

RESEARCH QUESTION

In college students, does engaging in aggressive behavior impact mental well-being?

BACKGROUND

- Previous research on the topic of mental well-being and intimate partner violence focuses mainly on the mental well-being of the victim.
- There are many known physical health and mental health impacts that are associated with intimate partner violence (Sagar & Hans, 2018).
- Mood disorders are one of the most common mental health consequences, with depression and anxiety disorders being the most common (Delara, 2016).
- Based on these past findings, we propose that individuals who engage in intimate partner violence as the aggressor will also have worse mental well-being, similar to how the victims do.
 - Though there is a large body of research on this topic, mental well-being in the aggressor has not been studied.
 - This study will add to the body of intimate partner violence research by examining the mental well-being of aggressors.
- Nonzero-sum beliefs are associated with compassionate goals, increased responsiveness, increased perception of partner's responsiveness, and increased relationship quality (Crocker, Canevello, & Lewis, 2016).
 - We predict that nonzero-sum belief can improve mental well-being in aggressors because it will decrease the aggressive behavior they engage in.

HYPOTHESIS

- 1) More negative conflict tactics (i.e. psychological and physical aggression) will lead to higher levels of anxiety and depression.
- 2) More coercive control (psychological abuse involving manipulation, oppression, etc.) will result in higher levels of anxiety and depression.

METHOD

Participants

- Participants were 180 college students in romantic relationships

Materials

- Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988)
- Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, et al., 1961)
- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977)
- The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Expanded Form (PANAS-X) (Watson & Clark, 1994)

Design & Procedure

- Participants were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental condition.
 - Control: article on growth mindset in intelligence.
 - Experimental: article on nonzero-sum beliefs.
- Participants completed an online survey regarding
 - Conflict scenario and response
 - Intimate partner violence and approval of violence in relationships
 - Mental well-being

