

# Emotional Manipulation and its Relationship with Symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder among Couples

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## Abstract

The current study sought to examine emotional manipulation and its connection to symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples, and whether there are statistically significant differences based on the variables such as gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level. The study involved a sample of 924 married couples, selected through the descriptive correlational approach. The findings revealed a moderate level of emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples. They also showed statistically significant differences in emotional manipulation and narcissistic personality disorder symptoms based on gender, favoring males; duration of marriage, favoring those married for less than (10) years; and educational level favoring those with secondary or less. No statistically significant differences were found based on age. Moreover, a positive and statistically significant relationship was identified between emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder in couples. Based on these findings, the researchers recommend organizing lectures and seminars to educate couples about the negative effects of emotional manipulation and various types of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder appearing in the marital relationship.

**Keywords:** Emotional manipulation, symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, couples.

Family life is the first institution in acquiring individuals with feelings; it teaches us how to form our feelings towards ourselves, towards others, and how to react. The way the spouses deal with each other and with their children instills a deep lesson in their souls (Goleman,

2000) Human relations provoke many emotions, whether positive or negative, in different life situations, resulting in positive behaviors that lead to the continuation of the relationship, or negative behaviors that break the relationship apart. The ability to empathize, express

emotionally, empathically share the other party's feelings, and understand the justifications for his behavior, are all factors that lead to harmony between spouses and their family stability (Ruslan, 2006).

The prevailing relationship between couples determines their personality patterns and affects their interactions with each other, and their relationship with their children, and those around them. The style of one of the spouses may depend on domineering, neglect, abuse, or rejection, especially if one of them is subjected to emotional manipulation by the other. Therefore, emotional manipulation depends mainly on identified strengths and weaknesses of the related spouses, in which each of them resorts to weakening the other's strength as much as possible, shaking his self-confidence, and controlling him by force (Abdella, 2019).

Emotional manipulation is a cunning way of dealing; through which one spouse exploits and manipulates the feelings of the other, as the manipulator is characterized by disrespecting other relationships, seeking to get closer to others to exploit and mock them (Wai & Tilipoulos, 2012). This is not limited to social relations only; it may extend in the future to marital and family life. The individual may show internal conflicts, and a decrease in skills, which results in difficulty in forming a healthy family life, where a person with narcissistic personality disorder arises (Bjornlund, 2011).

The narcissistic personality is self-centeredness, selfishness, love of appearance, getting attention, and always trying to be the center of attention. The narcissistic person may exaggerate several things, including dress and appearance to show off by exaggerating great achievements and abilities in an exaggerated theatrical way, as it seems to be more than it actually is and characterized by expansion in the scope of his social relationship, but superficially, for the sake of personal gain (Corry et al., 2008).

#### Emotional Manipulation

Emotional manipulation is one of the forms of psychological violence, more harmful than

verbal and physical violence, and leaves a clear impact on the feelings of the other party. The tendencies and trends of the manipulative individual take a different behavioral pattern in dealing with others. They are often overshadowed by material and personal benefits, as they resort to the method of exploiting emotions to achieve it. Some intentionally practice this method to cause harm to the other party, and this is accompanied by feelings of anxiety, lack of inner reassurance, and self-blame. Thus, any defect in the emotional aspect affects the individual and others (Forward, 2015).

Emotional manipulation is a common phenomenon practiced by both normal and distributed people in all aspects of life, especially in social relations. However, some individuals show behavior that tends towards emotional manipulation; to achieve certain goals regardless of the means used; to influence the behavior of others by stimulating and activating their cognitive; and emotional feelings (Al- Hindawi & Kamil, 2017).

Emotional arousal is one of the ultimate sources of manipulation. It is linked to a group of feelings or emotions, such as anxiety and fear. It also represents one of the main obstacles to changing behavior. It produces a condition known as avoidance behavior and it occurs when the manipulator stops trying to succeed due to his doubts about his abilities and it is treated through repeated exposure to stimuli that produces high levels of anxiety (Bandura & Walters, 1977).

Braicker (Braicker, 2004) defines emotional manipulation as a form of social influence that alters other behaviors using hidden, abusive, or deceptive tactics that prioritize the manipulator's interests at the expense of others.

Mohammed (2022) defined it as achieving personal goals without caring about the outcome of its influence on the manipulated person, and that deception, and hiding logical evidence are methods of manipulation.

Emotional manipulation is often employed to gain benefits and evade negative consequences,

as individuals use words, actions, or sounds that lead to memories associated with a specific event, and different responses can be observed from the targeted victim, such as fear, surprise, embarrassment, anger, and others. The manipulator may influence the victim's behavior using various methods, such as lying, spreading guilt, threatening, and using the seduction method (Mandal & Kocur, 2013).

