



A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF REJECTION SENSITIVITY AS PREDICTOR OF DEPRESSION IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a disorder of considerable homotypic continuity. Indeed, a past history of depression consistently has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of its future recurrence (Keenan, Feng, Hipwell, & Klostermann, 2009;). Researches have been carried out in regard to the domain of depression as potent etiological factor which represent three selected variables – social anxiety, loneliness and rejection sensitivity mediated by low sociability temperament. Rich social interactions not only mediate depression but are potent intervention to reduce it.

However, the educational environment among the youth or college students offer assured opportunities of social interaction, yet the individual markers in terms of social anxiety, loneliness and rejection sensitivity is surely correlated with depression. Once the dynamics sets in at young age it may continue to be operative at adult stage. Therefore, the present problem focused on young population in educational set up. An attempt was made to vary the educational context in terms of level of education, i.e., in colleges owing regulated or autonomous opportunities in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Review of literature from various national and international sources clearly predicted that no such study has been conducted in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

This study examined whether rejection sensitivity, or the fear of interpersonal rejection, was related to depression among college students. The regression model that resulted from the study indicated that level of rejection sensitivity accounted for approximately 11% of variance in depression among students in the research. Implications for college counseling practice and research are provided.

Key Word: Depression, College students, ANOVA, Rejection Sensitivity, Pearson's r.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical construct *rejection sensitivity* refers to fearful expectations of, bias toward perceiving, and intense reactions to potential rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996); that is, the term refers to a fear of being rejected by others. The rejection construct is typically used to describe situations in which one individual perceives that a second person does not value, or see as important, the relationship shared by the two people and experiences negative thoughts and feelings as a result (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006).

Rejection worries seem to vary both in frequency and intensity among individuals. For example, Downey and Feldman (1996) reported wide variations in individual propensities to become anxious about being rejected, and they suggested that individuals may experience different levels of hypervigilance for rejection. For individuals with higher rejection sensitivity levels, these fearful expectations about the loss of close relationships may have detrimental effects on interpersonal functioning and, paradoxically, can be connected to behaviors that may result in actual rejection by important people in their lives (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998). Interpersonal interactions among individuals who are particularly sensitive to rejection by others may be colored by feelings of insecurity, uneasiness, misinterpretations of social cues, and adaptation of behaviors that may be particularly likely to elicit rejection (Luterek, Harb, Heimberg, & Marx, 2004). Rejection fears can also lead to additional psychological or emotional concerns (Stafford, 2007). Moreover, there may be wide differences in how individuals react to the same rejection events, such as learning about a romantic partner's sexual affair, not being consulted about an important project at work by one's boss, not being included by other students in a classroom study group, or having one's birthday forgotten by a close friend.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND COLLEGE STUDENT DEPRESSION

The positive relationship between a sense of belonging with others and psychological well-being has been well established (for a comprehensive review, see Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Relatedness to others has been found to be one key element in adaptive individual functioning (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995). A lack of social connectedness has been associated with counseling clients who seek assistance to address issues of loneliness, isolation, and alienation (Lee & Robbins, 1998), and some individuals experiencing a higher sensitivity to rejection than the norm report intense symptoms of emotional distress (Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997).

Previous research has suggested that rejection sensitivity might play a role in college student depression. For example, in examining rejection sensitivity, the presence of depression symptoms,

attachment style, academic performance, and dating patterns among undergraduate women, Ayduk, Downey, and Kim (2001) reported significant relationships between high levels of rejection sensitivity and increased presence of depression symptomatology. Similarly, Luterek et al. (2004) examined whether rejection sensitivity had an influence on the presence of depression among undergraduate women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse prior to arriving on campus. It is interesting that rejection sensitivity predicted the presence of depression among these students independent of their experience of childhood sexual abuse. When examined independently from rejection sensitivity, childhood sexual abuse, on its own, did not predict symptoms of depression among these students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

A limitation of the current literature examining rejection sensitivity and depression among college students is that the recent studies, such as those of Ayduk et al. (2001) and Luterek et al. (2004), focused exclusively on female students. In fact, one of the few studies of rejection sensitivity among college men focused on anxious expectations of rejection and dating violence, rather than on depression (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). Understanding how rejection sensitivity affects depression in ways that are either similar or different for men and women may be especially important because some research indicates that women's adjustment might tend to rely more closely on interpersonal functioning (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006), whereas men's adjustment might tend to rely more heavily on individual accomplishments (Downey et al., 1998). If so, then a study focusing on the construct of sensitivity to interpersonal rejection may have especially significant implications for female students, indicating that gender may interact with rejection sensitivity in a way that could help in understanding the experience of depression among this population. This might be valuable, too, because in general, girls and women report symptoms of depression at greater rates than do boys and men (Office of Applied Studies, 2005; Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). To more confidently understand these factors, however, requires additional study that would include both college women and men and would examine rejection sensitivity and depression among a wider range of college students, rather than more narrowly among those with childhood sexual abuse, dating difficulties, and so forth.

