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Arianna Rueda
University of Dayton, ruedaa1@udayton.edu

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Recommended Citation
Rueda, Arianna, "Gender Differences in Rates of Anhedonia and the Effect of Menstrual Cycles in University Students" (2019). Content presented at the Roesch Social Sciences Symposium. 18. https://ecommons.udayton.edu/roesch_symposium_content/18

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

Arianna Rueda
Faculty Mentor: Julie Walsh-Messinger
Department of Psychology, University of Dayton

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.

• There are several measures of anhedonia and there may be one or none that are sensitive to gender differences.

• 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.

• Examining gender differences across different anhedonia measures will help determine whether there are gender differences in different aspects of anhedonia.

HYPOTHESES

1. Females will have higher levels of anhedonia than males in across the genders, which is consistent with (Langvik et al., 2016)

2. In females, anhedonia levels will be associated with day of menstrual cycle.

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

Data Analysis
• An independent T-tests were performed to examine sex differences in anhedonia levels.

• Pearson correlation was used to see if there was a relation between anhedonia, menstrual cycle, and hormonal contraception.

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

In study I and II there was no difference in anhedonia across the genders, which is consistent with (Langvik et al., 2016).

Validating stages in one menstrual cycle did not relate anhedonia as measured by the SNAPs.

In study II there was an association between social anhedonia and menstrual cycle, such that females who were further in their menstrual cycle had higher levels of anhedonia.

Which could affect the ways of coping with anhedonia.

CONCLUSIONS

SPECIFIC AIMS

• Examine sex differences in levels of anhedonia in two undergraduate student samples.

• Investigate if anhedonia is related to menstrual cycle or hormonal contraception

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following students for their assistance with data collection and entry: Russell Macek, BS; Phoebe Cline, MA, Lisa Bester, BA; Michael A Lee, BS; Mike Mccln, BS; Neha Est, and Piper Senio.

Please address all correspondence to Arianna Rueda at ruedaa@udayton.edu

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