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Personality Risk and Protective Factors Moderate Associations of Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem with Mental Health and Relationship Outcomes

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Introduction
• An individual with Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem (RCSE) bases their self-regard on the nature and outcome of his or her relationship (Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008).
• RCSE is said to occur from a thwarting of basic psychological needs, which are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Knee et al., 2008).
• The thwarting of the basic psychological needs can cause an individual to feel a lack of competence within the relationship, a lack of control within the relationship, and a lack of caring for and being cared for by the individual’s partner (Hadden, Rodriguez, Knee, & Porter, 2015).
• Those high in RCSE can have lower relationship satisfaction and experience higher levels of negative emotion felt (Knee et al., 2008).
• Certain personality risk and protective factors may influence the relationship between RCSE and its outcomes.
• Balanced authenticity can lead to greater feelings of autonomy and relatedness (Wang, 2016).
• Those higher in self-compassion have been found to have a greater sense of functional competence (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).
• High anxious attachment can compromise an individual’s autonomy due to overdependence and preoccupation with the relationship (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Current Study
• The goal of this study is to explore the influence that the degree to which one’s basic psychological needs are fulfilled has on the relationship between RCSE and mental health and relationship outcomes.
• This study will examine the moderating influences of the level of fulfillment of one’s psychological needs and their correlates (i.e., anxious attachment, self-compassion, and authenticity) on the association between RCSE and depression and relationship satisfaction.

Participants
• Married participants (N = 1687; 916 females; 758 males; 5 other; 8 missing) ranging in age from 22 to 90 years old (M = 48.7), taken from a large sample of alumni from a private Midwestern US university.

Measures
• Basic Psychological Needs Scale (Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazhova, 2001).
• Satisfaction with Life Scale with domain specific items for work and relationships (Kobau, Sniezek, Zack, Lucas, & Burns, 2010).
• Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008).
• Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale Depression Inventory (CES-D Scale; Radloff, 1977).
• Authenticity Scale (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008).
• Experiences in Close Relationship-Relationship Structures Questionnaire General (ECR-RS General; Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011).
• Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011).

Discussion/Significance of Research
• The proposed project is significant because a large portion of the population experiences intimate relationships for a significant period of their lives.
• In addition, how people identify their own self-worth is equally important because of the connections that it has to mental and physical health.
• Therefore, a project that continues the research of what influence an individual’s relationship has on their self-esteem has many important implications.
• Understanding what constructs act as risk or protective factors can inform either the creation of or mending of current interventions that are meant to specifically target these constructs.
• These interventions could in turn, diminish the negative impact of RCSE.

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