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Narcissism and Political Left-Right Orientation in View of Basic Human Values: A Sample of Faculty of Management Students From Turkey

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ABSTRACT

A growing number of studies investigate the relationship between narcissism and political orientation. This study uses an undergraduate sample from Turkey to explore this relation for a relatively understudied population. Given findings that link basic human values to narcissism and to political orientation, we also investigate the possibility of a mediating role for human values in this relation. Leftwing orientation is weakly and negatively correlated with narcissism and with narcissism's self-sufficiency dimension. In multinomial logistic regression, we find that the odds of placing oneself in the extreme right position verses moderate left position increases as narcissism increases. The effect of narcissism on political orientation appears fragile, however, when this relation is controlled for self-esteem, sex, and human values. Among Schwartz's basic human values, tradition turns out to be a stronger predictor of political orientation than narcissism and mediation is supported only for the values tradition and universalism. We find a positive indirect effect of narcissism on leftwing orientation through the value tradition and a negative indirect effect on leftwing orientation through the value universalism.

KEYWORDS

narcissism, political orientation, basic human values, mediation, Turkey

Introduction

Personality as the relatively enduring composition of individual level traits or qualities that influence how we feel, think, act/behave is known to interact with political and economic structures. Findings associating particular personality traits with political orientation (Bardeen & Michel, 2019; Carney et al., 2008; Furnham & Fenton-O'Creevy, 2018; Gerber et al., 2010; Jonason, 2014) are accompanied more recently by a growing number of studies investigating the relationship between narcissism and political orientation (Cichocka et al., 2017; Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Lichter & Rothman, 1982; Marchlewska et al., 2019; Mayer et al., 2020; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021). In the meta-analysis by Sibley et al. (2012), openness to experience and conscientiousness were the only personality traits among the Big Five to be reliably associated with political orientation, albeit weakly. The cultural and historical-political contexts have also been reported to be significant factors in the relation of political orientation to personality traits (Fatke, 2017; Roets et al., 2014), and to narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2019).

Among maladaptive personality traits, narcissism has been deemed an epidemic especially in Western cultures (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In Western cultures where narcissism seems to be boosted by competitive individualism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), the rightwing is associated with the relatively anti-social entitlement and rivalry dimensions of narcissism rather than the prosocial exhibitionistic and admiration-seeking dimensions (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Mayer et al., 2020). Critics have argued that Western samples still dominate much of the research in behavioral sciences leading to skewed results that may not be informative of other populations (Henrich et al., 2010).

Turkey, geographically and culturally being in the middle between West and East, embodies an amalgam. In spite of being more collectivist than the West (Marcus et al., 2017), individualism and self-enhancement values have gained support among younger generations. Since the relation between narcissism and political orientation has been little studied for Turkey (Şen, 2019), this study investigates whether and how narcissism and its dimensions are associated with political orientation in relation to basic human values for the Faculty of Management students from a Turkish university who are commonly exposed to Western culture and media while at the same time having diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Construct of Political Orientation and the Turkish Context

Rather than being a stable construct, political orientation reflects fluid combinations of numerous micro and macro level factors. Since the French Revolution, ideas promoting freedom and equality have spread across the world. At the same time, history has witnessed the clash of communitarian and individualistic values regardless of the discourse adopted, whether traditionalistic or (post)modern. Disputes over the credit to be given to the sources of knowledge and power remain a source of conflict while competing views on the principles, means, and practices of the distribution of economic, administrative, and cultural resources continue to give rise to political

clashes. Priorities of individuals and communities as well as the political discourse and practices sometimes diverge, sometimes converge.

According to Jost et al. (2008), the meaning attributed to the political left-right or the liberal-conservative orientations mainly refers to "(a) advocating versus resisting social change and (b) accepting versus rejecting inequality" (p. 128), although depending on the issue considered, both liberals and conservatives might accept or reject social change (Proch et al., 2019). For Turkey, the distinguishing feature of the left is an emphasis on secularism, which in the Turkish context is associated with ensuring that civic and state affairs are not governed by religion. The center right, on the other hand, by embracing a mixture of conservative and liberal worldviews along with a paternalistic attitude towards those with low socio-economic status, has attracted the majority of the votes in multi-party politics (Özbudun, 2006). Notwithstanding the unique characteristics of Turkish politics and the impact of varying perspectives on international questions, including the blurring of left-right cleavages on the issue of globalism versus nationalism (Öniş, 2007, 2009), there appear to be similarities with Western contexts. Dirilen-Gumus et al. (2019), for example, found system justification and social dominance orientation to be associated with voting for rightwing political parties. In addition, the research by Çarkoğlu (2007) suggests that while the rightwing is associated with a preference for state authoritarianism and status quo, the leftwing is "characterized by progressive, tolerant, democratic attitudes with low levels of religiosity and critical evaluations of the economic policy performance of the government" (p. 268). The author claims it is education along with sectarian and ethnic cleavages that predicts political ideology rather than economic deprivation (p. 267).