Emotionally manipulators suffer from disorders including narcissistic personality disorder and anti-social personality disorder. Also, borderline personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder appear to be common disorders. (Crawford 2007). Some theories have tried to provide a logical explanation for emotional manipulation, including Social Learning Theory: The concept of emotional manipulation emerged from the Social Cognitive Theory as a cognitive concept that affects an individual's behavior. This theory focuses on social interaction, social norms, and conditions in which learning occurs. This indicates that learning does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a social environment (Bandura, 1986). Austin's model of emotional manipulation: Austin believes that emotional manipulation appears in managing and controlling the feelings of others to achieve non-social goals and is expressed in shifting the emotions of others in favor of the manipulator, and showing unreal feelings and displays of emotion to serve oneself (Ngoc, 2020).

#### Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is known to be an inflator of self-importance and grandiosity. Narcissism is described as a reflection of exaggerated feelings of grandiosity and vanity (Southard, 2014). Their owners are described as great, have the full conviction that they are special, often accompanied by a lack of ability to feel the interests of others, and they cannot deal with criticism, have high demands, and deserve special care (Choi-Kain, 2020).

Bjornlund (Bjornlund, 2011) defines it as some sort of grandiosity, self-focused behavior

and a constant need for admiration. Walsh (Walsh, 2015) defined it as a pervasive pattern of greatness and self-interest, while Bateman & Fonagy (Bateman & Fonagy, 2016) defined it as self-exaggeration, arrogance, and lack of empathy toward others, and Sperry and Sperry (Sperry & Sperry, 2015) defined it as a sense of greatness, entitlement, and self-centeredness.

Narcissistic personality disorder is formed because of the individual going through three stages, which are self-confidence, which refers to the individual's belief that he has special abilities and has the ability to make decisions. When healthy self-confidence is directed towards pathology, success becomes more important to him than his self-esteem, the culture of his society, and self-preoccupation, and includes exaggeration of self-confidence, looking at others and the world as less valuable and self-indulgence, in which the individual has little ability to empathize with others, and focuses only on his own feelings, and his interests (Bateman & Fonagy, 2016).

One factor contributing to narcissistic personality disorder in children is the influence of narcissistic parents. Such parents often give their children greater freedom to achieve great successes, which creates in the children the belief that their parents take care of them all the time, to fulfill the wishes of their parents. Over time, they realize that their value to their parents is determined by the extent to which these satisfactions are achieved, and this creates their dependence on external emotional supplies to evaluate and support themselves (Köse & Erbaş, 2020)

Second, frustration and emotional deprivation is also a factor that contributes to the narcissistic personality disorder's development which affects children. The loss of a parent may cause a serious problem for the child, making him feel insecure, and depriving him of some important emotional experiences in shaping his personality, so he feels helpless and weak, and his self becomes fragile which makes it a source

of emotional satisfaction and therefore self-centered (Carpenter, 2012).

Finally, the parental treatment methods: parents' excessive attention to their children is linked to the child's ranking in the family, especially if he is the first, last, or only one. In this case, parents may follow the method of excessive pampering which makes him a spoiled, selfish, and narcissistic person (Saafan, 2011).

The criteria for diagnosing narcissistic personality disorder are outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

1) A persistent grandiosity's pattern (related to imagination or behavior). The need for sense of admiration and the lack of sense of empathy, that begins in early stages of adulthood and is evident in numerous situations, characterized by five or more of the following:

- A grandiose sense of self-importance, demonstrated by an overwhelming sense of being an exaggerator in achievements and being talented. To add, feeling of superiority are becoming dominant needless to necessarily having achieved equivalent achievements.
- Engaging in fantasies about limitless success, power, brilliance, beauty, or idealized love.
- Believes to be distinct, unique, understandable, and should be accompanied only by privileged people, or from an upper class.
- Requires excessive admiration.
- A sense of superiority, exemplified by unrealistic expectations of special preferential treatment, or automatic compliance with their demands.
- Exploitative in personal relationships, using others to achieve their own goals.
- Lacks empathy and refuses to recognize or acknowledge the feelings and needs of others.
- Frequently envious of others or believes that others are envious of him.
- Exhibits arrogant and condescending behaviors or attitudes.

Some theories have tried to provide explanations for narcissistic personality disorder, including the cognitive theory where Beck & Freman believe that narcissistic personality disorder arises from several schemas about the self, the future, and a special cognitive schema that refers to the important people in the narcissist's life, and special cognitive experiences that support his beliefs of his uniqueness, self-importance, and his belief in being distinguished from others (Abdella, 2019).

