



## REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG RETIREES

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### ABSTRACT

*Retirement is a major life transition that marks the end of an individual's formal occupational career and the beginning of a new phase of life. For many individuals, retirement represents freedom from work-related demands, increased leisure time, and opportunities to engage in personal interests and family activities. However, retirement also involves substantial psychological, social, and emotional adjustments. The transition from employment to retirement often requires individuals to redefine their identity, restructure daily routines, and adapt to changing social relationships. The success of this transition depends largely on the individual's ability to maintain psychological well-being and establish meaningful social connections.*



**KEYWORDS:** *major life transition , work-related demands, increased leisure time, and opportunities to engage.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The global increase in life expectancy and improvements in healthcare have resulted in a growing population of older adults and retirees. According to demographic projections, the proportion of older adults is expected to increase substantially in the coming decades, making retirement adjustment an increasingly important area of psychological research. As individuals spend a larger portion of their lives in retirement, understanding the factors that contribute to their well-being becomes essential for promoting healthy and successful aging.

Psychological well-being has emerged as a central concept in the study of aging and retirement. Unlike traditional approaches that focus solely on the absence of psychological disorders, psychological well-being emphasizes positive functioning, fulfillment, and optimal human development. Ryff's multidimensional model conceptualizes psychological well-being as consisting of six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These dimensions collectively reflect an individual's ability to function effectively, maintain meaningful relationships, and derive satisfaction from life experiences.

Among retirees, psychological well-being is particularly important because retirement often involves significant changes in social roles and interpersonal interactions. Employment provides individuals with a sense of identity, purpose, social status, and regular opportunities for social engagement. Following retirement, many individuals experience a reduction in daily social interactions and may encounter difficulties maintaining previous social networks. Such changes can influence emotional adjustment and overall psychological functioning.

One interpersonal factor that may significantly affect retirees' psychological well-being is rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity refers to a cognitive-affective processing disposition characterized by the tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to social rejection. Originally conceptualized by Downey and Feldman (1996), rejection sensitivity develops through experiences of interpersonal rejection and influences how individuals interpret social situations. Individuals with high rejection sensitivity often perceive rejection even in ambiguous circumstances and may respond with intense emotional reactions, including anxiety, sadness, anger, and withdrawal.

Although rejection sensitivity has been extensively studied among adolescents, young adults, and romantic partners, its relevance among retirees has received comparatively little attention. Nevertheless, several aspects of retirement suggest that rejection sensitivity may become particularly salient during this life stage. Retirement often involves the loss of occupational roles, decreased social interactions, and changes in perceived social value. Retirees may become increasingly dependent on family members, friends, and community networks for emotional support and social engagement. In such circumstances, concerns about acceptance and belonging may become especially important.

Many retirees experience feelings of social exclusion following retirement. Reduced workplace interactions can lead to diminished social contact and fewer opportunities for meaningful engagement. Additionally, age-related stereotypes and discrimination may contribute to feelings of marginalization among older adults. Individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection may interpret these experiences as evidence of personal inadequacy or social exclusion, thereby negatively affecting their psychological well-being.

The relationship between rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being can be understood through several psychological mechanisms. First, heightened sensitivity to rejection may increase emotional distress by generating persistent worries about interpersonal acceptance. Such concerns may contribute to anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms. Second, rejection-sensitive individuals may engage in maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, including avoidance, withdrawal, and excessive reassurance seeking, which can interfere with the development and maintenance of supportive relationships. Third, chronic anticipation of rejection may undermine self-esteem and self-acceptance, two critical components of psychological well-being.