Correspondingly, the current study adds to previous findings in extant literature that has considered rejection sensitivity and depression by including college men in the sample and considering the collective relationships between rejection sensitivity and depression for both sexes. The current study builds on previous research to allow for more direct comparison of the differences and similarities between the sexes regarding rejection sensitivity and depression. More specifically,

this study considers whether rejection sensitivity predicts depression among college students in general and whether there are differing effects for men and women.

Method

The total sample for the present study will **comprise 200 college** students of Jaipur , Rajasthan.

Criteria for inclusion-

- Undergraduate & Post Graduate students in regular courses.
- Participants in the age bracket of 19-25 years.
- Subjects should be able to understand English.

Criteria for exclusion-

- Students suffering from any physical disability or chronic physical ailment.
- Students suffering from any psychiatric illness.
- Students having a history of alcohol and drug abuse.
- Married students.

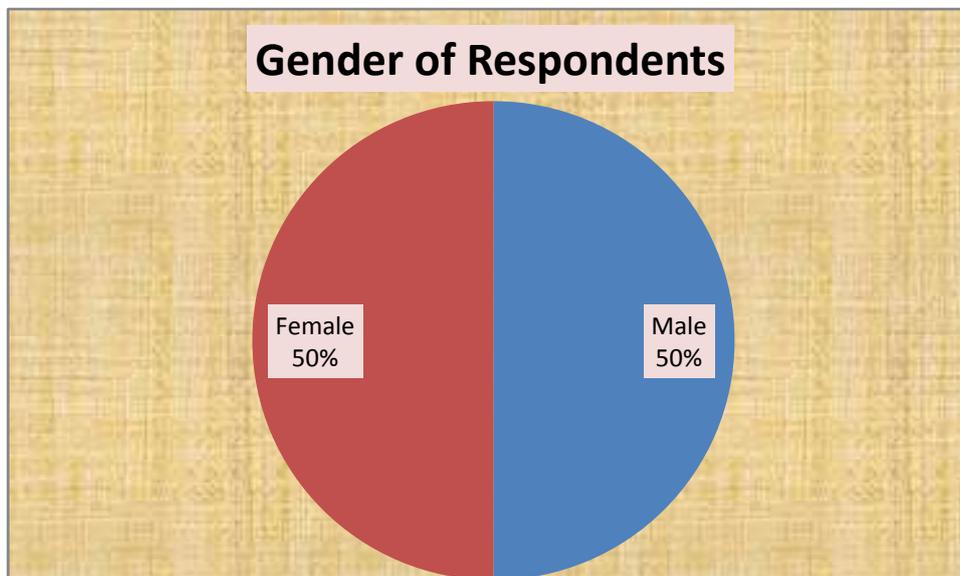
In the present study, non- probability sample of which purposive sampling technique will be used to select the sample.

The following measurement devices were administered in the small groups of college students of Jaipur.

- The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire(Downey & Feldmen, 1999)*

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

CHART 1 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS



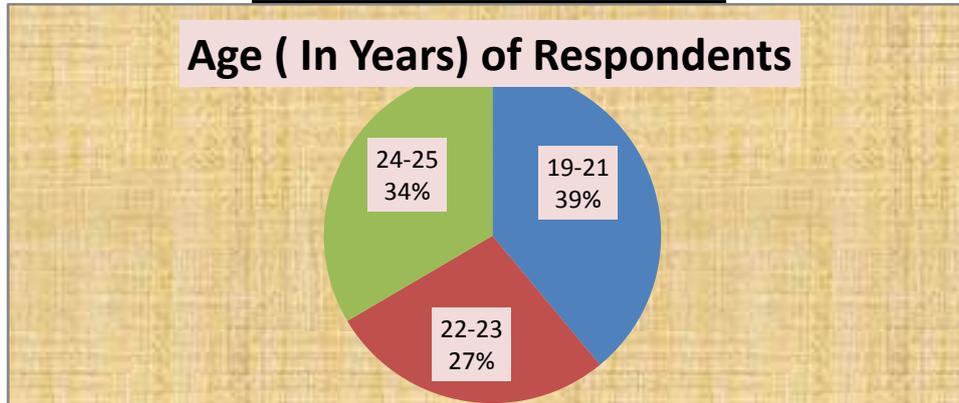
Interpretation:

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From the above table the demographic details of 200 respondents had been evaluated. In the first parameter the gender of respondents was analyzed where a equal proportion of male and female students i.e 50.00% were male whereas the remaining 50% respondents were females.

