

Rejection Sensitivity and Personal Responsibility Among Adults and Young Adults

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Over several decades, research in psychology has focused on the various ways people respond to rejection and take personal responsibility for their actions. This work contributes to current understanding by studying these psychological constructs in a sample of adults and young people living in South India, revealing potential cultural and age-related variances in these occurrences. The study intends to analyze the relationship between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among adults and young adults of age range 18 – 30. The sample size of N=176 was collected from young adults and adults of the specific age group who reside in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The psychometric tools used for the study were Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire and Personal Responsibility Scale. The data was analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and Mann Whitney U test. The findings depicts that there is significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility in addition to a significant level of influence of the variables. Thus, rejecting the Null Hypothesis. Further, it showed that there isn't any significant gender difference or age difference (18 – 30) in rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility. Thus, accepting the Null Hypotheses.

Keywords: rejection sensitivity, personal responsibility, young adults, adults

Horney coined the term “rejection sensitive” to describe people who have a strong reaction to rejection. Downey and Feldman introduced the notion of rejection sensitivity (RS) in 1996. They defined it as a cognitive-affective processing tendency that drives people to: anxiously anticipate rejection, easily perceive rejection, and intensely respond to rejection. Rejection sensitivity is the ability to anticipate rejection with anxiety, comprehend it easily, and respond emotionally.

Responsibility is a broad construct characterised in various ways (e.g., moral, social, or personal responsibility; Sheldon et al., 2018) and is conceptualised as “feeling accountable for one’s decisions and actions, reliable and dependable to others, and empowered to act on issues within one’s control.” Personal responsibility implies that

an individual is accountable to oneself as well as the needs or wellbeing of others (Ruyter, 2002), and this concept emphasises self-accountability, which represents an individual’s behaviours and decisions that might affect oneself and others (Mergler & Shield, 2016).

Need and significance

The study aims to explore the impact of generational change on personal responsibility and rejection sensitivity, a crucial aspect of personal agency and accountability. It identifies a research gap in understanding the relationship between these concepts, which has been linked to interpersonal problems and mental health issues. The shift from young adulthood to adulthood is a significant stage of development, characterized by changes in

relationships, responsibilities, and identity development. Understanding the interaction between personal accountability and rejection sensitivity during this transitional stage could provide insights into variables affecting adaptive functioning and overall wellbeing. Developing a comprehensive understanding of these concepts across age groups can help create targeted therapies to support adaptable coping mechanisms and improve interpersonal interactions. The study aims to fill a significant knowledge gap regarding individual differences in accepting responsibility for actions and coping with rejection.

Even after controlling for the teens' pre-existing level of social skill, rejection sensitivity was linked to a proportional increase in despair and anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, it was discovered that internalising symptoms and rejection sensitivity were linked. The findings highlight the importance of rejection sensitivity in understanding late adolescents' social and emotional development (Marston et al., 2010). Similarly, the findings revealed that rejection sensitivity has a negative impact on self-esteem and social self-efficacy, while favourably increasing social avoidance and discomfort. The findings emphasise the significance of recognising and avoiding Rejection Sensitivity in improving social wellbeing and reducing loneliness among young adults (Watson, & Nesdale, 2012).

Rejection Sensitivity is substantially connected with aggressiveness and victimisation (Gao, 2021). The study's findings also revealed that through attributions for partner behaviours, Rejection Sensitivity and Unstable Self Esteem had indirect effects on violence. Furthermore, the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Unstable Self Esteem, as well as self-behavior silencing, was mediated by self-behavioral attributions. Furthermore, Unstable Self Esteem was revealed to be

strongly related with self-suppressive behaviours. (Göncü and Sümer, 2011). Furthermore, research shows that while poor Emotional Regulation strategies favourably regulate anger, aggression, withdrawal, and anxiety, rejection expectation has a negative impact on prosociality (Casini et al., 2022).

The findings revealed that most students believe they have more responsibility for their own learning than for their peers' learning, can identify tasks that require responsibility, and recognise the benefits of responsibility, but do not always put it into practice. (Ayish, N., 2019). According to research, higher socioeconomic status (SES) may increase stigma against mental illness. This is because people with a high SES live in areas with many resources, making certain phenomena easier to manage. People with a high socioeconomic status view mental illness as internal, manageable issues, which contributes to stigma (Schaan et al., 2020). In addition, personal responsibility regulated the association between COVID-19 information intake and preventative behaviours, whereas health orientation moderated the direct effect. (Liu, 2021).

