

Research Paper

## Relationship between Hypermasculinity and Rejection Sensitivity among Young Adults in India

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between Hypermasculinity and Rejection Sensitivity is discussed. For the purpose of this study, young adults aged 18-25 were given a questionnaire about hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity. The data collected from this questionnaire was interpreted to prove the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant relationship between hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity among young adults. Various sources were utilized in supporting the hypothesis. Firstly, the concept of hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity was elaborated followed by determining the relationship between the two variables. Data gathering was done using Purposive Snowball Sampling, a non-probability sampling technique and higher statistical processes of SPSS 26 were applied after manual scoring of the data gathered. Finally, after scoring of the data, the hypothesis was tested and proven to be true; there is a relationship between hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity among young adults in India.

**Keywords:** *Hypermasculinity, Rejection Sensitivity, RSQ, HVQ*

**H**ypermasculinity: It is a term used in psychology to describe an extreme form of masculine behavior characterized by an emphasis on power, hostility, and resilience. It is a concept that has been extensively studied in the fields of psychology and gender and is often associated with negative outcomes such as aggressive behavior, physical violence, and poor mental health. According to Levant (2011), the emergence of masculine traits is clearly influenced by many factors, including socialization and cultural norms. Boys are rarely encouraged to adopt conventional masculine traits such as strength, competitiveness, and general male dominance because repressive behaviors are seen as feminine or weak. This can lead to a desire to conform to a particular masculine standard, which may be one of the potential causes contributing to the development of masculine traits. Hypermasculinity is often associated with negative consequences such as aggression, violence, and poor mental health. Men who exhibit volatile (negative) traits may be more susceptible to engage in unsafe behaviors such as abuse of narcotics, acts of physical violence, and unsafe intercourse. According to Wong, Wang et al. (2017), people with athletic traits may be more susceptible to mental health problems such as insomnia, anxiety, agitation, depression, withdrawal from social relationships, and disorders

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Received: May 27, 2023; Revision Received: July 30, 2023; Accepted: August 04, 2023

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associating with the reckless use of narcotics. Hypermasculinity can also have a negative impact on interpersonal relationships.

**Rejection Sensitivity:** A psychological system that refers to a person's relatively high degree of sensitivity to direct or indirect rejection or the fear of total rejection is commonly known as rejection sensitivity. People who are sensitive to rejection tend to be more sensitive to the possibility of rejection and may be rejected when they don't want it or when it's not warranted. This can cause them to overreact (even in small cases) to rejection or become anxious in social situations where they fear rejection. Rejection sensitivity is often associated with anxiety and low self-esteem, as well as social anxiety and depression. People who are sensitive to rejection may be more likely to avoid social situations or engage in behaviors designed to avoid rejection, such as overcompensating or being overly tolerant of others. (Ayduk et al., 2001) A variety of contexts, rejection sensitivity is studied, including romantic relationships, friendships, and work relationships. People who are sensitive to the concept of rejection may be more prone to obstacles in these relations because they may feel rejected in unexpected places and may overreact to it. For example, they may interpret a partner's criticism as rejection and react angrily or defensively. (Romero-Canyas, R., Downey, G., et al. 2010).

There is a complex but valid relationship between hypermasculinity and susceptibility to rejection. First, because of their adherence to traditional male norms, hypermasculine men are susceptible to experiencing negative feelings of rejection and could potentially be exceptionally sensitive to perceived threats to masculinity. Second, men who are more susceptible to rejection are more likely to adopt hypermasculine behaviors to protect themselves from rejection and maintain their masculinity. A 2010 study by Popp, D. & Oswald, D.L. found that men who espoused traditional notions of gender roles and exhibited hyper-masculine behavior were more likely to experience rejection. Additionally, men with a high rejection-sensitive profile were more likely to uphold hyper-masculine beliefs and exhibit aggressive behavior in response to relationship threats.

