Impulsivity and the Dissolution of Romantic Relationships

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Introduction

Emerging adults (18-25 years old) have the ability to develop a personal identity and explore various possibilities in life independently, or for the first time without interference from parents or guardians. Emerging adults tend to base their decision making during this time period on the fulfillment of independence and/or interdependence needs.

There has been very little research conducted regarding the impact of impulsivity on romantic relationship dissolution. Therefore this is an exploratory study and no hypotheses were made.

This study tested whether there are differences in reasons for breaking up with romantic partners based on impulsivity scores.

Methods

Participants

• 113 emerging adults who all experienced a breakup within the last 6 months

Survey Measures

• Romantic Experiences Questionnaire
  Asked participants to provide a narrative of the story of their breakup
• UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale1,2

Results

Independence

Independent samples t-test revealed a lack of significant differences between the impulsivity levels of those who expressed a need for independence and those who did not. In examining the subcategories of impulsivity, none of the variations in impulsivity seemed to play a role in participants’ decision to dissolve their relationship under the guise of independence needs.

Interdependence

Independent samples t-test revealed significant differences between the impulsivity levels of those who expressed a need for interdependence and those who did not. Participants who expressed a need for interdependence as an explanation for the dissolution of their romantic relationship scored higher on the negative urgency and positive urgency subsets of the UPPS than those who did not, which was trending significance.

Discussion

Results of this study suggest a connection between emotional reactivity and the dissolution of romantic relationships for interdependence reasons. This is due to the social connection desired in establishing interdependence and the propensity to react when those needs are not met.