Still, the political landscape of Turkey is quite volatile. Turkey ranks lower in perceived political stability and absence of politically-motivated violence scores than a wide range of countries including the UK, US; Canada, Austria, Netherlands, Singapore, Japan, Australia, Qatar, and Malta; it is in the lowest quartile among all countries for these scores except for a few years between 1996 and 2018 (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2019). A further complication is that it is quite difficult to associate particular parties in Turkish politics with fixed political positions across a wide range of issues including economic liberalism versus protectionism, pro-migrant versus anti-migrant policies, religious versus secular arrangements, and centralization versus dispersion of power, among others. Indeed, subject to varying degrees of change in their discourse, practices, and influence over time, a multiplicity of political parties has entered, exited, and re-entered the political stage, while between 1990 and 2011, as Esmer (2012) indicates, a shift from the center to the rightwing occurred (p. 53).

Irrespective of the varying meanings attributed to political concepts such as political ideology, rightwing, leftwing, liberalism, conservatism, fascism, communism, and anarchism, for decades, the relationship between personality and political orientation has been investigated mainly with reference to the authoritarian personality and maladaptive personality traits, with roots in psychoanalytic theory. The Fascism Scale, developed by Adorno and his colleagues (1950), provided the chief impetus and inspiration to this line of research. Studies investigating the link of politics with

individual narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2017; Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Lichter & Rothman, 1982; Marchlewska et al., 2019; Mayer et al., 2020; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021) and with collective narcissism (de Zavala et al., 2009; Marchlewska et al., 2018) can be considered as part of this tradition. Yet, the relationship between narcissism and political orientation has been little studied for Turkey (Şen, 2019).

Narcissism and Political Orientation

As for narcissism, the conceptualization of narcissistic personality disorder varies from one approach to another (e. g., alternative schools in psychodynamic approach, cognitive-behavioral approach), while it is defined with reference to a "pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy" along with at least five criteria listed in DSM-IV that have been kept fundamentally the same in DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2012).

Although the ideal self-image of those with high narcissism might even be one of being tolerant, flexible, and peaceful; low empathy along with high intolerance, rigidity, and aggression may also accompany this self-image. Intolerance, rigidity, and aggression remind one of authoritarianism, since "authoritarians are characterized by a propensity for cognitive rigidity, intolerance, and aggression" (McHoskey, 1996, p. 709). Owing to the studies implying a proximity between authoritarian personality and rightwing extremism, one can expect that the political orientation of those with an authoritarian personality and those with high narcissism might be similar. Indeed, echoing a positive relation between narcissism and rightwing politics, Zitek and Jordan (2016) found that the higher narcissism is the more likely one is to support income inequality and the hierarchy between groups, in organizations and business. However, they also found that the correlation between narcissism and support for hierarchy is positive if it is possible to rise in rank and negative if it is not possible to rise in rank. While it is possible that having central political positions might provide a greater opportunity to rise in rank, it might be also possible that those with higher narcissism might adopt any political position in line with their expectations of having more power, respect, admiration, and status in a particular segment of society, and develop a boosted self-image accordingly. This again implies a diversification of the paths across the political spectrum. It is also possible to move towards the extremes through challenging the established political, economic, and social order at the local, national or global level, for that might satisfy the grandiose feelings of certain narcissists, enabling them to feel more superior than the ruling elites and their supporters.

