

Research Paper

Romantic Dating Relationships Conflict & Mental Health among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, the researchers have attempted to assess the conflict in a romantic dating relationship and the mental health of young adults. The data was collected using Depression, Anxiety & Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) and Conflict in Adult Dating Scale Inventory short form (CADRI-S) from a sample of 106 college students and working individuals, aged between 18 to 25 years. The Pearson correlation method was used to find the relation between mental health and conflict in dating among young adults. Regression was used to find out the influence of conflict in dating relationships and mental health among young adults. The results of the present study indicate that there is a relationship between conflict in a dating relationship and depression among young adults. There is no relation between conflict in dating relationships on Anxiety and Stress among young adults. And there shows an influence of conflict in dating relationships in Depression among young adults. The study provides insight into romantic dating conflicts and mental health among young adults.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Romantic Relationships, Conflict*

Romantic relationships are defined as reciprocal, ongoing, and spontaneous interactions between two partners characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy (Collins, et al., 2009). This definition reflects the modern understanding of romantic relationships. For example, the marital status and gender of the partner are unclear. Instead, this definition focuses on interaction (i.e., interactive, ongoing, spontaneous) and language.

In 1995 Baumeister and Leary suggest that a sense of belonging and a desire to develop positive and meaningful interpersonal relationships are fundamental human motives. Moreover, they argue that the satisfaction we get from romantic relationships cannot be obtained from non-romantic ones.

Interpersonal conflict refers to any type of conflict that involves two or more people. This is different from intrapersonal conflict, which involves internal conflict with oneself. Mild or severe interpersonal conflict is a natural consequence of human interaction. People have very different personalities, values, expectations, and problem-solving styles. Conflict may arise when working or communicating with someone who does not share your views or goals.

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According to World Health Organization, “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.” Depression is extreme sadness or despair that lasts more than days. It interferes with the activities of daily life and can cause physical symptoms such as pain, weight loss or gain, sleeping pattern disruptions, or lack of energy. People with depression may also experience an inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. Depression is the enemy of intimacy. This helps create tension and conflict when a once-loving partner goes into emotional isolation or becomes angry and blaming. I think this is inevitable because the loving support of a long-term relationship is incompatible with the depressive self-image as unworthy and broken. It is also incompatible with the depressive phase when you blame your partner for your inner pain. Stress is defined as the pressures placed on the body’s overall responses to distressing situations in the environment (Radeef, Faisal, Ali, & Ismail, 2014). Although stress is common, it can be harmful to relationships. Oftentimes, people bottle up or keep their stress to themselves, which makes it difficult for their partners to understand what they are going through and to provide support. Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nash, S. P., Longmore, M. A., Manning, W. D., & Giordano, P. C. (2015) conducted a study on Strained Dating Relationships, A Sense of Mattering, and Emerging Adults’ Depressive Symptoms among respondents ages 18-24, the study found the influence of that a sense of mattering mediated the relationship between conflict and depressive symptoms.

Sheets, E. D., & Craighead, W. E. (2014) conducted a study Comparing chronic interpersonal and no interpersonal stress domains as predictors of depression recurrence in emerging adults. Shows evidence of interpersonal stress could have a substantial impact on the course of depression is consistent with theories of emerging adulthood, a time when young people are individuating from the family and experiencing significant social transition.

Choi, S., & Murdock, N. L. (2017) conducted a study on the Differentiation of Self, Interpersonal Conflict, and Depression: The Mediating Role of Anger Expression. The study consisted of 260 college students attending an urban university located in the Midwestern United States. As a result, it was found that external anger partially mediates the relationship between emotional reactivity and interpersonal conflict, and internalized anger fully mediates the relationship between emotional release and depression.

Eberhart, N. K., & Hammen, C. (2009) conducted a study on Interpersonal Predictors of Stress Generation, there was significant evidence that interpersonal style contributes to the occurrence of interpersonal stressors.

Londahl, E. A., Tverskoy, A., & D’Zurilla, T. J. (2005) conducted a study on “The Relations of Internalizing Symptoms to Conflict and Interpersonal Problem-Solving in Close Relationships”. Results show negative problem orientation has also been found to be a very important modulator of the relationship between romantic partner conflict and anxiety symptoms. In particular, the association between conflict symptoms and anxiety was stronger when negative problem orientation was higher than when it was low.

Need and Significance of the Study

It is important to understand the influence of romantic relationship conflict on mental health in young adults nowadays because they are facing unique challenges in their relationships. For instance, current advancements in technology have made it easier to form and maintain relationships than in previous generations; however, technology also creates opportunities for conflict such as cyberbullying, sexting, and online harassment. It is crucial to identify the link between relationship conflict and mental health in young adults because they are at a crucial point in their lives where they are establishing and solidifying their identities and social support systems. If relationship conflict is not addressed, it can lead to long-term negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and stress, which can impact academic and professional success, social relationships, and overall well-being. Not many studies happened on this present topic. Therefore, the present study intends to understand how Romantic relationship conflict and mental health are related and influenced by young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To understand the relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and depression.
2. To understand the relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and anxiety.
3. To understand the relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and stress.
4. To understand the influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and depression.
5. To understand the influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and anxiety.
6. To understand the influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and stress.