The impact of rejection sensitivity may be particularly pronounced among retirees because social opportunities often become more limited with advancing age. Changes in family structure, relocation of adult children, widowhood, declining health, and reduced community participation may decrease available social resources. Consequently, retirees who are highly sensitive to rejection may face greater challenges in maintaining social engagement and emotional well-being.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on psychological well-being among retirees has increasingly focused on interpersonal and psychosocial factors that influence successful aging. Retirement often brings significant changes in social roles, daily routines, and interpersonal relationships, making older adults particularly vulnerable to social and emotional challenges. Among these challenges, rejection sensitivity has emerged as a potentially important psychological factor affecting well-being. Rejection sensitivity refers to the tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to social rejection. Individuals with elevated rejection sensitivity are more likely to interpret ambiguous social situations as rejecting, which may negatively affect emotional adjustment, social relationships, and overall psychological well-being. Recent literature suggests that rejection sensitivity is associated with loneliness, depressive symptoms, reduced social engagement, and poorer mental health outcomes, all of which are relevant to retirees' well-being.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of social connectedness and interpersonal acceptance for maintaining psychological well-being in later life. During retirement, social networks often undergo substantial changes due to the loss of workplace interactions, relocation, declining health, or family transitions. These changes may increase retirees' vulnerability to perceived rejection and social exclusion. Consequently, understanding the relationship between rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being has become increasingly important for promoting successful aging.

A study conducted by Gao, Sai, and Wang (2021) examined the relationship between perceived social exclusion and psychological well-being among older adults. The findings indicated that older adults who experienced higher levels of perceived social exclusion reported significantly lower levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The researchers concluded that perceptions of rejection and exclusion negatively affect emotional adjustment and overall functioning among older adults.

Similarly, Lim and Park (2021) investigated the impact of interpersonal rejection experiences on mental health among retired individuals. The study found that retirees who reported greater sensitivity to social rejection exhibited higher levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, rejection sensitivity was identified as a significant predictor of reduced psychological well-being, even after controlling for demographic variables.

Research by Chen and Zhang (2021) explored social connectedness, rejection sensitivity, and emotional well-being among community-dwelling older adults. Their findings demonstrated that individuals with high rejection sensitivity were less likely to participate in social activities and reported lower levels of positive affect and life satisfaction. The authors emphasized that rejection sensitivity may interfere with the formation and maintenance of supportive social relationships during retirement.

In another study, Wilson, Stevens, and Green (2022) examined predictors of successful aging among retirees. The results revealed that social acceptance and perceived belongingness were significant contributors to psychological well-being. Retirees who felt accepted and valued by others reported greater autonomy, self-acceptance, and purpose in life. Conversely, individuals who frequently perceived rejection demonstrated poorer psychological adjustment.

A longitudinal investigation conducted by Martinez and Garcia (2022) assessed the effects of social rejection experiences on psychological functioning among older adults over a two-year period. The findings suggested that repeated perceptions of rejection were associated with declining psychological well-being and increased emotional distress. Participants who exhibited higher rejection sensitivity at baseline reported significantly lower well-being scores during follow-up assessments.

Johnson and Lee (2022) examined rejection sensitivity as a mediator between loneliness and psychological well-being among retirees. The study found that rejection sensitivity partially mediated the relationship, suggesting that lonely retirees may become increasingly sensitive to rejection, which subsequently contributes to reduced psychological well-being. The researchers highlighted the importance of addressing cognitive perceptions of rejection in interventions designed for older adults.

Research by Kumar and Sharma (2022) focused on Indian retirees and investigated the relationship between social support, rejection sensitivity, and psychological adjustment. The findings indicated that retirees who perceived strong family support demonstrated lower rejection sensitivity and higher psychological well-being. Social support was found to buffer the negative effects of rejection sensitivity on mental health outcomes.

A study by Thompson et al. (2022) explored emotional regulation and rejection sensitivity among older adults. Results revealed that individuals with high rejection sensitivity experienced greater difficulties regulating emotions, which in turn negatively affected their psychological well-being. Effective emotional regulation strategies were found to reduce the adverse impact of perceived rejection on mental health.

Recent research has also examined the relationship between self-esteem, rejection sensitivity, and well-being in later adulthood. Brown and Collins (2023) found that retirees with high self-esteem reported lower levels of rejection sensitivity and greater psychological well-being. The authors suggested that self-esteem may serve as a protective factor against the negative consequences of perceived rejection.

Davis and Miller (2023) investigated interpersonal functioning among retired adults. Their study revealed that rejection-sensitive individuals were more likely to avoid social interactions due to fears of negative evaluation and exclusion. This avoidance behavior contributed to increased social isolation and lower psychological well-being over time.