There are findings relating narcissism positively with conservatism (Jonason, 2014; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011); with rightwing nationalism (Mayer et al., 2020; Şen, 2019); and with social dominance orientation (Cichocka et al., 2017, controlling for self-esteem in Western samples). These may bear certain similarities with those studies associating extreme rightwing with authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950; Tetlock, 1983), with the caveat that neither rightwing and extreme rightwing nor narcissism and authoritarian personality are the same. Again with the caveat that, at least during the last few decades, the extreme leftwing has encompassed

not only those against multi-party democratic procedures but also those in support of participatory and radical forms of democracy, the research relating narcissism negatively with democracy (Marchlewska et al., 2019) seems also to have parallels with those studies stressing the psychological similarities of the leftwing and rightwing extremists (de Regt et al., 2011; Eysenck, 1954, 1975; Eysenck & Coulter, 1972; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Taylor, 1960). Lichter and Rothman (1982) found that "narcissism and phallic-assertive orientation each significantly increases the variance explained in radicalism" (p. 222) and Zeigler-Hill et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between leftwing authoritarianism and the extraverted, antagonistic and neurotic aspects of narcissism. Still, several studies (Cichocka et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2019) indicate that the results for the relation of narcissism to political orientation through Western samples are only in part replicated in post-communist Eastern Europe where the relation of narcissistic self-evaluation to social dominance orientation or democracy is reported to be weaker with Polish samples, which might be in part on account of diverse political histories.

In addition to the abovementioned disparities for the relation between narcissism and political orientation, diverse dimensions of narcissism are also reported to be associated with diverse political positions in the West (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Mayer et al., 2020). For a US sample, while entitlement is higher among those in conservative positions, exhibitionism is higher among those with liberal values. These seem to outweigh each other given that as a higher construct narcissism is equally distributed across the political spectrum (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018). For a German sample, narcissistic admiration is negatively and narcissistic rivalry is positively related to the support for radical right (Mayer et al., 2020). While the exhibitionism and admiration dimensions call to mind an aspiration for the recognition and validation of one's self by means of feeding a self-image through the gaze of others, the entitlement and rivalry dimensions evoke a more aggressive style of meeting one's needs at the expense of others. Therefore, the underlying factors that those with higher narcissism are drawn to diverse political positions might vary. In addition, given the findings that link basic human values to narcissism (Güngör et al., 2012; Kajonius et al., 2015; Rogoza et al., 2016) and to political orientation (Caprara et al., 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010), as well as those studies that suggest a mediation role of the worldview of individuals in the relation between personality and political orientation (Hodson et al., 2009; Van Hiel et al., 2007; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021), it is possible for the human values to mediate the effect of narcissism on political orientation.

A review by Duckitt and Sibley (2010), for example, reported that rightwing authoritarianism (RWA) is positively correlated with security, conformity, and tradition; and negatively correlated with stimulation and self-direction while a social dominance orientation is positively correlated with achievement, power, and hedonism; and negatively correlated with egalitarian values, specifically with universalism and benevolence (pp. 1866–1867). Caprara et al. (2017) compared a wide range of countries that included Turkey and found that basic values are good predictors of political ideology except for post-communist countries, while left-right (liberal-conservative) self-placement predicts voting except for Ukraine. In general, a preference for right/

conservative ideology is predicted to a great extent by security, conformity, and tradition and to a lesser extent by power and stimulation, while universalism and hedonism appear to predict a preference for left/liberal ideology. According to the authors, the general pattern highlights "that the critical trade-off underlying ideology is between values concerned with tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people (universalism) versus values concerned with preserving the social order and status quo (security)" (p. 402). Yet, for Turkey, only tradition and universalism revealed statistical significance (p. 400).

Since our sample is composed of those students with diverse cultural backgrounds who predominantly receive a pro-modernization education in Turkey where capitalism has been the dominant mode of production almost from the first few decades of the 20th century, we expect both similarities and differences with research using Western samples in terms of the relation of political orientation to narcissism, its diverse facets and the underlying values. Given the characteristics of our sample and given that politics in Turkey has been marked by those cleavages triggered by a pro-modernization project with three basic pillars—secularism, capitalism, and nation-building based mainly on language—the underlying values providing those with higher narcissism a convenient medium for grandiosity might be mainly on account of looking down on religion on the leftwing, and the support for ethnic and class inequalities on the rightwing. Since the nationalist and religious extremes together make the main body of the extreme rightwing, compared to especially moderate political positions, we expect the extreme rightwing to be more appealing for those with higher narcissism scores. At the same time, we thought, this would lead to a positive association of the rightwing with narcissistic superiority, entitlement, and authority. With these suppositions, our study examines how narcissism and its dimensions are related to political positions as measured by a left-right self-placement scale and the possibility of a mediating role for human values for the Faculty of Management students in a Turkish university.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 257 students (123 female; 134 male) enrolled in various undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Management at a Foundation University in Turkey, to which mostly the children of the upper middle-class families from Anatolia attend. The data was collected via an in-class questionnaire form administered in May 2014. The purpose of the study was clearly stated at the beginning and students were ensured of anonymity. Participation was on a voluntary basis. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 32 years ($M = 22.5$; $SD = 2.31$).

