

Self-Worth, Psychological Needs and Relational Functioning among Young Adults

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Abstract: *Technology enabled dating has revolutionized the manner in which people seek new relationships. The aim of the present study was to explore a few essential psychological aspects related to online dating among a sample 240 young adults (120 users and 120 non-users of dating apps) between the age of 20-30 years. Self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning were the three variables considered for the present study in order to understand their impact on online dating behavior among young adults. A between groups design was employed to check for any differences between users and non-users of dating apps and also gender differences with respect to the aforementioned variables. Furthermore, a correlational design was implemented to ascertain the predictors of relational functioning among users and non-users of dating apps. Results revealed significant differences in the dimensions of autonomy satisfaction and relational depression among users and non-users of dating apps. Additionally, men using dating apps reported higher levels self-worth, competence satisfaction and relational esteem as opposed to women using dating apps. Impact of significant predictors of relational functioning among various groups in the study were also discussed.*

Index Terms – Online Dating, Self-Worth, Psychological Needs, Relational Functioning, Young Adults.

I. INTRODUCTION

Online dating has emerged as a widespread medium for an individual to connect with like-minded individuals without having to scour their social circles. Today's younger generation spends a large amount of their time for social and emotional development using social media as a tool (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010). One of the reasons why a large number of individuals prefer using online platforms over face-to-face settings is the amount of control it offers over self-presentation along with the possibility to easily terminate an encounter. Moreover, the pace at which one gets acquainted with somebody is controllable, while safely maintaining their anonymity. This sense of anonymity helps reduce inhibitions and increases self-confidence too (Aretz, Demuth, Schmidt & Vierlein, 2010). According to Erickson's sixth stage of human development – intimacy versus isolation, young adults often transition through a period in their lives where they either develop close and intimate relationships with significant people in their lives, or tend to remain in isolation (Erikson, 1950). Although most individuals are able to form strong bonds with others and have close, lasting romantic relationships, there are some individuals who struggle to form intimate relations with others and are often left feeling lonely and isolated. Regardless, the desire to find a romantic partner remains, as does the sense that doing so can be challenging. Such individuals, however, have found solace due to the recent influx of several online dating platforms that has made it considerably easier for them to find someone they are compatible with.

As the number of people who opt for online dating grows each day, the need to take into consideration the various psychological aspects related to online dating also arises. The results from a series of empirical research studies on internet based activities, such as behaviour in the network learning environment (Chen & Jang, 2010), internet usage (Zhao, Lu, Wang & Huang, 2011) and Facebook usage (Sheldon and Gunz, 2009) show that the online behavioural involvement of an individual goes up with an increase in the degree of satisfaction of psychological needs. According to the self-determination theory, there exist at least three basic psychological needs whose satisfaction is crucial for the achievement of wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A study on online games indicated that children who perceived higher level of satisfaction of competence, relatedness and autonomy were more inclined to use the internet often (Shen, Liu & Wang, 2013). This gives us an insight into how the psychological needs of an individual are a fundamental driving force of their online behaviour. The self-determination theory, therefore, could provide a unique perspective that will help us understand the relationship between psychological needs and online network behaviour. Another aspect of their behaviour that online dating participants consistently keep in mind is to develop strategies not just to assess others but also to figure out and showcase their own level of desirability. In such a case, the individual's own perceived value plays a large role in how he or she portrays himself or herself to the rest of the world through an online platform. This gradually creates a feedback mechanism over time that either positively or negatively reinforces a person's self-worth (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). Similar to the concept of self-worth and psychological needs, there are many other relational processes that are linked either directly or indirectly to the well-being of an individual. The concept of relational functioning is one such area that has functional consequences for the person and the relationship he or she is involved in. As people transition from adolescence into adulthood, the dynamics of relationships gradually shift and close friends and romantic partners become central figures. Therefore, need fulfilment within these important relationships becomes vital to well-being and relational functioning. A meta-analysis of studies that explored the concept of need satisfaction within romantic relationships showed that as needs are fulfilled in people's romantic relationships, their self-esteem, vitality, and positive affect tend to go up (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008). Taking the aforementioned research studies and their findings into consideration, the current study aims to explore the impact of online dating on the self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning of young adults who make use of online platforms to form and forge relationships. Based on previous literature discussed above, the objectives of the current study are as follows:

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine if there is a difference in self-worth, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction dimensions of psychological needs (relatedness, competency and autonomy) and the dimensions of relational functioning (relational esteem, relational depression and relational preoccupation) among users and non-users of dating apps.
- To determine if there are gender differences in self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning among users and non-users of dating apps.
- To study whether self-worth and psychological needs predict relational functioning among users and non-users of dating apps

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a between-groups design to assess the differences in self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning between users and non-users of dating apps. This study also aims to assess the gender differences in the same among users and non-users of dating apps. Lastly, the study adopts a correlational design to determine the predictors of relational functioning among users and non-users of dating apps.

3.2 Sample

Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 240 users and non-users of dating apps in the age group of 20-30 years. The mean age of this sample of young adults was 22.71. The sample comprised of 120 users of dating apps (60 Male and 60 Female) and 120 non-users of dating apps (60 Male and 60 Female).

3.3 Instruments/Tools

The following questionnaires/instruments were used to collect data for the study:

- Information Schedule: Participants involved in the study were asked to fill an information schedule which asked them about their age, gender, family type, residence and other details. They were also asked if they were a member of any dating app, and if yes, they were further asked to mention the dating apps they used.
- Texas Social Behaviour Inventory (TSBI): The Texas Social Behaviour Inventory is an objective measure of an individual's feelings of self-worth or social competence. Helmreich and Stapp (1974) revised the original 32 item scale to create two parallel 16 item forms namely Form A and Form B. A correlation of 0.97 was found between each form and the original 32-item scale. Form B was used in the current study and its correlation with the original 32-item scale was 0.973 for males and 0.977 for females. Subjects responded to the statements on a five-point Likert scale (0-not at all, 1-not very, 2-slightly, 3-fairly, 4-very much). The scores on the scale range from 0-64 with the higher scores indicating higher self-esteem.
- The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs (BMPN): The BMPN measures a set of basic psychological needs namely, relatedness, competence and autonomy. The scale consists of 18 items in total and each need is assessed through six items, three of which tap into need satisfaction and three into need dissatisfaction. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores for each of the needs were then computed (six subscale scores in all). According to the reliability analyses carried out by Sheldon and Hilpert (2012), the coefficients of satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores for relatedness were 0.71 and 0.85 respectively. Similarly, the coefficients of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores for competence were 0.71 and 0.70 and 0.69 and 0.72 for autonomy.
- Relational Assessment Questionnaire (RAQ): This 26-item self-report questionnaire developed by Snell & Finney (1993) assesses three different areas of romantic relational functioning. Relational esteem is the tendency to positively evaluate one's capacity to relate intimately to another person. Relational depression is the tendency to feel depressed about the status of one's intimate relationships. Relational preoccupation is the tendency to be highly obsessed with thoughts about intimate relationships. Items were answered on a 5-point Likert type scale (0 = not at all characteristic of me to 4 = very characteristic of me). Higher scores on each subscale correspond to greater relational esteem, relational depression and relational preoccupation. Snell and Finney (1993) observed Cronbach's alphas for relational esteem, depression, and preoccupation of 0.81, 0.88, and 0.85. Cronbach's alpha for the three subscales was 0.80, 0.89, and 0.89, respectively

3.4 Procedure

After selecting the measures to be used for the study the researcher visited colleges, organizational institutions, shopping malls and food joints. After establishing rapport, the participants were made aware that their participation in this study was purely voluntary and were assured of confidentiality throughout the study. Those who agreed to participate in the study were requested to fill an informed consent form and the questionnaires. The data collected was coded and entered in the software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0 for analyses.

