

Physical Touch and Trust Levels among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This research proposal investigates the intricate relationship between physical touch and trust levels, especially among young adults. It recognizes physical touch as a pivotal form of non-verbal communication, essential for social interactions, emotional well-being, and cognitive development. In an era dominated by digital communication, this study emphasizes the need to understand how physical touch contributes to the establishment and maintenance of trust. By exploring various factors such as environmental, individual, and cultural influences, this research aims to uncover how different types of physical touch affect trust levels. Trust is identified as a multifaceted concept crucial to both intimate relationships and broader social structures, with its dynamics influenced by a myriad of psychological and social factors. The proposal highlights the evolutionary significance of touch for bonding and group cohesion, noting the role of oxytocin in fostering trust through physical contact. It also considers the impact of personal and societal changes on perceptions of touch and trust, including the challenges faced by individuals with heightened sensitivities to touch. Furthermore, the proposal discusses the significance of touch in the emotional and physical well-being of the elderly, underscoring its role in combating loneliness and establishing trust. Through a nuanced examination of the relationship between touch and trust, this research seeks to provide insights into the development of trust dynamics among young adults, considering the significant transitions and identity formation characteristic of this life stage.

Keywords: *Physical Touch, Trust Levels, Non-verbal Communication*

The concept of "physical touch" has been long regarded as a powerful form of non-verbal communication. It plays a crucial role in social interactions, emotional well-being, and even cognitive development. In the context of young adults, understanding the relationship between physical touch and trust levels could shed light on social dynamics, mental health, and overall well-being. In the quickly changing social scene of today, understanding the significance of physical touch in the creation and maintenance of trust is of utmost importance. The importance of physical touch in communicating reliability and establishing bonds cannot be understated in a time of increased digital communication and physical distance. This research proposal examines the complex relationships between physical touch and trust levels, taking into account environmental, individual, and cultural factors that may influence this relationship. This research aims to investigate how different types of physical touch influence trust levels among young adults. Trust is a complex idea

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that is essential to interactions in both close friendships and larger societal contexts. Based on prior interactions, the nature of the relationship, and the environment in which the encounter occurs, trust levels can vary greatly. It is possible to build, degrade, and rebuild trust over time through regular, good contacts, or it can be destroyed through betrayals and unfulfilled expectations. The complexity of trust has been explored in depth by numerous psychological theories and social investigations, with major components like credibility, emotional attachments, and reciprocity being examined. In an organizational setting, Trust may have an impact on everything from customer loyalty to employee collaboration and engagement. In general, trust is a crucial component of happy relationships and effective societies. From an evolutionary perspective, touch was essential to our predecessors' ability to bond and maintain group cohesion. This innate urge for contact has persisted over time, solidifying its significance in building trust. Studies have repeatedly emphasized how important touch is during the early stages of development. Skin-to-skin contact with newborns, or "kangaroo care," has been demonstrated to offer profound physiological and cognitive effects, building a strong foundation of trust between the infant and carer. The way that touch works changes as we grow older.

A symbiotic relationship between developmental, social, and individual factors and trust levels in young adults. Given that young adulthood is marked by significant transitions, identity formation, and the development of deeper interpersonal interactions, understanding trust dynamics within this group is essential. Childhood and adolescent experiences greatly influence trust in young adults. For instance, constant encouragement and affirmation from carers in the beginning stages can help build a solid foundation of trust. On the other hand, trauma, inconsistency, or betrayal can cause mistrust or wariness. Childhood and adolescent experiences greatly influence trust in young adults. For instance, constant encouragement and affirmation from carers in the beginning stages can help build a solid foundation of trust. On the other hand, trauma, inconsistency, or betrayal can cause mistrust or wariness. Mutual trust concerns may occur as a result of young individuals reporting more unfavorable healthcare provider encounters than other age groups. In both professional and personal relationships, trust is crucial, and it may be gained or reestablished by being trustworthy and dependable, speaking honestly, and being willing to give and take.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its focus on understanding the role of physical touch in shaping trust levels among young adults, a demographic navigating complex social landscapes in an increasingly digitalized world. As human interactions undergo transformations with the proliferation of online communication platforms, the inherent value of physical touch in forming and sustaining interpersonal relationships risks being overshadowed or diminished. This research aims to bridge this gap in understanding, shedding light on the psychological and social ramifications of physical touch, or the lack thereof, on trust dynamics within young adult interactions.

