

The Roles of Affective Lability, Boredom, and Mindfulness in Predicting Number of Sex Partners

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Affective Lability

- Affective lability, a trait related to borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder, is a facet of emotion dysregulation involving rapid changes in extreme emotional states (Oliver et al., 2004).
- People who are affectively labile are more likely to be impulsive and have a greater number of sex partners (Adams et al., 2016; Henry et al., 2001).

Boredom Proneness

- Boredom is an aversive state involving lack of mental stimulation (Fahlman et al., 2013).
- People prone to boredom are more likely to have difficulty regulating emotions (Weybright et al., 2022).
- Boredom proneness is linked to hypersexuality and risky sexual behavior (de Oliveira et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2014).

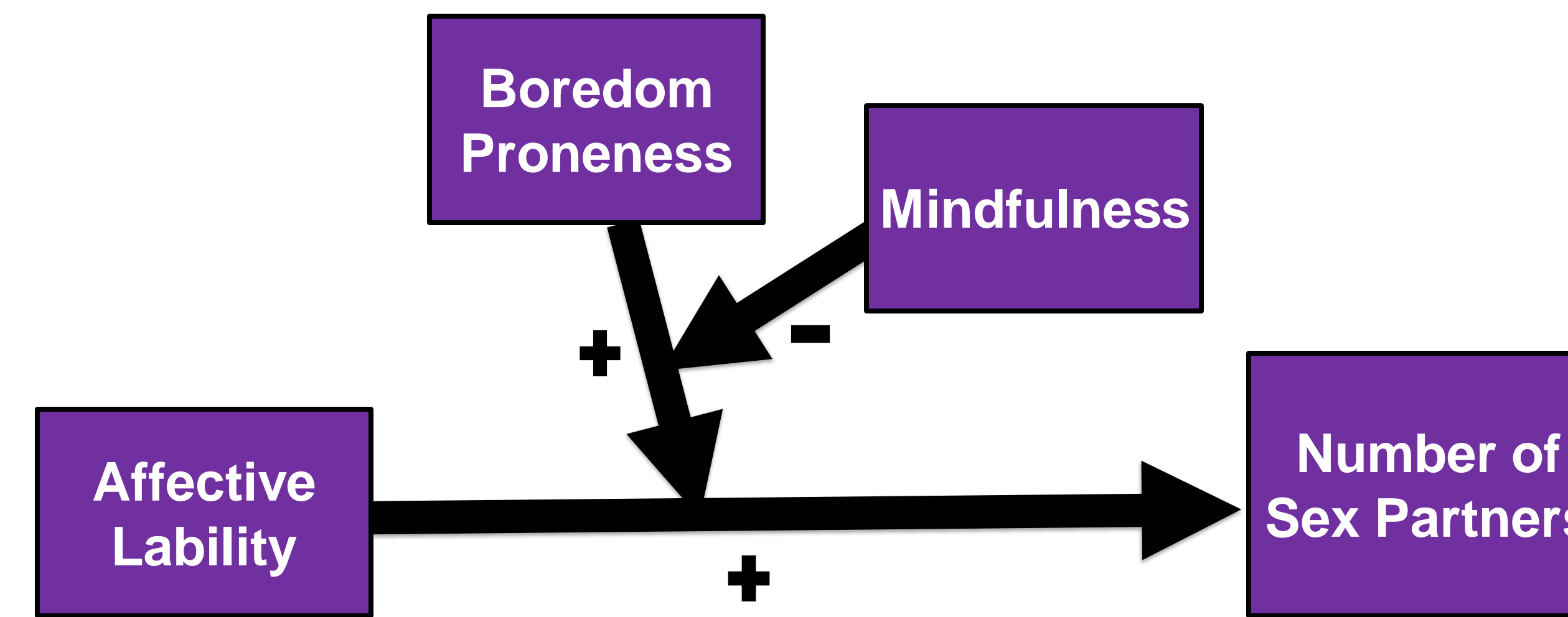
Trait Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is the ability to attend to thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations in an accepting and non-judgmental way (Baer, 2003).
- Mindfulness is positively associated with healthy emotion regulation and negatively associated with hypersexuality (Brem et al., 2018; McLaughlin et al., 2019).

Theorizing

- Among women with strong fluctuations in mood, boredom may escalate an aversive emotional experience, and in turn, create a heightened sense of urgency to ameliorate the intensity.
- Therefore, this heightened aversive experience may lower the threshold for acting on an urge to engage in casual, impulsive sex.
- Conversely, attending to the present moment may enable greater tolerance of boredom, even if it is experienced strongly and aversively, and protect against maladaptive coping and consequent impulsive sex.