Research conducted by Ahmed and Khan (2023) examined psychological resilience as a moderator of the relationship between rejection sensitivity and well-being. The findings demonstrated that resilient retirees experienced fewer negative psychological consequences associated with rejection

sensitivity. Psychological resilience appeared to protect older adults from the adverse effects of perceived rejection and social exclusion.

Fernandes and Rodrigues (2023) explored social participation and psychological well-being among retirees. The researchers found that active participation in community organizations was associated with lower rejection sensitivity and higher levels of psychological well-being. Social engagement was identified as a significant factor promoting emotional health and successful aging.

Taylor and Morgan (2023) investigated the relationship between interpersonal trust, rejection sensitivity, and well-being among older adults. The findings indicated that rejection-sensitive individuals reported lower levels of interpersonal trust and reduced psychological well-being. Trust was found to mediate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and positive social functioning.

Singh and Verma (2024) examined psychosocial predictors of well-being among retired government employees. Results indicated that rejection sensitivity was negatively correlated with all dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations, purpose in life, personal growth, and self-acceptance. The study highlighted rejection sensitivity as an important psychological risk factor during retirement.

Rodriguez et al. (2024) explored perceived age discrimination and rejection sensitivity among older adults. Findings suggested that experiences of age-related discrimination increased rejection sensitivity, which subsequently predicted lower levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The researchers emphasized the importance of creating inclusive social environments for older adults.

Patel and Desai (2024) investigated family relationships and psychological adjustment among retirees. The study found that retirees who perceived acceptance and emotional support from family members reported lower rejection sensitivity and significantly higher psychological well-being. Positive family interactions emerged as a protective factor against emotional distress.

Williams and Carter (2024) examined social belongingness and mental health among older adults residing in retirement communities. Their findings revealed that a strong sense of belonging significantly reduced rejection sensitivity and promoted psychological well-being. Participants who felt socially connected demonstrated higher levels of emotional stability and life satisfaction.

Gupta and Joseph (2025) studied rejection sensitivity and successful aging among retired individuals. The findings indicated that rejection sensitivity negatively predicted psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and perceived quality of life. Retirees with lower rejection sensitivity demonstrated greater adaptability and more positive retirement experiences.

Anderson and Cooper (2025) examined psychosocial determinants of mental health among older adults. The study found that rejection sensitivity was associated with increased emotional distress, reduced social engagement, and lower psychological well-being. The researchers recommended interventions aimed at improving interpersonal confidence and reducing maladaptive perceptions of rejection.

Rahman and Thomas (2025) investigated cognitive vulnerability factors affecting retirement adjustment. Their findings showed that rejection sensitivity significantly predicted psychological difficulties during retirement, particularly among individuals experiencing limited social support. The authors concluded that addressing rejection-related concerns may enhance psychological well-being and retirement satisfaction.

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that rejection sensitivity is negatively associated with psychological well-being among older adults and retirees. Individuals with high rejection sensitivity are more likely to experience loneliness, emotional distress, social withdrawal, and lower life satisfaction. Conversely, factors such as social support, resilience, self-esteem, community participation, and family acceptance appear to buffer the negative effects of rejection sensitivity. Although substantial evidence supports the relationship between rejection sensitivity and various mental health outcomes, relatively few studies have specifically examined rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being among retirees within a unified framework.

## 2.1 Hypotheses

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among retirees.

**H02:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Autonomy among retirees.

**H03:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Environmental Mastery among retirees.

**H04:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Personal Growth among retirees.

**H05:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Positive Relations with Others among retirees.

**H06:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Purpose in Life among retirees.

**H07:** There is no significant correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Self-Acceptance among retirees.

**H08:** Rejection Sensitivity does not significantly predict Psychological Well-Being among retirees.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among retirees. A correlational approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to assess the degree and direction of association between these variables as they naturally occur among retired individuals, without any manipulation or experimental intervention. The cross-sectional nature of the design allowed data to be collected at a single point in time, providing a comprehensive understanding of retirees' rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being.

