Research Paper

Impact of Fear of Rejection on Resilience and Sense of Belongingness among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study delved into the impact of fear of rejection on resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between fear of rejection and both resilience and sense of belongingness. Fear of rejection emerged as a substantial predictor, significantly contributing to lower levels of resilience and sense of belongingness among participants. These results highlight the detrimental effect of fear of rejection on individuals' ability to bounce back from adversity and their sense of connection and inclusion. The study underscores the importance of addressing fear of rejection in interventions aimed at enhancing mental health and overall well-being among young adults. By targeting this psychological barrier, interventions can empower individuals to build greater resilience and foster stronger feelings of belongingness, ultimately promoting healthier outcomes and more supportive social environments.

Keywords: *Fear of Rejection, Resilience, Sense of Belongingness*

Fear of rejection is a prevalent psychological phenomenon with profound implications for individuals' emotional well-being and social interactions. Stemming from the innate human need for acceptance and belonging, fear of rejection manifests as a pervasive fear of disapproval or exclusion, often leading to avoidance behaviors and impaired functioning across various life domains (Leary, 2010; DeWall & Bushman, 2011). This study aims to investigate the impact of fear of rejection on resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults, addressing a gap in the literature regarding the specific implications of fear of rejection on these critical psychological outcomes.

Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity, plays a pivotal role in individuals' capacity to navigate life's challenges and setbacks (Masten & Narayan, 2012). For the purpose of this study, resilience will be operationally defined as the individual's ability to effectively cope with and recover from stressors, setbacks, and rejection-related experiences.

Similarly, the sense of belongingness reflects individuals' perceived connection and acceptance within social groups, contributing significantly to emotional well-being and

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psychological adjustment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Operationalized in this study, the sense of belongingness will refer to the subjective appraisal of one's integration and acceptance within social contexts, including family, peer groups, and community.

While prior research has explored fear of rejection and its correlates, limited attention has been given to its specific impact on resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults (Ayduk & Zayas, 2011). Consequently, there is a pressing need to elucidate the mechanisms through which fear of rejection influences these critical psychological outcomes. By addressing this gap, the current study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between fear of rejection, resilience, and sense of belongingness among young adults.

Understanding how fear of rejection affects resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults is essential for informing the development of targeted interventions aimed at promoting mental health and social well-being. By empirically investigating these relationships, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying fear of rejection and its implications for young adults' psychological resilience and social functioning.

Through this research, we aim to provide valuable insights that can inform the design and implementation of interventions tailored to support young adults in effectively coping with fear of rejection and fostering a sense of resilience and belongingness in their social environments.

While prior research has examined the correlates of fear of rejection, few studies have systematically investigated its impact on resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults (Ayduk & Zayas, 2011). Consequently, there is a pressing need to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which fear of rejection influences these critical psychological outcomes. By addressing this gap in the literature, the current study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between fear of rejection, resilience, and sense of belongingness among young adults.

Understanding how fear of rejection impacts individuals' ability to bounce back from adversity and foster meaningful connections within their social environment is essential for designing effective interventions to support their psychological resilience and sense of belongingness (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Through empirical investigation, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying fear of rejection and its implications for young adults' mental health and social functioning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gandhi, M., & Patel, D. (2024). Investigated the impact of fear of rejection on college students' career aspirations, emphasizing the role of career adaptability in mediating this relationship. They underscored the significance of cultivating adaptive career skills to counteract the negative effects of fear of rejection on career decision-making and goal pursuit.

Gupta, S., & Sharma, R. (2024). Explored gender-specific patterns in fear of rejection and resilience among emerging adults, with a focus on the moderating influence of coping strategies. Their study highlighted the necessity for tailored interventions to address fear of rejection and bolster resilience among young men and women.

Wang, Y., & Chen, L. (2023). Investigated the relationship between perceived parental rejection and young adults' sense of belongingness, revealing that a strong sense of identity partly mediates the detrimental effects of parental rejection. Their findings underscored the developmental importance of identity exploration and integration in fostering a sense of belongingness.

Lee, S., & Park, J. (2023). Examined cultural disparities in fear of rejection and sense of belongingness among Asian American young adults, focusing on the role of acculturation stress. Their results highlighted the intricate interplay between cultural factors, acculturation stress, and psychosocial adjustment, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive interventions.

Zhao, X., & Wu, Y. (2023). Explored the moderating influence of cultural adjustment on the relationship between fear of rejection and psychological well-being among international students. Their findings suggested that successful cultural adjustment mitigates the adverse effects of fear of rejection on psychological well-being, emphasizing the importance of supportive cultural transition programs for international students.

Chang, L., & Li, X. (2023). Conducted a longitudinal study examining the interaction between fear of rejection and social support on college students' sense of belongingness. Their findings indicated that social support buffers the negative impact of fear of rejection over time, emphasizing the protective role of supportive relationships.

Patel, R., & Shah, S. (2023). Explored the association between fear of rejection and academic outcomes among first-generation college students, focusing on the mediating role of self-efficacy. Their findings suggested that fostering self-beliefs and academic confidence partially mitigates the negative impact of fear of rejection on academic performance.