The social and interpersonal theory emphasized the role of the environment in the emergence of the disorder, and it appears in the exaggerated appreciation of the style of parents raising their children, teaching them the behavior of exploiting others, preferring in all matters of life, and treating them as important and different people (Al-Behairi, 2007).

Upon reviewing the educational literature, the researchers identified some studies relevant to the current topic. Hadi (2012) conducted a study aimed at examining emotional blackmail among married male and female employees in Iraq and analyzing differences based on gender and duration of marriage. The study involved a sample of 300 couples. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference in emotional blackmail based on the duration of marriage variable, with higher levels observed in marriages lasting between 1 and 10 years.

The study conducted by McNulty & Widman (McNulty & Widman, 2013) examined the relationship between narcissistic personality traits and marital satisfaction in New York. The sample included 371 newlywed couples. The findings showed a statistically significant difference narcissism levels based on the gender variable, with male couples showing higher levels of narcissism.

Al-Saleh (2016) explored the manifestations of narcissistic personality and contradictory self-perception, and their relation to marital compatibility among a sample of childbearing and childless women in Damascus. The study also showed differences based on the variables

age, duration of marriage, and educational level. The sample involved 40 wives. The findings indicated no correlation between narcissistic personality manifestations, contradictory self-perception, and marital compatibility among the women, and no statistically significant differences were found in narcissistic personality manifestations based on the study variables.

Abdella 's study (2019) aimed to investigate the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between emotional blackmail and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among a sample of couples in Egypt. The study sample consisted of (337) husbands and wives. The results showed a statistically significant difference in emotional blackmail according to the gender variable favoring males with no statistically significant difference in the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder based on the gender variable. Additionally, positive and significantly statistical correlation appeared between the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder and emotional blackmail.

Ponte et al. (Ponte et al., 2020) identified the relationship between both narcissism and psychological abuse between couples in Florence, Italy. This sample consisted of (473) people in a stable emotional relationship. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in psychological abuse of the life partner based on age and relationship duration. However, a statistically significant difference was found based on the level of narcissism which is related to the gender variable favoring males. Additionally, the study suggested that higher level of narcissism indirectly leads to psychological abuse towards the partner.

In the study conducted by Al-Shalash (2023), that aimed to explore psychological vitality and emotional exploitation among a sample of husbands emotionally separated from their wives, and to find out the differences based on age and educational qualifications. The study included (180) husbands emotionally separated from their wives from the city of Riyadh, Saudi

Arabia. The results revealed an inverse correlation between psychological vitality and emotional exploitation among couples. Additionally, statistically significant differences in emotional exploitation were found based on age group in favor of the oldest, and educational qualification favoring those with lower educational attainment.

Previous studies have focused on examining narcissistic personality disorder and emotional manipulation and revealing differences related to certain variables, namely, gender, age, marriage duration, and the level of education. These studies were conducted in different environments (Iraq), America, Arab Republic of Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic, Italy, and Saudi Arabia. The study at hand utilized prior studies and their theoretical framework, problem formulation, emphasizing its importance, and discussing its results. It achieves the goal sought by the previous studies and differs from them in its attempt to identify emotional manipulation and its relationship to the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples, and to know the differences according to gender and age variables, the duration of marriage, and educational level, making it the first study in Jordan - within the limits of the researchers' knowledge conducted in this field.

#### The Study Problem and Its Questions

Nowadays, there is an increasing interest in individualism, competition, and achievement, which has contributed to the increased prevalence of narcissistic personality symptoms, as individual culture focuses on the self and its goals without any consideration of relationships with others. In marital life, the nature of the couple's relationship together affects the nature and stability of family life, and when one of the spouses practices emotional manipulation towards the other, this may lead to a disorder in his personality, and couples who are characterized by narcissism, and practice emotional manipulation, usually behave instinctively stemming from excessive self-admiration, and the exploitation of the other

party to achieve their goals. To the researchers' knowledge, no studies have linked the two variables of this study together. Consequently, this study aims to reveal the relationship among manipulation of emotions and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples. Specifically, the current study attempts to answer the questions below:

- 1) What is the extent of emotional manipulation among couples?
- 2) Are there significantly statistical differences in emotional manipulation among couples based on their gender, age, marriage duration, and educational level?
- 3) What is the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples?
- 4) Are there differences in the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples related to factors such as gender, age, marriage duration and the level of education?
- 5) Is there a link between emotional manipulation and the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples?

