

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF HYPER-INDEPENDENCE ON REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND FEAR OF INTIMACY AMONG YOUNG FEMALE ADULTS



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**Abstract.** Rejection sensitivity, hyper-independence, and fear of intimacy are interrelated psychological constructs that evidently affects an individual's existing interpersonal relationships and overall well-being. Together, they can create complex barriers to forming and maintaining healthy connections, highlighting the importance of understanding their interplay in fostering emotional and relational growth. A mediation analysis was used to ascertain the mediating role of hyper-independence on the influence of rejection sensitivity to the fear of intimacy among young female adults who are not in a dating relationship. The respondents were chosen via purposive sampling. There were 300 respondents who filled out the integrated questionnaire composed of the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Hyper-Independence Scale, and Fear of Intimacy Scale. Findings revealed that rejection sensitivity significantly influences hyper-independence and fear of intimacy. Likewise, hyper-independence highly impacts fear of intimacy significantly. Results have substantiated that hyper-independent individuals may inadvertently foster a guarded stance toward intimacy. In turn, this guarded stance may also stem from the sensitivity of individuals to rejection. Furthermore, hyper-independence partially mediated rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy. Suggestively, heightened independence plays a partial role on how the anxious emotions towards being intimate with others is influenced by their increasing sensitivity with cues of rejection. Lastly, an intervention program was carried out to assist young adults in cultivating healthier behavioral patterns.

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**Keywords:** *Fear of Intimacy, Hyper-Independence, Rejection Sensitivity, Young Adults*

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## **Introduction**

Liberty in making life decisions without being influenced by interpersonal relationships such as friendship, familial connection, and romantic networks is essential for the psychological growth of an individual (Javier et al., 2020). However, the excessive autonomy conferred to a person in maneuvering their own lives could lead to detachment towards their withstanding social relationships and their refusal to build new ones (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, detachment also traces back to experiences of rejection and neglect from formative years until adolescence, which crucially shapes the interpersonal relationships built during adulthood (Lenton-Brym et al., 2020). Likewise, self-reliance also provokes detachment, impacting an individual's help-seeking behavior, social networks, and overall well-being (Choo & Marszalek, 2019). Furthermore, Giovazolias and Paschalidi (2022) identify the elevated sensitivity to rejection as an antecedent of the developed fear of intimacy, especially in women.

In this regard, the researchers observed a probable relationship between rejection sensitivity, hyper-independence, and fear of intimacy, hence the need for more profound research. Unfortunately, despite the relevance of hyper-independence in the presentation of avoidant behavioral patterns, only a few scholarly research have been prompted. Rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy, on the other hand, have received enough scholarly attention. Among these, Shulman and Yonatan-Leus (2023) replicated a study investigating the impact of rejection sensitivity on romantic relationships during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Additionally, Manbeck et al. (2020) quantified fear of intimacy in reference to a vast spectrum of interpersonal relationships and its relation to the overall well-being. However, the rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy among individuals not in a dating relationship, especially in the younger spectrum of young female adults, remains unexplored.

Relative to the aforementioned gap in the literature, we address it in the present study by examining the mediating impact of hyper-independence in the relationship between rejection sensitivity and the developed fear of intimacy among young female adult students enrolled at Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology. Notably, these students must not be in a dating relationship during the study. Overall, the goal of this study is to utilize the data and results obtained as the foundation for developing an intervention program. Moreover, this study was conducted during the first semester of Academic Year 2024 - 2025.

## **Research Objectives**

This study investigated the young female adult undergraduate students from Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology who are currently not affiliated with any dating relationship. Specifically, this paper sought to answer the following: (1) What is the level of rejection sensitivity among the respondents?; (2) What is the level of hyper-independence among the respondents?; (3) What is the level of fear of intimacy among the respondents?; (4) Is there a significant influence of the level of rejection sensitivity on the level of fear of intimacy among the respondents?; (5) Is there a significant influence of the level of rejection sensitivity on the level of hyper-independence among the respondents?; (6) Is there a significant influence of the level of

hyper-independence on the level of fear of intimacy among the respondents?; (7) Does the level of hyper-independence significantly mediate the influence of the level of rejection sensitivity on the level of fear of intimacy?; and (8) What intervention program could be made based on the findings of the study?