**Now** that we have an understanding of the concepts covered in this paper, let us look at some research which were done in the field, to better understand the scenario which warrants this current research. We have already established that there hasn't been much research on the relationship between hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity among young adults in India. So, the paper is all about undertaking that aspect. Wood, J.L., et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on hypermasculine values in 2014 titled "Predicting involvement in prison gang activity: Street gang membership, social and psychological factors." The primary objective of this evaluation was to assess whether affiliation to gang members in prison, the psychological effects it has on individuals can accurately predict the criminal activity in prison, particularly young offenders. The sample size was 188 young prisoners who were imprisoned in the UK Youth Prison. The conclusion of this study was that psychological factors such as attachment to social status in prison, feeling of empowerment due to social domination and being top in the hierarchy, showcasing notorious anti-governmental acts all contribute the probability of young offenders in involving themselves with gang-related activities in prison. It is also observed that longer-prison sentences are proportional to the probability of young offenders associating themselves with in-prison activities. Allyn & Pritchard conducted a study using a questionnaire on super-masculine values in 2016 titled "Psychological and behavioral characteristics differentiating gang and non-gang girls in the UK." The research conclusively encompasses males joining gangs as members and affiliates; however, no assessment had

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been done to this extent to prove as such till now. The main objective of this assessment was to conclusively find out whether male gang members indicate distinct psychological characters when compared to non-male gang members. For this assessment, a total of 117 individuals were taken into consideration, (22 being gang members and 95 being non-gang members). The magnitude of criminal activity, their sexual orientation, self-esteem, resistance to governmental law and policies and their perception of social hierarchy was assessed using a MANCOVA series. The results showed that, despite having relatively low sample size, they had more involvement in these factors (criminal activity) than non-gang members. These findings support the finding of Pyrooz et al. (2014) stating that individuals with active gang-related activities are more prone to higher criminal activities than non-gang members. In conclusion, gang-associated members are more prone to criminal activity and sexual exploitation than non-gang members. Leone, R.M., et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on super-masculine values in 2022. The study talks about the importance of knowledge males have about sexual consent and where they draw the line between sexual consent and borderline sexual violence (non-consensual) and sexual violence offences in male freshmen, university or not. The sample size for this study was 1144 first-year students – a series of linear models (generalized) were performed to test the knowledge level of these students about how they interpret sexual consent and how much it moderates the relationship between sexual violence risk factors and sexual violence perpetrators. Knowledge of sexual consent moderated the inner understanding of one's masculine intensity, excessive alcohol intake, pro-rape environments and blind support from superiors and peers. The study concluded that the knowledge of sexual consent did not significantly reduce the relationship between sexual violent perpetrators, non-consensual intercourse, and the utilization of pornographic content. The findings in this study emphasizes the need to efficiently educate first-year students regarding sexual consent and a comprehensive sex education for adolescents to improve knowledge of sexual consent prior to SV prevention programs being offered to college students. Nyland, C., conducted a study using a questionnaire on hypermasculine values in 2014. A crime survey conducted in England and Wales displayed 700k people reporting having experienced sexual violence and rape, to the police. In this sample size, the demographic consisted of 140k males and 560k females. In the case of females (having sample size thrice as male counterpart), the age varied between 10 and 24 whereas for males it was around the age range 5 and 19. What this indicates that men are likely to be victims of sexual violence or rape at a relatively younger age than women. This sample size are registered complaints, indicating that are many such instances where the report hasn't even been filed, indicating that the sexual violence cases could be triple the data used simply because the victims don't feel the necessity to file a complaint either due to fear or the failure of not understanding the true meaning of sexual violence. This poses challenges when understanding the true essence of sexual violence, as most of the acts go unnoticed. Matson, K., et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on strong masculinity values in 2018. The association between gun passion, high masculinity, male honor, maintenance, antagonism, and aggression Lifetime gun enthusiasm was tested in the sample size of 861 men from the United States of America. The method of regression analysis was conducted to understand the datasets which showed the passion for firearms due to their perceived masculine ideologies and undervalued emotions. It showed that amongst the gun enthusiasts, they showed an extensive amount of confidence as compared to their counterparts. They also showed no signs of abusive childhood or emotional distress. The confidence they gained from firearms has affected their current ideologies, upholding their masculine ideals. Salazar, L. et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on super-masculine values in 2018. Sexual violence in university premises is a serious widespread phenomenon that needs to be desperately addressed. The current response to this is the

