

Rejection Sensitivity and Romantic Relationships: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Authors : Mandira Mishra, Mark Allen

Abstract : This meta-analysis explored whether rejection sensitivity relates to facets of romantic relationships. A comprehensive literature search identified 60 studies (147 effect sizes; 16,955 participants) that met inclusion criteria. Data were analysed using inverse-variance weighted random effects meta-analysis. Mean effect sizes from 21 meta-analyses provided evidence that more rejection sensitive individuals report lower levels of relationship satisfaction and relationship closeness, lower levels of perceived partner satisfaction, a greater likelihood of intimate partner violence (perpetration and victimization), higher levels of relationship concerns and relationship conflict, and higher levels of jealousy and self-silencing behaviours. There was also some evidence that rejection sensitive individuals are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour and are more prone to sexual compulsivity. There was no evidence of publication bias and various levels of heterogeneity in computed averages. Random effects meta-regression identified participant age and sex as important moderators of pooled mean effects. These findings provide a foundation for the theoretical development of rejection sensitivity in romantic relationships and should be of interest to relationship and marriage counsellors and other relationship professionals.

Keywords : intimate partner violence, relationship satisfaction, commitment, sexual orientation, risky sexual behaviour

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