## **Methods**

The researchers utilized a quantitative approach through a descriptive research design, a method focusing on analyzing numerical data, variables, and information to derive findings. A mediation analysis was used to ascertain the influence of rejection sensitivity on the levels of fear of intimacy through the mediator, hyper-independence. The 300 respondents were purposely selected within the range of 18 to 25 who are currently not in a dating relationship. The study took place at Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology who were enrolled during the first semester of the Academic Year 2024 – 2025. Notably, all respondents were made aware of the preliminary information regarding the research, i.e., title of the study, purpose of the research, and the criteria imposed on its target respondents. After which, the researchers handed out informed consent forms for the students who suffices the criteria and are voluntarily participating. It was done to ensure that the rights of the respondents are respected while upholding the utmost scholarly interest of the research.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to complete an integrated questionnaire containing three standardized self-report measures. The 18-situation Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ – 18) by Downey and Feldman (1996) was adopted to this study to present the degree of anxiety and expectancy about the outcome of each situation to quantify the level of rejection sensitivity. The 7-item Hyper-Independence Scale (HIS) which is self-made was also adopted to this study to assess the extremity of independence based on how an individual perceives as they should behave on specific situations. The 35-item Fear of Intimacy by Descutner and Thelen (1991) was adopted to this study to assess an individual's level of fear of intimacy and their extent of their anxiety.

Mean, standard deviation, frequency and percent were used to describe and measure the respondents' rejection sensitivity, hyper-independence, and fear of intimacy. Moreover, linear regression was employed to verify the significant relationships between the variables and establish the grounds for mediation analysis. Hayes process macro was also used to examine whether hyper-independence mediated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results and findings of the study are presented chronologically based on the objectives as presented herein.

**Table 1***Summary of the Respondents' Level of Rejection Sensitivity*

Scoring Scale	Rejection Sensitivity			
	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
30.21 - 36.00				
24.37 - 30.20				
18.53 - 24.36	2	0.66%	19.92	Moderately High
12.69 - 18.52	110	36.67%	15.02	Moderately Low
6.85 - 12.68	165	55.00%	10.16	Low
1.00 - 6.84	23	7.67%	9.94	Very Low
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>11.65</b>	<b>Low</b>

*F - Frequency*

Table 1 illustrates the respondents' level of rejection sensitivity. The results show that 55.00% of the total sample with a mean score of 10.16 ( $n=165$ ) has *low* rejection sensitivity. Followed by 36.67% of the sample size with a mean score of 15.02 ( $n=110$ ) presenting a *moderately low* rejection sensitivity. With a mean score of 9.94 ( $n=23$ ), 7.67% of the sample size attained a *very low* rejection sensitivity. Lastly, 0.66% of the entirety garnered a mean score of 19.92 ( $n=2$ ) which deduces to a *moderately high* rejection sensitivity. Overall, the respondents' level of rejection sensitivity was found to be *low* with a mean score of 11.65 ( $n=300$ ).

The aforementioned findings suggest a low level of rejection sensitivity exhibited by the respondents. Specifically, this implies that young female adult students who are currently not in a dating relationship are unlikely to anticipate and avoid rejection cues although a significantly less percentage of the population size presents a heightened vulnerability to perceived rejection. It can be inferred that most respondents navigate social dynamics with significantly less concern about acceptance and rejection from their surroundings and day-to-day encounters.

Reinforced by the study of Mishra et al. (2024), individuals with low rejection sensitivity do not experience an alarmingly strong activation of defense mechanisms against rejections or refusals. Hence, they will likely establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with a high expectancy of healthy connections. However, it does come with risks, such as taking acceptance for granted. Contrary to Reinhard et al. (2019), who stipulated that the development of depressive symptoms in the learning setting increases due to the common occurrence of peer rejection, several learners in tertiary education are still presenting significantly low levels of rejection sensitivity.