#### The Importance of Study

The importance of the study from a theoretical standpoint comes from the scarcity of Arab and foreign studies in this field as the researchers noticed through reviewing previous studies, that most of them focused on emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder separately and did not link them in a joint study. This study is within the researchers' knowledge, the first attempt to detect emotional manipulation and its relationship to the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples, and it may

enrich the local and Arab library with the information it will provide about emotional manipulation and the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder.

From a practical standpoint, the findings may be aiding those working in the field of psychological counseling to organize training courses to educate couples about the negative effects of emotional manipulation and this disorder on the psychological health of them and their children. The current study may open horizons for further future studies in this field.

#### Study limits and its Determinants

The current study was limited to an available sample of couples, and its results were determined by its two tools (The Emotional Manipulation Scale and The Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms Scale), and the validity and stability they achieved, and the degree of objectivity of the sample's responses to the items.

## Procedures and Methods

### Study Approach

The correlational descriptive approach was chosen because it best fits the goals of such study.

### The Participants

(924) husbands and wives participated in the study, and they were selected using the accessible method. Table (1) illustrates how the study participants are divided based on their gender, age, marriage duration and educational level.

Table (1): Participant Distribution of Study Sample based on the variables

Variable	Categories	Repetition	Percentage
Gender	Male	405	44.0
	Female	517	56.0
Age	Under 35 years	446	48.3
	35 years and older	478	51.7
Educational Level	Secondary school and less	407	44.0
	Bachelor's and above	517	56.0
Marriage Duration	Less than 10 years/	439	47.5
	10 years and above	485	52.5
Total		925	100.0

### The Two Scales of the Study

#### First: The Scale of Emotional Manipulation

The Emotional Manipulation Scale developed by Austin et al. (Austin et al., 2007) was used to meet the study's goals, which consists of (18) items, divided into three fields: the tendency to emotional manipulation (10 items), weak emotional skills (5) items, and emotional concealment (3) items.

#### Validity and Stability Implications of the Emotional Manipulation Scale

##### Scale Validity

To ensure the validity of the scale, it was initially presented (18) items to some specialists in psychological counseling and educational psychology. These experts were asked to express their opinions on the items specifically regarding their adherence to the fields, clarity, their soundness in terms of meaning and wording, and suitability for the study sample. They were asked also to suggest necessary deletions, additions, modifications or to add any comments.

The comments of the refereeing professors were considered, which included modifications in the wording, and thus the scale settled on (18) items distributed into the three previous areas. Construct validity indicators were also calculated for the study scale, by applying it to a survey sample of 40 husbands and wives from the study population but outside the main sample and correlation coefficients were calculated among each item and the field to which it belongs and the overall scale. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between the item and its field ranged between (0.37-0.74) for the field of tendency toward emotional manipulation, (0.74-0.81) for the weak emotional skills, and (0.51-0.84) for the emotional concealment. The correlation between each individual item and the overall scale score ranged from 0.35 to 0.73, which indicates the validity of the scale.

##### Scale Stability

To ensure the scale's reliability, it was administered to a survey sample of 40 husbands and wives from the study population, and from

outside its sample. After two weeks of the first application, the scale was applied again, and the scale's stability was calculated by testing and re-testing the method by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the first and second applications. The repetition stability coefficients ranged between (0.82- 0.85) for the three fields, and (0.90) for the total scale. The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was calculated, and the internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) range between (0.77- 0.81) for the three fields and (0.86) for the total scale, this indicated that the scale has a high degree of reliability.

#### Second: The Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms Scale

To meet the objectives of the study, a measure of narcissistic personality disorder symptoms was developed, based on the diagnostic criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition "DSM-5" (APA, 2013) consisting of (27) items, divided into nine diagnostic criteria: A sense of grandeur, preoccupation with fantasies related to the power and success, the beliefs of superiority, the need for excessive admiration, exploitation of others, a lack of empathy and envy of others, and arrogant behavior and attitudes. (3) items were formulated for each criterion.

Validity and stability implications of the narcissistic personality disorder symptom scale.

##### Validity of the scale

To ensure the scale's validity, the initial (27) items were reviewed by some specialists in psychological counseling and educational psychology. These specialists were asked to give their opinions on the scale's items based on their adherence to the diagnostic criteria, their clarity, their soundness in terms of meaning and wording, their suitability to the study sample members, and to delete, add, or modify any item, and any other comments they deem appropriate. The notes of the refereed professors, which included amendments in wordings, and thus the

scale settled on (27) items distributed to the previous standards.