Variables and Operational Definition

- **Conflict in Dating Relationships:** Romantic relationship conflict or interpersonal relationship conflict arises when there is a divergence of opinions, beliefs, or needs between two individuals in a relationship.
- **Depression:** it is a sense of extreme sadness or despair that lasts more than days. It interferes with the activities of daily life and can cause physical symptoms such as pain, weight loss or gain, sleeping pattern disruptions, or lack of energy.
- **Anxiety:** it is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.
- **Stress:** it is defined as the pressures placed on the body's overall responses to distressing situations in the environment.

Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and depression.

H2: There is no significant relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and anxiety.

H3: There is no significant relationship between conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and stress.

H4: There is no significant influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and depression.

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H5: There is no significant influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and anxiety.

H6: There is no significant influence of conflicts in a romantic dating relationship and stress.

Sample

The sample consists of 106 individuals (college students and working individuals) of the age range of 18-25.

Inclusive Criteria

- Young adults in the range of 18-25 are included.
- Individuals who were committed and single were included.

Exclusive Criteria

- Age groups other than young adults (18-25) are excluded.

Instruments

- **Conflict in Adult Dating Inventory Short Form (CADRI-S):** The conflict in Adult Dating Inventory Short Form, Wolfe, et al, (2001) CADRI-S is a self-report instrument up of 20 items with bidirectional questions. Validity-Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the factorial of CADRI-S. Reliability-Cronbach's alpha was computed.
- **Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21):** DASS-21 is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. Each of the DASS-21 item scales contains 7 items, divided into subscales with similar content. DASS-21 is a reliable and valid measure of depression, anxiety, and stress in a clinical and non-clinical population of adults.

Research Design

A convenient sampling approach was adopted in this research. A questionnaire on the conflict in dating relationships and Depression, anxiety, and stress scale was set online, with inclusion and exclusion criteria considered, and a total sample of 106 was gathered.

Statistical Technique

Inferential Statistics and descriptive Statistics were utilized in this study. Mean and Standard Deviations are the descriptive statistics measures. Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression are inferential statistic methods used in the SPSS software.

RESULTS

To test the first three hypotheses, the Pearson Correlation method is used.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Correlation between Conflicts in a Romantic Dating Relationship and Depression

	Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1.	Conflict in Dating relationship	106	41.75	21.970	-	
2.	Depression	106	7.25	5.512	.206*	-

* $p < .05$ (two tailed)

Table 1 shows the Descriptive Statistics of the Correlation between Conflicts in Romantic Dating Relationships and Depression among young adults. The mean and standard deviation of the variable Conflict in Dating Relationship is 41.75 and 21.970 respectively. The mean

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and standard deviation of variable Depression is 7.25 and 5.512 respectively. Here mean of conflict in dating relationships is higher than that of Depression.

The correlation coefficient obtained is .206, and the significant value is .034, which is less than .05. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, and accepted the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between the Romantic Dating Relationship and Depression among young adults.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Correlation between Conflicts in a Romantic Dating Relationship and Anxiety

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1. Conflict in Dating relationship	106	41.75	21.970	-	
2. Anxiety	106	6.95	5.559	.145	-

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Table 2 shows the Descriptive Statistics of the Correlation between Conflicts in Romantic Dating Relationships and Anxiety among young adults. The mean and standard deviation of the variable Conflict in Dating Relationship is 41.75 and 21.970 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the variable Anxiety is 6.95 and 5.559 respectively. Here mean of conflict in a dating relationship is higher than that of Anxiety.

The correlation coefficient obtained is .145, and the significant value is .139, which is greater than .05. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted, and rejected the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship doesn't exist between Romantic Dating Relationships and Anxiety among young adults.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Correlation between Conflicts in a Romantic Dating Relationship and Stress

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1. Conflict in Dating relationship	106	41.75	21.970	-	
2. Stress	106	6.70	5.404	.086	-

* $p < .05$ (two tailed)

Table 3 shows the Descriptive Statistics of the Correlation between Conflicts in Romantic Dating Relationships and stress among young adults. The mean and standard deviation of the variable Conflict in Dating Relationship is 41.75 and 21.970 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the variable Anxiety is 6.70 and 5.404 respectively. Here mean of conflict in a dating relationship is higher than that of Stress.

The correlation coefficient obtained is .086, and the significant value is .381, which is greater than .05. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted, and rejected the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship doesn't exist between Romantic Dating Relationships and Stress among young adults.

Table 4 Regression Table Predicting Conflict in Dating Relationship with Depression.