**Table 2***Summary of the Respondents' Level of Hyper-Independence*

Scoring Scale	Hyper-Independence			
	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
43 - 49	88	29.33%	45	Very High
36 - 42	180	60.00%	39	High
29 - 35	32	10.67%	34	Moderately High
22 - 28				
15 - 21				
8 - 14				
1 - 7				
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>40.36</b>	<b>High</b>

*F - Frequency*

Table 2 illustrates the respondents' level of hyper-independence. The results reveal that 60.00% of the sample size presents a *high* level of hyper-independence with a mean score of 39 ( $n=180$ ). Then, 29.33% of the population demonstrated a very high hyper-independence level with a mean score of 45 ( $n=88$ ). A *moderately high* level of hyper-independence with a mean score of 34 ( $n=32$ ) was observed among 10.67% of the respondents. Overall, the respondents' level of hyper-independence was found to be *high*, with a mean score of 40.36 ( $n=300$ ).

The above-mentioned findings suggest an evidently high level of hyper-independence exhibited by the respondents. Specifically, this implies that young female adult students who are currently not in a dating relationship are likely to reject help from others and overvalue self-efficacy. It can be inferred that they have a strong preference for self-sufficiency, which often precedes their reluctance to seek external assistance and input from their environment. They may also struggle to collaborate effectively in group settings and attempt social isolation, as their desire for independence and individuality can push others away.

Thus, the extreme need for autonomy and resolute reluctance to receive help from its environment will likely cause existing interpersonal relationships to fall apart over time (Hanawalt, 2022). However, in the study of Jakubiak et al. (2022), he stipulated that a relationship is not likely to collapse when a hyper-independent individual is understood, reassured, and supported by interpersonal relationships.

**Table 3**

*Summary of the Respondents' Level of Fear of Intimacy*

Scoring Scale	Fear of Intimacy			
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>QI</i>
148 - 175	2	0.62%	155.50	<i>Very High</i>
120 - 147	37	5.23%	127.97	<i>High</i>
92 - 119	155	53.23%	103.40	<i>Average</i>
64 - 91	95	36.92%	79.93	<i>Low</i>
35 - 63	10	4.00%	58.20	<i>Very Low</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>98.67</b>	<b><i>Average</i></b>

*M – Mean; F – Frequency; Qualitative Interpretation (QI)*

Table 3 presents the summary of the respondents' level of fear of intimacy. Results shows that 53.23% of the respondents leans towards an *average* fear of intimacy with a mean score of 103.40 ( $n=155$ ). Followed by 36.92% of the sample size which attained a *low* fear of intimacy with a mean score of 79.93 ( $n=95$ ). Then, 5.23% of the respondents attained a mean score of 127.97 ( $n=37$ ) displays a *high* fear of intimacy. Additionally, 4.00% of the population presented a *very low* fear of intimacy with a mean score of 58.20( $n=10$ ). Lastly, 0.62% of the respondents revealed a *very high* fear of intimacy with a mean score 155.50( $n=2$ ). Overall, the respondents' level of fear of intimacy was found to be *average* with a mean score of 98.67 ( $n=300$ ).

The aforementioned findings suggest that the respondents exhibit an average level of the fear of intimacy. Specifically, this implies that young female adult students who are currently not in a dating relationship presents a moderate manifestation of

anxiety towards intimacy with other individuals. Suggestively, a huge portion of the population, given that they are not in any romantic relationship, are hesitant to be intimate with their social networks or even a probable romantic partner.

Reinforced by the study of Zebuline and Thenmozhi (2022), individuals who are not affiliated with a romantic relationship exhibit an increasing level of fear of intimacy. Furthermore, individuals experiencing heightened apprehension towards intimacy encounter challenges initiating and sustaining communication, fostering favorable impressions within relationships, and articulating their emotions, ultimately leading to diminished life contentment (Fani Sobhani et al., 2021).

