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## Introduction

College students are known for being stressed out and depressed. The stress of exams, papers, and relationships is sometimes too much for students, so they become somewhat hopeless and depressed. Sometimes people with depression look for a romantic relationship to get away from their problems. The romantic relationship either distracts them from their problems or it proves them with a supportive partner. So the question arises: should depressed students seek romantic relationships? (McNeill, Reinzi, Butler, & Doty, 1996). This study looked at gender differences among students in regard to their perceptions about relationships. There are several reasons why this problem is significant. The first reason is that many suffer from depression; especially young adults. The second reason is that during young adult years there is increased pressure in regards to relationships. The third reason is so that people can learn how other college students feel towards depression.

## Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Relationship status will be negatively correlated with depression.
- Hypothesis 2: Participants with higher scores on the depression scale will be less likely to think that someone with depression should be in a relationship than participants with lower scores on the depression scale.
- Hypothesis 3: Participants (both genders) will think that someone with depression should not be in a relationship.

## Method

Students were recruited via the Austin College psychology participant pool and received 15 minutes of extra credit. Students were first asked a series of demographic questions and were given one of three scenarios regarding gender, relationships status, and depression.

- 1) Male student
- 2) Female student
- 3) Student whose gender is not known

Example of scenario with student of unknown gender:  
*A student has been feeling down recently. The student has been really struggling with life (making friends, schoolwork, etc.). The student was even recently diagnosed with depression. There is someone this student has had their eye on and is contemplating getting into a relationship with them. This student has been contemplating getting into a romantic relationship.*

Then participants were asked a set of yes/no questions (e.g., Should the student in the scenario get into a romantic relationship? Could that student's depression affect the relationship?) and took the Centers for Epidemiological Studies Revised Depression Scale (Eaton, Smith, Ybarra, Muntaner, & Tien, 2004).

