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Revenge Tendencies and Procedural Justice Outcomes of Sexual Rejection

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Introduction

In romantic relationships, partners do not always experience the desire for sexual relations at the same time. The literature shows there are several ways that a romantic partner can reject sexual advances. Based on how rejection is communicated, partners may believe it to be fair or unfair. In order to determine if different types of rejection are deemed more fair or less fair than others from the perspective of the rejected partner, we used hypothetical scenarios of sexual rejection and envaulted individuals' feelings of procedural justice. Procedural justice is the subjective evaluations of events based on the way a process occurred rather than the outcome.

Being sexually rejected can cause feelings of emotional vulnerability and an imbalance of power in romantic relationships. In reaction to the rejection, one way that individuals can respond is by getting even with their romantic partner. Therefore, we examined whether different types of sexual rejections evoked more inclinations to seek revenge against a romantic partner.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the diverse ways of communicating sexual rejection in connection with how fair participants perceived the rejection to be, from a procedural justice viewpoint. Additionally, we evaluated behavioural tendencies in reaction to the types of sexual rejection.

Types of Rejection

Reassuring: your partner reassures you that they love you and are attracted to you, and offers to make it up to you in the future.

Ex: trying to talk instead and offering other forms of physical contact (kissing, hugging, snuggling, cuddling)

Assertive: your partner is clear and straightforward about why they are rejecting you.

Ex: saying no in a direct manner and telling you honestly the reason why they don't want to have sex, even if it hurts your feelings

Deflective: your partner does not reciprocate your affection and seems to be pretending not to notice that you are interested in sex or is pretending to sleep.

Ex: physically turning away from you or lying in a position that's hard to snuggle with

Hostile: your partner starts to criticize the way you initiated sex as well as other aspects of your relationship.

Ex: displaying frustration towards you

Methodology

Procedure:

- Recruited through the undergraduate research participant system (received 0.5% credit).
- Inclusion criteria: must have been in a committed relationship for 3 months and have been sexually active.
- Randomly assigned to 1 of 4 sexual rejection conditions.
- Completed measures of procedural justice and inclination to take revenge following the rejection.

Participants:

- $N = 285$
- 65.6% were exclusively dating
- 87.0% said they were extremely or moderately satisfied with their relationship
- 76.1% said they were extremely or moderately satisfied with their sex life

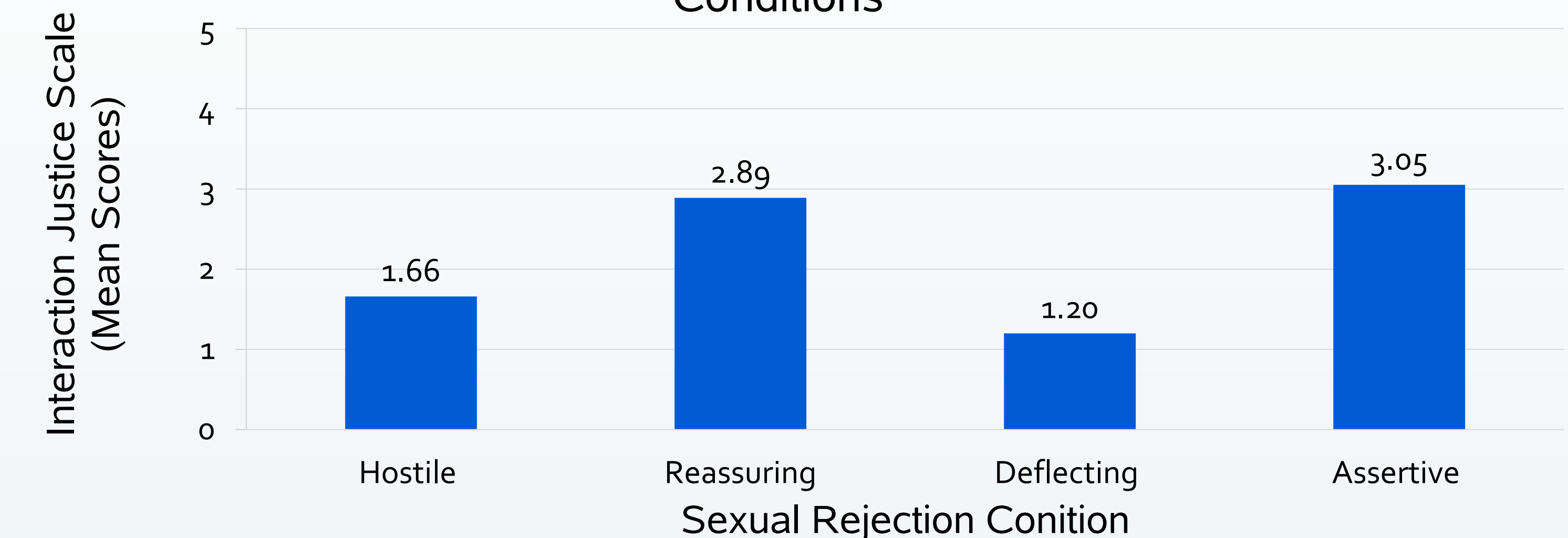
Measures:

- Sexual rejection conditions (Kim, 2015):
 - "Imagine you and your partner are home on a typical night, and you are in the mood for sex. You initiate sex with your partner, but they reject your advance by..."
- Interactional justice scale (modified from Moorman, 1991):
 - "Your partner treated you with kindness and consideration."
- Interpersonal revenge behaviour measure (Yoshimura, 2016):
 - "Tell your partner that the relationship meant less than it did."
 - "Destroy old letters, gifts, and memorabilia from the relationship."

