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Relationship Satisfaction and Loneliness Among Young Adults Using Online Dating Services

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Abstract: This dissertation investigates the interplay between relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults engaged in online dating services. The study contextualizes the phenomenon within the historical evolution of online dating platforms and examines factors influencing relationship satisfaction, such as communication dynamics, platform design features, and compatibility. Additionally, it explores the prevalence and correlates of loneliness in online dating contexts, including the discrepancy between desired and actual social connections, the superficial nature of online interactions, and the influence of social media use. By elucidating the nuanced dynamics shaping relationship satisfaction and loneliness in online dating, this study aims to contribute to theoretical understanding and practical interventions for promoting healthy and fulfilling romantic experiences in the digital age.

Keywords: Online dating, relationship satisfaction, loneliness, young adults, communication dynamics, platform design,

CHAPTER-1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In this digital age, where virtual contacts are an important part of modern social exchanges, online dating services have grown popular and are changing the way people find love. Scholars have paid a lot of attention to how these platforms work, especially when it comes to what they mean for young adults' relationship happiness and loneliness. The main goal of this research is to look into the complex link between young adults' use of online dating services, happiness in their relationships, and feelings of loneliness. The rise of online dating sites has changed the rules of traditional dating by giving people access to a huge pool of possible partners and new ways to start and keep love relationships. For young people in particular, these websites are not only a way to look for dates, but they also show how modern society is changing how it views dating and being close. Because of this, it is very important to know how online dating affects the mental health of this group.

This study is mainly interested in the idea of relationship satisfaction, that refers to how people personally judge the quality and happiness of their love relationships. The common belief is that online dating can make it easier to find matched partners and make bonds that are satisfying. However, there is still mixed evidence about how it affects relationship happiness. Some studies show that the ease of use and accessibility for online dating sites makes it easier to build lasting relationships, which in turn raises the level of relationship happiness. On the other hand, some people are worried about how shallow online interactions can be, how common it is for people to lie, and the paradox for choice, which can all hurt relationships and make users unhappy.

At the same time, loneliness is becoming an important factor in how young people behave when they are online dating. It has been found that a big problem for people who use online dating services is loneliness, which is defined by feelings of societal separation and a gap between wanted and real social ties. Even though these

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platforms make it seem like they offer huge social networks, young people may actually feel more lonely. This is because they don't have as many face-to-face interactions, are afraid of being rejected, and have relationships that don't last long.

1.2 Relationship Satisfaction in Online Dating Contexts

Relationship satisfaction is a crucial aspect of online dating, encompassing people's subjective assessments of the stability, quality, and fulfillment of their romantic relationships that started or were sustained via digital platforms. Understanding the elements impacting relationship happiness in this setting is essential for researchers and practitioners to promote positive and rewarding love encounters.

The quality of communication between partners is a major factor in whether or not a relationship in an online dating setting is satisfying. Studies have shown that people's views of relationship happiness are heavily influenced by the regularity and quality of communication. Message capabilities or chat platforms commonly serve as the starting point for text-based interactions, allowing people to assess compatibility, develop rapport, and create emotional connection with possible partners during their first encounters. However, problems arise when nonverbal clues are not present, which may lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which can affect relationship satisfaction.

Online dating platforms may impact users' relationship satisfaction experiences via their design and functioning. Systems that emphasize user interaction via gamification features like texting, swiping, and matching may provide an initial thrill and novelty but may eventually lead to discontent or disappointment. More gratifying relationships may be possible on platforms that prioritize compatibility-based matching algorithms or encourage meaningful conversations via guided prompts & profile prompts.

Relationship happiness is greatly affected by how genuine and open a person seems in their online dating profile. Research has shown that online romantic relationships may suffer when confidence is eroded due to worries about deceit, misrepresentation, or catfishing. Platforms that emphasize user verification, promote authenticity, and make it easy for people to be honest about themselves may end up with more satisfied and trusting users.