Objective

To study the relationship between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults and young adults.

Hypotheses

- H01: There is no significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults.
- H02: There is no significant influence of rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among adults and young adults.
- H03: There is no significant difference between males and females on

rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility.

H04: There is no significant difference between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults of age range 18-24

H05: There is no significant difference between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults of age range 25-30

Method

Sample

A sample of 176 adults and young adults of age range 18 – 30 were selected for the research study. In the research study a convenient sampling method was used. Questionnaires on rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility were circulated online considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria and a total sample of 176 were collected data were collected from the month of December 2023 to February 2024.

Tools

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Adult version (A-RSQ) by Downey & Feldman, 1996). A variation of the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) designed to evaluate RS in adult study participants is the RS-Adult questionnaire (A-RSQ). It consists of eighteen hypothetical statements with test-retest reliability (Spearman-Brown coefficient) =.91 and internal consistency (alpha) =.89 (per administration) to evaluate sensitivity to rejection in adult general samples.

Personal responsibility: The eight-item PRS is a self-report questionnaire designed to evaluate people’s level of personal responsibility (Sheldon et al., 2018). A 5-point Likert scale is used to rate each item on the scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. The scale’s appropriate internal reliability estimates were supported by prior research

(Sheldon et al., 2018) with reliability estimates (H range = .80–.90).

Results

Table 1. Spearman Correlation table for the scales Rejection Sensitivity and Personal Responsibility

Variables	n	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1.Personal Responsibility	176	33.10	4.936	-		
2.Rejection Sensitivity	176	91.13	25.073	-.309**	-	
3.Age	176	1.18	.382	.111	-.130	-

* p <.05 (2-tailed), ** p <.001 (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows spearman correlation between personal responsibility, rejection sensitivity and age. From the results inferred it can be observed that there exists significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility with an ‘r’ value of -.309** and a significant p value of .000 with corresponding mean and SD values of 33.10 and 4.936 for personal responsibility, 91.13 and 25.073 for rejection sensitivity and 176 and 1.18 for age

Table 2. Regression Table with Rejection Sensitivity Scale and Personal Responsibility.

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Beta	F	P
Rejection Sensitivity	.219	.048	.043	-.219	8.797	.003
Personal Responsibility (Constant)						

Table 2 shows a regression table with rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility with a significance value of .003. From the results obtained it can be inferred that there is a significant influence of the constant with rejection sensitivity with a R value of -.219, Beta value of -.219 and F of 8.797 with corresponding R² value of .048 and delta R² value of .043 thus, depicting 4.3 percent influence of the variable on the constant.

Table 3. Mann Whitney U table on Personal Responsibility based on gender with Mean, SD, Mean Rank, Z value and Significance Value.

	MALE			FEMALE			Z	Sig Value
	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Mean	SD	Mean Rank		
Personal Responsibility	32.87	5.343	87.15	33.28	4.623	89.53	-.307	.759

Table 3 shows the gender difference on personal responsibility. From the inferred results it is evident that there isn't any significant difference in personal responsibility based on gender since the significance value is .759 and the Z value is -.307 with a mean, SD and mean rank for male are 32.87, 5.343 and 87.15 and for female are 33.28, 4.623 and 89.53

Table 4. Mann Whitney U table on Personal Responsibility based on age with Mean, SD, Mean Rank, Z value and Significance Value.

	18-25			26-30			Z	Sig Value
	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Mean	SD	Mean Rank		
Personal Responsibility	32.88	4.969	85.91	34.16	4.712	100.63	-1.465	.143

Table 4 shows the difference in personal responsibility based on age. From the inferred results it is evident that there isn't any significant difference in personal responsibility based on age since the significance value is .143 and Z value is -1.465 with a mean, SD and mean rank of 32.88, 4.969 and 85.91 for age range 18 – 25 and 34.16, 4.712 and 100.63 for age range 26 – 30

Table 5. Mann Whitney U table on Rejection Sensitivity based on gender with Mean, SD, Mean Rank, Z value and Significance Value.

