



**THE 30<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**  
**AT UNK & VMU**

**ABSTRACTS**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION TO PREGNANCY AND DISORDERED EATING BEHAVIOR: THE  
MEDIATING ROLE OF DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, AND STRESS**

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**Background.** Disordered eating behavior (DEB) refers to a range of problematic eating patterns and distorted attitudes towards food and appearance, focusing mostly on weight and shape. It may develop at any point in life, including during pregnancy – a time marked by significant physiological, psychological, and behavioral changes. The considerable prevalence of DEB during pregnancy has prompted researchers to explore factors that may be associated with its development, one of which is psychological adaptation to pregnancy. This study aims to examine the relationship between psychological adaptation to pregnancy and DEB, with particular attention to the mediating roles of depression, anxiety, and stress.

**Methods.** The study included a sample of 179 pregnant women who met the inclusion criteria and completed an online survey. Data collection was conducted between September 2024 and February 2025. The data were gathered using a personal information form, the Prenatal Self-Evaluation Questionnaire (PSEQ-II), the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS), the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), and the Three-Factor Eating Questionnaire-Revised (TFEQ-18-R), which consists of three scales: cognitive restraint, uncontrolled eating, and emotional eating.

**Results.** Depression, anxiety, and stress fully mediate the relationship between psychological adaptation to pregnancy and uncontrolled eating. Among the three, depression shows the strongest indirect effect (.41), followed by stress (.32) and anxiety (.29). Similarly, depression, anxiety, and stress also fully mediate the relationship between psychological adaptation to pregnancy and emotional eating. Again, depression has the strongest indirect effect (.71), followed by stress (.54) and anxiety (.30). In contrast, for cognitive restraint, only anxiety emerged as a significant mediator, with an indirect effect of .21. Depression and stress do not significantly mediate this relationship.

**Conclusions.** Poorer psychological adaptation to pregnancy is linked to increased levels of uncontrolled and emotional eating, primarily through elevated symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Among these mediators, depression demonstrated the strongest indirect effects. However, only anxiety significantly mediated the relationship between psychological adaptation to pregnancy and cognitive restraint. These results underscore the importance of assessing and supporting pregnant women's psychological adaptation to pregnancy and mental health, as addressing emotional distress may be key to reducing DEB during pregnancy.

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**THE EFFECTS OF EXTENDED BREAKS ON CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT**

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Classroom engagement is a critical determinant of academic success, influencing students' active participation, motivation, and learning outcomes. While the impact of extended summer breaks on learning loss is well-documented, there is limited research on the effects of shorter seasonal breaks. This study aimed to investigate the influence of seasonal breaks on classroom engagement among middle school students. Analysis of weekly engagement scores following each break revealed significant variations. Implementing targeted interventions and support mechanisms for students returning from breaks may mitigate potential declines in engagement. Further

research is warranted to explore underlying factors and develop strategies to sustain engagement across all break durations.

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## ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN DEATH ANXIETY AND THE ORTHOREXIC EATING BEHAVIOUR IN A SAMPLE OF YOUNG ADULTS

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**Introduction.** Orthorexic eating behavior (also known as orthorexia or orthorexia nervosa) is a complex phenomenon involving a tendency to follow a strict, quality-focused diet, which can potentially lead to adverse effects on an individual's physical, psychological, and social well-being (Bratman, 1997). Certain psychological factors and personality traits (e.g. perfectionism, need for control, narcissism) have been observed to be associated with this behavior (Mitrofanova et al., 2021), also one of the important and, according to some authors, essential motives for beginning to eat healthily is concerns for health and illness related anxieties (Bratman, 1997). When examining other similar types of problematic or disordered eating behaviors, it is hypothesized that orthorexic eating behavior may be explained by death anxiety (Matsumoto & Rodgers, 2020). Although death anxiety can motivate individuals to adopt adaptive coping strategies to manage this fear, when death anxiety remains unconscious, it can become a source of various psychological disorders including eating disorders (Arndt et al., 2005). To date, no studies have directly examined the relationship between death anxiety and orthorexic eating behavior. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the correlations between orthorexic eating behavior and general death anxiety. In order to accurately assess this association, the study also controlled for adaptive healthy eating behavior and other relevant variables, including diet type, adherence to a physician recommended diet, and age.

**Methodology.** The study was conducted online. The online questionnaire consisted of Teruel Orthorexia Scale (TOS) by Barrada & Roncero (2018), the Death anxiety inventory-revised (DAI-R) by Tomas-Sabado et al. (2005) and socio-demographic questions, including age, gender, education, employment, height, weight, dietary type, history of eating disorders, adherence to a physician-recommended diet. The study included 259 young adults (198 women, 61 men). Their age varied from 18 to 35 years (mean age 25,6; SD=3,925).

**The main results.** Regression analysis revealed that a higher level of general death anxiety significantly predicted greater orthorexic eating behavior ( $\beta = 0.202, p < 0.001$ ), even after controlling for adaptive eating behavior, age, diet type, and adherence to a physician-recommended diet. Among the components of death anxiety, only thoughts about death significantly predicted orthorexic eating behavior ( $\beta = 0.378, p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusions and implications.** The connection between death anxiety – especially thoughts about death – and orthorexic eating behavior may arise from a complex interplay of psychological factors. Both constructs reflect an underlying preoccupation with health and the meaning of life, potentially intensifying psychological distress when they co-occur. Death anxiety may fuel obsessive dietary behaviors as individuals attempt to manage existential fears, creating a feedback loop between anxiety and rigid eating patterns. Further research is necessary not only to replicate these findings but also to investigate the role of unconscious mortality reminders (not just subjectively observed emotions about death) and their potential influence on orthorexic eating behavior.

