

# Relationships of Interpersonal Problems and Depression in College Students

Leal F., Teter E., Wrappah J., Stahl L., Fant P.  
North Texas Behavrial Health Careers Opportunity Program

## Introduction

- Depression is state of unhappiness, discontent, and pessimism that interferes with daily life (APA 2018).
- Depression in College university students has been a rising issue in recent years (Chen et al., 2023).
- Interpersonal problems consist of a pattern of behaviors within relationships that ultimately lead to inefficient communication or interactions (Sadock & Sadock, 2011).
- These problematic behaviors may be characterized as interpersonal excesses (behaviors done too much) or inhibitions (behaviors done too little) (Soldz et al., 1995).
- Some examples of interpersonal problems include dominant, submissive, affiliative, and hostile behavior (Soldz et al., 1995).
- In addition to psychological issues like depression, interpersonal problems have also been found to be a common issue among students (Eng & Heimberg, 2006).
- These problematic behavioral tendencies may result in disruptions in social interaction (Hunt et al., 2010), lack of social support, and loneliness (Bell & Gonzalez, 1988; Meng et al., 2011), which have been shown to be associated with depressive symptoms and other mental health concerns (Saleem et al., 2019).The multitudes of developmental tasks facing college students demand a large amount of social interaction (Di Stasio et al., 2020), thus emphasizing problematic interpersonal behavior in this population of people seems appropriate.

## Method

### Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to address how social aspects are related to mental health in college students.

### Two Research Questions:

What is the association between interpersonal problems and depression?

Does interpersonal problems predict depression?

### Predictions:

Hypothesis 1: Higher rates of interpersonal problems will be associated with higher rates of depression.

Hypothesis 2: Interpersonal problems will predict depression in college students.

## Method

A sample of 441 college students was drawn from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette via SONA participates recruitment system or class announcement.

Demographics: The average age of the participants were 23.18 (SD=6.82). The self reported ethnicities were as followed: 56% White, 16.3% Black/African American, 8.2% Asian/Asian American, 6.8% Hispanic/Latino, and 12.7% identified as Other.

### Measures

**Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21).** The depression, anxiety, and stress scale 21 (DASS-21; Lovibond and Lovibond, 1995) is a 21 item self-report measure that is a shorter form of the longer DASS-42 item scale.

- An exemplar item for the Depression subscale is “I couldn’t seem to experience any positive feeling at all.”

**Inventory of Interpersonal Problems - Short Circumplex Form (IIP-SC).** The inventory of Interpersonal Problems - Short Circumplex Form (IIP-SC; Soldz et al., 1995) is a shortened 32-item version of the 64-item Inventory of Interpersonal Problems - Circumplex Scales (IIP-C;

- An exemplar item that represents interpersonal inhibitions would be “asserting myself with another person,” where as an interpersonal excess would be “I put others needs before my own too much”.

## Results

### Correlation table

|                        | Interpersonal problems | Depression |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Interpersonal problems | -                      | .71        |

### Regression table

| Depression             | R squared | F    | Beta | Sig.  |
|------------------------|-----------|------|------|-------|
| Interpersonal Problems | .51       | 19.1 | .71  | <.001 |

**A Linear regression showed that Interpersonal Problems significantly predicted Depression, F(1,408) = 19.1, p < .001, R^2 = .51, b = .71.**

## Discussion

- The results of this study suggest that interpersonal problems were related to depression in college students.
- Results showed that interpersonal problems accounts for 51% of the variance in depression amongst college students.
- This suggests that social aspects in college students' lives can influence their mental health negatively (Wu et al., 2021).
- This is important because poor mental health in students can further lead to the downfall of the students' academic achievements as well as reduce their academic related motivation (Wentzel et al., 1998).
- This study was inline with previous research that displayed the importance of interpersonal processes in the manifestation of mental health (Eganov et al., 2020).
- Social aspects like interpersonal problems are important to consider because of the importance of peer and professional networking and development of a social support system especially in college students. - Social support has been found to alleviate depressive symptoms while also being a critical key to helping college students adjust to their new lifestyle. All of these things have been found to be critical to aspiring young professionals d(Sadock & Sadock, 2011).

### •Limitations and Future Directions

- It is also important to note that the data was self reported. This is a limitation because the sample could possibly lie or exaggerate when answering.
- Future research should assess these variables post covid-19 to allow for better generalization of findings.

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