

Rejection Sensitivity and Self-Disclosure in Online and In-Person Communications

Amber Nerren, Elizabeth Wilson, & Ginette Blackhart
East Tennessee State University



Introduction

- Rejection sensitive (RS) individuals tend to engage in less self-disclose (Ando, 1978; Ksionzky & Mehrabian, 1980).
- Wilson & colleagues (2018) found that although RS individuals self-disclose less, they reported self-disclosing more in online environments than in-person.
- Current study aimed to replicate results of Wilson et al. (2018) using different measurements of self-disclosure and examining the role of true self.

Method

- 272 participants (206 females) recruited through Sona ($M_{age} = 20.7, SD = 5.19$).
- Participants completed the following questionnaires online:
 - Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Adult Version (A-RSQ) (Berenson et al., 2019) ($\alpha = .81$).
 - Online Self Disclosure Scale (OSDS) (Lee et al., 2019) ($\alpha = .77$), modified to include a wide range of social media (rather than only Twitter and Facebook).
 - Self-Disclosure Index (SDI) (Miller et al., 1983) ($\alpha = .97$), modified to assess self-disclosure to same-sex and opposite-sex strangers and friends online and in-person.
 - Real Me Scale (McKenna et al., 2002) ($\alpha = .60$) assessing the extent to which participants feel more comfortable expressing their “true” selves in online environments as opposed to in-person.
 - Demographics questions, including questions about use of social media.

Results

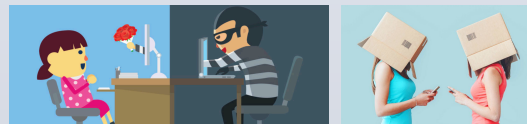
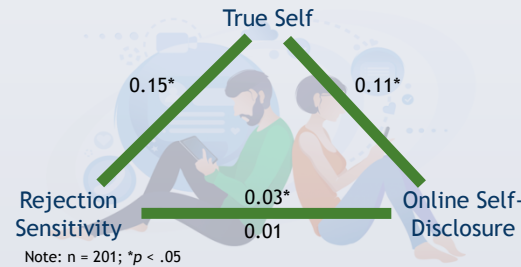
- Prior to conducting analyses:
 - 9 participants removed from analyses including OSDS because they indicated not using social media ($n = 263$).
 - 73 participants removed from analyses including the SDI due to response bias ($n = 205$).
- Using different self-disclosure assessments, our results did not replicate Wilson et al. (2018).
- RS was not significantly correlated with self-disclosure through social media (OSDS) ($r = -.12, p = .06$) ($n = 263$) or with self-disclosure online ($r = .11, p = .13$) or in-person ($r = -.05, p = .47$) as assessed by the SDI ($n = 205$).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. A-RSQ	-				
2. Real Me	0.17*	-			
3. OSDS	-0.13	0.12	-		
4. SDI Online	0.08	0.36*	0.30*	-	
5. SDI In-Person	-0.08	0.05	0.29*	0.74*	-
Mean	9.44	6.13	27.60	3.17	3.56
SD	4.17	3.58	8.56	1.09	0.97

Note: $n = 201$; * $p < .05$

- True self was not significantly related to self-disclosure in person ($r = .07, p = .31$), but was significantly related to self-disclosure online (as assessed by the SDI), $r = .37, p < .001$ ($n = 205$); and with self-disclosure through social media, $r = .17, p = .007$ ($n = 263$).

- We found a significant indirect effect between RS and self-disclosure online (on the SDI), indicating that true self mediated that relationship, $p = .02, 95\% CI = .003, .031$.



Contact:

•Amber Nerren: nerren@etsu.edu
•Dr. Ginni Blackhart: blackhar@etsu.edu.

Conclusion

- Rejection sensitivity was not significantly correlated with self-disclosure in the current study.
 - This may be due to using different assessments of self-disclosure than Wilson et al. (2018), who used the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (Wheless & Grotz, 1976).
- We did find, however, that feeling more comfortable expressing the true self in online environments predicted self-disclosure online and mediated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and online self-disclosure as measured by the SDI.

Limitations

- Used self-report to assess self-disclosure.
- Over 75% of the sample consisted of female participants.

Future Research

- Replication of the current study and of Wilson et al. (2018) is needed, especially in light of differences in findings, perhaps due to the use of different self-disclosure questionnaires.
- Research on this topic must go beyond self-reported self-disclosure to further assess the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-disclosure online and in-person.

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