IV. RESULTS

The obtained quantitative data of this study was analyzed using independent samples t-test and stepwise regression analyses using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. A t-test was used to determine if there are any differences in self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning between users and non-users of dating apps. The means, standard deviations and t-value for the same are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1- Mean, Standard Deviation and the *t*-value for users and non-users (N=240)

Variable studied	Users (N=120)		Non-users (N=120)		<i>t</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self-worth	40.69	9.07	41.21	8.89	0.45
Relatedness satisfaction	11.67	1.91	11.71	2.36	0.15
Relatedness dissatisfaction	8.98	3.07	9.06	2.82	0.20
Competence satisfaction	11.37	2.05	11.18	2.41	0.66
Competence dissatisfaction	9.58	2.77	9.63	2.89	0.14
Autonomy satisfaction	10.18	3.03	11.48	2.65	3.56**
Autonomy dissatisfaction	10.46	2.29	9.95	2.80	1.54
Relational esteem	14.88	5.28	14.58	5.60	0.44
Relational depression	13.03	8.50	10.68	8.39	2.15*
Relational preoccupation	17.12	5.71	16.57	5.56	0.76

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

The results in Table 1 indicate that there was a significant difference between dating app users and non-users with respect to autonomy satisfaction ($t=3.56$, $p \leq 0.01$) and relational depression ($t=-2.15$, $p \leq 0.05$). It can be seen that those who use dating apps experience lower autonomy satisfaction and higher relational depression when compared to those who do not use dating apps. Thereafter, a t-test was carried out to determine if there are any gender differences in self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning among users of dating apps. The means, standard deviations and t-value for the same are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2- Mean, Standard Deviation and the *t*-value for male and female users (N=120)

Variable studied	Male (N=60)		Female (N=60)		<i>t</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self-worth	42.7	8.21	38.68	9.51	2.48*
Relatedness satisfaction	11.85	1.82	11.48	1.99	1.05
Relatedness dissatisfaction	9.18	3.28	8.78	2.87	0.71
Competence satisfaction	11.75	1.96	10.98	2.08	2.08*
Competence dissatisfaction	9.68	2.89	9.48	2.66	0.39
Autonomy satisfaction	10.40	3.14	9.95	2.94	0.81
Autonomy dissatisfaction	10.73	2.30	10.18	2.26	1.32
Relational esteem	16.13	4.89	13.63	5.41	2.66**
Relational depression	12.77	8.17	13.28	8.87	0.33
Relational preoccupation	15.83	5.97	18.40	5.17	2.52*

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

The results in Table 2 indicate that there were significant gender differences in self-worth ($t=2.48$, $p \leq 0.05$), competence satisfaction ($t=2.08$, $p \leq 0.05$), relational esteem ($t=2.66$, $p \leq 0.01$) and relational preoccupation ($t=2.52$, $p \leq 0.05$) among users of dating apps. It can be seen that men who use dating apps had higher levels of self-worth, competence satisfaction and relational esteem when compared to women. Women, on the other hand, showed higher levels of relational preoccupation when compared to men.

Similarly, another t-test was conducted to determine if there were any gender differences in self-worth, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction dimensions of psychological needs (relatedness, competency and autonomy) and the dimensions of relational functioning (relational esteem, relational depression and relational preoccupation) among non-users of dating apps. The means, standard deviations and t-value for the same are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3- Mean, Standard Deviation and the *t*-value for male and female non-users (N=120)

Variable studied	Male (N=60)		Female (N=60)		<i>t</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self-worth	41.33	9.04	41.08	8.82	0.15
Relatedness satisfaction	11.57	2.38	11.85	2.36	0.66
Relatedness dissatisfaction	8.45	2.81	9.67	2.72	2.41*
Competence satisfaction	11.03	2.62	11.32	2.20	0.64
Competence dissatisfaction	9.55	2.66	9.72	3.11	0.31
Autonomy satisfaction	11.23	2.88	11.73	2.39	1.03
Autonomy dissatisfaction	9.85	2.94	10.05	2.68	0.39
Relational esteem	15.72	5.68	13.43	5.32	2.27*
Relational depression	11.90	9.33	9.47	7.20	1.60
Relational preoccupation	15.75	5.82	17.38	5.20	1.62