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implementation of sexual violence prevention programs. In addition to this, we have to first and foremost understand the factors of first-years students that contribute to sexual violence and provide the necessary education and risk-prevention. A sample size of 1133 students were selected from a range of 30 colleges (4-year colleges) in Georgia, USA. At baseline, sexual violence acts are compared with pre-college students using binary logistics regression. The results showed that roughly 19% reported consumption of sexual media, heavy consumption of alcohol, extremely rigid principles and superiors who approved of such acts. It is important to note that students with well-off families were less likely to colleges with a history of sexual violence crimes. In conclusion, to prevent sexual violence acts in universities, there should be programs for the students in primary and secondary education to further educate all students, resulting in risk of exposure to sexual acts and potential criminal acts. Adams, N. et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on super-masculine values in 2022. This study discusses the concept of male orientation and paternity among workers (in the oil sector) and how it positively affects workplace safety and risk-aversion. It elaborates on the dangerous areas of their work and the dangerous industry they are in and how it reaffirms the concept of manhood, redefining the concept of masculinity. In terms of fatherhood, these workplaces have developed a certain mindset of being the breadwinner of the family and the importance of being distant from family for their betterment. The ability to have this sort of male identification is outdated as they equate riskier work conditions to that of masculinity – only men can do it. These identity reforms have led to safer work culture which in turn normalizes the respect the world has for masculine men who step into dangerous work environments for the betterment of their families. Implications of workplace safety are discussed in this study. Adams, N. et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on hypermasculinity values in 2013. This study understands the role of masculinity as a form of coping mechanism among African American adolescents and understanding the magnitude of impact of masculinity they've been influenced by watching the adults in school and how they perceive them. For this study, two primary questions were asked, and the data was collected. In a Southeast Asian city, 241 African Americans attended public school, the data from the questionnaire revealed that perception of hypermasculinity come from negative experiences in these public schools. Additionally, these negative experiences have a stronger relationship than any other factors in public schools. Schaefer, H.S., et al. conducted a study using a questionnaire on hypermasculinity values in 2021. Expressions of hypermasculinity are studied in many fields of the world, showcasing their negative impact, but rarely it's been studied in the military sector. This study examines the hostility, and the negative experiences individuals face in the military sector, specifically in the US military education. The sample size of 1560 freshmen and 499 male graduates have been taken into consideration. Multivariate Moderated Multiple Regression, better known as MMMR was conducted showcasing aspects of military with respect to hypermasculinity such as the innate desire for power and control, internal attachment to hypermasculine norms, the extent of control over expression emotions, sexual preference, and how it all affects outwardly (academics, behavior towards superiors and peers, etc.). Healthy manifestations such as feelings, perception towards women, and overall counter-productive parts to hypermasculinity in the military sector can avoid hypermasculinity in general. Khader, S. B. conducted a study using a questionnaire on super-masculine values in 2020 titled "Effect of negative childhood experiences on later performance of sexual violence in college boys". Sexual Violence is an important dilemma in the US, especially amongst students in universities – negative childhood experiences can contribute to students committing sexual violence not just in universities, but in the later part of their lives as well. This study investigates whether negative childhood experiences are interrelated with sexual violence in later part of their lives as grownups. Aggression,

hostility (specifically towards women) and excessive consumption of alcohol in adulthood, the relationship between these acts and negative childhood experiences is discussed. Statistical analysis was conducted using SAS 9.4 software. 3 mediation analyses are performed through the Hayes PROCESS macro model 14. The results suggest that physical fitness and excessive alcohol consumption mediate the relationship between ACE and subsequent SV perpetration, and perceived social norms are an important regulatory factor. The relationship was positively correlated, sexual violence education and prevention programs should be targeted for prevention of these acts by using mediums such as physical fitness, and awareness of social norms.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Sample*

The data was collected from 102 men aged between 18-26 years.