The comments of the refereeing professors were considered, which included modifications in the wording, and thus the scale settled on (27) items distributed according to the previous standards. Construct validity indicators were also calculated for the study scale, by applying it to a survey sample of 40 husbands and wives from the study population but outside the main sample and correlation coefficients were calculated among each item and the field to which it is related to and the overall scale. Pearson correlation coefficients between the item and its field ranged between (0.52-0.91) and the correlation coefficients between the item degree and the total degree of the scale ranged between (0.32-0.70); which indicates the validity of the scale.

#### Scale Stability

it was administered to a survey sample of 40 husbands and wives from the study population, and from outside its sample. Two weeks after the first application, the scale was applied again, and the scale's stability was calculated by testing and re-testing method by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the first and second applications. The repetition stability coefficients have ranged between (0.82-0.87) for the nine standards, and (0.92) for the overall scale. The internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) were also calculated and ranged between (0.71-0.83) for the nine standards and (0.87) for the overall scale, this indicated that the scale has a high degree of stability.

Correction of the two scales and the statistical standard used.

The two scales' items were answered based on a 5-point scale that takes the weights below:

"always" (5) degrees, "often" (4) degrees, "sometimes" (3) degrees, "rarely" (2) degrees, and "never" (1) degree. To interpret the arithmetic mean, the following statistical standard was used: 1.00 – less than 2.33 low levels, 2.33 - less than 3.67 medium levels, and 3.67 - 5.00 high level.

#### Study Variables.

The study included the following variables:

First: Classification variables, which included:

- Gender, which has two categories, male and female.
- Age, with two levels under 35 years and 35 years and older.
- The duration of the marriage, which has two levels: less than 10 years, and 10 years or more.
- Educational level, which has two levels: secondary school and less, and bachelor's degree and above.

Second: Dependent variables: Emotional Manipulation and Symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder among Couples.

#### Statistical Treatments

To answer the first and third questions of the study, arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, and to answer the second and fourth questions, quadruple variance analysis was used, and to answer the fifth question, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used.

#### Presentation and Discussion of the Results

First: The results of the first question that stated: "What is the level of emotional manipulation among couples?".

The arithmetic means and standards deviations of the participants estimates the level of emotional manipulation were calculated, and Table (2) illustrates this.

Table (2) Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Sample Members'

Rank	Domain	Mean	Standard Deviation	The Level
1	Emotional concealment	3.41	.831	Moderate
2	Tendency toward emotional manipulation	2.64	.792	Moderate
3	Weak emotional skills	2.54	.813	Moderate
	Emotional manipulation	2.79	.584	Moderate



Estimates of the Level of Emotional Manipulation.

Table (2) clearly shows that the arithmetic means for the areas of emotional manipulation among couples ranged between (2.54 - 3.41) Emotional concealment came in the first place, with an arithmetic means of (3.41), at a moderate level. The field of tendency toward emotional manipulation came in the second place, with an arithmetic means of (2.64), at a moderate level. Finally, the field of weak emotional skills came in third place, with an arithmetic means of (2.54), and at a moderate level. The arithmetic mean for the total degree of emotional manipulation was (2.79), at a moderate level. The reason for this is due to the lack of self-confidence, social skills, communication skills, and conflict resolution among spouses. Each of them tries to influence the other in unhealthy ways, because of his inability to express his needs and desires

correctly. In addition to the presence of some pressures, challenges in the marital relationship, or in the couple's personal lives, and a lack of understanding of personal boundaries. There may be a lack of clarity in understanding each partner's rights in the relationship, which sometimes leads to unintentionally override them.

Second: The results of the second question that stated: "Are there statistically significant differences in the level of emotional manipulation according to variables: gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level?".

To answer this question, the arithmetic means, and standard deviations of the level of emotional manipulation among couples were calculated according to the variables of gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level, and Table (3) illustrates this.

Table (3) Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviations of the Level of Emotional Manipulation among Couples by Study Variables

Variable	Categories		tendency toward emotional manipulation	weak emotional skills	emotional concealment	emotional manipulation
Gender	male	M	2.85	2.66	3.53	2.96
		D	.822	.873	.845	.599
	female	M	2.48	2.45	3.32	2.66
		D	.726	.751	.808	.536
Age	under 35 years	M	2.73	2.54	3.42	2.84
		D	.825	.823	.879	.604
	35 years and older	M	2.57	2.54	3.41	2.75
		D	.752	.805	.783	.561
Educational Level	secondary school and less	M	2.73	2.65	3.53	2.89
		D	.797	.841	.816	.575
	bachelor's and above	M	2.58	2.45	3.32	2.72
		D	.782	.780	.831	.580
Duration of Marriage	less than 10 years	M	2.76	2.58	3.35	2.85
		D	.839	.819	.829	.604
	10 years and above	M	2.54	2.51	3.48	2.74
		D	.733	.807	.828	.561

M= Mean; D= Standard Deviation

As observed in Table (3) there are variations between the arithmetic means of the study's sample estimates regarding the level of

emotional manipulation based on gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level. To assess the statistical significance of these

observed differences, a quadruple variance analysis was used, and Table (4) illustrates this.

