

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Construct Validity of the Affect Sensitivity Nomological Net

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Comorbidity rates between mental disorders suggest a need to examine transdiagnostic mechanisms that etiologically contribute to multiple forms of psychopathology. The Affect Sensitivity nomological net is a proposed model of several of these mechanisms and includes a higher-order Affect Sensitivity construct, which bifurcates into anxiety sensitivity (AS) and its three facets, and distress intolerance (DI) (Bernstein, Zvolensky, Vujanovic, & Moos, 2009). However, previous studies of associations between constructs within this nomological net and various psychopathological outcomes have not demonstrated strong discriminant validity between constructs. Thus, the goal of the current study was to empirically examine the structure of the Affect Sensitivity nomological net using confirmatory factor analyses, as well as the differential pattern of association of constructs within the net with various psychopathological outcomes using multiple linear regression analyses amongst a sample of 281 undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 18.92$, $SD = 1.11$; 85.8% White; 71.2% female). Results indicated that a factor solution approximating the overall structure of the Affect Sensitivity nomological net demonstrated acceptable model fit. Results also indicated that Affect Sensitivity, AS, and DI demonstrate differential patterns of association with psychopathological outcomes. Overall, results generally support the construct validity of the Affect Sensitivity nomological net and the

conceptualization of AS and DI as related, yet distinct, constructs. Implications, limitations, and directions for future research are discussed.