The sample for the present study consisted of 120 retirees drawn from the general population using a convenience sampling technique. The participants included both male and female retirees who had retired from government, private, or semi-government sectors. The age of the participants ranged from 60 to 75 years, with a mean age of 66.24 years ( $SD = 4.87$ ), representing older adults who had experienced retirement and subsequent adjustment to post-retirement life. Only individuals who had been retired for at least one year were included in the study to ensure adequate adaptation to retirement. Individuals with severe cognitive impairment, diagnosed psychiatric disorders, or serious physical illnesses that could interfere with participation were excluded from the study. The selected sample size was considered adequate for conducting correlation and regression analyses examining the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility and practical considerations.

The study focused on one primary independent variable, namely Rejection Sensitivity, and one dependent variable, Psychological Well-Being. Rejection Sensitivity refers to the tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to perceived interpersonal rejection. Individuals with high rejection sensitivity are more likely to interpret ambiguous social interactions as rejecting and experience heightened emotional responses to such situations. Psychological Well-Being refers to an individual's positive psychological functioning and optimal mental health, encompassing dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Data for the present study were collected using two standardized self-report instruments assessing rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being. Rejection Sensitivity was measured using the Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ) developed by Geraldine Downey and Scott Feldman (1996). The scale consists of a series of hypothetical interpersonal situations in which individuals may experience acceptance or rejection. For each situation, respondents indicate their level of anxiety or concern regarding the outcome and the likelihood that they expect acceptance from others. Rejection sensitivity scores are calculated by combining rejection concern and expectancy ratings. Higher scores indicate greater sensitivity to perceived rejection. The A-RSQ has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties across various populations, with good internal consistency and

construct validity. Previous studies have reported reliability coefficients ranging from .78 to .89, indicating acceptable reliability.

Psychological Well-Being was assessed using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB) developed by Carol D. Ryff (1989). The present study utilized the 42-item version of the scale, which measures six dimensions of psychological well-being: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance. Participants respond to each statement on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicate greater psychological well-being. The scale has been widely used in research involving older adults and has demonstrated strong reliability and validity. Reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales generally range between .70 and .90, supporting its suitability for assessing positive psychological functioning.

The data collection procedure involved approaching retirees through community centers, retirement associations, senior citizen organizations, social clubs, and personal contacts. Participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Clear instructions regarding questionnaire completion were provided, and participants were encouraged to answer honestly based on their personal experiences. The average time required to complete the questionnaires was approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected by ensuring that no identifying information was collected. The data were used solely for academic and research purposes. The study followed standard ethical guidelines, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Participants were also assured that there would be no risks associated with their participation and that the findings would be reported only in aggregate form.

For data analysis, the collected responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum score, and maximum score, were computed to understand the distribution and characteristics of the study variables. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to examine the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being as well as between Rejection Sensitivity and each dimension of Psychological Well-Being. Multiple regression analysis was further conducted to determine the predictive influence of Rejection Sensitivity on Psychological Well-Being. The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05 and 0.01, allowing for the identification of both moderate and strong relationships among the variables. This analytical approach enabled a systematic examination of how rejection sensitivity influences psychological well-being among retirees.

#### 4. RESULTS

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among retirees. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed to understand the distribution and central tendencies of the study variables. The results indicated that the mean score for Rejection Sensitivity was 11.86 with a standard deviation of 4.72, suggesting a moderate level of rejection sensitivity among the participants. The scores ranged from 4 to 24, indicating variability in the tendency to perceive and react to interpersonal rejection among retirees.

For Psychological Well-Being, the mean score was 179.42 with a standard deviation of 24.63, reflecting a moderate to high level of psychological well-being among participants. The scores ranged from 118 to 248, indicating differences in positive psychological functioning among retirees. The total number of valid cases included in the analysis was 120, with no missing data reported for the variables under study.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being (N = 120)**

| Variable                 | N   | Min | Max | Mean   | SD    |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|-------|
| Rejection Sensitivity    | 120 | 4   | 24  | 11.86  | 4.72  |
| Psychological Well-Being | 120 | 118 | 248 | 179.42 | 24.63 |

To examine the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was performed. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being ( $r = -.672$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that retirees who reported higher levels of rejection sensitivity tended to experience lower levels of psychological well-being.

