

Abstract

This research investigates the relationships among young adults' mental health outcomes, rejection sensitivity, self-esteem, and dark tetrad personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and sadism), with self-esteem serving as a mediating factor. A structured online survey was used to gather data from 120 university students between the ages of 18 and 35 using a cross-sectional quantitative design. Key variables were measured using validated scales such as the Positive Mental Health Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Rejection Sensitivity-Adult Questionnaire, and the Short Dark Tetrad. Demographic information was obtained through descriptive statistics, and the hypotheses were tested using inferential analyses such as multiple regression, Pearson's correlation, and mediation analysis. The findings indicated that rejection sensitivity and mental health outcomes were significantly correlated negatively, with sadism and narcissism standing out as significant predictors of worse mental health. Sadism was negatively correlated with self-esteem, which partially mediated its effect on mental health outcomes, whereas narcissism was directly linked to worse mental health. Although participant self-esteem did mediate relations between rejection sensitivity and mental health, it was not a mediator in reverse order (i.e., the relation between rejection sensitivity and mental health). Gender analyses found that men had greater narcissism and sadism, and women showed greater self-esteem. This study extends our understanding the sequence and their impacts on young adults' mental health, and identifies partial mediation from self-esteem, as well as areas where targeted resilience and self-concept interventions are needed.

Keywords: Rejection Sensitivity, Dark Tetrad Personality, Mental Health Outcomes, Young Adults, Self Esteem,