Generally, it impacts the overall life satisfaction of an individual, which is likely to decrease due to psychological factors such as rejection, abandonment, and loss, which trigger intense negative emotions whenever a trigger is presented (Qazi et al., 2024). Additionally, social relationships fulfill fundamental human needs such as belongingness, love, and security. However, some individuals struggle to establish and maintain these connections, leading them to adopt self-destructive coping strategies that jeopardize their relationships with others and their personal life goals (Visvalingam et al., 2023). Hence, individuals with a prevalent fear of intimacy are often not in a dating relationship due to previous experiences of falling out in their romantic relationships (Obeid et al., 2019).

**Table 4**

*Influence of the Respondents' Level of Rejection Sensitivity on the Level of Fear of Intimacy*

Variables		Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	p-value
Rejection Sensitivity	Fear of Intimacy	.253**	<.001

\*Significant at 0.05 level

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level (Highly Significant)

Table 4 presents the influence of rejection sensitivity on the level of fear of intimacy. Findings reveal a significantly high influence of rejection sensitivity on the manifestation of fear of intimacy, wherein  $\beta=.253$ ,  $p<.001$ . The result indicates that the respondents' rejection sensitivity levels correspond to their fear of intimacy. Specifically, it implies that an individual's sensitivity to rejection cues and avoidant behavior in specific social interactions impacts their presenting behavioral patterns of fear of intimacy. With the heightened presentation of rejection sensitivity, an individual becomes even more avoidant and anxious to be intimate with others due to the tendency to be refused when they initiate intimacy.

Rejection-sensitive individuals display the tendency to expect rejection in both overt and ambiguous situations anxiously. Due to the presentation of strong emotional reactions towards specific cues, individuals tend to cope through maladaptive behaviors, such as being anxious about initiating intimacy, which may result in a refusal from the other person (Beeson et al., 2020). Furthermore, rejection sensitivity is also characterized by interpersonal anxiety, which heavily impacts the presented fear of intimacy. Not only do individuals withdraw from existing interpersonal relationships due to their fear, but they also avoid building new relationships, still accounting for the same anxiety (Giovazolias & Paschalidi, 2022).

**Table 5***Influence of the Respondents' Level of Rejection Sensitivity on the Level of Hyper-Independence*

Variables		Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	p-value
Rejection Sensitivity	Hyper-Independence	.122*	.035

\*Significant at 0.05 level

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level (Highly Significant)

Table 5 presents the influence of rejection sensitivity on the level of hyper-independence. Findings reveal a strong influence of rejection sensitivity on the exhibited hyper-independence among the respondents, wherein  $\beta=.122$ ,  $p=.035$ . The result indicates that the respondents' rejection sensitivity levels correspond to their excessive presentation of hyper-independence.

Specifically, it implies that an individual's sensitivity to rejection cues and avoidant behavior in specific social interactions impacts their presenting behavioral patterns of reluctance to seek and receive help. Due to the sensitivity of an individual to be refused or rejected by their environment, they tend to accomplish tasks, run errands, and perform individually. Despite the risk of overworking and fatigue, hyper-independent individuals would rather be alone than risk being refused when they ask for help.

Reinforced by the study of Lesnick and Mendle (2021), students often resort to impulsive responses whenever stressed by peers in the learning environment. This peer stress is highly shaped by the hypersensitivity of an individual to rejection, which then stimulates responses that may be adverse to social harmony. In turn, this impacts the likelihood of an individual creating a close and intimate bond with their peers. With the declining relationship between individuals and their peers, they would likely prefer to work autonomously, even at the expense of their health. As supported by Sommerfeld and Bitton (2022), rejection-sensitive individuals exhibit low self-compassion, which indicates that even at the expense of their own selves, they can tolerate their toxic behavioral patterns.