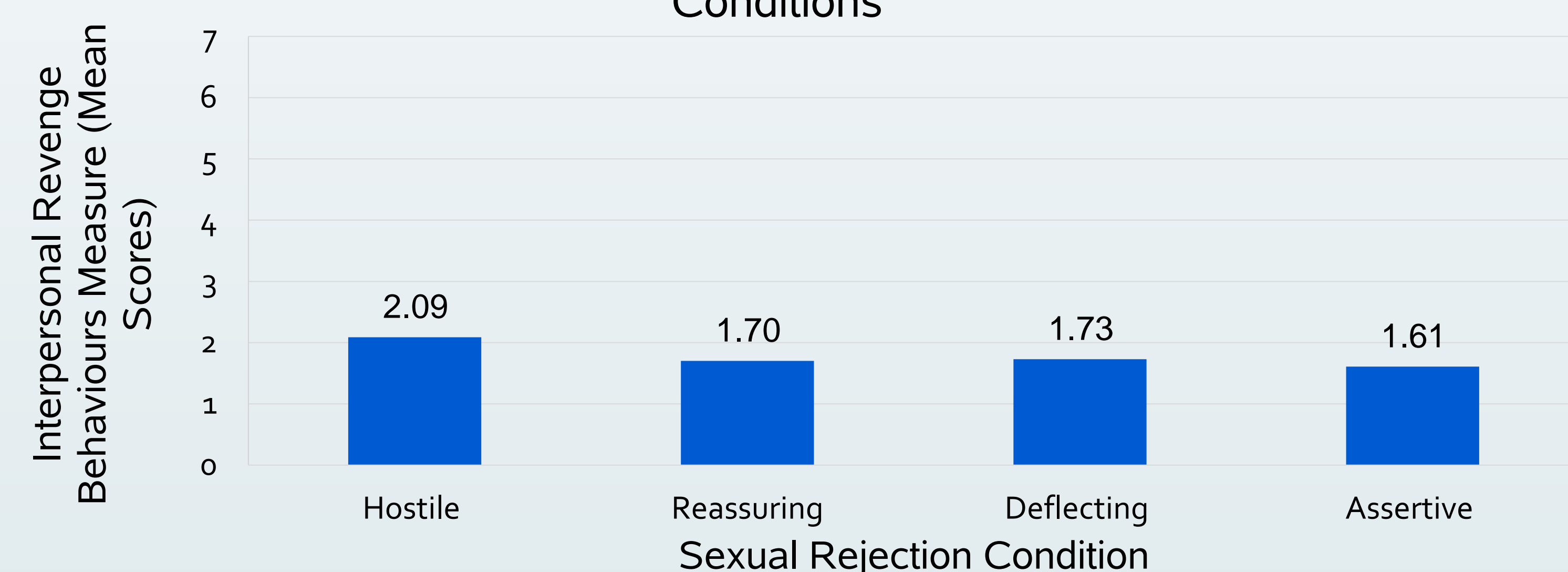
Results

- Using planned comparison, we compared each condition to the others for variance and a found significant difference between conditions.
- Participants in the deflecting condition had the lowest levels of fairness (procedural justice) in comparison to the other rejection conditions. $F(4, 280) = 51.33, p < .001$
- Participants rejected in a hostile manner were more likely to seek revenge in comparison to participants in other rejection conditions. $F(4, 280) = 3.99, p = .002$

Feelings of Procedural Justice Within Sexual Rejection Conditions



Inclination to Seek Revenge Within Sexual Rejection Conditions



Conclusion

Participants in the deflecting rejection condition perceived the rejection as the most unfair. A deflecting rejection fails to provide any kind of explanation to the rejected partner. Individuals are more likely to struggle to make sense of the rejection when no explanation is offered, which likely affects their emotional state. Thus, deflecting rejections are expected to be perceived as the most unfair. Reassuring and hostile rejections provide a reason for the rejection and therefore, are perceived as more fair.

Hostile rejections evoked the highest inclination to take revenge on a romantic partner. Hostile rejection includes criticism towards the rejected partner, which likely produces more feelings of imbalance in the relationship than other types of rejections not criticizing the rejected partner. Consequently, participants may be more inclined to engage in revenge behaviours to reduce this imbalance in power.

The findings of this research suggest that the manner in which a romantic partner chooses to reject sexual advances in a romantic relationship can have important implications for the rejected partner, and influence future behaviours and outcomes in the relationship. Research suggests that communication is important in romantic relationships. This research contributes to the literature by illustrating that the manner in which a romantic partner chooses to reject sexual advances is important, as some types of rejections can lead to more negative outcomes for romantic partners and their relationship.