Measures

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16). NPI-16 is the 16-item short version (Ames et al., 2006) of the 40-item forced-choice NPI-40 developed by Raskin and Hall (1979, as cited in Raskin & Terry, 1988). The short version includes items that measure the authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, and

entitlement dimensions of narcissism, while no items are included for measuring the vanity dimension. Scores for the Turkish version of NPI-16 used in this study (Güngör & Selçuk, 2015) ranged from 0 to 15 (M = 7.1; SD = 3.44; α = .74). Convergent and discriminant validities were tested with Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Tukuş, 2010, p. 53) and the General Belief in a Just World Scale (Yalçın, 2006, p. 109) respectively, in parallel with the English version (Ames et al., 2006). As expected, NPI-16 scores were found to be positively correlated with Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale scores (r = .31, n = 234, p < .01) and uncorrelated with the General Belief in a Just World Scale (α = .77) scores (r = –.10, n = 233, p = .13).

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). We use the Turkish adaptation of RSES (Tukuş, 2010, p. 53) to measure self-esteem. The scale consists of five positively and five negatively worded items, coded on a 4-point scale (3 = strongly agree; 0 = strongly disagree). The negatively worded items are reverse coded, and the total score is found by adding up the score for each item. A higher total score indicates a higher level of self-esteem. Scores range from 8 to 30 (M = 22.45; SD = 4.69; α = .84).

Nine-Point Left-Right Self-Placement Scale for Political Orientation. The scale relies on the self-report of participants' perceptions of where they see themselves on the left-right political spectrum. Scores range from 1 to 9 where 9 represents extreme left; 1 represents extreme right; and 5 represents center. We treated political orientation as a continuous variable in linear regression and as a categorical variable in multinomial logistic regression. When used as a categorical variable, the categories are *right4stars* (n = 18), *right3stars* (n = 13), *right2stars* (n = 21), *right1star* (n = 15), *center* (n = 73), *left1star* (n = 23), *left2stars* (n = 25), *left3stars* (n = 20), and *left4stars* (n = 19). As Van Hiel (2012) argues, "the self-placement scale is not a measure of ideology", but a measure of an individual's "general political orientation. Some people may attach high importance to social-cultural issues when placing themselves on the left-right scale, whereas others might consider economic-hierarchical issues" (p. 181). Political self-placement is further complicated by the fact that perceptions of particular attitudes as "extreme" or "moderate" are subject to change over time and across contexts (pp. 166–167). Moreover, even where two individuals vote for the same political party, share similar attitudes and have a similar level of intensity of those attitudes, they may still perceive and report a different political position with respect to each other. Lastly, the Turkish context should be interpreted with caution because, as Yılmaz et al. (2016) suggest, "the one-item political orientation scale commonly used in Western contexts has the power to predict moral foundations even though the Turkish ideological landscape appears more complex and social democracy in Turkey, unlike Europe, emphasizes binding foundations" (p. 560).

Schwartz's Basic Human Values Scale (BHVS). The BHVS comprises 21 items covering 10 basic values. The Turkish Version of the BHVS was obtained from the European Social Survey (2004). We reverse coded the items so that 1 corresponds to "not like me at all" and 6 to "very much like me". In our analyses, we used centered scores for each value as suggested by Schwartz (n.d.) and for all of the BHVS items. The item labels for the facets of 10 basic values are revised from

van Herk et al. (2018): benevolence (helping others, loyalty); universalism (equality, understanding others, care for nature); self-direction (independence, creativeness); stimulation (looking for new things, excitement); hedonism (having a good time, having fun); achievement (being admired, being successful); power (being rich, getting respect); security (safety, strong government); conformity (following rules, behaving properly); and tradition (familial-religious customs, modesty). Schwartz (2001) subsumed the 10 basic values under two orthogonal dimensions: self-enhancement (power, achievement, partially hedonism) versus self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence) dimension; and openness to change (self-direction, stimulation partially hedonism) versus conservatism (security, conformity, tradition) dimension. Self-enhancement and openness to change "emphasize independent action, thought and feeling and readiness for new experience" while self-transcendence and conservatism "emphasize self-restriction, order and resistance to change" (p. 269).

Striving for Justice Measures. We included two items to measure a person's desire to struggle in the face of perceived injustice. One of the items measures the eagerness to seek justice for oneself: "I do not want to struggle against the injustices against me". The other measures the eagerness to seek justice for others: "I do not want to struggle against injustices against the other". We labelled these *justice for self* and *justice for others*. 6 indicates the strongest and 1 indicates the weakest desire to strive for justice.