	Male			Female			Z	Sig Value
	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Mean	SD	Mean Rank		
Rejection Sensitivity	88.51	25.225	83.53	93.12	24.899	92.28	-1.128	.259

Table 5 shows the difference in Rejection Sensitivity based on gender. From the inferred results it is evident that there isn't any significant difference in personal responsibility based on gender since the significance value is .259 and the Z -1.128 value is with a mean, SD and mean rank for male are 88.51, 25.225 and 83.53 and for female are 93.12, 24.899 and 92.28.

Table 6. Mann Whitney U table on Rejection Sensitivity based on age with Mean, SD, Mean Rank, Z value and Significance Value.

	18 - 25			26 - 30			Z	Sig Value
	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Mean	SD	Mean Rank		
Rejection Sensitivity	92.75	24.932	91.54	83.55	24.726	74.26	-1.715	.086

Table 6 shows the difference in Rejection Sensitivity based on age. From the inferred results it is evident that there isn't any significant difference in personal responsibility based

on age since the significance value is .086 and the Z value is -1.715 with a mean, SD and mean rank of 92.75, 24.932 and 91.54 for age range 18 – 25 and 83.55, 24.726 and 74.26 for age range 26 – 30.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults and young adults. From the results obtained it can be inferred that there exists significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility, in a study wherein Rejection Sensitivity, Self-Esteem Instability, and Relationship Outcomes, The Mediating Role of Responsibility Attributions, the results suggest that individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection are also likely to experience fluctuations in their self-view, (Göncü & Sümer, 2011). This might be one such reason wherein there's evident lack in taking responsibility based on the situation. These results also serve to be a current addition to the existing research as there isn't sufficient data reporting the same. Thus, accepting the null hypothesis.

In addition, there also exists a significant influence of rejection sensitivity on personal responsibility among adults and young adults. Research evidence proves that individuals with high rejection sensitivity (RS) may experience interpersonal and psychological suffering as they fear rejection (Ayduk et al., 2000). Thus, accepting the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, there isn't a significant difference in personal responsibility based on gender among adults and young adults. Hyde noted that gender differences had either no influence at all or a very minor effect on the majority of the psychological variables investigated throughout the hundreds of years of research, which supports the gender similarities theory (APA.,2005). The available

results appear to be novel for the literature within; no sources could corroborate the findings. Thus, accepting the null hypothesis.

Similarly, there isn't a significant difference in personal responsibility among adults and young adults based on age. Possibly because experiences do not align with conventional notions of maturity as a period of independence and social responsibility, many individuals do not consider or treat young people as adults (Settersten and Ray, 2010). Thus there seems to have a sense of ignorance to the understanding of responsibility among young adults as well as adults, which often seem to be almost similar in both the groups. Thus, accepting the null hypothesis

Findings also suggest that there is no significant difference in rejection sensitivity based on age among adults and young adults. Research demonstrates that relationships with relationship engagement, quality, and (development after) coping with relationship stress are related to initial levels of rejection sensitivity as well as changes in rejection sensitivity from age 16 to age 23. The findings demonstrated that rejection sensitivity often reduced as one entered maturity. (Norona et al., 2018). Thus, the available studies contradict the obtained results thus accepting the hypothesis that there isn't significant difference in age in rejection sensitivity among adults and young adults. To an extent the significance value shows some point of inclination to the difference as the significance value isn't that distant from the required level.

Finally, there isn't a significant difference in rejection sensitivity based on gender among adults and young adults. Little research has looked into gender differences in late adolescence, when males are most likely to be vulnerable to rejection, despite studies finding no significant differences in mean levels of rejection sensitivity earlier in

adolescence (Downey, Lebolt, et al., 1998; Sandstrom, et al., 2003). There were no discernible gender differences in the single study on rejection sensitivity in late adolescence (Harper et al., 2006). None of the sources that are currently available could corroborate the results, which appear to be novel findings for that literature. Thus, accepting the null hypothesis.

Conclusion

The study on rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility among young adults is not only academically relevant but also has practical implications for mental health, education, and personal development. Thus, the study results reveal that there exists significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility in addition to a significant level of influence of the variables. In addition, it showed that there isn't any significant gender difference or age difference (18 – 30) in rejection sensitivity and personal responsibility. It can provide valuable insights into the factors that influence young adults' psychological well-being, decision-making, and relationships, ultimately contributing to their success and overall quality of life.

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