Wang, Y., & Chen, L. (2023). Investigated the mediating role of identity formation in the relationship between perceived parental rejection and sense of belongingness in young adults. Their findings suggest that a strong sense of identity partially mediates the negative impact of parental rejection on sense of belongingness, highlighting the developmental significance of identity exploration and integration.

Kim, H., & Lee, E. (2022). Examined the moderating role of attachment styles in the relationship between fear of rejection and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults. Their findings suggested that secure attachment moderates this relationship, buffering the negative impact of fear of rejection on relationship satisfaction, while insecure attachment exacerbates it.

Singh, A., & Mishra, N. (2022). Explored the relationship between fear of rejection and mental health outcomes among LGBTQ+ youth, focusing on the buffering role of community support. Their results indicated that community support attenuates the adverse effects of fear of rejection on mental health, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQ+ individuals.

METHOD
Problem
To study the impact of fear of rejection on resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults.

Participants

The study recruited 150 participants through convenient sampling. The participants were young adults aged between 18 and 25 years from diverse backgrounds.

Design

This study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between fear of rejection, sense of belongingness, and resilience among young adults aged 18 to 26 years.

Objectives

- To investigate the impact of fear of rejection on resilience among young adults.
- To investigate the impact of fear of rejection on sense of belongingness among young adult.

Hypothesis

- There is a significant negative impact of fear of rejection on resilience among adults.
- There is a significant negative impact of fear of rejection on sense of belongingness among adults.

Tools

The Fear of Rejection Scale, developed by Nida Nafees in 2019 has 15 items with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from .68 to .89 across its four factors, it also demonstrated construct validity through correlations with related constructs and minimal correlations with unrelated constructs.

The Resilience Scale Revised, authored by Wagnild in 2009, is a 14 items scale with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranging from .89 to .96, the construct validity of the Resilience Scale Revised by Wagnild (2009) has been confirmed through various methods, including content analysis, known groups, convergent/discriminant studies, correlation studies.

The General Sense of Belongingness Scale, developed by Malone and Muncil, is a 12-item scale that measures individuals' overall sense of acceptance and inclusion in social groups. It contains robust construct validity and the scale demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .89 to .96.

RESULT

Fear of rejection and resilience
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
RESILIENCE	73.38	11.186	150
FEAR OF REJECTION	49.59	12.094	150

Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean resilience score was 73.38 (SD = 11.186) and the mean fear of rejection score was 49.59 (SD = 12.094).

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2461.080	1	2461.080	22.506	.000[b]
	Residual	16184.260	148	109.353		
	Total	18645.340	149			

a. Dependent Variable: RESILIENCE   b. Predictors: (Constant), FEAR OF REJECTION

Regression analysis was conducted to further explore the relationship between fear of rejection and resilience. The regression model was statistically significant (F(1,148) = 22.506, p < .001), and fear of rejection significantly predicted resilience (β = -.363, p < .001). This suggests that fear of rejection has a significant negative impact on resilience among young adults.

Fear of rejection and sense of belongingness
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
BELONGINGNESSSCORES	45.79	9.817	150
FEAROFREJECTION	49.59	12.094	150

Descriptive statistics indicated that the mean belongingness score was 45.79 (SD = 9.817) and the mean fear of rejection score was 49.59 (SD = 12.094).

ANOVA

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
	Regression	2536.504	1	2536.504	31.754	.000b
1	Residual	11822.089	148	79.879		
	Total	14358.593	149			

a. Dependent Variable: BELONGINGNESS SCORES
b. Predictors: (Constant), FEAR OF REJECTION

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of fear of rejection on belongingness scores. The regression model was statistically significant (F(1,148) = 31.754, p < .001), and fear of rejection significantly predicted belongingness scores (β = -.420, p < .001). This indicates that fear of rejection negatively affects feelings of belongingness among young adults.

DISCUSSION

Our study explored how fear of rejection impacts resilience and sense of belongingness among young adults, revealing significant associations and providing insights into their psychological well-being.

Fear of Rejection and Resilience
The negative impact of fear of rejection on resilience suggests that young adults with higher fear of rejection tend to have lower resilience levels. This highlights the challenge they face in bouncing back from adversity and maintaining psychological well-being.

Fear of Rejection and Sense of Belongingness
Similarly, the negative impact of fear of rejection on sense of belongingness indicates that individuals with higher fear of rejection experience lower feelings of social connectedness. This underscores the importance of addressing these fears to enhance social integration with and support.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights how fear of rejection negatively impacts young adults' resilience and sense of belonging. Recognizing fear of rejection as a significant predictor, interventions can be tailored to mitigate its effects, empowering individuals to foster resilience and stronger

connections. Addressing this barrier is crucial for promoting young adults' mental well-being and social integration.

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How to cite this article: Kaushik, G. & Yadav, V. (2024). Impact of Fear of Rejection on Resilience and Sense of Belongingness among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *12*(2)*,* 206-211. DIP:18.01.426.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.426