

Behind the Veil of Confidence: Gender Differences in Narcissism and Overconfidence in the Prediction of Exam Scores

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Overconfidence, the tendency to overestimate one's abilities, strongly influences decision making in a variety of contexts. In the present study, we examined overconfidence in the context of students casting predictions of their exam grades. In particular, we were interested in examining possible predictors of overconfidence, specifically gender and narcissism. Based on previous research, we hypothesized that men and those higher in narcissism would be more overconfident.

We collected data from 172 undergraduate students from seven different introductory courses. We examined narcissism through administering a pre-course questionnaire, which included a narcissism inventory, at the beginning of the semester. We collected exam predictions by asking students to record their predicted exam grade as the last question of each of their exams. The course instructor provided actual exam grades after each exam. Overconfidence was defined as the difference between predicted and actual scores, with predicted scores being greater.

Consistent with our hypotheses, independent-samples t-tests showed that men are both more overconfident and more narcissistic than their female counterparts. In addition, narcissism was a positive predictor of overconfidence. Additional analyses using a multiple regression revealed that gender accounted for 7.8% of the variability in overconfidence. After controlling for narcissism, gender accounted for 4.6% of overconfidence. A Sobel test using narcissism as the mediator between gender and overconfidence revealed that this was a significant reduction, and thus partially supporting our hypothesis that narcissism mediates the relationship between gender and overconfidence. Additional analyses and implications of these findings will be further discussed