**Table 6***Influence of the Respondents' Level of Hyper-Independence on the Level of Fear of Intimacy*

Variables		Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	p-value
Hyper-Independence	Fear of Intimacy	.225**	<.001

\*Significant at 0.05 level

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level (Highly Significant)

Table 6 presents the influence of hyper-independence on the level of fear of intimacy. Findings reveal a significantly strong influence of hyper-independence on the manifestation of fear of intimacy among the respondents, wherein  $\beta=.225$ ,  $p<.001$ . The result indicates that the respondents' hyper-independence levels closely correspond to their anxious behavioral patterns towards being intimate with other people.

Specifically, it implies that excessively autonomous individuals, characterized by their reluctance to seek and receive help from their surroundings, influence their likelihood of being close and intimate with others. An existing drive among hyper-independent individuals causes them to act unconsciously and decide alone without the

external input of others. Whether an individual has an existing romantic relationship or not, due to their increasing need for individualism, their interpersonal relationships are at the expense of falling apart. In turn, hyper-independent individuals fear creating a bond with others and being intimately close with treasured individuals due to their tendency to overly value the I mindset rather than the We wherein others are valued and not just themselves.

Furthermore, hyper-independent individuals feel sufficient on their own that they unconsciously undervalue their interpersonal relationships. Due to this, their relationships, especially romantic ones, feel that their worth is depleting due to the lack of emotional intimacy (Erichsen, 2023). Because of the imbalance between the I and We mindset, interpersonal relationships are at stake of falling apart. In turn, hyper-independent individuals develop a fear of being intimate with other individuals, knowing that they might unintentionally forsake the relationship (White, 2022).

**Table 7**

*Analyses of the Hyper-Independence Mediation Effect on the Influence of Rejection Sensitivity on the Respondents' Fear of Intimacy*

Path	Variables/Effect	$\beta$	SE	p-value
a	Rejection Sensitivity $\rightarrow$ Hyper-Independence	.143*	.067	.035
b	Hyper-Independence $\rightarrow$ Fear of Intimacy	.972**	.274	<.001
c <sup>1</sup>	Rejection Sensitivity $\rightarrow$ Fear of Intimacy	1.33**	.321	<.001
<b>Effects</b>				
	Direct	1.33**	.321	<.001
	Indirect	.139*	.084	<.05
	Total	1.47**	.324	<.001
	Percentage Mediated (%)		9.5%	

*B* - Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; *SE* - Standard Error

\* Significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level (*Highly Significant*)

Table 7 shows the mediating effect of hyper-independence on the influence of rejection sensitivity on the level of fear of intimacy. In order to determine if hyper-independence mediated the impact of rejection sensitivity on the female young adult's fear of intimacy, a bootstrapping method was used through Hayes' Process Macro methodology.

Three conditions were met before analyzing the mediation effect. First, the regression analysis' findings indicate that rejection sensitivity had a substantial impact on fear of intimacy ( $\beta=1.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Second, the regression analysis results revealed that rejection sensitivity had a significant impact on the hyper-independence ( $\beta=.143$ ,  $p=.035$ ) of the respondents. Third, the regression analysis yielded results indicating that hyper-independence significantly influences fear of intimacy ( $\beta=.972$ ,  $p <.001$ ). Thus, the grounds for mediation analysis are established.

More so, the indirect effect ( $\beta=.139$ ,  $p<.05$ ) demonstrates the substantial effect of rejection sensitivity on fear of intimacy through hyper-independence while the total



effect ( $\beta=1.472$ ,  $p <.001^{**}$ ) yields statistically significant results. Substantially, about 9.5% of the overall influence of the rejection sensitivity was attributable to hyper-independence.

Results revealed a partial mediation of hyper-independence on the impact of rejection sensitivity on the fear of intimacy of non-dating female young adults. This means that due to the existing influence of the variables on each other, the mediator only functions as a strengthening factor to the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. It implies that increasing sensitivity towards rejection cues affects the heightened manifestation of behavioral patterns of fear of intimacy. Moreover, this effect surges even more when an individual is hyper-independent.

The results suggest that an individual's tendency to be reluctant to ask for and receive help affects, although not entirely, the influence of the heightened sensitivity with cues of rejection on the anxious emotions towards being intimate with other people. Hyper-independence strengthens the influence of rejection sensitivity, further increasing the tendency of individuals to withdraw from interpersonal relationships. With constant withdrawal, individuals begin to develop a fear of intimacy.

