

# Rejection Sensitivity Mediates the Association Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Depression Among Adolescents



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## INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that risk factors such as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) associate with adverse mental health outcomes including depression, which affects 15.8% of US adolescents as of 2019 (Daly, 2021; van Duin et al., 2019).

- Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are incidents of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or household dysfunction preceding the age of 18.
- Rejection Sensitivity is described as a cognitive-affective approach to anxiously anticipate rejection.

## Hypotheses

- We expect to find that ACEs associate with depression, where greater number of ACEs will predict elevated depression.
- Additionally, we expect to find that rejection sensitivity mediates this relationship.

## METHODS

The data were collected from adolescents through an online survey.

- N=103; M<sub>age</sub> = 16.6 years; 61.8% Female; 77.7% white.

Self-report survey measures were used to assess the key constructs:

- Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-SRQ)
- Adverse Childhood Experience International Questionnaire (ACE)
- Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS-20) that computes broad anxiety through 15 items and MDD through 5 items.

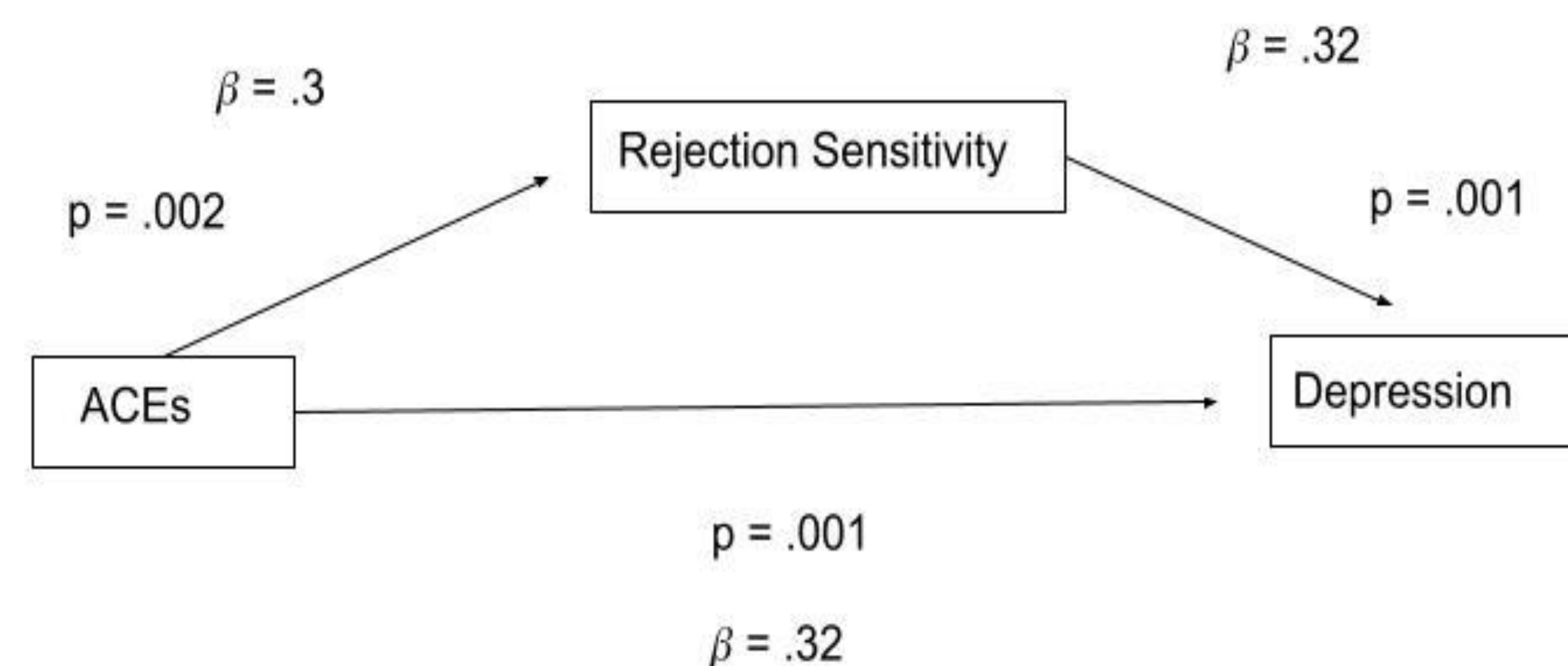


Figure 1. Mediation Model

Table 1. Rejection Sensitivity Mediating between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adolescent Depression

<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>MSE</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
.39	.15	9.50	8.84	<.001
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Constant	7.00	.83	8.40	<.001
ACEs	.49	.20	2.51	.014
Rejection Sensitivity	.19	.08	2.47	.015
<i>Indirect Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>BootSE</i>	<i>Lower CI</i>	<i>Upper CI</i>
Indirect Effect	.15	.08	.01	.33

Figure 2. Table.

## RESULTS

- There was a significant association between ACEs and Depression.
- Rejection sensitivity was found to mediate the relationship between ACEs and adolescent depression.

## CONCLUSIONS

These results support the hypothesis that rejection sensitivity explains the association between ACEs and depression in adolescents. These findings demonstrate that a greater number of ACEs was related to heightened rejection sensitivity which, in turn, associated with worsened depression. Therefore, rejection sensitivity is able to explain the relationship among ACEs and depression.

Overall, the findings implicate the role of rejection sensitivity in the occurrence of depression among adolescents who have experienced ACEs. Rejection sensitivity should be addressed in clinical treatment among this population.

## References

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