CHART 2 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

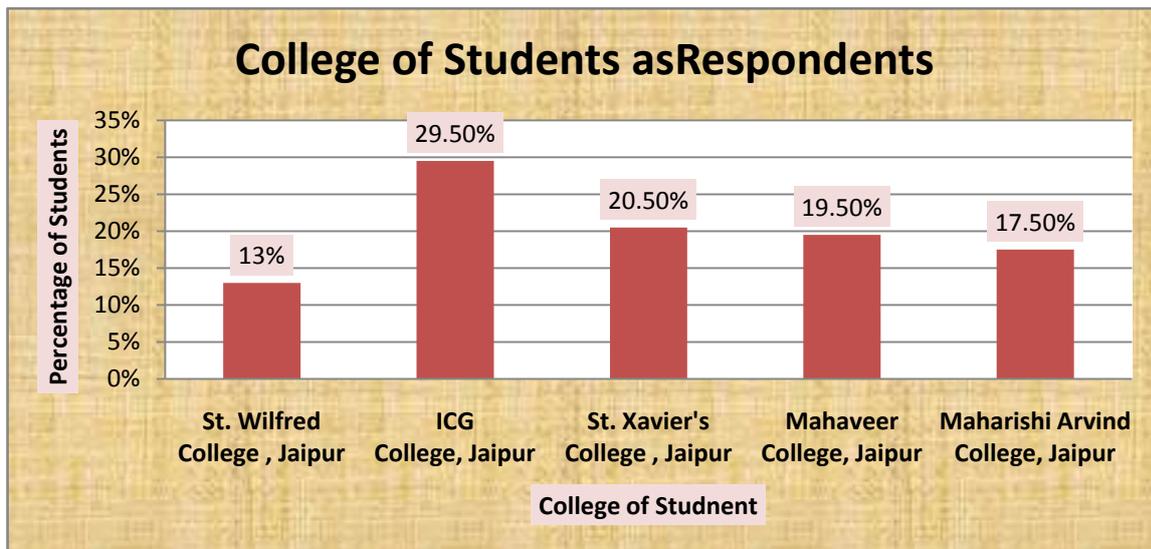


Interpretation:

In this parameter the age group of college students as respondents were evaluated. The maximum respondents i.e. 39% were between the age group of 19 to 21 year. The minimum respondents i.e. 27.5% of college student were between the age group of 22 to 23 year. Remaining 33.5% were between age group of 24 to 25 years. It can be analyzed from the table that all the age group of college students have actively participated in the research.

Statement 3: College of Respondents

CHART 3 COLLEGE OF RESPONDENTS



Interpretation:

In the above parameter the college of respondents was evaluated. The maximum respondents i.e. 29.5% of college student of Jaipur were from ICG the IIS university college. 20.5% were from St. Xavier's College, Jaipur. Whereas minimum 3% were from St. Wilfred College, Jaipur.

PEARSON'S 'r' BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND VARIABLES UNDER STUDY INTERCORRELATION

The inter correlation between Depression scores and scores of all the variables under study were found using Pearson's 'r' method for all the group separately (male, female and total group of college students), some correlation were found to be highly significant whereas the other were found to be insignificant. The obtained results are presented in tables below. The description of results is as under:-

TABLE 1 PEARSON'S 'r' BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND REJECTION SENSITIVITY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

REJECTION SENSITIVITY FACTORS	Pearson's 'r'
Male_Rejection Sensitivity	0.019**
Female_Rejection Sensitivity	0.083*
Total group - Rejection Sensitivity	0.003**

*Significant at 0.05 level

(N=200)

**Significant at 0.01 level

The above table gives an account of result showing correlation of depression of college students with Rejection Sensitivity. Correlation of depression with male rejection sensitivity and female rejection sensitivity was 0.019 and 0.083, which was found to be significant at 0.05 level. Similarly, correlation between depression and rejection sensitivity of total group (all college students) was found to be 0.003 which is significant at 0.01 levels only.

Thus hypothesis H₁: There will be significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression is accepted and proved.

DISCUSSION

Evidence from prior research and theory has indicated that rejection sensitivity would be related to depression, especially for women (Ayduk et al., 2001). If one bears in mind that the research results were modest, the current study's findings indicate that college students who expect, readily perceive, or have intense reactions in response to rejection may be more vulnerable to experiencing symptoms of depression. Furthermore, contrary to previous research findings and theory, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression was not significantly related to being male or female; thus, gender did not contribute to the ability of rejection sensitivity to predict depression. These

findings suggest several directions for future research and have several implications for college counseling practice.

CONCLUSION

This study joins previous research suggesting a potential connection between rejection sensitivity and the presence of symptoms of depression in college women and men. More research is needed to help confirm, expand, or revise the present findings about the role of rejection sensitivity in the etiology, course, and treatment of depression among some college students.

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