Personality Risk and Protective Factors Moderate Associations of Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem with Mental Health and Relationship Outcomes
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Frane Santic, University of Dayton (Contact: santicf1@udayton.edu)
Advisor: Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D.

**Introduction**

- Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem (RCSE) involves one basing their self-regard on the nature and outcome of their 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).
- Thwarting of the needs can lead to problems feeling mastery, control, and cared for within the relationship (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).
- The basic psychological needs and their correlates may have an effect on RCSE’s negative influence.
- Balanced authenticity can lead to greater feelings of autonomy and relatedness (Wang, 2016).
- High anxious attachment related to low autonomy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

**Current Study**

- The study examines the moderating influences of one’s basic psychological needs and their correlates 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
- Satisfaction with Life Scale
- Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem Scale
- CES-D Scale
- Authenticity Scale
- ECR-RS General
- Self-Compassion Scale

**Results**

- Positive association between RCSE and relationship satisfaction that becomes stronger as competence decreases (Male)
- Positive association between RCSE and depression that becomes stronger as relatedness and authentic living decrease, and as acceptance of external influences increases (Female)
- Positive association between RCSE and depression for those low in competence (Female), relatedness (Male), and autonomy
- Positive association between RCSE and depression for those high in anxious attachment and self-alienation
- Positive association between RCSE and depression for females low in self-compassion and for males high in acceptance of external influences

**Discussion/Limitations/Future Directions**

- As long as the basic psychological needs and their correlates are not thwarted, RCSE does not seem to influence mental health outcomes.
- Levels of RCSE do not seem to detrimentally impact relationship satisfaction.
- This study is correlational, so one cannot determine causal impact; it also may not reflect how personality factors impact other cultures, genders, and SES populations.
- Future research may test the influence of cultural differences on RCSE and the degree to which each factor influences RCSE and mental health outcomes.