Giovazolias and Paschalidi (2022) reinforces that fear of intimacy is the inclined anxiety an individual has in socializing with their interpersonal relationships such as peers, friends, and family. It is a byproduct of an increasing level of rejection sensitivity. However, the sensitivity towards being refused and the anxiety to interact with interpersonal relationships and even strangers is also inclined to hyper-independence characterized by extreme self-reliance and refusal to seek help from other people.

## **Intervention Program**

### **Rationale**

Unhealthy behavioral patterns are deemed rampant among young adults enrolled in tertiary education, especially among females who are not in a dating relationship. This claim is supported by this study's results, which revealed the presentation of detached and avoidant patterns of behavior such as rejection sensitivity, hyper-independence, and fear of intimacy. Hence, the researchers crafted the *Bridges Not Walls: Pathways to Healthy Connections and Overcoming Intimacy Barriers* intervention program to cater to this concern specifically.

### **General Objectives**

1. To learn and acknowledge toxic behavioral patterns involving rejection sensitivity, hyper-independence, and fear of intimacy.
2. To build a healthier and more balanced network of connections across interpersonal relationships especially in the learning environment.
3. To extend help to the general public who may or may not be aware of their own toxic behavioral patterns and the extent to which it is affecting them.

*Bridges Not Walls: Pathways To Healthy Connections and Overcoming Intimacy Barriers*

Area of Concern	Specific Objectives	Activities/Strategies	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Budget	Monitoring Scheme	Success Indicator
Rejection Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the behavioral patterns inclined with the sensitivity to rejection cues.</li> <li>Explain the identified holistic impact of rejection sensitivity.</li> <li>Identify cues of rejection experienced in the past.</li> </ul>	Psychoeducation About Rejection Sensitivity	Students, Resource Speaker, Guidance Personnel	Week 1	5000	After activity evaluation.	Active participation of the students with 80% - 100% attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize personal responses presented towards rejection cues.</li> <li>Identify the emotional impact that led to the presentation of the said response.</li> <li>Learn to regulate the emotions inclined to the responses inclined with rejection cues.</li> </ul>	Emotion Regulation Workshop	Students, Resource Speaker, Guidance Personnel	Week 2 - 3	10000	After activity evaluation.	Active participation of the students with 80% - 100% attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get familiarized with identified personal situational triggers.</li> <li>Strategize new responses to replace the detached behavioral ones.</li> <li>Create a planned response against rejection cues which may present unexpectedly.</li> </ul>	Crafting of Personal Relapse Prevention Plan	Students	Week 4 - 5	-----	After activity evaluation.	Full commitment of the students.
Hyper-Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the behavioral patterns of hyper-independence.</li> <li>Distinguish the boundary between healthy and toxic independence.</li> <li>Explain the identified holistic consequence of hyper-independence to an individual.</li> </ul>	Psychoeducation About Hyper-Independence	Students, Students Body Organizations, Gender and Development Office, Resource Speaker	Week 6	5000	After activity evaluation.	Full and active participation of the students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify personal responses to situations which entail reluctance to seek or receive help.</li> <li>Reframe negative perceptions of help from other people into harmless actions.</li> <li>Craft better responses for situations wherein cues of hyper-independence may arise</li> </ul>	Cognitive Reframing Workshop	Students, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Expert	Week 7 - 8	20000	After activity evaluation.	Full and active participation of the students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcome the ideology of being self-sufficient.</li> <li>Learn the importance of interdependence to make a team work.</li> <li>Enhance connection building skills among peers.</li> </ul>	Community Building Activities	Students, Students Body Organizations	Week 9	10000	After activity evaluation.	Full and active participation of the students across all activities.