* $p \leq 0.05$

The results in Table 3 indicate that there were significant gender differences in relatedness dissatisfaction ($t = -2.41$, $p \leq 0.05$) and relational esteem ($t = 2.27$, $p \leq 0.05$) among non-users of dating apps. Results indicate that men reported higher levels of relatedness dissatisfaction when compared to women. However, when it comes to relational esteem, women scored higher than men.

The next section focuses on the stepwise regression analyses aimed at determining the predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning. Self-worth and the dimensions of psychological needs were entered as the predictor variables. Tables 4, 6, 8 and 10 show the summary of stepwise regression analyses for the predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning. Tables 5, 7, 9 and 11 show the detailed regression analyses for the same.

Table 4 – Showing the summary of regression analysis for predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning among male users (N=60)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables		
	Relational esteem	Relational depression	Relational preoccupation
Self-worth	NS	-0.46**	-0.29*
Relatedness satisfaction	0.27*	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
B Competence satisfaction	NS	0.27**	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	-0.37**	-0.28*
Self-worth	NS	0.21	0.08
Relatedness satisfaction	0.07	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
ΔR² Competence satisfaction	NS	0.07	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	0.14	0.08
Total Adjusted R²	0.07	0.42	0.16

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR^2 -R Squared Change, β -Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 5 – Results of stepwise regression analyses showing various models predicting the dimensions of relational functioning among male users (N=60)

Predictor	ΔR^2	β
<u>Criterion: Relational esteem</u>		
Model 1	0.07	
1. Relatedness satisfaction		0.27*
<u>Criterion: Relational depression</u>		
Model 1	0.21	
1. Self-worth		-0.46**
Model 2	0.14	
1. Self-worth		-0.44**
2. Autonomy dissatisfaction		-0.37**
Model 3	0.07	
1. Self-worth		-0.47**
2. Autonomy dissatisfaction		-0.42**
3. Competence satisfaction		0.27**
Total Adjusted R^2	0.42	
<u>Criterion: Relational preoccupation</u>		
Model 1	0.08	
1. Self-worth		-0.29*
Model 2	0.08	
1. Self-worth		-0.30*
2. Autonomy dissatisfaction		0.28*
Total Adjusted R^2	0.16	
Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR^2 -R Squared Change, β -Standardized Coefficient Beta		

According to the results displayed in Table 5, relatedness satisfaction was a significant predictor of relational esteem and there was a positive relationship between the two ($\beta = 0.27$, $p \leq 0.05$), with the predictor variable contributing to 7% of the variance in relational esteem. The table shows that the dimension of relational depression was predicted by three variables, namely, Self-worth ($\beta = -0.46$, $p \leq 0.01$), autonomy dissatisfaction ($\beta = -0.37$, $p \leq 0.01$) and competence satisfaction ($\beta = 0.27$, $p \leq 0.01$). While self-worth and autonomy satisfaction were negatively correlated to relational depression, competence satisfaction had a positive association with the same. The contribution of self-worth, autonomy dissatisfaction and competence satisfaction in predicting relational depression among men who use dating apps was found to be 21%, 14% and 7% respectively. The predictor variables together contributed to 42% of the overall variance of relational depression.

The dimension of relational preoccupation was predicted by self-worth ($\beta = -0.29$, $p \leq 0.05$) and autonomy dissatisfaction ($\beta = 0.28$, $p \leq 0.05$) with self-worth showing a negative correlation and autonomy dissatisfaction showing a positive association with the criterion variable. Both self-worth and autonomy dissatisfaction had an equal contribution of 8% each towards the variance of relational preoccupation making the overall contribution of both variables 16%.