Statistical Procedures

Statistical analyses were mainly carried out with the IBM SPSS and Stata software packages. To overcome the shortcomings arising from a small sample size at least partially, the mediation analyses were carried out using JASP software with 1000 replications (Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals). After evaluating the descriptive statistics and sex differences (Table 1), we present zero-order correlations for our main variables (Table 2) and for the relation between political orientation and the six dimensions of narcissism (Table 3). Using the BHVS items, we also test the association of each human value facet with political orientation and narcissism. Multinomial and binary logistic regressions covering several combinations were carried out to check the relationship between narcissism and political orientation for various positions. For these regressions, the reference categories include individual positions (*right4stars, right3stars, right2stars, right1star, center, left1star, left2stars, left3stars, left4stars*) or combined positions: rightwing (merging right 1-2-3-4 stars); leftwing (merging left 1-2-3-4 stars); left-right extremes (merging *right4stars* and *left4stars*); moderate right (merging right 1-2-3 stars); moderate left (merging left 1-2-3 stars); and moderates (merging all categories except *right4stars* and *left4stars*). In addition, hierarchical regression analysis was used to control for the overlaps among the predictors (Table 4). In mediation analysis, we treat narcissism as the predictor and political orientation as the outcome variable, while human values and their facets are tested for possible mediation (Table 5).

Results

Table 1 indicates that females are more leftwing oriented than males in our sample. On the other hand, males and females do not differ significantly in terms of narcissism [similar to the findings of Jonason et al. (2019) for Turkey; cf. Torgersen (2012) reporting higher scores for males] and in terms of human values except for two. Males have higher scores for the value tradition, while females have higher scores for the value security (cf. Dirilen-Gumus & Buyuksahin-Sunal, 2012). Females also score higher in terms of striving for justice for others.

Tables 2 and 3 suggest that leftwing orientation is negatively and weakly correlated with narcissism and its self-sufficiency dimension. As might be expected, leftwing orientation correlates positively with universalism and negatively with tradition. Narcissism has a positive association with the values of self-direction, power, achievement, stimulation, and hedonism; and has a negative association with the values of universalism, security, conformity, tradition, and benevolence. Being positively correlated with narcissism, self-esteem is also associated positively with self-direction, achievement, stimulation, hedonism and negatively with security and tradition. Universalism is positively associated with striving for justice for both self and others. Striving for justice for others is negatively correlated with power and positively correlated with leftwing orientation and striving for justice for self. Yet, no association appeared between striving for justice and narcissism.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Sex Differences for Our Main Variables

	Mean (*SD*)			*t*	*g*
	Overall	**Male**	**Female**		
Political orientation	5.24 (2.205)	4.87 (2.183)	5.62 (2.171)	2.688**	0.344
Narcissism	7.10 (3.444)	7.10 (3.220)	7.10 (3.683)	−0.004	−0.001
Self-Esteem	22.45 (4.692)	22.74 (4.383)	22.14 (5.001)	−1.018	−0.128
Self-Direction	0.31 (0.692)	0.34 (0.643)	0.28 (0.743)	−0.706	−0.089
Power	−0.49 (0.932)	−0.43 (0.949)	−0.55 (0.912)	−1.069	−0.134
Universalism	0.20 (0.670)	0.15 (0.646)	0.25 (0.694)	1.179	0.148
Achievement	−0.16 (0.909)	−0.19 (0.902)	−0.13 (0.919)	0.557	0.070
Security	0.17 (0.755)	0.05 (0.836)	0.30 (0.631)	2.735**	0.338
Stimulation	−0.21 (0.926)	−0.27 (0.931)	−0.14 (0.919)	1.153	0.144
Conformity	−0.45 (1.005)	−0.35 (0.902)	−0.56 (1.102)	−1.608	−0.204
Tradition	−0.13 (0.914)	−0.02 (0.888)	−0.26 (0.929)	−2.118*	−0.266
Hedonism	0.26 (0.678)	0.27 (0.709)	0.25 (0.646)	−.0173	−0.022
Benevolence	0.38 (0.672)	0.36 (0.729)	0.41 (0.605)	0.566	0.071
Justice for self	5.47 (1.146)	5.48 (1.037)	5.46 (1.256)	−0.153	−0.019
Justice for others	5.09 (1.258)	4.94 (1.347)	5.26 (1.137)	2.061*	0.255

*Note. g is Hedges' g for effect size. * p < .05. ** p < .01.*
Source: Authors.