Preregistered Hypothesis



Method

- Online study and recruitment (e.g., Reddit, SONA)
- Power analysis: minimum $N = 242$
- Participants: 469 women (18+)

Affective Lability Scale-SF (3 subscales; 18 items; Oliver et al., 2004)

1. Anxiety/depression
2. Depression/elation
E.g., Sometimes I feel extremely energetic one minute and then the next minute I might have so little energy that I can barely do a thing
3. Anger
1 = *Very Undescriptive* to 4 = *Very Descriptive*

Boredom Proneness Scale-SF (single scale; 8 items; Struk et al., 2017)

- E.g., I often find myself at "loose ends," not knowing what to do
1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*

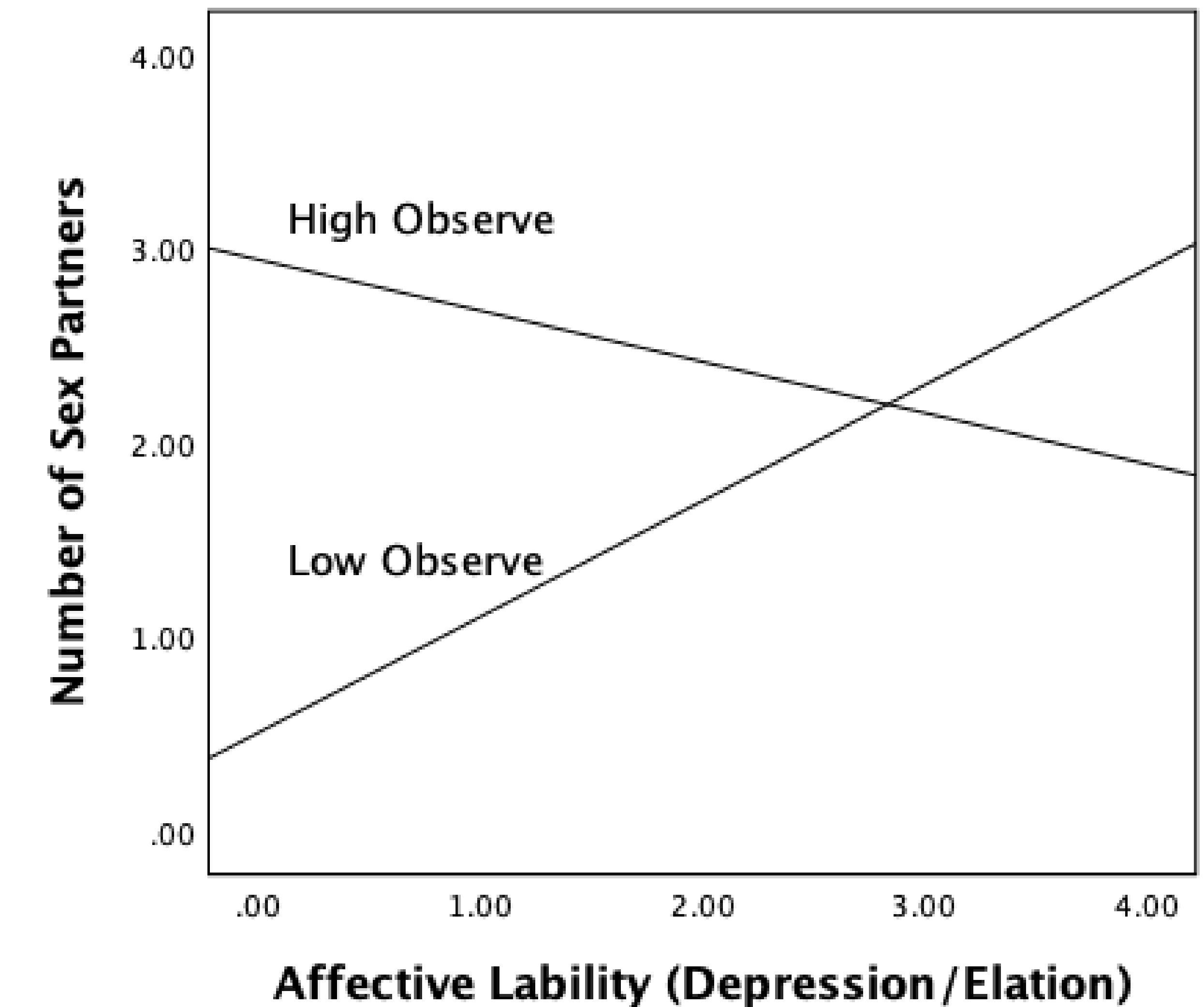
Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire-SF (5 subscales; 24 items; Bohlmeijer et al., 2011)

1. Observe
E.g., I notice the smells and aromas of things
2. Describe
3. Acting with awareness
4. Nonjudging of inner experience
5. Nonreactivity to inner experience
1 = *Never or Very Rarely True* to 5 = *Very Often or Always True*

Number of Sex Partners (modified from Ueda et al., 2020)

- "How many sex partners have you had in the last 12 months? For purposes of this study, sex is defined as vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If you are unsure, take your best guess"

Results



- Preregistered 3-way interactions were not significant.
- Among women who report rapid change between depression and elation
 - Those who tend to observe thoughts and sensations had *less* sex partners in the last year.
 - Those who tend *not* to observe thoughts and sensations had *more* sex partners in the last year.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- In a therapeutic setting, skills related to observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations may be helpful in reducing number of sex partners and associated risks.
- However, this finding was exploratory (i.e., not preregistered) and should be viewed with caution and needs replication.
- Further research is needed to explore the protective roles of the different facets of mindfulness.
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