1.3 Loneliness and Social Isolation in Online Dating

Online dating platforms often contribute to feelings of social isolation and loneliness, despite their claims of connecting people and facilitating social contact. The gap between ideal and real social relationships is a major factor that leads to online daters feeling lonely. The abundance of options on these platforms can cause indecisiveness, insecurity, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Additionally, online contacts are fleeting, ghosting, and bread-crumbing are commonplace. Online conversations tend to be shallow, making it difficult to form deep ties and emotional closeness.

The anonymity and lack of personal connection provided by online dating platforms can also lead to feelings of isolation and separation. This can lead to a lack of self-control and an increased likelihood of engaging in antisocial or dishonest conduct. Excessive social media usage can also make users feel lonely and compare themselves to others, leading to feelings of loneliness and depression symptoms.

Online dating services may contribute to users' feelings of isolation and loneliness through their design and user interface. Platforms that encourage quick judgments about others based on appearance can create an environment where people feel objectified and disconnected. However, platforms that enable community-building activities, promote genuine relationships, and stimulate meaningful interactions can help users feel more connected.

However, online dating sites can also help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation by facilitating connections between people with similar interests. Virtual gatherings, community forums, and peer support groups can help users find companionship and overcome feelings of isolation. To combat feelings of isolation and loneliness associated with online dating, researchers and professionals need to identify the factors contributing to these problems and devise effective solutions.

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CHAPTER-2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Raalte and Floyd's (2022) study looked at the connection between affection and relationship satisfaction, specifically stress and sadness, in Southwestern college students. The findings demonstrated that the association between attachment and depression, intimacy, and trust was unaffected by satisfaction. It did, however, reduce the association between stress and affection, with affection only strongly negatively correlated with stress in very pleased partnerships. Participants that expressed dissatisfaction were deprived of affection, and they displayed varying frequencies of affectionate behaviours.

The development of relationship satisfaction in relation to age and length of relationship is investigated in this systematic review and meta-analysis by **Bühler, Krauss & Orth (2021).** Analysis was done on data from 165 independent samples, which included 165,039 participants. According to the findings, relationship satisfaction dropped between the ages of 20 and 40, peaked at 40, climbed until 65, and then plateaued in late adulthood. The first ten years of the relationship saw a decline in relationship satisfaction, which peaked at ten years, then increased until twenty years, at which time it declined once more. The mean change results showed that relationship satisfaction declined within a particular relationship, with the biggest drops occurring in early adulthood and the early stages of a partnership. According to moderator analyses, the variance in the mean level was explained by the presence of children and a relationship satisfaction measure. Characteristics including birth cohort, sample type, nation, ethnicity, gender, shared household with partner, marriage status, relationship transitions, and dyadic data all showed consistent patterns in the findings.

Adamczyk (2018) conducted a study to investigate the association between young adults' romantic loneliness and their relationship status. 419 adults between the ages of 20 and 35 provided data. Single status was found to have a direct negative effect on romantic loneliness, according to the model, which explained 64.36% of the total variance in romantic loneliness. The study also discovered that fear of being alone and an unfulfilled need for belonging acted as some kind of relationship mediators. Relationship status's indirect impact on romantic loneliness due to unfulfilled need for belonging was more significant than the combined indirect effects of unfulfilled need for belonging and serial fear of being alone.

Ouytsel et al (2016) examined 57 teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18, found that social networking sites are essential for finding out information about potential love partners. To show interest, they would rather see old photos and status updates. They do not, however, believe that Facebook officialness matters in relationships. They are also conscious of the possibility of controlling actions, such sharing passwords or keeping an eye on profiles, and envy.

The characteristic emotional intelligence and the pleasure of romantic relationships were found to be significantly correlated in a meta-analysis of six researches by **Malouff, Schutte & Thorsteinsson (2014)** with 603 participants. The results of the study showed a strong correlation between an individual's emotional intelligence and both their partner's contentment and their self-reported level of happiness. This result points to the need for more research on couples' emotional intelligence through intervention in order to increase the satisfaction of romantic relationships.