Table 2

Zero-Order Correlations for Our Main Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Political orientation	–														
2. Narcissism	−.133*	–													
3. Self-Esteem	−.064	.305**	–												
4. Self-Direction	.044	.188**	.183**	–											
5. Power	−.076	.349**	−.119	−.138*	–										
6. Universalism	.200**	−.383**	−.072	−.043	−.419**	–									
7. Achievement	−.017	.425**	.178**	−.027	.223**	−.329**	–								
8. Security	−.023	−.179**	−.143*	−.262**	−.052	−.039	−.029	–							
9. Stimulation	.082	.204**	.166**	.085	.044	−.175**	.030	−.330**	–						
10. Conformity	−.059	−.181**	−.094	−.286**	−.179**	−.019	−.264**	−.040	−.323**	–					
11. Tradition	−.248**	−.292**	−.200**	−.215**	−.246**	−.044	−.307**	.000	−.390**	.238**	–				
12. Hedonism	.112	.158*	.236**	.208**	−.037	−.146*	−.051	−.206**	.215**	−.298**	−.246**	–			
13. Benevolence	.010	−.253**	−.048	−.050	−.283**	.096	−.286**	.039	−.137*	−.100	.112	−.168**	–		
14. Justice for self	.070	.021	.061	−.040	−.108	.169**	−.042	−.010	.061	.014	−.023	−.017	−.051	–	
15. Justice for others	.136*	.026	.071	−.010	−.161*	.205**	.006	−.081	−.078	.053	.014	−.033	.052	.373**	–

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$
Source: Authors.

Table 3

Correlations Between Political Orientation and the Dimensions of Narcissism

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Political orientation	–						
2. Authority	–.088	–					
3. Self-Sufficiency	–.134*	.300**	–				
4. Superiority	–.076	.268**	.397**	–			
5. Exhibitionism	–.100	.343**	.303**	.447**	–		
6. Exploitativeness	–.096	.344**	.333**	.360**	.310**	–	
7. Entitlement	.080	.061	.050	.065	.083	.174**	–

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

Source: Authors.

Logistic regression analyses suggest that only extreme right (*right4stars*) versus moderate left ($B = -.192$, $SE = .080$, $p = .016$, Odds Ratio = .825), versus *left2stars* ($B = -.217$, $SE = .094$, $p = .021$, Odds Ratio = .805), and versus *left3stars* ($B = -.228$, $SE = .099$, $p = .021$, Odds Ratio = .796) showed statistical significance. For a unit increase in the narcissism score, the odds of locating oneself in *left2stars, left3stars* or the merged moderate left positions is approximately 20% lower or .8 times the odds of locating oneself in the extreme right position.

As for the associations with BHVS items, there is a positive correlation between narcissism and "creativeness" facet of self-direction ($r = .19$, $p < .01$); "excitement" facet of stimulation ($r = .23$, $p < .01$); "having fun" facet of hedonism ($r = .16$, $p < .05$); "being admired"($r = .43$, $p < .01$) and "being successful" facets of achievement ($r = .22$, $p < .01$); and "being rich" ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) and "getting respect" facets of power ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). There is a negative correlation between narcissism and the "helping others" ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$) and "loyalty" facets of benevolence ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$); the "equality" ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$), "understanding others" ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$), and "care for nature" facets of universalism ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$); the "safety" facet of security ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$); the "behaving properly" facet of conformity ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$); and the "modesty" facet of tradition ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$). Leftwing orientation is positively correlated with the "equality" facet of universalism ($r = .30$, $p < .01$); the "independence" facet of self-direction ($r = .13$, $p < .05$); the "looking for new things" facet of stimulation ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) and the "having fun" facet of hedonism ($r = .15$, $p < .05$), while it is negatively correlated with the "familial-religious customs" facet of tradition ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$).

In the hierarchical regression (Table 4), the predictor variables are narcissism alone in Model 1; plus self-esteem in Model 2; plus sex in Model 3; plus the values universalism and tradition in Model 4; plus striving for justice for others in Model 5. There is a significant increase in the predictive power from Model 2 to Model 3 when sex is accounted for; and from Model 3 to Model 4 when the values universalism and tradition are added. The significant predictors are narcissism in Models 1, 4, and 5; the value tradition in Models 4 and 5; and sex alone in Model 3. These results point to the fragility of the relation of narcissism to political orientation.

