

The Effectiveness of Mentalization-Based Training on Rejection Sensitivity and Difficulties in Positive Emotion Regulation in Students with Social Anxiety

Roghayeh. Mahmoud Soltani¹, Mehdi. Heydari^{1*}, Rezvan. Rezvani²

¹ Department of Clinical Psychology, To.C., Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

² M.A., Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University, Pakdasht, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: mehdi.heydari6682@iau.ir

Editor

Muhammad Rizwan¹
Associate Professor, Department of
Psychology, Haripur University,
Islamabad, Pakistan
muhammad.rizwan@uoh.edu.pk

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Mehdi Rostami¹
Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond
Hill, Ontario, Canada. Email: dr.mrostami@kmanresce.ca
Reviewer 2: Azade Abooei¹
Department of Counseling, Faculty of Humanities, University of Science and Art,
Yazd, Iran. Email: a.abooei@tea.sau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph stating “Recent evidence has shown that social anxiety is not merely associated with overt fear in social situations...,” the theoretical framework would benefit from a more explicit integration of cognitive-behavioral and attachment-based perspectives on social anxiety. The manuscript currently introduces socio-affective and interpersonal mechanisms, but it does not clearly explain how mentalization theory conceptually bridges these mechanisms with the selected outcome variables.

The section discussing rejection sensitivity as “a cognitive-affective tendency characterized by anxious expectations...” is theoretically relevant; however, the manuscript does not adequately differentiate rejection sensitivity from closely related constructs such as interpersonal sensitivity, fear of negative evaluation, and attachment anxiety. A clearer conceptual distinction is necessary to avoid construct overlap and to justify the selection of rejection sensitivity as a primary dependent variable.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are relatively comprehensive; however, the criterion “not suffering from severe psychiatric disorders” is vague and clinically imprecise. The authors should explain whether psychiatric screening interviews were conducted, whether self-report disclosure was used, and which diagnostic criteria or assessment tools were applied to determine psychiatric eligibility.

The paragraph describing the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire contains an important psychometric inconsistency. The manuscript attributes the questionnaire to “William H. Bies and James Parker (1989),” which appears inconsistent with the widely recognized Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire literature. The authors should verify the original source, authorship, scale structure, and psychometric references to ensure scientific accuracy.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The paragraph citing Zimmer-Gembeck et al. and Lord et al. appropriately references longitudinal and interpersonal evidence, but the manuscript does not sufficiently discuss the mechanisms through which impaired mentalization contributes specifically to rejection-oriented interpretations. Expanding this discussion with a more detailed account of reflective functioning and epistemic trust would considerably improve the theoretical depth of the introduction.

The statement “Positive emotion dysregulation refers to maladaptive responses to pleasant emotional experiences...” is conceptually important; nevertheless, the manuscript inconsistently refers to “Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale–Positive” while later describing the standard DERS developed by Gratz and Roemer. This creates substantial ambiguity regarding the actual instrument used. The authors should clarify whether the study employed the DERS-Positive or the original DERS and ensure complete consistency throughout the manuscript.

The paragraph beginning with “In recent years, mindfulness- and mentalization-oriented interventions have gained increasing attention...” provides a useful comparison between mindfulness and mentalization approaches; however, the rationale for selecting mentalization-based training instead of more established interventions for social anxiety, such as CBT, remains underdeveloped. The manuscript would benefit from a stronger justification grounded in empirical superiority, mechanism-specific intervention effects, or contextual suitability.

In the paragraph discussing “Mentalization-based training may be particularly relevant for reducing rejection sensitivity...,” the proposed intervention mechanisms are theoretically plausible, yet the manuscript does not specify how these mechanisms were operationalized during the sessions. Providing examples of specific therapeutic exercises targeting interpersonal ambiguity, reflective functioning, or emotional flexibility would improve methodological transparency and intervention reproducibility.

The study design paragraph beginning with “The present study was applied in terms of purpose...” lacks sufficient detail regarding the recruitment setting and the number of institutions involved. Since the sample was drawn from “universities, student counseling centers, and selected psychological service clinics,” the manuscript should clarify how many sites participated and whether participants differed systematically across recruitment settings.

The sentence “students whose scores were above the mean score of the initial sample were identified as individuals with elevated social anxiety” raises a significant methodological concern. Using the sample mean as a cutoff criterion may compromise diagnostic validity and introduce sample dependency. The authors should justify this procedure and discuss why established clinical cutoff scores or standardized norms were not employed.

The manuscript states that “30 eligible students were selected using purposive sampling and were then randomly assigned through a simple lottery method.” While random assignment is mentioned, the procedure lacks sufficient methodological detail. The authors should specify allocation concealment procedures, whether randomization was conducted by an independent researcher, and how selection bias was minimized.

The explanation of sample size determination indicates “a statistical power of 0.83” and “a moderate effect size,” yet no formal power analysis software, formula, or effect size assumptions are reported. This omission weakens methodological rigor. The manuscript should specify the statistical assumptions underlying the power estimation and identify the software or procedure used for sample size calculation.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.