Table 6 – Showing the summary of regression analysis for the predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning among female users (N=60)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables		
	Relational esteem	Relational depression	Relational preoccupation
Self-worth	0.33**	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
β Competence satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Self-worth	0.11	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
ΔR² Competence satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Total Adjusted R²	0.11	NS	NS

Note: **p≤0.01, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR²-R Squared Change, β-Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 7 – Results of stepwise regression analyses showing various models predicting the dimensions of relational functioning among female users (N=60)

Predictor	ΔR ²	β
<u>Criterion: Relational esteem</u>		
Model 1	0.11	
1. Self-worth		0.33**
Total Adjusted R ²	0.11	

Note: *p≤0.05, **p≤0.01, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR²-R Squared Change, β-Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 7 shows that the dimension of relational esteem among women who use dating apps is predicted by their levels of self-worth (β=0.33, p≤0.01). There is a positive association between self-worth and relational esteem where the predictor variable contributes towards 11% of the variance of the criterion.

Table 8 – Showing the summary of regression analysis for predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning among male non-users (N=60)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables		
	Relational esteem	Relational depression	Relational preoccupation
Self-worth	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
β Competence satisfaction	-0.42**	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Self-worth	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
ΔR² Competence satisfaction	0.18	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Total Adjusted R²	0.18		NS

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR²-R Squared Change, β-Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 9 – Results of stepwise regression analyses showing various models predicting the dimensions of relational functioning among male non-users (N=60)

Predictor	ΔR ²	β
	<u>Criterion: Relational esteem</u>	
Model 1	0.18	
1. Competence satisfaction		-0.42**
Total Adjusted R ²	0.18	

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR²-R Squared Change, β-Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 9 shows that the dimension of relational esteem among men who do not use dating apps is predicted by competence satisfaction ($\beta = -0.42$, $p \leq 0.01$). There is a negative association between competence satisfaction and relational esteem. Competence satisfaction in this case contributes towards 18% of the variance of the criterion.

Table 10 – Showing the summary of regression analysis for predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning among female non-users (N=60)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables		
	Relational esteem	Relational depression	Relational preoccupation
Self-worth	0.27*	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
β Competence satisfaction	-0.26*	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Self-worth	0.07	NS	NS
Relatedness satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Relatedness dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
ΔR² Competence satisfaction	0.07	NS	NS
Competence dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy satisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Autonomy dissatisfaction	NS	NS	NS
Total Adjusted R²	0.14	NS	NS

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR^2 -R Squared Change, β -Standardized Coefficient Beta

Table 11 – Results of stepwise regression analyses showing various models predicting the dimensions of relational functioning among female non-users (N=60)

Predictor	ΔR^2	β
<u>Criterion: Relational esteem</u>		
Model 1	0.07	
1. Self-worth		0.27*
Model 2	0.07	
1. Self-worth		0.29*
2. Competence satisfaction		-0.26*
Total Adjusted R ²	0.14	

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, R-Coefficient of Correlation, ΔR^2 -R Squared Change, β -Standardized Coefficient Beta

According to Table 11, relational esteem among women not using dating apps is a function of their self-worth ($\beta=0.27$, $p \leq 0.05$) and competence satisfaction ($\beta=-0.26$, $p \leq 0.05$). While there is a positive correlation between self-worth and relational esteem, a negative association between competence satisfaction and relational esteem was found. Both self-worth and competence satisfaction had an equal contribution of 7% each towards the variance of the criterion making the overall contribution of both variables 14%.

V. DISCUSSION

The overarching goal of this study was to determine the differences between people who use dating apps and those who don't with respect to self-worth, psychological needs and relational functioning. Gender differences among users and non-users of dating apps were also explored. Lastly, the predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning among users and non-users of dating apps were determined.

