**Research Paper**

# Self-Esteem, Attachment, and Dating Apps among Emerging Adults

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## ABSTRACT

In the modern era, dating apps are being used by emerging adults to help with these responsibilities. Emerging adults, who are often classified as people between the ages of 18 to 30 years, have been using dating apps more and more as they work through the challenges of romantic relationships in the digital age. Emerging adults are using dating apps to seek love, convenience of communication, affirmation of their value, or simply boredom. Therefore, the present study aims to find out the relationship between self-esteem and attachment among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps. Self-esteem can be defined as the subjective perception of an individual overall value or worth. In addition, the emotional link that develops between individuals is considered as attachment. In the current study, the first objective was to find out the relationship between self-esteem and attachment styles (Close, Depend, Anxiety) among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps. The further objective was to measure the difference in the level of self-esteem among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps. The last objective was to study the difference in the level of attachment styles (Close, Depend, Anxiety) among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps. There were total 120 emerging adults between the age group of 18 to 30 years who participated in the present study. The emerging adults were assessed using 2 tools as Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, M. 1965) and the Adult Attachment Scale (Collins, 1996). Results revealed that there is a negative correlation between self-esteem and close attachment among males and depend attachment in females. But there was a significant difference between self-esteem and anxiety attachment among males. Additionally, self-esteem in females was higher than males and the close attachment type and depend attachment type in males were higher than females, only the anxiety attachment was higher in females than males.

***Keywords:** Emerging adults, Dating apps, Self-esteem, Attachment, Males, Females*

Dating Apps are software programs that connect people for those looking for dating, friendship, romantic relationships, etc. They are downloaded onto mobile devices and include methods that consider the users' age, preferred partner's gender, and the

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distance they will travel to meet. To create potential love matches, numerous apps also collect data from social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, etc.

The romantic relationship landscape has changed greatly in the last several years, largely due to the influence of digital platforms on how people meet and build relationships. Dating apps have become a well-known and powerful instrument among these platforms for promoting love meetings. These days, many young individuals utilize dating apps since they improve social connections and meet new companions and love partners.

The term "emerging adulthood" was coined in the early 2000s by psychologist Jeffrey Arnett to refer to the time between adolescence and full adulthood. This phase of life usually extends from the late teens to the early thirties and even into the twenties. There are some characteristics and challenges that make emerging adulthood apart from both adolescence and mature adulthood.

For emerging adults, dating and forming romantic relationships are essential developmental activities. In the modern era, dating apps are being used by emerging adults to help with these responsibilities. Emerging adults, who are often classified as people between the ages of 18 and 30, have been using dating apps more and more as they work through the challenges of romantic relationships in the digital age. Emerging adults are using dating apps to seek love, convenience of communication, affirmation of their value, or simply boredom. Self-esteem is the subjective perception of an individual overall value or worth is called self-esteem. It expresses your degree of confidence in your skills and qualities, much like self-respect does. A strong sense of self-worth can improve your motivation, emotional stability, and general quality of life. On the other hand, very high or low self-esteem might be adverse. Gaining a deeper comprehension of your individual self-esteem level might assist you in finding the ideal equilibrium.

Attachment as per John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, attachment means how successfully you bonded in your first relationship and how you handle intimacy in the future are typically indicators of each other's qualities.

## METHODOLOGY
### Aim
To study the relationship between self-esteem and attachment among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps.

### Objective
1. To find out the relationship between self-esteem and attachment styles (Close, Depend, Anxiety) among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps
2. To measure the difference in the level of self-esteem among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps
3. To study the difference in the level of attachment styles (Close, Depend, Anxiety) among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps

### Sample
Under non-probability, purposive was employed. The data was collected on the emerging adults males and females ranging from 18-29 years. The study was conducted on 120

individuals who are on dating apps or have used to any dating apps. The selection of the data was based on their age and gender.

## *Hypotheses*

- H1- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and close attachment among male emerging adults
- H2- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and depend attachment among male emerging adults
- H3- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and anxiety attachment among male emerging adults
- H4- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and close attachment styles among female emerging adults
- H5- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and depend attachment among female emerging adults
- H7- There will be significant relationship between self-esteem and anxiety attachment among female emerging adults
- H9- There will be significant gender difference on the level of self-esteem among male and female emerging adults
- H10- There will be significant difference on the level of attachment styles (Close, Depend, Anxiety) among male and female emerging adults

## *Research Design*

The general plan or approach that leads the researcher in carrying out a study to answer specific research questions or objectives is referred to as the research design. It acts as a guide for the entire research process, outlining a framework of methods for data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. A well-designed research study improves the validity and dependability of the findings while also ensuring that the research objectives are met efficiently. This study is Quantitative in nature, meaning it involves gathering and analyzing the numerical data to test the hypotheses and to measure the relationship between the variables. The type of research design which is used in this study is the correlational method which means to see how strongly variables are related to each other.

