Population. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 30(6), 699–709. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-006-9061-6>
- Haşiloğlu, S. B., & Hasiloglu Ciftciler, M. (2023). What Should be The Measure of Conformity to Normal Distribution (Normality) Test in Likert Type Digital and Face-To-Face Survey Data?. *Journal of Internet Applications and Management*, 14(2), 54-69. <https://doi.org/10.34231/iuyd.1346463>
- Hendin, H. M., & Cheek, J. M. (1997). Assessing hypersensitive narcissism: A reexamination of Murray's Narcism Scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(4), 588– 599. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2204>
- Ingersoll, T. S., McClanahan, L. L., & McClanahan, S. M. (2008). Fear of Intimacy with Helping Professionals Scale: Reliability and Validity of English and Mandarin Versions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(2), 211–218.
- Kealy, D., & Rasmussen, B. (2012). Veiled and vulnerable: The other side of grandiose narcissism. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 40(3), 356–365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-011-0370-1>
- Kim J. H. (2019). Multicollinearity and misleading statistical results. *Korean journal of anesthesiology*, 72(6), 558–569. <https://doi.org/10.4097/kja.19087>
- Kohut, H. (1966). Forms and transformations of narcissism. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 14(2), 243-272.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/000306516601400201>

Kohut, H. (1971). *The analysis of the self: A systematic approach to the psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders*. University of Chicago Press.

Kohut, H. (1977). *The restoration of the self*. University of Chicago Press.

Luchner, A. F., Mirsalimi, H., Moser, C. J., & Jones, R. A. (2008). Maintaining boundaries in psychotherapy: Covert narcissistic personality characteristics and psychotherapists. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 45(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.45.1.1>

Martin, J., & Ashby, J. S. (2004). Perfectionism and fear of intimacy: Implications for relationships. *Family Journal*, 12, 368–374.

Mashek, D., & Sherman, M. D. (2004). Wanting less closeness in romantic relationships. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 26(4), 327–337.

Masterson, J. F. (1993). *The emerging self: A developmental, self, and object relations approach to the treatment of the closet narcissistic disorder of the self*. Brunner/Mazel.

McRae, K., Ochsner, K. N., Mauss, I. B., Gabrieli, J. J. D., & Gross, J. J. (2008). Gender Differences in Emotion Regulation: An fMRI Study of Cognitive Reappraisal. *Group processes & intergroup relations: GPIR*, 11(2), 143–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430207088035>

McWilliams, N. (1994). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis: Understanding personality structure in the clinical process*. Guilford Press.

- Morrant, C. (1999). Review of *Fear of intimacy* [Review of the book *Fear of intimacy*, by R. W. Firestone & J. Catlett]. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 36(4), 416–417. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0092418>
- Ozer, B. U., Demir, A., & Harrington, N. (2012). Psychometric properties of Frustration Discomfort Scale in a Turkish sample. *Psychological reports*, 111(1), 117–128. <https://doi.org/10.2466/08.02.18.PR0.111.4.117-128>
- Prager, K. J. (1995). *The psychology of intimacy*. Guilford Press.
- Pincus, A. L., & Roche, M. J. (2011). Narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability. In W. K. Campbell & J. D. Miller (Eds.), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (pp. 103–116). Wiley.
- Pirrone, D., Sels, L., & Verhofstadt, L. (2023). Relational needs frustration: an observational study on the role of negative (dis)engaging emotions. *Frontiers in psychology*, 14, 1232125. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1232125>
- Reich A. (1960). Pathologic forms of self-esteem regulation. *The Psychoanalytic study of the child*, 15, 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1960.11822576>
- Reis, H. T., & Shaver, P. (1988). Intimacy as an interpersonal process. In S. Duck, D. F. Hay, S. E. Hobfoll, W. Ickes, & B. M. Montgomery (Eds.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions* (pp. 367–389). John Wiley & Sons.
- Rohmann, E., Neumann, E., Herner, M. J., & Bierhoff, H.-W. (2012). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism: Self-construal, attachment, and love in romantic relationships. *European Psychologist*, 17(4), 279–290. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000100>

- Rosenzweig S. (1938). A general outline of frustration. *Character and Personality*, 7, 151– 160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1938.tb02285.x>
- Rosenzweig, S. (1944). An outline of frustration theory. In J. M. Hunt, *Personality and the behavior disorders* (pp. 379–388). Ronald Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68– 78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Sengül, B. Z., Ünal, E., Akça, S., Canbolat, F., Denizci, M., & Baştuğ, G. (2015). Validity and reliability study for the Turkish adaptation of the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS). *Düşünen Adam: The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences*, 28(3), 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.5350/DAJPN2015280306>
- Sherman, M. D., & Thelen, M. H. (1996). Fear of Intimacy Scale: Validation and Extension with Adolescents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 13(4), 507–521.
- Smolewska, K., & Dion, K. L. (2005). Narcissism and Adult Attachment: A Multivariate Approach. *Self and Identity*, 4(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576500444000218>
- Sorefi, A. R. (1995). Narcissism: a view from infant research. *Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 23, 49–77.

- Taber, K.S. (2018). The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education. *Res Sci Educ* 48, 1273–129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-0169602-2>
- Timmerman, G. M. (1991). A concept analysis of intimacy. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 12(1), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.3109/01612849109058207>
- Underwood, J. J., Barry, C. T., & Charles, N. E. (2021). The interplay between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, emotion dysregulation, and distress tolerance in adolescents. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 179.
- Van Buren, B. R., & Meehan, K. B. (2015). Child maltreatment and vulnerable narcissism: The roles of shame and disavowed need. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 63(3), 555–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003065115593058>
- Vanhee, G., Lemmens, G., Stas, L., Loeys, T., & Verhofstadt, L. (2018). “Why are couples fighting? A need frustration perspective on relationship conflict and dissatisfaction.” *Journal of Family Therapy*, 40(suppl. 1), S4–S23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12126>
- Vansteenkiste, M., Ryan, R.M. & Soenens, B. Basic psychological need theory: Advancements, critical themes, and future directions. *Motiv Emot* 44, 1–31 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09818-1>
- Wright, A. G. C., Lukowitsky, M. R., Pincus, A. L., & Conroy, D. E. (2010). Narcissism and maladaptive interpersonal patterns: The role of self- and other-enhancement. *Journal of Personality*, 78(3), 791–818.
- Zeigler-Hill, V., Clark, C. B., & Pickard, J. D. (2008). Narcissistic subtypes and contingent self-esteem: Do all narcissists base their self-esteem on the same

domains? Journal of Personality, 76(4), 753– 774.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00503.x>.

