



FACES OF SOCIAL ANXIETY: FEAR OF INTIMACY AND ANXIETY IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CROATIAN YOUNG ADULTS

Anita Vulić-Prtorić, Department of Psychology, University of Zadar, Croatia

Renata Glavak Tkalić, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Croatia

Social anxiety may be presented in a variety of forms, such as fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, fear of own hostile impulses in relationships, fear of social evaluation, fear of self-disclosure, etc. In specific constellations with personal and contextual factors, these fears and anxieties tend to develop in psychopathological ways in the future.

The **aim** of the research was to examine the relationship between seven personality characteristics related to parental acceptance - rejection theory and two main aspects of anxiety: fear of intimacy in adulthood and anxiety in interpersonal relationships.

Sample The research was carried out in Zagreb, Croatia among 235 graduate university students (61% females). The age of respondents was between 20 and 30 years (M=23.11. SD=1.508).

Measures: Besides Personal Information Form (Rohner Research Publications. 2008) respondents completed 3 questionnaires:

1. PAQ Adult Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Rohner, 2004) containing 42 items addressing seven personality dispositions in **7 scales**. that measure: 1. hostility / aggression; 2. dependency; 3. negative self-esteem; 4. negative self-adequacy; 5. emotional unresponsiveness; 6. emotional instability; 7. negative world view. Total PAQ score $\alpha=0.90$

2. IRAQ Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety Questionnaire (Rohner. 2004) containing 9 items. It measures anxiety in terms of interpersonal relationships with high score representing high level of anxiety. Total IRAQ score $\alpha=0.89$

3. FIS Fear of Intimacy Scale (Descutner & Thelen. 1991) containing 35 items that can determine the level of fear of intimacy with high score representing a high level of fear of intimacy. Total FIS score $\alpha=0.93$

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences in Measures of Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety and Fear of Intimacy

- ✓ both males and females reported low levels of interpersonal relationship anxiety and fear of intimacy
- ✓ There were **no statistically significant gender differences** in interpersonal relationship anxiety and fear of intimacy.



Measures	M	SD	N	t
Interpersonal relationship anxiety				
Males	14.16	4.83	91	0.29
Females	14.35	4.92	144	
Total	14.28	4.88	235	
Fear of Intimacy				
Males	76.23	20.88	91	0.41
Females	75.06	21.99	141	
Total	75.52	21.52	232	

Table 2: Correlations Between Psychological Adjustment, Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety and Fear of Intimacy

- ✓ Poorer psychological adjustment was associated with higher fear of intimacy among both males and females.
- ✓ Higher anxiety was associated with higher fear of intimacy among both, males and females.



Measures	1.	2.	3.
1. Psychological adjustment		0.55**	0.55**
2. Interpersonal relationship anxiety	0.50**		0.43**
3. Fear of intimacy	0.54**	0.34**	

Table 3. Correlations between Psychological Adjustment (seven dispositions), Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety and Fear of Intimacy



PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS	FEMALES		MALES	
	Fear of intimacy	Interpersonal relationship anxiety	Fear of intimacy	Interpersonal relationship anxiety
Hostility / aggression	0.31**	0.32**	0.20	0.30**
Dependency	-0.21*	0.06	-0.05	0.04
Negative self-esteem	0.54**	0.48**	0.51**	0.50**
Negative self-adequacy	0.48**	0.36**	0.46**	0.55**
Emotional unresponsiveness	0.61**	0.33**	0.67**	0.39**
Emotional instability	0.32**	0.36**	0.37**	0.47**
Negative world view	0.39**	0.35**	0.41**	0.32**



RESULTS

Fear of intimacy and anxiety in interpersonal relationship were moderately correlated (for females $r=0.34$ and males $r=0.43$) indicated that they are two very different aspects of social anxiety.

When analysing personality dispositions, it was found that emotional unresponsiveness and negative self-esteem were personality variables in strongest positive correlation with fear of intimacy in both males and females. Interpersonal relationship anxiety was in highest positive correlation with negative self-esteem among females and negative self-adequacy among males.

Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated that negative self-esteem is the main personality aspect that made significant independent contribution to both fear of intimacy and interpersonal relationship anxiety. When analyzing for males and females separately, it was found that negative self-adequacy made significant independent contribution to interpersonal relationship anxiety among males, while negative self-esteem made significant independent contribution to interpersonal relationship anxiety among females. Emotional unresponsiveness made significant independent contribution to fear of intimacy, among both males and females.

Results presented in this poster are part of the international FOI project

Fear of Intimacy Project - Ronald and Nancy Rohner Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection; University of Connecticut, USA.