## Results

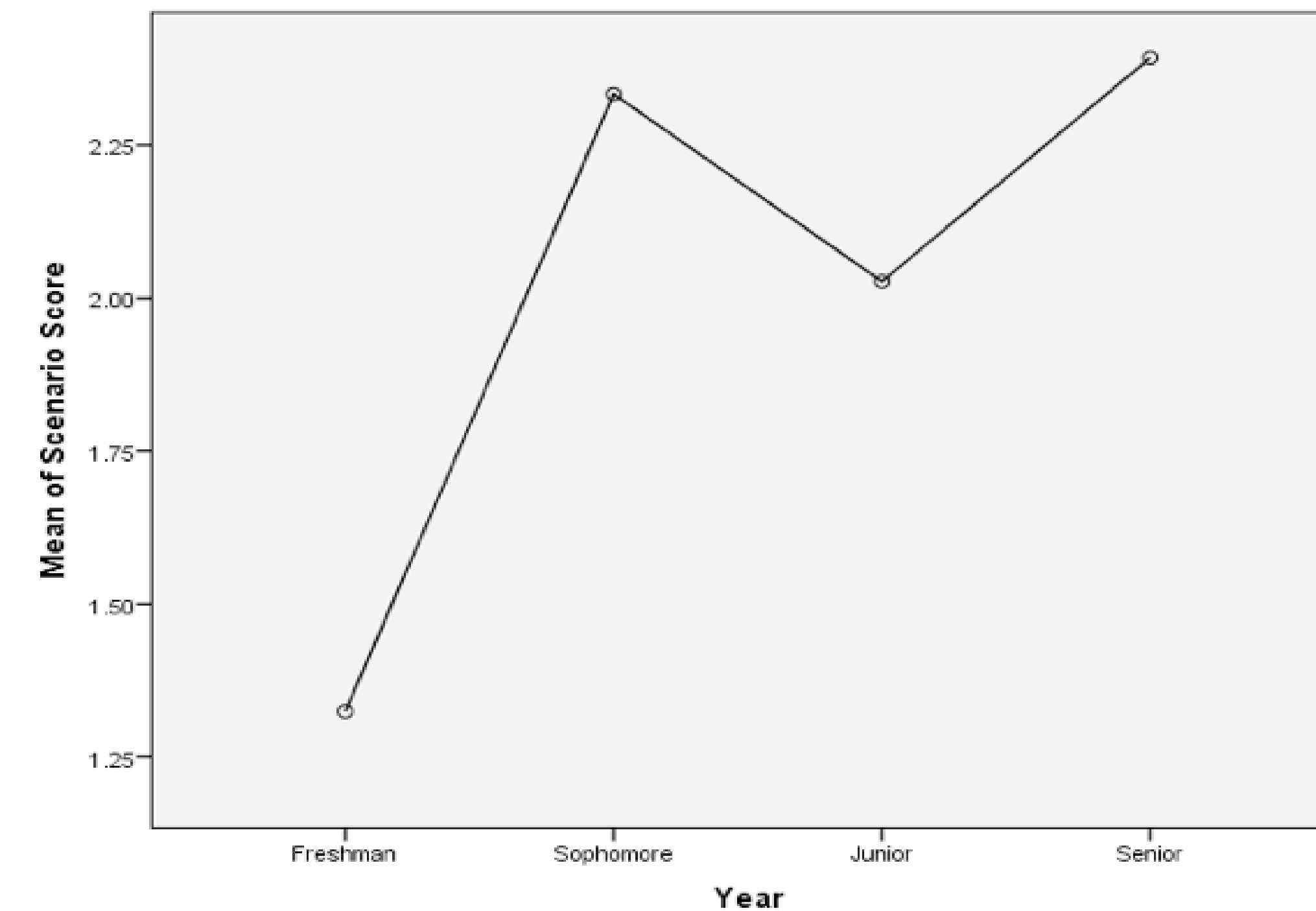


Figure 1. Mean of scenario score by year in school.

Table 1  
 Logistic Regression Table Predicting Whether or Not Participants Considered the Person in the Scenario Emotionally Ready for a Relationship

Variable	B	SE	Wald's z	p	OR
Constant	-2.87	0.81	12.46	<.001	0.06
Depression Score	0.01	0.02	0.42	.52	1.01
Female	1.11	0.44	6.33	.012	3.02
In a Relationship	-0.26	0.43	0.35	.55	0.78
Year in School	0.40	0.20	3.83	.05	1.49
European American	0.21	0.44	0.22	.64	1.23
Male Scenario	0.38	0.51	0.56	.45	1.47
Female Scenario	0.06	0.54	0.01	.92	1.06

Table 2  
 Scenario Outcomes Predicting Whether or Not Participants Believed the Student is or is Not Ready for a Romantic Relationship

		Not Ready for a Relationship	Ready for a Relationship	Total
Scenario	Female	40	12	53
	Male	41	12	53
	Neutral	37	9	46
	Total	118	34	152

Table 3  
 Logistic Regression Table Predicting Whether or Not Participants Believed the Person in the Scenario Should Enter a Relationship

Variable	B	SE	Wald's z	p	OR
Constant	-2.01	0.70	8.24	.004	0.13
Depression Score	0.01	0.01	0.73	.39	1.01
Female	0.35	0.40	0.73	.39	1.42
In a Relationship	-0.02	0.38	0.002	.97	0.99
Year in School	0.34	0.18	3.59	.06	1.40
European American	-0.04	0.39	0.13	.91	0.96
Male Scenario	0.11	0.46	0.05	.82	1.11
Female Scenario	0.22	0.46	0.24	.63	1.25