Table 4

Ordinary Least Squares Hierarchical Regression Predicting Political Orientation

Predictors	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R^2	R^2_{adj}	R^2 change	F change	p
	B	SE	β	p					
1.					.021	.016	.021	4.623	.033*
Narcissism	−.092	.043	−.144	.033*					
2.					.021	.012	.001	.148	.701
Narcissism	−.087	.045	−.136	.054					
Self-Esteem	−.013	.033	−.027	.701					
3.					.051	.038	.030	6.873	.009**
Narcissism	−.085	.044	−.133	.057					
Self-Esteem	−.009	.032	−.020	.778					
Male	−.767	.292	−.174	.009**					
4.					.156	.137	.105	13.380	.000**
Narcissism	−.106	.048	−.166	.029*					
Self-Esteem	−.034	.031	−.072	.277					
Male	−.545	.281	−.123	.054					
Universalism	.361	.228	.112	.115					
Tradition	−.729	.160	−.309	.000**					
5.					.164	.140	.007	1.891	.171
Narcissism	−.114	.049	−.178	.020*					
Self-Esteem	−.037	.031	−.079	.238					
Male	−.497	.283	−.113	.080					
Universalism	.284	.234	.088	.227					
Tradition	−.746	.160	−.316	.000**					
Justice for others	.153	.111	.090	.171					

*Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$*
Source: Authors.

The mediation analyses found support for the possible mediation of only two values. As Table 5 suggests, when the analysis was done for each human value and their facets individually, we found that the indirect effect of narcissism on leftwing orientation is negative through the value universalism; negative through the equality facet of the value universalism; and positive through the value tradition. However, when universalism and tradition are placed simultaneously as mediators in the model, the indirect effect of narcissism occurs not through the value universalism, but through the value tradition, with partial mediation: the direct effect suggests that narcissism predicts leftwing orientation negatively; the indirect effect suggests that narcissism predicts leftwing orientation positively through attributing less value to tradition (Figure 1).
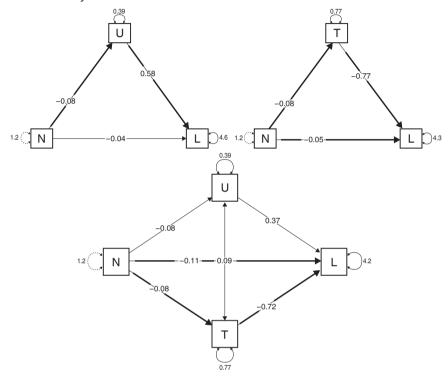
Table 5

Mediation Analyses for Universalism, Tradition, and Their Facets
(Bootstrap analyses with 1000 replications; non-standardized estimates)

Direct effect	Lower BC 95% CI	Upper BC 95% CI	predictor → mediator	mediator → outcome	Mediator variables	Indirect effect	Lower BC 95% CI	Upper BC 95% CI
Narcissism → Modesty facet of tradition (MOD-TR) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.085	−.171	−.011	+	0	MOD-TR	5.507e-4	−.033	.020
Narcissism → Familial-religious customs facet of tradition (CUS-TR) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.085	−.159	.017	+	0	CUS-TR	1.888e-4	−.015	.020
Narcissism → Equality facet of universalism (EQU-UN) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.048	−.132	.037	−	+	EQU-UN	**−.034**	−.073	−.004
Narcissism → Understanding others facet of universalism (UND-UN) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.086	−.183	2.28e-4	+	0	UND-UN	7.69e-4	−.018	.008
Narcissism → Care for nature facet of universalism facet of universalism (CAR-UN) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.086	−.175	−.003	+	0	CAR-UN	6.78e-4	−.021	.015
Narcissism → Tradition (TR) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.147	−.235	−.065	−	−	TR	**.061**	.029	.106
Narcissism → Universalism (UN) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.039	−.130	.059	−	+	UN	**−.043**	−.087	−.008
Narcissism → Tradition (TR); Universalism (UN) → political orientation (leftwing)								
−.114	−.209	−.021						
			−	−	TR	**.057**	.026	.099
			−	+	UN	−.028	−.067	.006

Note: BC denotes bias-corrected.
Source: Authors.

Figure 1

Mediation Analyses for Universalism and Tradition

Note. U = universalism; T = tradition; N = narcissism; L = leftwing.
Source: Authors.