Variables	B	β	SE	t	p
(Constant)	35.802		3.479	10.292	0.00
Depression	.821	.206	.382	2.145	.034

Note: Adjusted $R^2 = .033$

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Table 4 shows the regression table predicting conflict dating relationship with depression. The R^2 is .042, the adjusted R^2 is .033, and the B and β values of depression are .821 and .206 respectively. It is found that there is a significant influence of depression on conflict in dating relationships with a significance level of .034. Hence the Alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5 Regression Table Predicting Conflict in Dating Relationship with Anxiety.

Variables	B	β	SE	t	p
(Constant)	37.782		3.407	11.089	0.00
Anxiety	.571	.145	.383	1.490	.139

Note: Adjusted $R^2 = .011$

Table 5 shows the regression table predicting conflict dating relationship with Anxiety. The R^2 is .021, the adjusted R^2 is .011, and the B and β values of Anxiety are .571 and .145 respectively. It is found that there is no significant influence of Anxiety on conflict in dating relationships with a significance level of .139. Hence the Alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6 Regression Table Predicting Conflict in Dating Relationship with Stress.

Variables	B	β	SE	t	p
(Constant)	39.413		3.412	11.552	0.00
Stress	.350	.086	.397	.880	.381

Note: Adjusted $R^2 = -.002$

Table 6 shows the regression table predicting conflict dating relationship with Stress. The R^2 is .007, the adjusted R^2 is -.002, and the B and β values of Stress are .350 and .086 respectively. It is found that there is no significant influence of conflict in dating relationships on Stress with a significance level of .381. Hence the Alternative hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigates Conflict in Dating Relationships and the Mental Health of young adults. The sample consists of 106 students and working individuals with the age range of 18-25. A convenient sample method is used. The tools used in the study are the Conflict in Adult Dating Inventory Short Form (CADRI-S) and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21). The collected data was analyzed using SPSS.

From the findings of the present study, we can infer that there is a positive correlation between Conflict Dating Relationships and Depression. Conflict in a dating relationship has a significant influence on Depression in young adults. This indicates that conflict in romantic relationships or dating relationships has a great effect on the mental health of individuals. Findings from similar studies also show the influence of conflict in a romantic relationship has a great impact on undergoing mental health issues in young adults, the study conducted (Nash, S. P. et. al, 2015) which also state that the influence of that a sense of mattering mediated the relationship between conflict and depressive symptoms. Another study also revealed the same that there is a positive correlation between external anger partially mediating the relationship between emotional reactivity and interpersonal conflict, and internalized anger fully mediates the relationship between emotional release and depression. (Choi, S., & Murdock, N. L. 2017). It is clear that unsettled internal struggles can lead to dark moods and a decline in self-esteem and depression can cause overwhelming loneliness and detachment which can hinder any relationship.

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From the current study, we can infer that there is a negative correlation between Conflict in a dating relationship and anxiety, here we propose that the relationship between conflict in a dating relationship and anxiety has no relation, the result is consistent with the study conducted (Joel, S. et. al, 2011) Conflicting Pressures on Romantic Relationship Commitment for Anxiously Attached Individuals also shown a negative correlation. And the current result also shows that there is no influence of conflict in a dating relationship on anxiety among young adults.

Also, in the current study, we can also infer that there is a negative correlation between conflict in dating relationships and stress among young adults. And there is no influence on conflict in dating relationships with stress among young adults. Hence it is unclear that there is no relation between conflict in an interpersonal romantic relationship causes stress, but the current study proves that conflict in romantic dating relationships has no effect on stress in young adults.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The study aims to analyze conflict in a romantic dating relationship and the mental health of young adults. The sample consists of 106 young adults aged range from 18-25. A convenient sampling method was adopted for the data collection. The tools used in the study are the Conflict in Adult Dating Inventory Short Form (CADRI-S) and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21). The collected data was analyzed using SPSS.

Depending on the findings the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between conflict in romantic dating relationships and depression among young adults and also there is a significant influence of conflict in romantic dating relationships with depression in young adults.

Implications

The findings of the study revealed that conflict in a romantic dating relationship and depression are positively correlated. Young adults experience depression when it comes to conflict in romantic dating relationships. As young adults experience depression and other mental health issues, conducting more studies among them is important, and appropriate measures should be taken for their proper functioning.

Limitations

- There was only a limited number of studies done in the above mention sample.
- The number of samples is less selected due to the restriction of time.
- Due to the limited sample size the results cannot be generalized.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Similar studies can be conducted using various other variables among the same group.
- Similar studies can be conducted based on specified gender.
- Studies can be conducted by including a greater number of samples.
- Researchers can administer a pre-and post-test to young adults following a training program about positive interpersonal or dating relationships and mental health.

Ethics Followed

- Prior to the study, participant consent was taken.
- The feeling of the participants was not questioned in a manner.

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- Participants' details and responses are kept private.
- Individuals taking part in the study were kept anonymous.
- The participant's data was not utilized for any other reason than the agreed-upon research project.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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