Table (4) Analysis of the Quadruple Variance of the Study Sample Members' Estimates of the Emotional Manipulation Level as a Whole, according to the Study Variables.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of square	F value	Statistical significance
Gender	20.046	1	20.046	64.855	.000*
Age	.021	1	.021	.068	.794
Educational Level	7.658	1	7.658	24.775	.000*
Duration of Marriage	1.240	1	1.240	4.013	.045*
Error	284.052	919	.309		
Total	314.433	923			

Source: (SPSS).

Table (4) clearly shows that there is a noticeable difference in the participants estimates of the level of emotional manipulation, based on the gender variable in favor of males. This finding may be attributed to the pattern of culture and upbringing, which plays an important role in shaping male behavior about expressing feelings and emotional interaction, as males are less likely to express their feelings directly, in addition to social expectations that may put pressure on males to show power and control. This may lead to the use of emotional manipulation methods to achieve this. Such findings are consistent with the findings of Abdallah's study (2019), that revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in emotional blackmail among a sample of couples based on the gender in favor of males.

The findings showed that there was a significant statistical difference in the estimates of the participants for the level of emotional manipulation related to the duration of marriage in favor of less than (10) years. Perhaps the reason for this is due to the immaturity of the marital relationship and their exposure to increasing emotional pressures at the beginning of the relationship, and the difficulty of adapting to the requirements of the relationship, they are more likely to lack of self-confidence and uncertainty, because of not getting used to each other well. Also, the marital relationship in its

early stages may be accompanied by many tensions and challenges. This makes them less emotionally stable, and more susceptible to emotional manipulation. Such result is consistent with Hadi's results (2012), which revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in emotional blackmail among married male and female employees in Iraq, depending on the variable duration of marriage, in favor of (1-10) years. While it differs with the finding of the study of Ponti et al. (Ponti et al., 2020) which showed that there was no statistical significance in psychological abuse among couples in Italy according to the variable of the duration of the relationship.

The results also indicated that there was a significant statistical difference in the participants' estimates of the level of emotional manipulation, based on the educational level variable, in favor of secondary school or less. The reasons are due to the lack of communicational and emotional skills, awareness of correct dealing methods, and the rights of the partner. There are also and the focus on achieving their interests and goals without taking into account the rights of their partner. Some reasons result from being exposed to unhealthy behavioral models, whether in their previous relationships or in their social environment. This leads to the use of emotional manipulation methods as an ineffective means in

the marital relationship. Such result is consistent with the result of Al-Shalash's study (2023), which showed that there was a statistically significant difference in emotional exploitation among a sample of husbands who were emotionally separated from their wives according to the educational qualification variable in favor of the least.

The results of the question also showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the study sample members' estimates of the level of emotional manipulation according to the age variable. This result can be explained by the presence of compatibility and emotional stability between the spouses regardless of their age, and they may have common personal orientations that make them interact in similar ways in their marital relationship, which reduces the possibility of emotional manipulation tactics.

Such result is consistent with the result of Ponti et al.'s (2020) study, which revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in psychological abuse between couples in Italy according to the age variable. While this result differs from the result of the Al-Shalash study (2023), which revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in emotional exploitation according to the age group variable in favor of the oldest.

Third: The results of the third question, which states: "What is the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples?".

The arithmetic means, and standard deviations estimates of the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder were calculated where Table 5 shows this.

Table (5) Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviations of the Level of Symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder among Couples by Study Variables,

Rank	Domain	Mean	Standard Deviation	The Level
1	the belief that they are a special person	3.37	.839	moderate
2	a sense of grandeur	3.35	.788	moderate
3	a sense of superiority	3.32	.759	moderate
4	preoccupation with fantasies of power and success	3.03	.810	moderate
5	arrogant behaviors and attitudes	2.86	.780	moderate
6	the need for excessive admiration	2.55	.869	moderate
7	envy of others	2.18	.722	low
8	exploitation in relationships	1.95	.811	low
9	lack of empathy	1.44	.624	low
	symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder	<b>2.67</b>	<b>.516</b>	moderate

Source: (SPSS).

