Gender Differences in Rates of Anhedonia and the Effect of Menstrual Cycles in University Students
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BACKGROUND

• Anhedonia is the lack of experiencing pleasure from pleasurable experiences (D’Haenen, 1996) and is associated with the reward pathway in the brain (Langvik et al., 2016).
• Anhedonia can be further broken down into physical or social (Martino et al., 2018).
• Physical anhedonia is the absence of pleasure from eating, drinking, or physical touch.
• Social anhedonia is a lack of pleasure derived from social experiences.

Previous research has looked at gender differences in anhedonia with conflicting results.
• One measure of anhedonic subtype of depression found a relation with positive affect and gender differences more than other measures of anhedonia (Langvik et al., 2016).
• One study found no gender differences in anhedonia (Langvik et al., 2016).
• The associations between menstrual cycle and anhedonia have not been fully investigated yet.
• Anxiety and depression have a high comorbidity rate, and anhedonia is a complex symptom on its own.

Depression is not a simple disorder that is uniform in every person and anhedonia is a complex symptom on its own.
• This may be in part that anhedonia is not merely one set definition but rather interrelated traits
• There are several measures of anhedonia and there may be one or more that are sensitive to gender differences.

Future Directions
• Research into the impact of menstrual cycles on the experience of pleasure is limited and future studies on anhedonia should consider menstrual cycle as a potential factor.
• Future studies should track menstrual cycles with a daily diary to more accurately assess menstrual cycle
• Examining gender differences across different anhedonia measures will help determine whether there are gender differences in different aspects of anhedonia.

METHODS

Study I
Sample
• One hundred three college-aged students (63 women and 40 men) from a mid-sized Midwestern university

Procedure
• This is a secondary analysis from data collected as part of a larger study examining associations between olfaction, depression, and anhedonia.

Measures
• The The Snaith-Hamilton Pleasure Scale (SHAPS) (Snaith, 1993)

Study II
Sample
• Fifty-six college aged students (45 women and 11 men) from a mid-sized Midwestern university

Procedure
• This is a secondary analysis from data collected as part of a larger study examining associations between olfaction and social functioning.

Measures
• The Chapman Revised Social Anhedonia Scale (Chapman & Chapman, 1976) was used to measure social anhedonia.

RESULTS

• There was a significant difference between menstrual cycle and social anhedonia (r(50) = .392, p = .018).

REFERENCES