Schaffhuser, Allemand & Martin (2014) examined the relationship satisfaction of intimate couples based on three different perspectives on the Big Five personality traits: self-perceptions, partner-perceptions, and meta-perceptions. The research involved data from 216 couples. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model was used for analysis. The findings revealed that neuroticism negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while agreeableness and conscientiousness positively correlated with satisfaction across all perspectives. Additionally, significant associations between extraversion and relationship satisfaction were found exclusively in partner- and meta-perceptions. The study highlights the importance of each perspective in understanding the role of personality in relationship satisfaction.

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CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults using online dating services and offline dating services.

3.2 Rationale of the study

In the digital age, a growing number of people are using online dating apps and social media to meet new friends or romantic partners. These platforms provide a high level of connectivity, but they also make it easier to be non-committal, leading to less gratifying interactions and relationships. This dissertation focuses on the relationship satisfaction and loneliness experienced by youth who use online dating services and those who don't, comparing the levels of satisfaction and loneliness among these two groups. The study suggests that in the modern world, meeting new friends or potential mates has become as easy as a swipe on their face, leading to feelings of loneliness. Therefore, understanding the relationship between satisfaction in relationships and perceived feelings of loneliness is crucial to combat this issue. Online dating apps and social media have become a popular choice for young adults seeking platonic relationships, but the correlation between satisfaction and loneliness in the context of online dating remains unresolved.

3.3 Objectives

- To examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults using online dating services.
- To explore the relationship between relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults using offline dating services.

3.4 Hypothesis

I. There will be significant difference between the level of relationship satisfaction among users of online dating services and individuals using offline dating services.

II. There will be significant difference between the level of loneliness among users of online dating services and individuals using offline dating services.

III. There will be significant relationship between the level of relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults using online dating services.

IV. There will be significant relationship between the level of relationship satisfaction and loneliness among young adults using offline dating services.

3.5 Variables of the study

3.5.1 Independent Variable

Dating Method: The term "dating method" describes the strategy or manner in which young adults look for and pursue romantic relationships. It falls into two primary groups: (1) online dating services, whereby users connect with possible love partners via digital platforms or applications, and (2) offline dating, where users meet and engage with potential mates in person in real-world situations. The independent variable in this study is dating strategy, which classifies individuals according to how they like to look for and initiate romantic relationships.

3.5.2 Dependent Variables

Relationship Satisfaction: The term "relationship satisfaction" describes how one feels about their love relationship in terms of its overall happiness, fulfillment, and quality. It includes several aspects including intimacy, communication, trust, and compatibility, all of which add to the relationship's perceived success and satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is one of the dependent variables in this study, demonstrating how satisfied young adults are with their romantic relationships and how much that happiness is impacted by the dating technique they choose (online or offline).

Loneliness: The subjective sensation of emotional and social isolation that is defined by depressive, empty, and estranged feelings from other people is called loneliness. It results from an apparent disparity between ideal and real social ties and interactions. The second dependent variable in this study is loneliness, which measures how socially and emotionally alone young adults feel and is impacted by the kind of dating they choose (online or offline).

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3.6 Participants of the study

A total of 108 individuals, 54 individuals who met their partner online and 54 individuals who met their partner offline, will be selected from the pool using a purposeful sampling technique. The sample population is primarily composed of individuals aged 18-25 years old.

Inclusion criteria included dating adults in the age group of 18-25 years.Exclusion criteria included young adults who were engaged as well as adults involved in cohabiting relationships.

3.7 Data collection instruments

The **"Relationship Assessment Scale" and "The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale"** together with demographic data, were used in this study to gather data.