Table (5) shows that the arithmetic means for the areas of narcissistic personality disorder symptoms among couples ranged between (1.44-3.37), and the field of belief that he is a special person came in first place, with an arithmetic mean (3.37), and at a moderate level, while lack of empathy appeared in the last place, with an arithmetic mean (1.44), and a low level. The arithmetic mean of the total degree of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder was (2.67), and a moderate level. Perhaps the reason for this is due to the imbalance of power in the marital

relationship as one of the partners repeatedly tries to impose his will and opinion without taking into account the needs of the other partner, and repeatedly tries to control him and constantly show his superiority, in addition to presence of problems in effective communication between the spouses, a lack of emotional interaction, as well as the impact of the culture and social environment in which the individual grew up, which encourages self-pride and excellence that leads to the emergence of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder.

Fourth: the results of the fourth question stated that: "Are there statistically significant differences in the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder according to the variables of gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level?".

To answer this question, the arithmetic means, and standard deviations of the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder were calculated according to the variables of gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level, and Table (6) illustrates this.

Table (6): Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviations of the Level of Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms among Couples According to Study Variables

Variable	Categories		asense of grandeur	preoccupation with fantasies of power and success	the belief that they are a special person	the need for excessive admiration	a sense of superiority	exploitation in relationships	lack of empathy	envy of others	arrogant behaviors and attitudes	symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder
Gender	male	M	3.46	3.17	3.48	2.73	3.50	2.14	1.56	2.29	2.98	2.81
		D	.803	.857	.833	.922	.774	.908	.744	.767	.759	.552
	female	M	3.27	2.91	3.28	2.40	3.17	1.79	1.34	2.09	2.76	2.56
		D	.767	.751	.835	.795	.716	.688	.491	.672	.783	.456
Age	under 35 years	M	3.39	3.10	3.44	2.54	3.40	2.16	1.54	2.24	2.95	2.75
		D	.755	.800	.804	.879	.722	.838	.687	.729	.768	.505
	35 years and older	M	3.32	2.96	3.30	2.55	3.24	1.75	1.34	2.13	2.77	2.60
		D	.818	.814	.866	.860	.785	.732	.541	.712	.782	.515
Educational Level	secondary school and less	M	3.46	3.11	3.52	2.68	3.38	2.01	1.46	2.26	2.98	2.76
		D	.758	.826	.844	.853	.781	.871	.612	.733	.834	.531
	bachelor's and above	M	3.27	2.96	3.25	2.44	3.26	1.90	1.41	2.12	2.76	2.60
		D	.802	.792	.817	.867	.737	.759	.633	.707	.721	.492
Duration of Marriage	less than 10 years	M	3.37	3.12	3.46	2.57	3.42	2.15	1.52	2.24	2.96	2.76
		D	.781	.830	.800	.855	.707	.845	.690	.763	.772	.527
	10years and above	M	3.34	2.94	3.28	2.53	3.22	1.76	1.36	2.13	2.76	2.59
		D	.795	.783	.866	.882	.792	.734	.549	.678	.775	.493

M= Mean; D= Standard Deviation

It is noted from Table (6) that there are phenotypic differences between the arithmetic means of the participants estimates of the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder based on gender, age, marriage duration, and

educational level. In order to determine the statistical significance of the phenotypic differences, a quadruple variance analysis was used, where table (7) illustrates this.

Table (7): Quadruple Variance Analysis of the Study Sample Members' Estimates for the Level of Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms as a Whole According to the Study Variables.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of square	F value	Statistical significance
Gender	14.350	1	14.350	60.820	.000*
Age	.464	1	.464	1.968	.161
Educational Level	7.232	1	7.232	30.651	.000*
Duration of Marriage	2.015	1	2.015	8.540	.004*
Error	216.838	919	.236		
Total	245.530	923			

Table (7) shows that there was a statistical significance difference in the participants estimates of the level of symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, based on gender variables in favor of males. Perhaps the reason for this is due to the style of upbringing, culture, and social expectations that encourage males to behave in ways that reflect the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder. In addition to the social and economic pressures and challenges facing males, such as challenges in the labor market, or social competition, as well as sexual discrimination in diagnosing and estimating the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder. Doctors tend to diagnose males with narcissistic symptoms more than females because of social expectations. Such finding is similar to the result of McNulty & Widman Study (McNulty & Widman, 2013), which revealed that there was a statistical significance difference in the level of narcissism based on the gender variable in favor of males, while it differs with the result of the study of Abdella (2019), which showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the symptoms of Narcissistic personality disorder among a sample of couples in Egypt according to the gender variable.