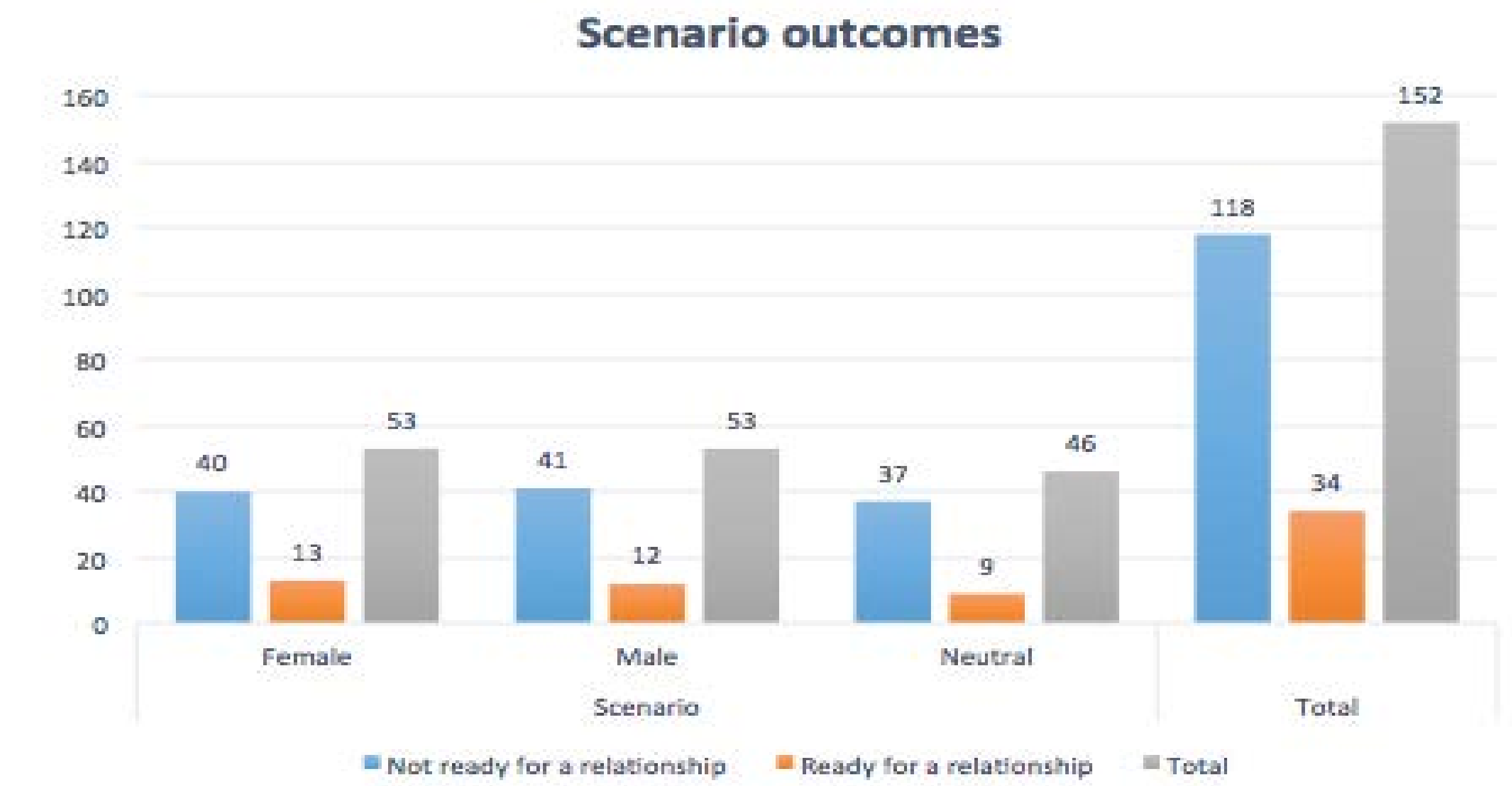


Figure 2 Scenario Outcomes Predicting Whether or Not Participants Believed the Student is or is Not Ready for a Romantic Relationship.

## Discussion

Further inquiry is necessary into whether people think that those with depression should become involved in a committed relationship. McNeill et al.'s (1996) study was not congruent with our results. This study could provide further insight into mental illness stigma and how that affects those who are single and those who are in a relationship. This study can be used by clinicians to help better treat and understand depression among young adults. This study could allow clinicians to better treat those who are in a relationship and teach them how to maintain their relationship while also coping with their depression. Results of this study should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations. The study consisted of a fairly homogenous sample. The study used a researcher-designed scale, which is not empirically reliable or valid. Many participants failed to answer all of the questions or decided to not complete the survey, which could have skewed the data. Participants may have given socially desirable responses on the CESD-R, a self-report depression test, so they could seem less depressed in the eyes of the researchers.

## References

Eaton, W. W., Smith, C., Ybarra, M., Muntaner, C., Tien, A. (2004). Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale: review and revision (CESD and CESD-R). In ME Maruish (Ed.). *The Use of Psychological Testing for Treatment Planning and Outcomes Assessment (3rd Ed.)*, Volume 3: *Instruments for Adults*, pp. 363-377. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

McNeill, K., Rienzi, B., Butler, M., & Doty, M. (1996). College students' attitudes toward finding a mate to escape depression: Sex differences. *Psychological Reports*, 79, 45-746.