RESULTS

Figure 1. Nonzero-Sum Belief & Depression

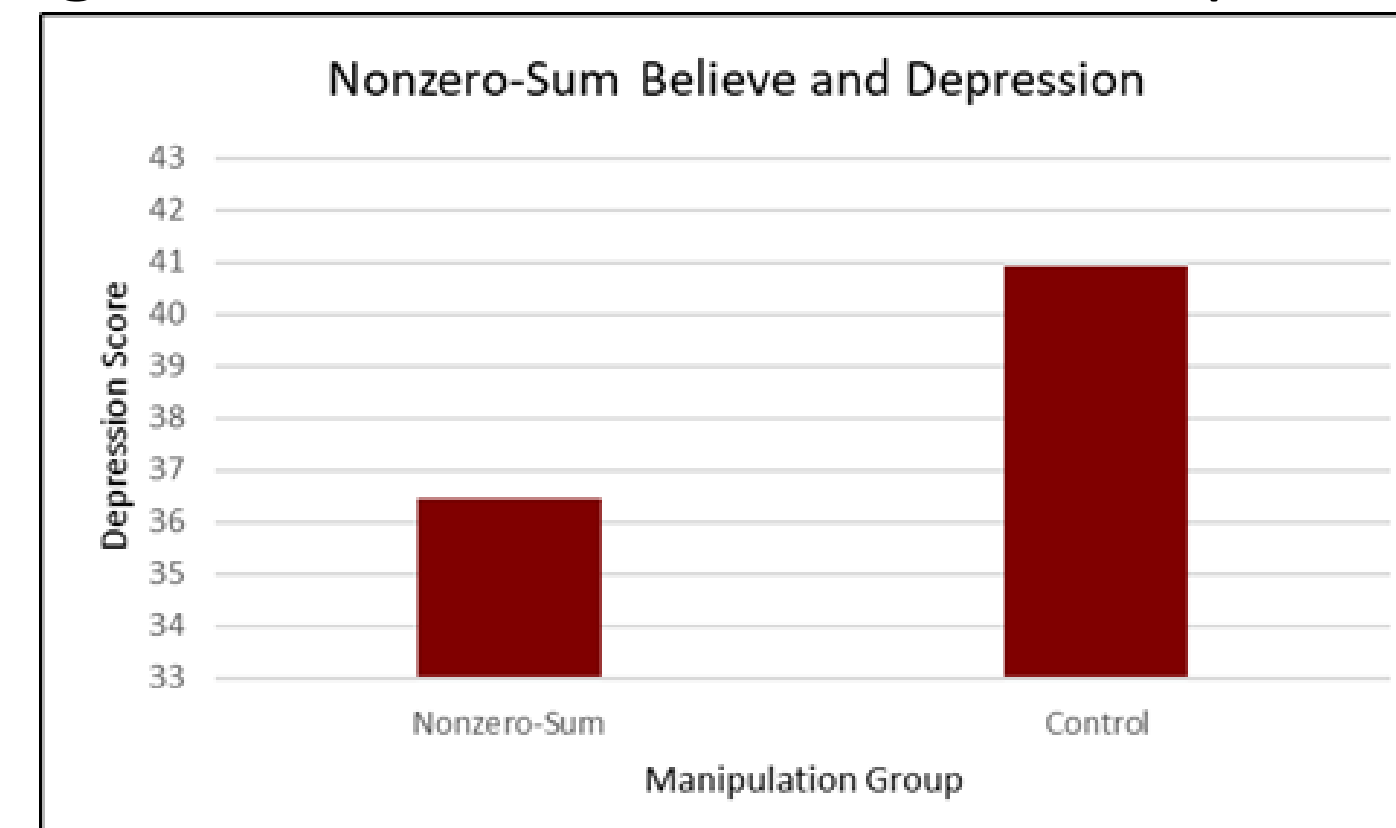
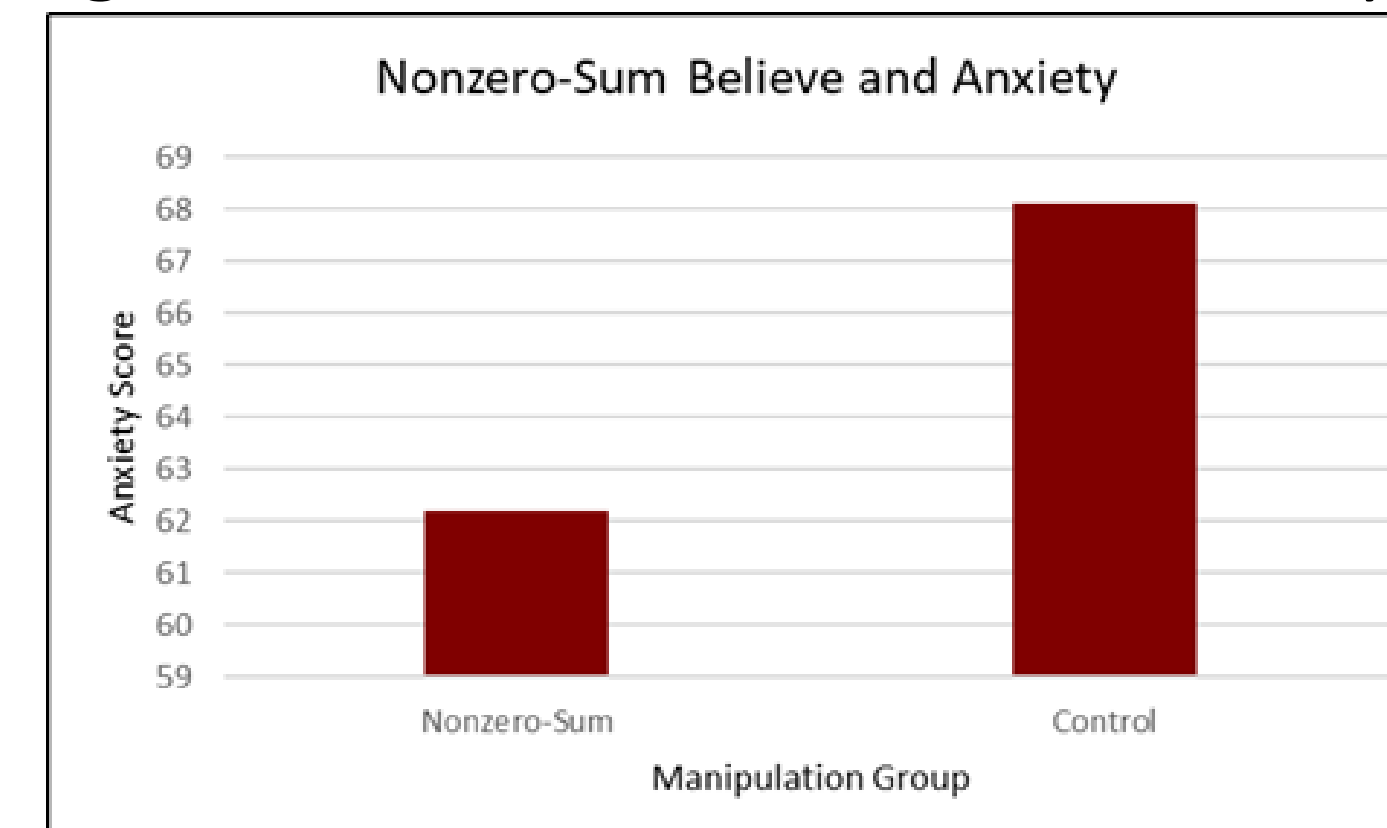


Figure 2. Nonzero-Sum Belief & Anxiety



- There is a significant difference between the mean depression score for those in the nonzero-sum manipulation group and those in the control group.
- There is a significant difference between the mean anxiety score for those in the nonzero-sum manipulation group and those in the control group.

Figure 3. Regression Analysis of each violence measure's effect on trait mental well-being (anxiety and depression).

Mental Well-Being	Violence Measurement	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Anxiety	Negative Conflict Tactics	2.279	1.047	0.167	2.177	0.031
Anxiety	Coercive Control	11.569	7.361	0.120	1.572	0.118
Depression	Negative Conflict Tactics	0.939	0.713	0.099	1.316	0.190
Depression	Coercive Control	13.727	5.000	0.207	2.745	0.007

- There is a significant relationship such that as negative conflict tactics increase, trait anxiety scores increase.
- There is a significant relationship such that as coercive control increases, trait depression scores increase.

DISCUSSIONS

- Consistent with our hypothesis, coercive control and negative conflict tactics did have an effect on mental well-being. However, coercive control only had an impact on depression, and negative conflict tactics only had an impact on anxiety.
- Nonzero-sum belief is related to mental well-being, such that there is a difference between anxiety scores and depression scores for individuals in the nonzero sum manipulation group and individuals in the control group.
- These results are similar to those found in studies focusing on victims of domestic violence (i.e. being a victim of domestic violence has a negative impact on mental well-being)

Limitations

- Depression and anxiety were the only specific mental illnesses examined. Future studies could also include other mental illnesses supported by literature.
- Only Negative Affect was examined from the PANAS-X scale. Future studies could examine positive affect too.
- This study only included college students as participants. Future studies could expand to other populations to improve generalizability.

Future Directions

- Run a study with a similar design and procedure that includes more mental illness scales.
- Future research could further examine why there is a relationship between intimate partner violence and mental well-being.

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