

Self-Hatred, Sadness, Anhedonia, and Pessimism are Central Symptoms of Depression in 10,005 College Students: A Network Analysis



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BACKGROUND

Depression in college students is a growing concern, and has been associated with several negative outcomes.

However, recent research has indicated that the use of sum scores in depression research may be both psychometrically and conceptually problematic.

The current project had 2 goals:

1. Utilize a network analysis approach to identifying the most central symptoms of depression.
2. Explore differences in network structure between men and women.

METHODS

Participants

The current data (N = 10,005) was collected as a part of a screening process for students enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology course at the University of Texas at Austin.

Age	18.77 ±1.82
Female	63.24%
White/Caucasian	51.22%
Asian or Pacific Islander	19.93%
Hispanic	18.70%
Black	4.79%
American Indian	0.13%
Multi-Racial	3.16%
Other/Missing	2.07%

Measure

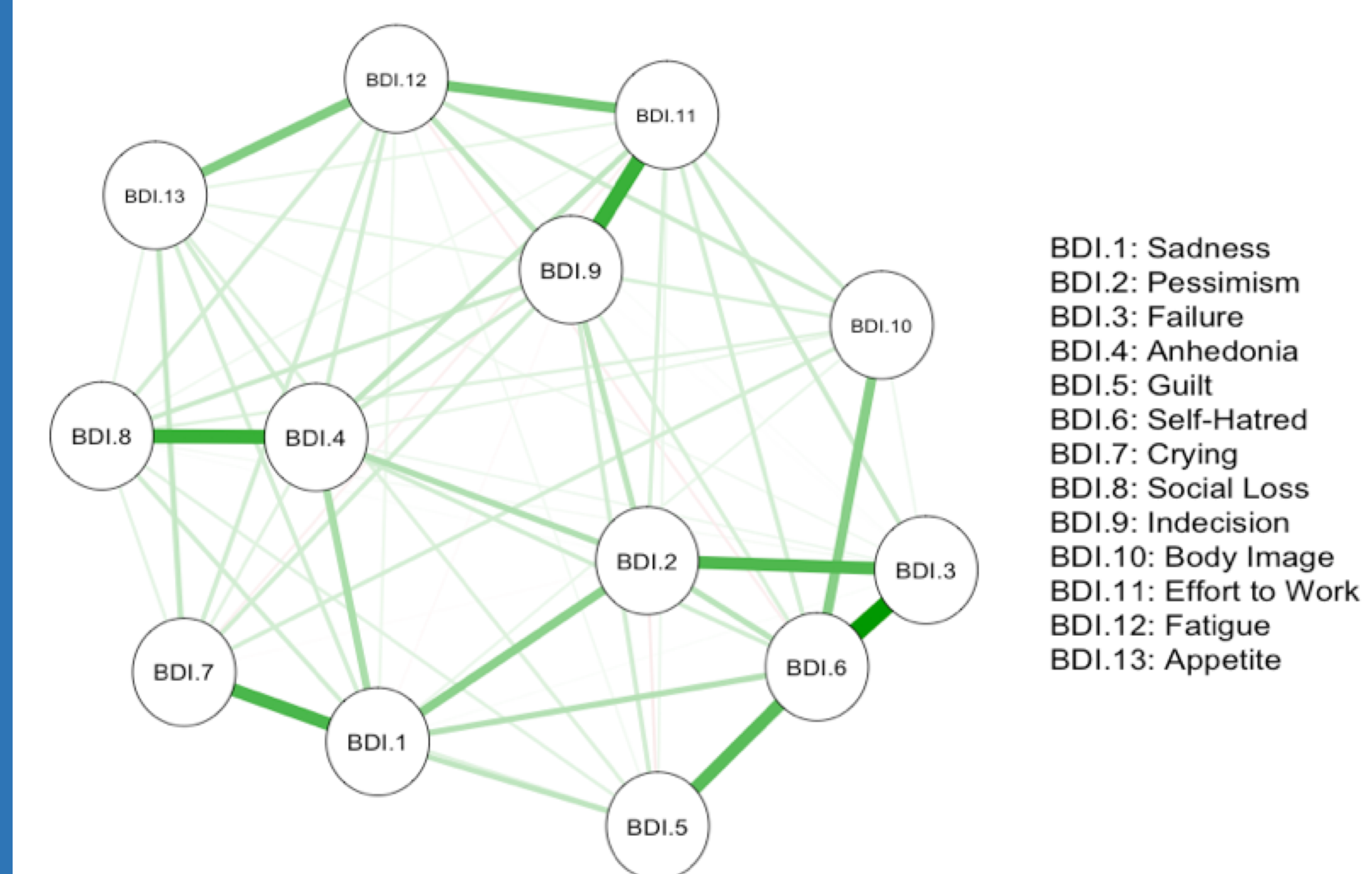
- Beck Depression Inventory –Short Form (BDI-SF).

Self-hatred, sadness, and anhedonia may be the most **important** depression symptoms in college students.

Differences in network structure across genders suggest that **certain symptoms** may be better **intervention targets** for certain subgroups.

RESULTS

When indexed by strength, the most central symptoms were **self-hatred, sadness, and anhedonia**.



Subgroups

Network comparison analysis revealed several structural differences between females and males:

Females

- sadness-crying
- self hatred-negative body image
- crying-fatigue

Males

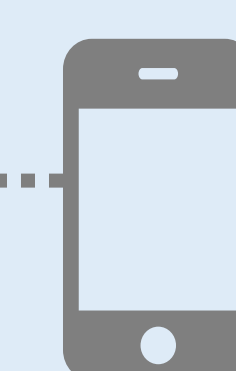
- pessimism-social loss

Network structure did **not** differ based on the clinical cut point on the BDI-SF.

DISCUSSION

The current study indicates that certain depression symptoms may be more important for depression than others.

Future research should investigate network structure differences between genders in a more confirmatory way.



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