3.8 Data collection procedure

The collection of data was done using the **"Relationship Assessment Scale" (Hendrick, 1988) & "The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale" (Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson, 1978)**. After introducing the goals of the study to the participants, they were requested to take part and were provided with the questionnaires with details about the study, privacy concerns, the researcher's contact details, and further measures. The review of the instruments took five minutes.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULT & DISCUSSION

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The emergence of internet dating services has brought about a significant change in the way people in modern society date and build relationships. These platforms provide people with previously unheard-of chances to meet possible mates by bridging social and geographic divides. But as online dating has become more popular, worries about how it may affect loneliness and relationship fulfillment have emerged. Clarifying the subtleties of contemporary relationship dynamics requires an understanding of how young adults who use online dating services compared to those who prefer offline dating techniques differ in terms of their level of relationship happiness and loneliness. This study compares the levels of loneliness and relationship satisfaction experienced by young adults who date offline vs those who use online dating services. This inquiry uses a thorough research technique that includes surveys as well as qualitative analyses in order to investigate the distinct experiences, difficulties, and results related to these two dating styles.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all variables among Online users

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	Loneliness	Relationship satisfaction
Mean	41.09259259	24.05555556
Standard Deviation	10.08317956	7.829351323
N	54	54

The above table displays the descriptive data for relationship satisfaction and loneliness among internet users. With a standard deviation of 10.08 and a mean loneliness score of 41.09, the sample as a whole indicates a moderate degree of loneliness on average. On the other hand, the participants' mean relationship satisfaction score is 24.06, and a standard deviation of 7.83, indicating a somewhat lower degree of relationship satisfaction. The standard deviations show that both variables are varied, suggesting that the sample of internet users has a range of experiences with loneliness and relationship satisfaction. The results have been calculated on a sample that is of a reasonable size, having N = 54 for each of the variables, which improves the statistical reliability. These findings offer a quantitative picture of online users' emotional experiences and suggest that more research is necessary to determine the variables that affect relationship satisfaction and loneliness in the setting of online interactions.

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Table 2: Descriptive statistics of all variables among Offline users

	Loneliness	Relationship satisfaction
Mean	40.90741	25
Standard Deviation	11.23214	7.682374
N	54	54

The descriptive data for relationship satisfaction and loneliness among offline users are shown in Table 2. Offline people experience a comparable amount of loneliness as online users, as seen by their mean loneliness score of 40.91 and a standard deviation = 11.23. Having a standard deviation of 7.68, offline users' mean relationship satisfaction level is somewhat higher at 25. This indicates that as compared to their online counterparts, offline users often report somewhat greater levels of relationship satisfaction. The standard deviations of the loneliness & relationship satisfaction measures exhibit variety, indicating a range of experiences across offline users. The conclusions are supported by a sizable sample size, with N = 54 for both variables. In addition to shedding light on offline users' emotional experiences, these findings emphasize the need of taking into account both online and offline environments when analyzing relationship satisfaction and loneliness.

DISCUSSION

Online dating platforms have revolutionized romantic interactions, offering individuals unprecedented opportunities to establish connections and cultivate relationships beyond traditional channels. These platforms cater to various demographics, interests, and relationship objectives, catering to casual encounters, LGBTQ+ people, religious or ethnic groupings, or general matchmaking. However, online dating is a complex and developing part of modern romance due to issues such as emotional letdown, privacy and security concerns, and misrepresentation.

Relationship satisfaction refers to the general state of contentment, fulfillment, and happiness that people feel in a romantic relationship. It encompasses various aspects of the relationship, including emotional connection, trust, shared goals and values, compatibility, and communication. Relationship satisfaction is a subjective experience that varies from couple to couple and can be impacted by factors such as cultural background, personality qualities, past experiences, and external stressors. Maintaining a happy and meaningful relationship over time requires effort, mutual investment, and communication from both parties.

Loneliness is the subjective and cognitive distress or uneasiness that results from being alone or believing that one is alone in some way. It is a complex and prevalent emotional state, beyond simple physical isolation, marked by feelings of emotional or social deprivation, as well as sensations of emptiness and disconnection. This study compared the data of young people who date online to those who prefer meeting their partners in person and provides insight into the complex relationships and feelings of loneliness that exist between these two groups.