#### *Instruments*

Two measures were used in this study:

- 1. Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Adult version (A-RSQ)** is a cognitively emotional processing predisposition to expect rejection anxiety, modeled by socio-cognitive learning's history, and activated in situations where it is likely to be rejected. refuse or accept. The RS-Adult Questionnaire (A-RSQ) is an adaptation of the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) to assess sensitivity towards rejection in adults. The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) is a psychological assessment tool that measures an individual's sensitivity to rejection, that is, their expected anxiety propensity, perception, and response to rejection. The adult version of the RSQ is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the likelihood that an individual will experience rejection sensitivity in their personal and social relationships. The questionnaire asks about responses to hypothetical situations, such as being criticized by peers, as well as responses to past experiences of rejection. RSQ scores range from low to high rejection sensitivity, with a relatively larger score showcasing a greater likelihood of encountering rejection sensitivity.
- 2. Hypermasculine Value Questionnaire** is a 26item measure of typical masculine values among men working in a variety of fields. It is also known as a psychological assessment tool designed to measure an individual's degree of compliance with masculine beliefs and behaviors. Hypermasculinity refers to exaggerated beliefs and stereotypes about traditional male roles, such as an emphasis on aggression, toughness, and dominance. The HVQ is primarily used by researchers and mental health professionals to measure attitudes and behaviors toward physical fitness, as well as the relationship between physical fitness and various outcomes, such as aggression, substance abuse, and risky sexual behavior. The questionnaire can also be used to develop interventions to reduce overly masculine attitudes and behaviors and promote healthier and more positive manifestations of masculinity.

## RESULTS

*Table No. 1 & 2: Descriptive Statistics & Correlations between HVQ and RSQ*

Statistics		HVQ	RSQ
N	Valid	102	102
	Missing	0	0
Mean		124.33	184.20
Std. Error of Mean		1.457	5.797
Std. Deviation		14.713	58.544
Skewness		-.624	-.460
Std. Error of Skewness		.239	.239

According to the data, the mean value of HVQ is 124.33 and RSQ is 184.20, having a standard error of mean 1.457 and 5.797 respectively. Additionally, the standard deviation of HVQ was 14.713 and 58.544. In the end, the skewness of HVQ and RSQ came out to be -.624 and -.460, having standard error of skewness as .239 for both, respectively.

		HVQ	RSQ
HVQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
RSQ	Pearson Correlation	.411**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The data indicates that there is a significant relationship between HVQ and RSQ with a correlation of 1 for HVQ and .411 for RSQ. It suggests that there is a positive correlation; the higher the hypermasculinity of the subjects, the greater they are prone to being sensitive towards rejection.

## DISCUSSION

Above statistics provide information about the correlational relationship between hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity. It suggests that there is a positive correlation; the higher the hypermasculinity of the subjects, the greater they are prone to being sensitive towards rejection. According to some research, rejection sensitivity and hypermasculinity are positively correlated. According to a study by Parrott, D. & Zeichner, A. in 2005, appeared in the Journal of Counseling Psychology, hypermasculine males were more likely to be sensitive to rejection than non-hypermasculine men. The study also discovered that rejection sensitivity was linked to a higher chance of interpersonal issues and issues with emotion control. Another study that was published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology by Kim, J. S., & Goldstein, S. E. in 2013 discovered that the association between violence and hypermasculinity was largely mediated by rejection sensitivity. According to the study, hypermasculine males may be more inclined to react violently to real or imagined rejection because they are more sensitive to it. These studies collectively imply that hypermasculine men may be more prone to rejection sensitivity and its unfavorable effects, such as relationship issues and aggressiveness. It's crucial to remember, though, that not all guys with hypermasculine features are going to be sensitive to rejection or acting aggressively. The association between hypermasculinity and rejection sensitivity

also draws attention to the dangers of advancing hypermasculine norms in society, particularly in settings like sports or the workplace where dominance and competitiveness are frequently valued. We may fight to establish an inclusive and just community that fosters collaboration, empathy, and emotional intelligence by becoming aware of the harmful effects of hypermasculinity.

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### **Acknowledgement**

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Anandita (2023). Relationship between Hypermasculinity and Rejection Sensitivity among Young Adults in India. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 1564-1571. DIP:18.01.150.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.150