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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This study investigates classroom engagement among middle school students in an alternative school setting, focusing on potential differences between Mondays and Fridays. Data from eight students were collected using daily assessments completed by teachers. Results indicate higher average engagement on Fridays compared to Mondays for the majority of students, potentially attributed to factors such as anticipation of the weekend break and the positive, supportive environment cultivated within the school. The study underscores the impact of teacher practices, school environment, and individual student characteristics on engagement levels. While limited by a small sample size and a lack of existing literature on daily variations in engagement, the findings highlight the importance of promoting autonomy-supportive practices and creating a positive learning environment to enhance student

engagement throughout the week. Further research with larger sample sizes is warranted to validate these findings and inform targeted strategies for promoting classroom engagement.

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## THE LINK BETWEEN ADULT DARK TRIAD TRAITS AND DIFFERENT FORMS OF RISKY DRIVING

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**Introduction.** Each year, traffic accidents result in injuries and fatalities for countless people worldwide (WHO, 2023). This issue is equally pressing in Lithuania – according to the Lithuanian Road Police Service (2023), nearly 3,000 traffic accidents occurred in 2023 alone, claiming the lives of 157 people. Risky driving has been identified as one of the key contributors to traffic incidents, often conceptualized as a human factor that encompasses various psychological and behavioral characteristics, including personality traits (Jafarpour & Rahimi-Movaghar, 2014). To develop a more comprehensive understanding of people predisposed to risky driving, it is essential to consider a broad range of personality traits, including those traditionally viewed as socially aversive, such as Dark Triad personality traits. The present study aims to examine the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and adult engagement in different forms of risky driving.

**Methodology.** The study involved 233 drivers (average age 31.79). In this study the following instruments were used: the Driver Behavior Questionnaire (Reason et al., 1990), the Driving Anger Expression Questionnaire (Deffenbacher et al., 2002), the Driver Vengeance Questionnaire (Wiesenthal et al., 2000) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3) questionnaire (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

**Results.** It was found that higher levels of psychopathy predicted more frequent driving errors and violations, as well as more frequent aggressive driving, when controlling for age, gender and being involved in a traffic accident caused by another driver. No significant associations were found between Machiavellianism or narcissism and these forms of risky driving. Compared to Machiavellianism and narcissism, psychopathy had the strongest positive association with aggressive driving. Higher levels of Machiavellianism predicted more frequent involvement in vengeful driving when controlling for age, gender, being involved in a traffic accident caused by another driver and aggressive driving.

**Conclusions and implications.** The results indicate that Dark Triad personality traits have unique associations with different forms of risky driving. This highlights the importance of further exploration of the relationship between these phenomena to enable more accurate profiling of people prone to risky driving. The insights gained could not only enhance the profiling of high-risk drivers but also inform the development of more targeted and effective prevention strategies aimed at reducing risky driving.

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## Evaluating Nebraska's Suicide Prevention Plan: Insights, Comparisons, and Future Directions

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The aim of this research is to evaluate Nebraska's Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan (2022-2025), compare it to national and similar state initiatives, and provide data-driven recommendations to enhance future suicide prevention efforts, with particular attention to Nebraska's unique demographic and geographic challenges. Connections between Nebraska's statewide suicide prevention plan and other mental health and suicide prevention initiatives and policies, including 988 related laws, are explained and assessed. Findings aim to enhance Nebraska's suicide prevention strategies and inform future research and policy development.

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADULTS' VALUES AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUAL INDIVIDUALS

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**Introduction.** Despite positive changes in attitudes towards homosexual people, both gay men and lesbian women continue to face negative perceptions globally. These negative perceptions are linked to poorer health and well-being outcomes for members of the LGBTQ+ community. In this context, research continues to explore the factors that

influence evaluative beliefs about homosexual people. One area of interest is personal values, which function as guiding principles in individuals' lives and are often expressed through attitudes. Given the conceptual closeness of values and attitudes, scholars have proposed that deeply held value system may be linked to attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals. However, research is still limited regarding whether certain values are more strongly associated with attitudes towards gay men versus lesbian women. The present study aims to examine the relationships between adults' personal values and their attitudes towards homosexual men and homosexual women.

**Methodology.** The study included 252 adults (73 men, 178 women and 1 non-binary person) with a mean age of 28.32 (SD = 9.623). Data was collected via an online survey. The instruments used were the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 1992), the Modern Homonegativity Scale developed by Morrison and Morrison (2002). Also, the short version of the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982). Participants also answered additional socio-demographic questions.

**Results.** A stronger endorsement of power values was associated with more negative attitudes towards homosexual men but not towards homosexual women. In contrast, participants who placed higher importance on conservative values showed more negative attitudes towards both homosexual men and homosexual women. Furthermore, higher levels of self-transcendence and openness to change were linked to less negative attitudes towards both groups. Among all value types, conservative values showed the strongest association with negative attitudes towards homosexual men and homosexual women.

**Conclusions and implications.** The findings indicate that personal values are significantly associated with attitudes toward homosexual individuals. In particular, individuals who prioritize conservative or power-related values tend to express more negative attitudes, especially toward gay men. Conversely, those who emphasize self-transcendence and openness to change tend to hold less negative attitudes toward both gay men and lesbian women. These results suggest that certain value orientation may be linked to how individuals evaluate sexual minorities. This knowledge can be useful in designing educational initiatives that encourage reflection on personal values and promote inclusivity.

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