Discussion and Conclusion

While the relation of personality to politics has a longer history than the emergence of capitalism and modern state forms, studies investigating this relationship in terms of maladaptive personality structures gained momentum with the rise of fascism in Western Europe. The support given to mono-party politics by Communist political parties led some authors to suspect the presence of shared personality attributes among those backing extreme rightwing and extreme leftwing politics. Subsequent investigations attempted to distinguish leftwing and rightwing politics in terms of personality characteristics. The exploration of the relation of narcissism to political orientation may be considered a further offshoot of this line of enquiry. In Western cultures where narcissism seems to be boosted by competitive individualism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), the rightwing is associated with the relatively anti-social entitlement and rivalry dimensions of narcissism rather than the prosocial exhibitionistic and admiration-seeking dimensions (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Mayer et al., 2020). Our study explored the narcissism-political orientation link for a non-Western sample of

undergraduate management students from a private foundation university in Turkey who, being trained for the administrative ranks of a capitalist society, are nevertheless highly exposed to Western culture.

Although our study could not support an association between narcissism and the combined political extremes category vis-à-vis moderate positions (cf. Eysenck, 1954, 1975; Eysenck & Coulter, 1972), there are some similarities with mainstream arguments highlighting the uniqueness of the extreme rightwing in its relation to narcissism. Indeed, with the caveat that our multinomial logistic regression results have limited power due to the relatively small number of participants in each category when the political scale is divided into nine categories, the finding that narcissism is higher for those placing themselves in extreme right positions compared to moderate left positions parallels the findings of research that suggest an association between rightwing extremism and the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950; Tetlock, 1983).

Unlike Western samples associating the relatively anti-social dimensions of narcissism with rightwing positions, only the self-sufficiency dimension of narcissism showed a statistically significant positive association with political orientation (cf. Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Mayer et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021). Thus in our sample, those on the rightwing are slightly more likely to view themselves to be self-sufficient, where self-sufficiency is characterized by the belief that they will be a great person, that they always know what they are doing, and that they are more capable than others. The close relevance of self-sufficiency dimension with self-esteem might be the main factor for the disappearance of the statistical significance of narcissism as a higher construct when controlled for self-esteem in predicting political orientation. Indeed, for our sample, the hierarchical regression results indicate that the positive relation of narcissism with rightwing orientation appears to be quite weak and fragile (cf. Cichocka et al., 2017; Jonason, 2014; Mayer et al., 2020; Şen, 2019; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011) and the value tradition is a stronger predictor of political orientation than narcissism.

In terms of the relation between human values and political orientation, our results are compatible with Caprara et al. (2017) in that we found statistical significance only for universalism and tradition as predictors of political orientation in Turkey, a result that is not congruent with the findings from Western samples. In addition, we found the "looking for new things" facet of stimulation to be positively correlated with a leftwing orientation, similar to studies relating the personality trait openness with liberal/leftwing orientation (Bardeen & Michel, 2019; Carney et al., 2008; Furnham & Fenton-O'Creevy, 2018; Gerber et al., 2010; Jonason, 2014). However, unlike studies reporting a positive relation between the rightwing and a need for security (as summarized in Cichocka & Dhont, 2018), there was no statistically significant association between a rightwing orientation and security, neither for its strong government nor for its safety facets. Individual mediation analyses for the human values and their facets indicate that as narcissism increases, one might be oriented towards both rightwing and leftwing through lower universalism (specifically lower equality) and through lower tradition values respectively.

In brief, the results for our sample displayed similarity with previous studies at least in part. The similarities are attributable to the rightwing and specifically extreme rightwing orientations, being characterized by higher narcissism. The difference is mainly on account of the associated dimension of narcissism: for our sample, it is not the relatively anti-social aspects, but instead the self-sufficiency dimension that seems to be relevant. Not finding an association unique to narcissism's highly anti-social facets might be on account of the unique characteristics of the rightwing in Turkey, still having relatively collectivist values backed by the Turkish traditions and moderate Islamic culture of Anatolia, when compared to the individualistic rivalry that characterizes especially the rightwing of Protestant samples.

Our sample mainly consists of those coming from upper middle-class families. This means that most participants would have an opportunity to rise in rank through their family network. Since Napier and Jost (2008) demonstrated that the reasons for why those with lower socio-economic status are attracted to rightwing ideology might be different than for others, investigating the influence of socio-economic status would be informative in the future. While we acknowledge that the results that we present has limited generalizability and call for caution in comparing the results with data from other socio-political contexts, we hope it has some explanatory power for a segment of Turkish culture embodying both traditional and pro-modernization values.

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