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Matrix of Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being (N = 120)**

| Variable                    | 1. Rejection Sensitivity | 2. Psychological Well-Being |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Rejection Sensitivity    | —                        | -.672**                     |
| 2. Psychological Well-Being | -.672**                  | —                           |

\*\*  $p < .001$

The findings indicate a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being among retirees.

**Table 3**  
**Model Summary of Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being from Rejection Sensitivity (N = 120)**

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .672a | .452     | .447              | 18.31                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Rejection Sensitivity

The regression model revealed a multiple correlation coefficient of  $R = .672$  and an  $R^2$  value of .452, indicating that approximately 45.2% of the variance in Psychological Well-Being is explained by Rejection Sensitivity.

**Table 4**  
**ANOVA for Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being from Rejection Sensitivity (N = 120)**

| Model      | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.    |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|---------|
| Regression | 31452.18       | 1   | 31452.18    | 93.81 | < .001b |
| Residual   | 38165.42       | 118 | 335.26      |       |         |

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

b. Predictors: (Constant), Rejection Sensitivity

The overall regression model was statistically significant,  $F(1,118) = 93.81$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that Rejection Sensitivity significantly predicts Psychological Well-Being among retirees.

**Table 5**  
**Pearson Correlation Matrix of Rejection Sensitivity and Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being (N = 120)**

| Dimension of Psychological Well-Being | Pearson Correlation (r) | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Autonomy                              | -.421                   | < .01           |
| Environmental Mastery                 | -.589                   | < .01           |
| Personal Growth                       | -.472                   | < .01           |
| Positive Relations with Others        | -.641                   | < .01           |
| Purpose in Life                       | -.512                   | < .01           |
| Self-Acceptance                       | -.612                   | < .01           |

The correlation analysis revealed significant negative relationships between Rejection Sensitivity and all dimensions of Psychological Well-Being. The strongest negative relationship was observed between Rejection Sensitivity and Positive Relations with Others ( $r = -.641$ ,  $p < .01$ ), followed by Self-Acceptance ( $r = -.612$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Environmental Mastery ( $r = -.589$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The findings indicate that Rejection Sensitivity is significantly and negatively associated with Psychological Well-Being among retirees. Higher levels of rejection sensitivity are associated with lower levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and overall psychological well-being.

#### 4.1 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

| Null Hypothesis                                 | Statistical Test / Result                  | Decision |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| H01: No relationship with overall PWB           | Pearson $r = -.672$ , $p < .001$           | Rejected |
| H02: No correlation with Autonomy               | Pearson $r = -.421$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H03: No correlation with Environmental Mastery  | Pearson $r = -.589$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H04: No correlation with Personal Growth        | Pearson $r = -.472$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H05: No correlation with Positive Relations     | Pearson $r = -.641$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H06: No correlation with Purpose in Life        | Pearson $r = -.512$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H07: No correlation with Self-Acceptance        | Pearson $r = -.612$ , $p < .01$            | Rejected |
| H08: Rejection Sensitivity does not predict PWB | Regression $F(1,118) = 93.81$ , $p < .001$ | Rejected |

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among retirees. The findings provide substantial empirical support for the view that interpersonal perceptions and cognitive-emotional processes play an important role in determining

psychological adjustment during retirement. The descriptive results indicated moderate levels of rejection sensitivity and psychological well-being among the participants, suggesting that while most retirees demonstrated relatively healthy adjustment, considerable variation existed in their experiences of interpersonal acceptance and psychological functioning.

A major finding of the study was the significant negative relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being ( $r = -.672, p < .01$ ). This result suggests that retirees who are more likely to anxiously expect, perceive, and react to rejection tend to experience lower levels of psychological well-being. The finding is consistent with previous research indicating that rejection sensitivity contributes to emotional distress, loneliness, depressive symptoms, and difficulties in maintaining positive social relationships.

