

## How effective is “insisting on depression” as an excuse?

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### Introduction

#### Purpose:

Examining the relative effects of “insisting on depression” as an excuse by comparing it with typical statements of excuse and particularly when an excuse-maker does not show any depressive symptoms.

#### Insisting on depression:

a behavioral phenotype of people with modern type depression (MTD; Yamakawa & Sakamoto, 2015).

#### MTD:

Not an established mental disorder; rather, it is a generic term indicating a sort of depressive syndrome that has different features from those of traditional-type depression (i.e., melancholic depression; for details, refer to Kato et al., 2011)

### Methods

**Participants:** 216 Japanese undergraduates

**Procedure:** Using a hypothetical scenario method

Note. A vignette was adapted from Yamakawa and Sakamoto (2015)

**Design:** 1 x 5 Between-participants design

1. Physical illness: “I was out of shape”
2. Insisting on depression: “I think I may have depressive disorder”
3. Work requirements: “I was asked by a friend to work instead of him”
4. Negligence: “I forgot”
5. No-excuse: saying nothing (control condition)

Note. Experimental conditions were adapted from Weiner et al. (1987)

**Dependent variables:**

Behaviors they would deliver: 7 items

(e.g., punishing, forgiving, blaming, commiserating)

Impression & feelings towards excuse-maker: 12 items

(e.g., likeability, integrity, sympathy)

Note. Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### Results

One-way ANOVAs and post-hoc comparison revealed:

<Behavioral reaction>

Insisting on depression rated higher than no-excuse, and lower than physical illness.

<Impression>

Insisting on depression rated higher than no-excuse, and negligence

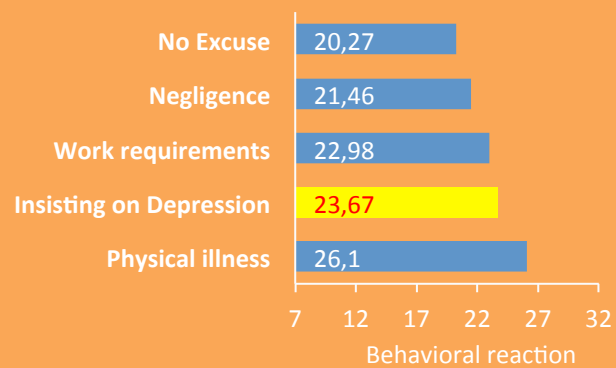


Fig. 1 Mean differences in behavioral reaction scores across five conditions

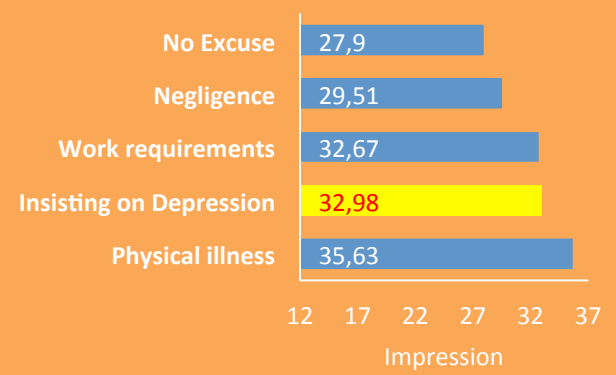


Fig. 2 Mean differences in impression scores across five conditions

### Conclusion

- Even if an excuse-maker did not show any symptoms of depressive disorder, insisting on depression was accepted as intermediately good excuse.
- Because the health education regarding depressive disorder has increased in Japan, a kind of implicit social norms to behave generously toward people with depression may exist.
- That implicit social norms might be reflected in our results.

### References

Kato, T. et al. (2011). Introducing the concept of modern depression in Japan: an international case vignette survey. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 135, 66-76.

Weiner, B., Amirkhan, J., Folkes, V. S., & Verette, J. A. (1987). An attributional analysis of excuse giving: Studies of a naive theory of emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 316-324.

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