The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the study sample members' estimates of the level of narcissistic personality disorder symptoms related to the marriage duration in favor of less than (10) years. Perhaps the reason for this is due to the lack of sufficient maturity of the marital relationship, lack of trust, emotional security, and ability to deal effectively with marital challenges, difficulties, and pressures associated with the new marital relationship, such as financial and social pressures, emotional integration, in addition to the lack of balance and understanding between the two partners, this increases the possibility of narcissistic behaviors emerging. This result differs from the result of Al-Saleh's study (2016), which showed that there was no statistically significant difference in

the manifestations of narcissistic personality among a sample of childbearing and childless women in Damascus based on the marriage duration.

The results also revealed that there was a statistical significant difference in the study sample members' estimates of the level of narcissistic personality disorder symptoms as a whole for the educational level variable in favor of secondary school or less. This result may be attributed to a lack of life experience and a lack of social and emotional skills necessary for healthy interaction with others among couples from a secondary educational level and less as their insufficient experience during social interactions, as well as social, cultural, and media influences, encourage narcissistic behavior more among couples with lower levels of education. This result differs from Al-Saleh's study results (2016), which indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the manifestations of narcissistic personality among a sample of childbearing and childless women in Damascus according to the educational level variable.

The results also showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the study sample members' estimates of the level of narcissistic personality disorder symptoms as a whole based on age variables. The reason for this is due to emotional and personal maturity and balance in the marital relationship, which means that the spouses are able to maintain a balance between their personal needs and the needs of the relationship, and the presence of a good level of understanding and communication between the spouses. This contributes to reducing conflicts and tensions that may lead to narcissistic behaviors. Such result is consistent with the result of Al-Saleh's study (2016), which showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the manifestations of narcissistic personality among a sample of childbearing and childless women in Damascus according to the age variable.

Fifth: Results of the fifth question, that states: "Is there a statistically significant correlation between emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among couples?".

To answer this question, Pearson's correlation coefficients between emotional manipulation and narcissistic personality disorder symptoms in couples were calculated where table 8 shows this.

Table (8) Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between Emotional Manipulation and Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms

Domain		tendency toward emotional manipulation	weak emotional skills	emotional concealment	emotional manipulation
a sense of grandeur	correlation coefficient	.228**	.086**	.217**	.267**
	Statistical significance	.000	.009	.000	.000
preoccupation with fantasies of power and success	correlation coefficient	.451**	.154**	.182**	.445**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
the belief that they are a special person	correlation coefficient	.285**	.151**	.177**	.317**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
the need for excessive admiration	correlation coefficient	.396**	.265**	.115**	.417**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
a sense of superiority	correlation coefficient	.390**	.134**	.112**	.371**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.001	.000
exploitation in relationships	correlation coefficient	.536**	.360**	.162**	.566**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
lack of empathy	correlation coefficient	.360**	.319**	.134**	.413**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
envy of others	correlation coefficient	.403**	.289**	.119**	.431**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
arrogant behaviors and attitudes	correlation coefficient	.524**	.296**	.146**	.532**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder	correlation coefficient	.600**	.341**	.230**	.630**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.000	.000

\* Statistical function at significant level (0.05); \*\* Statistical function at significant level (0.01).

Table (8) shows positive and significantly statistical relationship among emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder in spouses. This is a logical result; since some couples with symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder seek emotional manipulation to maintain control and power in the relationship, and their need to recognize their abilities, attractiveness, and value from their life partner. Emotional manipulation can be a way for them to control their partner and maintain control over the relationship as well as their increased sensitivity to criticism, and their exaggerated response to revenge. They resort to using emotional manipulation tactics to deal with the emotional criticism and stress they may face. Such result is consistent with the result of

Abdella's study (2019), which revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder and emotional blackmail among a sample of couples in Egypt, and the study of Ponti et al. (Ponti et al., 2020), which showed that a higher level of narcissism indirectly leads to psychological abuse towards the life partner among couples in Italy.

## Conclusion

The study results revealed a moderate level of emotional manipulation and significant differences in the level of emotional manipulation based on gender and duration of marriage. Additionally, the findings highlighted

the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, which were also moderate among the spouses. They got significant differences in emotional manipulation levels based on gender and duration of marriage. The results further revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder; underscoring the need for counseling programs that contribute to reducing emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder among spouses.

## Recommendations

Considering the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

- Organizing lectures and seminars to educate couples about the negative effects of

emotional manipulation and the symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder in the marital relationship.

- Enhancing communication and understanding skills between couples, encouraging them to express their goals, needs, and feelings, and avoiding emotional manipulation as a means to achieve this.

- Conducting further studies on emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder in light of variables that were not addressed in the current study, such as the average monthly income and the number of children.

- Conducting semi-experimental studies aimed at designing counseling programs that contribute to alleviating emotional manipulation and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder in couples.

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