



Evidence for a weak relationship between creativity and depressive traits

A recommendation by **Chris Chambers**  based on peer reviews by of the STAGE 2 REPORT:

Chin Yui Lam and Jeffrey Allen Saunders (2023) Relationship between creativity and depression: the role of reappraisal and rumination. OSF, ver. 1, peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://osf.io/z3ap5>

Submitted: 28 July 2023, Recommended: 08 November 2023

Cite this recommendation as:

Chambers, C. (2023) Evidence for a weak relationship between creativity and depressive traits. *Peer Community in Registered Reports*, 100536. [10.24072/pci.rr.100536](https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.rr.100536)

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For centuries, the relationship between creativity and mental health has been a subject of fascination, propelled by the impression that many of the most famous artists in history likely suffered from mood disorders or other mental illnesses. However, with the advent of psychological science – including more precise and diagnostic clinical measures – the empirical evidence for an association between creativity and depressive symptoms has been mixed, with some studies suggesting a positive relationship and others showing either no effect or indicating that the link, if there is one, may be driven by other personality characteristics (Verhaeghen et al., 2005). In the current study, Lam and Saunders used an online design in 201 participants to ask whether creativity is associated with higher depressive traits, and further, whether that relationship depends on two additional variables that could explain an observed positive correlation: *self-reflective rumination* (repetitive thoughts that maintain a negative mood state) and the frequency with which individuals engage in *reappraisal* (a regulation strategy that involves reinterpreting an event or situation to diminish its negative impact). Results showed mixed support for the hypotheses. Contrary to expectations, the relationship between creativity and depression was significantly *negative* rather than positive. However, even though the directionality of this relationship was opposite to predicted, the hypothesis that the association between creativity and depression is mediated by self-reflective rumination was supported. Finally, the results disconfirmed the hypothesis that reappraisal frequency contributes to the relationship between creativity and depression. Exploratory analyses indicated no reliable moderating role of gender. Overall, these findings suggest that creativity and depression may be only weakly related, and that self-reflective rumination could account for that relationship. The Stage 2 manuscript was evaluated over one round of review provided by the recommender and Managing Board, as the Stage 1 reviewers were no longer available. Based on additional changes to the manuscript, the recommender judged that the manuscript met the Stage 2 criteria and awarded a positive recommendation.

URL to the preregistered Stage 1 protocol: <https://osf.io/yub7n> **Level of bias control achieved:** Level 6. *No part of the data or evidence that was used to answer the research question was generated until after IPA.* **List of eligible PCI RR-friendly journals:**

- [Collabra Psychology](#)
- [Peer Community Journal](#)
- [PeerJ](#)
- [Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research and Practice](#)
- [Royal Society Open Science](#)
- [Studia Psychologica](#)
- [Swiss Psychology Open](#)

References:

1. Verhaeghen, P., Joormann, J., & Khan, R. (2005). Why we sing the blues: The relation between self-reflective rumination, mood, and creativity. *Emotion*, 5, 226-232.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.5.2.226>
2. Lam, C. Y. & Saunders, J. A. (2023). Relationship between creativity and depression: the role of reappraisal and rumination [Stage 2 Registered Report]. Acceptance of Version 2 by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://osf.io/z3ap5>

Reviews

Evaluation round #1

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://osf.io/z3ap5>

Version of the preprint: 1

Authors' reply, 03 November 2023

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Decision by [Chris Chambers](#) , posted 08 September 2023, validated 11 September 2023

Minor Revision

Thank you for submitting your Stage 2 manuscript. Neither of the two reviewers who evaluated your Stage 1 submission was available, but rather than immediately inviting new reviewers we decided to perform an evaluation among the Managing Board to determine whether further specialist review would be required. Happily, we felt that your submission was reported very clearly and in-line with protocol; the results distinguish

the outcomes of confirmatory and exploratory tests, and the discussion is sensible and evidence-based. With the Stage 2 criteria so close to being satisfied, we have decided that further in-depth evaluation by field experts is not required to proceed.

I enclose below comments from another member of the Managing Board. In addition, I think a nice addition to your paper to help readers quickly digest the conclusions would be an additional row in your research plan reporting in simple terms the outcome, i.e. whether each hypothesis was confirmed or disconfirmed (you could then rename the table to "Research plan and outcomes"). I will leave this as an option to consider (it is not mandatory). On a further minor note, there appears to be a formatting issue with this table in which the Hypothesis row is duplicated at the top of each page – is this intentional?

I look forward to receiving your revised manuscript.

Additional comments from Managing Board:

My evaluation of the manuscript finds it to be consistent with Stage 2 criteria and I could not see any deviations from the preregistered research plans. The authors have made their data and other research materials available on OSF (the link is functional). I list two points below that I hope will be helpful to the authors:

1. Under Methods > Participants, the authors describe exclusion criteria related to prior diagnoses and depression experience. It isn't immediately clear to me whether these criteria were applied to the 201 participants remaining after filtering for incomplete questionnaires, described in the paragraph preceding the one I reference. I do see numbers adding up to 201 in Table 2, so unsure at what stage this filtering was implemented. Please ignore this if I misinterpreted the text or missed some crucial information on this elsewhere in the manuscript.

2. This sentence on Page 12 needs to be corrected, perhaps by removing the bolded text: "Rumination tendency was measured using the 22-item Rumination Responsiveness Scale will be used" (and please check thoroughly for any other similar typos which can easily creep into Stage 2 submissions due to tense changes).