## *Instruments*

Total 2 research tools that were employed as follows-

1. **The Self-Esteem Scale** was developed by Rosenberg, m. (1965) is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about self. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77, and alpha coefficients ranged from 0.72 to 0.87.
2. **The Revised Adult Attachment Scale-** Close Relationship Version was developed by (collins, 1996)- The close relationship version is an 18-item scale that concerns how you generally feel in important close relationships in your life. All items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 5 (very characteristic of me). The revised adult attachment scale was found to have good reliability and validity, anxiety (0.72), dependence (0.75), and closeness (0.69). Correlations between dependence and closeness (r=0.38), weak between anxiety and dependence (r=-0.24), and none between anxiety and closeness (r=-0.08)

*Procedure*

The present study aimed at comparing males and females who are on dating apps or used dating apps in the domains of Self-Esteem and attachment The sample was decided to be 18 – 29 years old who are residing in India. After the sample was decided, data collection was done online using the services of Google Forms as well as physical collection. It consisted of a consent form. The form also contained demographic details and items from three scales namely Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Revised Adult Attachment Close Version. Participants were requested to answer as honestly as possible. Therefore, 120 responses were collected and thereafter, data collection was stopped and the results were scored. Both descriptive (mean, SD) and inferential statistics (t-test, correlation) were used to analyze the data.

# RESULT

*Table 1 Correlation value between Self-esteem and Attachment styles (Close) among male emerging adults.*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Close attachment | 60 | -2.85 | Sig.* |

*NOTE*. From the above table 1, the correlation value was found to be -.285. This means that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and close attachment significant at 0.05 level.

*Table 2 Correlation value between Self-esteem and Attachment styles (Depend )among male  emerging adults.*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Depend Attachment | 60 | -2.91 | Sig.* |

*NOTE*. From the above table 2, the correlation value was found to be -2.91. This means that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and depend attachment significant at 0.05 level.

*Table 3 Correlation value between Self-esteem and Attachment styles (Anxiety) among male emerging adults.*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Anxiety | 60 | .480 | Sig.*** |

*NOTE*. From the above table 3, the correlation value was found to be .480. This means that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and depend attachment significant at 0.05 and 0.01level

*Table 4 Correlation value between Self-esteem & Attachment styles (close) among Females emerging adults*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Close attachment | 60 | -2.89 | Sig.* |

*NOTE*. From the above table 4, the correlation value was found to be -.289. This means that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and close attachment in females which is significant at 0.05 level.

*Table 5 Correlation value between Self-esteem and Attachment styles (depend)among female emerging adults.*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Depend Attachment | 60 | -2.26 | - |

*NOTE*. From the above table 5, the correlation value was found to be -.226. This means that there is a insignificant negative correlation between self-esteem and depend attachment in females.

*Table 6 Correlation value between Self-esteem and Attachment styles (Anxiety) among female emerging adults.*

| Variables | N | r | p |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| Self esteem | 60 | | |
| Anxiety Attachment | 60 | .232 | - |

*NOTE*. From the above table 6, the correlation value was found to be -.226. This means that there is a insignificant negative correlation between self-esteem and anxiety attachment in females.

*Table 7 Mean, SD, and T value of Self-esteem among male and female emerging adults*

| Group | N | M | S.D. | t | p |
|-------|---|---|------|---|---|
| Male | 60 | 18.85 | 4.929 | -1.88 | Insignificant |
| Female | 60 | 20.77 | 6.655 | | |

*NOTE*. From the above table 7, the t-value was found to be -1.88. This means that there is a insignificant gender difference in self-esteem

*Table 8 Mean, SD, and T value of Attachment style (close) among male and female emerging adults*

| Group | N | M | S.D. | t | p |
|-------|---|---|------|---|---|
| Male | 60 | 20.07 | 3.71 | 1.248 | Insignificant |
| Female | 60 | 19.10 | 4.72 | | |

*NOTE*. From the above table 8, the t-value was found to be 1.248. This means that there is a insignificant gender difference in close attachment

*Table 9 Mean, SD, and T value of Attachment styles (depend) among male and female emerging adults*

| Group | N | M | S.D. | t | p |
|-------|---|---|------|---|---|
| Male | 60 | 16.68 | 4.56 | 2.032 | Significant |
| Female | 60 | 14.9 | 5.041 | | |

*NOTE*. From the above table 9, the t-value was found to be 2.032. This means that there is a significant gender difference in depend attachment at 0.05 level

*Table 10 Mean, SD, and T value of Attachment style (anxiety) among male and female emerging adults*

| Group | N | M | S.D. | t | p |
|-------|---|---|------|---|---|
| Male | 60 | 18.47 | 4.941 | -3.274 | Significant |
| Female | 60 | 21.63 | 5.62 | | |

*NOTE*. From the above table 10, the t-value was found to be -3.274. This means that there is a significant gender difference in anxiety attachment at .001 level.