The results of the t-test between users and non-users of dating apps show that those who use dating apps have lower autonomy satisfaction when compared to those who do not use dating apps. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), the need for autonomy represents an individuals' desire to experience psychological freedom when carrying out any activity. Even though it might seem at first that online dating provides a sense of autonomy and choice, people signing up for an internet dating site are first required to provide their personal information such as one's physical and socio demographical attributes like age, gender, height, weight, religion, education, and career. Revealing all this information online to potential partners even before having a conversation with them may lead to lower levels of autonomy satisfaction among those who use online dating platforms.

The present study also found that users of dating apps have higher levels of relational depression than non-users, which indicates a higher likeliness among users to evaluate their relationship potential in a negative fashion and feel depressed about their ability to relate in an intimate way to a partner. A study carried out by Young and Rogers (1998) on depression and internet addiction found that low self-esteem, poor motivation, fear of rejection and the need for approval is associated with depression which in turn contributes to increased internet use. This could help explain why the group of people in the present study who use dating apps exhibit higher levels of relational depression.

It was seen that women using dating apps had higher levels of relational preoccupation when compared to men. Due to deeply ingrained social norms or self-selected values, women put a greater effort on regulating interpersonal relationships, whereas men focus their emotional expression on the maintenance and pursuit of power and status (Brody, 1997). Another study threw light on the way men typically view themselves as distinct from other people while women seem to be more inclined to see themselves as embedded in important relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Together, these findings contribute to the conclusion that women might be more engrossed with the intimate aspects of their relationship and are more likely to show higher levels of relational preoccupation.

Findings of the present study show that men belonging to both groups had higher levels of relational esteem. According to the results of a study carried out by Thoresen (2015), men had significantly higher self-esteem scores than women. Josephs, Markus and Tafarodi (1992) found that the source of men and women's self-esteem differs. While men get their self-esteem by thinking of individuating achievements, women derive self-esteem through interdependence with others. These findings may help us explain the higher levels of relational esteem among men regardless of their method of dating.

Furthermore, the present study found that women who do not use dating apps have higher levels of relatedness dissatisfaction than men. This could be because women tend to have greater exposure than men to some negative aspects of dating in the social networking realm (Smith & Duggan, 2013). In this case, higher scores of relatedness dissatisfaction among women who do not use dating apps could also be due to the feeling of disconnection and lack of ways to reach out to potential partners.

This study also presents the predictors of the dimensions of relational functioning. Results show that among men who use dating apps, competence satisfaction was a significant predictor of relational depression and was positively associated with it. One explanation for this relationship could be the feeling of frustration experienced by men who perceive themselves to be competent and yet feel the need to use dating apps to look for intimate relationships.

Regardless of the group belonged to, the levels of relational esteem of women in the current study were a function of their self-worth. The positive association between their levels of self-worth and relational esteem can be supported by looking at the results of a study conducted by Kwang, Crockett, Sanchez and Swann (2013). Their study asserted that men derive their self-worth from relationships to a lesser degree than women. This supports the current study's finding that women are more reliant on their intimate relationships as a source of self-worth than men.

The present study found that there was significant negative correlation between self-worth and relational functioning among men who are users of dating apps indicating that lower the self-worth, higher was the relational depression and relational preoccupation or vice versa. A study conducted by Strubel and Petrie (2017) found that men using the dating app Tinder had more body image issues along with lower self-esteem and had feelings of inadequacy about their body image and physical appearance when compared to men who did not use the dating app. This could explain why the self-worth of men who use dating apps is negatively proportional to their feelings of relational depression and relational preoccupation.

Limitations and future directions

Due to the presence of stereotyping with regards to the usage of dating apps, gathering authentic information was demanding. The study did not look into a sample that was outside India. Hence, cultural and ethical differences were not accounted for. It would be worthwhile if further research explored other psychological factors such as self-image, fear of rejection, need for approval, loneliness, interpersonal difficulties, attachment styles and self-perceived physical attractiveness with people who prefer online dating.

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