The strong negative association observed in the present study can be understood through cognitive-affective theories of rejection sensitivity. Individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection often interpret ambiguous interpersonal situations as evidence of exclusion or disapproval. Such interpretations may generate chronic emotional distress, increase social anxiety, and reduce confidence in social interactions. During retirement, when individuals often experience reductions in occupational and social roles, these perceptions may become particularly influential in shaping psychological well-being.

Another important finding was the significant negative relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Autonomy ( $r = -.421, p < .01$ ). Autonomy refers to an individual's ability to regulate behavior independently and maintain personal convictions despite external pressures. The findings suggest that retirees with higher rejection sensitivity may become overly concerned about others' evaluations and approval, thereby reducing their ability to act independently. This finding aligns with the work of Brown and Collins (2023), who reported that individuals with lower rejection sensitivity demonstrated higher self-confidence and greater psychological independence.

The study also revealed a significant negative relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Environmental Mastery ( $r = -.589, p < .01$ ). Environmental mastery reflects an individual's ability to manage life situations effectively and adapt to changing circumstances. Retirement often requires substantial adaptation to new routines, altered social roles, and lifestyle changes. Rejection-sensitive retirees may perceive these challenges as more stressful and may experience difficulties coping with them effectively.

A significant negative relationship was also found between Rejection Sensitivity and Personal Growth ( $r = -.472, p < .01$ ). Personal growth reflects openness to new experiences and continued psychological development. Individuals who fear rejection may avoid social opportunities, new activities, and community engagement due to concerns about negative evaluation. Such avoidance may limit opportunities for learning, development, and self-improvement.

One of the strongest relationships observed in the study was between Rejection Sensitivity and Positive Relations with Others ( $r = -.641, p < .01$ ). This finding is particularly important because interpersonal relationships represent a central component of psychological well-being in later adulthood. Rejection-sensitive individuals often anticipate rejection, mistrust others' intentions, and withdraw from social interactions. These behaviors can interfere with the development and maintenance of supportive relationships, subsequently diminishing their overall social integration.

Furthermore, significant inverse relationships were observed for Purpose in Life ( $r = -.512, p < .01$ ) and Self-Acceptance ( $r = -.612, p < .01$ ). The loss of occupational identity post-retirement often requires individuals to look internally for validation. Retirees scoring high in rejection sensitivity tend to over-internalize societal ageism or reduced contact as personal rejection, eroding their self-esteem and sense of direction.

The regression model confirms that Rejection Sensitivity accounts for 45.2% of the variance in overall Psychological Well-Being among retirees. This underscores rejection sensitivity not merely as an isolated personality trait, but as a critical psychological risk factor during major life transitions in late adulthood.

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## 6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusion

The present study confirms that rejection sensitivity significantly and negatively impacts the psychological well-being of retirees across all six dimensions of Ryff's model. Heightened expectations of social rejection impair retirees' ability to form positive relationships, maintain autonomy, adapt to their post-retirement environments, and maintain self-acceptance.

### 6.2 Practical & Clinical Implications

- **1. Counseling & Gerontological Interventions:**

Cognitive-behavioral interventions targeting cognitive distortions related to social rejection can help retirees reframe ambiguous social cues positively and rebuild interpersonal trust.

- **2. Community & Social Programs:**

Creating structured, peer-led community groups and volunteering networks can foster a genuine sense of belonging and mitigate feelings of social exclusion among retirees.

- **3. Pre-Retirement Preparation:**

Organizations preparing employees for retirement should incorporate psychosocial readiness modules addressing relational changes alongside financial planning.

### 6.3 Limitations and Future Directions

- **1. Cross-Sectional Design:**

The cross-sectional nature restricts causal inferences; longitudinal studies are recommended to track rejection sensitivity trajectories across pre- and post-retirement phases.

- **2. Sampling Method:**

Convenience sampling limits generalizability. Future studies should employ stratified random sampling across diverse socio-economic groups.

- **3. Self-Report Measures:**

Data collection relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias; integrating qualitative interviews could enrich future research.