# DISCUSSION

The first hypotheses is that there will be a significant relationship between self-esteem and attachment among male emerging adults. The findings of this study reveal that there is a statistically negative correlation between self-esteem and close and depend on attachment type at 0.05 level whereas a positive correlation between self-esteem and anxiety attachment type at 0.01 level. This means that there is a clear negative association between self-esteem and intimate attachment type, it is important to understand that a variety of factors can influence both dimensions separately. The other part of this study states that there is a statistically negative correlation between self-esteem and depend attachment type, which means the negative link between self-esteem and dependent attachment shows that those who have low self-esteem are more likely to adopt dependent attachment styles. This could be due to a lack of confidence in one's own talents, which drives people to seek validation, support, and comfort from others. There are also several other reasons such as Low self-esteem Individuals with dependent attachment patterns may have more unfavorable experiences with online dating applications. People with lower self-esteem may struggle to form or maintain such close relationships due to underlying insecurities, this could result in disparities in relationship expectations and satisfaction levels among couples met through online dating apps. Another factor could be a response to rejection or disappointment which means individuals with strong attachments may be more sensitive to rejection or disappointment when dating online. The final part of this hypotheses states that there is a statistically positive correlation between self-esteem and anxiety attachment type, this correlation shows that people with higher levels of self-esteem also have more neurotic attachment tendencies, especially when they are afraid of being abandoned or unloved.

The second hypotheses of this study is that that there will be a significant relationship between self-esteem and attachment among female emerging adults. The findings of this study reveal that there is a statistically negative correlation between self-esteem and close attachment type in females and there is no statistically significant correlation between self-esteem and depend and anxiety attachment type in females. This means that the negative link between self-esteem and close attachment type means that as self-esteem declines, people are more likely to create close attachments or feel comfortable with intimacy and proximity, especially women.

The third hypotheses of this study is that that there will be a significant gender difference in the level of self-esteem among male and female emerging adults. Therefore, the mean score of self-esteem for females was higher than for males. This suggests that both genders, i.e., males and females consider themselves equal. In today's times, females are becoming more confident in doing things similar to males. Both males and females feel confident enough to do their work on their own. They both equally value themselves, encourage themselves and also, and see their capabilities as well.

The fourth hypotheses of the current study is that there will be a significant difference in the level of attachment among male and female emerging adults. Therefore, the mean score of close attachment in malesis higher than females This means that both males and females are comfortable getting close to each other. For this outcome, there could be possible factors such as cultural shifts which means gender norms and roles have shifted in modern societies with a greater emphasis on equality. Both men and women feel equally at ease expressing emotions, seeking closeness, and creating close bonds. The mean score of depend attachment in males is higher than in females. This suggests that males consider themselves more independent and self-reliant and maybe males are less inclined to seek close emotional

bonds or express dependency in relationships. The mean score of anxiety attachment in females is higher than in males This suggests that females have high anxiety attachments as compared to males, which means that females feel more worried about getting attached to people on online dating apps, they may have thoughts about whether someone will love or appreciate them or not.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aims to study the relationship between self-esteem and attachment among male and female emerging adults using or have used dating apps. Participants aged between 18-29 years were selected for this study who are on dating app or used dating apps. Results revealed that there is a negative correlation between self-esteem and close, depend attachment type in males and between self-esteem and close attachment type in females. It was also revealed that females have higher self-esteem as compared to males, and males have higher close and depend attachment type as compared to females. To conclude, the findings show a negative relationship between self-esteem and intimate, dependent attachment type in men. This shows that males who are more dependent and intimate in their connections have lower self-esteem.

- Similarly, a negative association was found between self-esteem and close attachment type in females. This suggests that girls who exhibit higher levels of closeness in their affiliations may have poorer self-esteem.
- The findings show significant gender disparities in self-esteem and attachment patterns. Females were shown to have better self-esteem than males. This may imply that societal forces or gender roles influence self-esteem differently in men and women.
- In contrast, males were found to have more close and dependent attachment types than females. This suggests that males are more likely to build bonds with greater intimacy and dependence.
- Gender differences in self-esteem and attachment styles highlight the need of taking gender into account when interpreting psychological phenomena. It implies that established gender norms and societal expectations might influence how people perceive themselves and create relationships.

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