The first hypothesis of this study was that there will be significant difference between the level of relationship satisfaction among users of online dating services and individuals using offline dating services. Independent t-tests showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. The second hypothesis suggested that the mode of meeting partners (online or offline) doesn't have a big effect on how happy or lonely young adults are in their relationships generally.

Correlation studies show that relationship satisfaction and loneliness are weakly negatively related among online users, meaning that people who are happier with their relationships tend to be less lonely. For young people dating online, correlational analysis showed that the quality of the relationship may help them feel less lonely.

In conclusion, the results show that there may be small differences in how happy people are with their relationships and how lonely they are between people who date online and people who date offline, but these variations cannot be considered statistically significant. Personal interests, the quality of the relationship, and social support networks may be more important factors when considering how dating platforms change the nature of relationships.

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CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the study, loneliness and relationship satisfaction levels were compared among young people who use online dating services and those who prefer to date in person. The summary data showed that both groups feel moderately lonely, but offline users feel a little more lonely than online users. In addition, both groups say they are satisfied with their relationships, but offline users likely to be a little more satisfied.

The t-tests that were used to see if there were any differences among the two groups in terms of relationship happiness and loneliness did not show any significant differences. It seems that there isn't a big difference in how happy or lonely people are in relationships based on whether they use either online or offline dating services.

Also, Pearson correlation studies looked at how relationship happiness and loneliness were related in each group. For people who use online dating, a weak negative connection (-0.232) was found, which means that being in a relationship that makes you happy is linked to being less lonely. In the same way, people who used offline dating showed a weak negative association (-0.12048) between these factors, which pointed to the same trend.

In the end, the study shows that young people feel the same amount of relationship satisfaction as well as loneliness no matter what way they use to date. However, relationship happiness seems to have a weak negative link with loneliness both in online as well as offline dating settings. This suggests that other variables may have a greater impact on one's loneliness levels. Therefore, the results show how important it is to look at more than just the type of dating when trying to figure out how relationships work and how young people feel.

Recommendations

- **Promote Social Skills Training:** Offer training and materials targeted at improving social and communication skills for both online and offline dating to help people handle dating situations more skilfully.
- **Encourage Offline Social Activities:** Encourage young people to go to events and do social activities in real life so they can make real connections outside of online dating.
- **Educate on Managing Expectations:** Offer training programs to help people manage their expectations about online dating, pointing out that it might not always result in instant satisfaction in relationships and could sometimes make people feel lonelier.
- **Provide Support for Loneliness:** Create support groups or therapy services for young adults who are lonely, giving them a safe place to talk about their feelings and ways to deal with them.
- **Enhance Online Dating Platforms:** Always make online dating sites better by adding features that put real connections ahead of shallow ones, like personality-based matching algorithms and instruments that make conversation easier.

Limitations of the study

- **Sampling Bias:** Sampling bias might restrict research because people who prefer offline dating may differ consistently from those who utilize online dating services, which can impact how the results are generalizable.
- **Self-Report Measures:** Self-report measures of relationship satisfaction as well as loneliness may be affected by response biases like social desirability bias, which can cause people to overestimate or underestimate their real experiences.
- **Temporal Causality:** Cross-sectional studies may not show temporal causation between online dating usage, relationship satisfaction, & loneliness because they cannot tell whether feelings of loneliness and relationship unhappiness occur before or after online dating.
- **Technology Accessibility:** Depending on criteria like socioeconomic level or digital literacy, not every young adult may have the same opportunities to use online dating services. This might lead to biased results and the exclusion of some demographics from the research.
- **Cultural Variability:** Research methods and interpretations should be culturally sensitive to account for potential changes in social norms, views towards online dating, and the incidence of loneliness among cultures and geographic locations.

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