*Bridges Not Walls: Pathways To Healthy Connections and Overcoming Intimacy Barriers (continued)*

Fear of Intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the behavioral patterns inclined with fear of being intimate with interpersonal relationships.</li> <li>• Expound on the possible cause of the fear of intimacy.</li> <li>• Explain the identified holistic impact of the fear of intimacy.</li> </ul>	Psychoeducation About Fear of Intimacy	Students, Students Body Organizations, Gender and Development Office, Resource Speaker	Week 10	5000	After activity evaluation.	Active participation of the students with 80% - 100% attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify experiences in the past that may have been the cause of this fear.</li> <li>• Identify the level of harm the fear of intimacy is inflicting on the individual.</li> <li>• Craft a detailed plan of action regarding the situation of the student.</li> </ul>	Counseling	Students, Guidance Counselor	Week 11 - 14	----	Every session	Active participation of the students with 100% of attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss healthy boundaries in various context.</li> <li>• Exercise setting healthy boundaries.</li> <li>• Learn the concept and importance of consent.</li> </ul>	Understanding Boundaries and Consent	Students, Students Body Organizations, Gender and Development Office, Resource Speaker, Guidance Personnel	Week 15	5000	After activity evaluation.	Full and active participation of the students.

## Conclusion

Inferences from this study provide a profound understanding of the mediating effect of hyper-independence on the impact of rejection on the fear of intimacy. This aligns with the Self-Efficacy Theory, highlighting a paradoxical blend of diminished self-efficacy in handling interpersonal relationships and heightened confidence in task completion alone. It entails that the respondents generally struggle to maintain relationships due to their individualistic and autonomous nature. Reinforced by the Psychosocial Theory of Development and the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory, as these individuals strengthen their independence, they may inadvertently foster a guarded stance toward intimacy. In turn, this guarded stance towards intimate situations may also be accounted from the sensitivity of individuals to specific situations, such as rejection, which may stimulate negative emotions such as shame and disappointment. This emphasizes how one unhealthy behavioral pattern strengthens the prevalence of another, which further creates an unfortunate impact on the overall well-being of an individual. It is profoundly observed through the strengthening impact of hyper-independence as a mediator to the influence of rejection sensitivity on the fear of intimacy. Significantly, this study illuminates light on several avoidant behavioral patterns prevalent among tertiary school students that may or may not be adequately addressed.

## Recommendations

The researchers propose the following recommendations to enhance the current programs related to these distinct cohorts of individuals. These suggestions aim to ensure the significance of the future replications of this study.

**School Administrators.** They should foster a healthy learning environment wherein individuals are informed about healthy boundaries and taught how to handle the sensitivities of other people, especially the vulnerable ones. They must ensure that the well-being of their constituents is not only physically secure but mentally and emotionally as well.

**Guidance Personnel.** They should implement regular psychoeducational activities that students and faculty are highly encouraged to join. This would reinforce support for the needy and awareness for those who are reluctant to admit and acknowledge their unhealthy behavioral patterns. Through this, help is extended to everyone, not only to those who seek it.

**Faculty.** They should employ a mindful approach within the learning setting, ensuring that healthy boundaries among students are respected and that cues of withdrawal from social interactions and the heightened preference for individualism are addressed. Holistic security must be kept within the learning environment without forsaking the well-being of several students due to their unacknowledged sensitivity to certain situations. Educators are also encouraged to refer students to psychological professionals within the institution if needed.

**Parents.** They should create a warm and nurturing home for their children to prevent the development of unfamiliarity and detachment, which in turn creates further complications once toxic behavioral patterns begin to persist. Fostering a healthy relationship at home with family gives an individual a secure foundation for creating social relationships. Additionally, a warm and nurturing home assures the children in the family a welcoming home when setbacks arise.

**Students.** They should learn to assess themselves and notice changes in their behavioral patterns and whether they still align with normal functioning. Once warning signs persist, they must not self-diagnose; instead, seek professional help from the Guidance Office of their respective schools.

**Future Researcher.** They should expound further on the mediating effect of hyper-independence on the impact of rejection sensitivity on fear of intimacy in a different age bracket but still under the young adulthood stage for better generalizability of findings and to supplement the gaps this research failed to address.

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