Physical touch, a fundamental human need, plays a critical role in the social and emotional development of individuals. Research has shown that physical interactions, from a comforting hug to a reassuring pat on the back, can significantly influence emotional well-being, stress levels, and even cognitive development. However, with the advent of digital communication, there's a growing disconnect from these tactile experiences, potentially impacting the way trust and bonds are formed and maintained.

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Furthermore, the study delves into the nuanced ways in which physical touch can convey trust and security, exploring both the positive impacts of touch in nurturing relationships and the potential for its absence to foster feelings of isolation or mistrust. This exploration is particularly relevant in the context of young adults, who are at a pivotal stage of forming significant interpersonal relationships and establishing their social identities.

The importance of this study also extends to its implications for mental health. Given the established links between social connections, trust, and psychological well-being, understanding the role of physical touch offers insights into new avenues for supporting mental health among young adults. This is especially pertinent in an era marked by rising mental health challenges and shifting social norms around physical interaction.

Additionally, by examining the interplay between physical touch and trust within various cultural, environmental, and individual contexts, this research can provide valuable perspectives on how digitalization and cultural shifts are reshaping fundamental human experiences. The findings could inform strategies in educational, therapeutic, and social settings to foster environments where trust and well-being are prioritized.

In conclusion, this study's significance is multifaceted, encompassing the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of physical touch and its impact on trust among young adults. By addressing this underexplored area, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary social dynamics, offering evidence-based insights to enhance relational trust and mental health in a digital age.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this study is correlational design.

Sample and Sampling

The study was conducted among 314 young adults who fall within the age range of 18-40 year. Convenience sampling was used for the study to select the sample. Only those who meet the following inclusion-exclusion criteria, are eligible for the study:

Inclusion criteria:

- Young adults of age 18-40 who are college going and working are included in the study.
- Knowledge of English Language.
- Only young adults from all over India are included in the study.

Exclusion criteria:

- Any other states other than Karnataka were excluded.
- Individuals below 18 and above 40 years were excluded.

Research problem

- Will there be any relationship between physical touch and trust levels?

Objectives

1. To find out if there is any relationship between physical touch and trust levels among male and female young adults.

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2. To find out if there is any relationship between physical touch and trust levels among young adults.

Hypotheses

1. There is no relationship between physical touch and trust levels among male and female young adults.
2. There is a relationship between physical touch and trust levels among young adults.

Procedure

The sample for this study comprises 100 young adults residing in Karnataka, India. These individuals will be selected based on specific inclusion-exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and uniformity in the sample population. Before the commencement of data collection, informed consent will be obtained from all participants, upholding the highest ethical standards. Confidentiality of participant information will be strictly maintained, with the assurance that all collected data will be utilized solely for academic research purposes. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

Given the scope and logistical considerations of this research, convenience sampling will be employed. This non-probability sampling method allows for the selection of participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate, making it a pragmatic choice for studies with specific geographic or demographic focuses. For the purposes of this research, participants will be young adults living in Karnataka who are easily reachable and willing to share their experiences regarding physical touch and trust levels.

To gather data on participants' experiences and perceptions of physical touch and its impact on trust levels, a specially designed questionnaire will be distributed. This instrument will seek to capture detailed insights into the participants' views and experiences related to physical touch in various social and intimate contexts, as well as their perceptions of trust within these interactions.

The questionnaire will be administered digitally via Google Forms to facilitate ease of distribution and response. This method ensures a broader reach within the targeted demographic, enabling efficient data collection while minimizing physical contact, in line with the study's theme.

The collected data will be compiled and processed using Microsoft Excel for initial sorting and coding. Subsequent statistical analysis will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. To explore the relationship between physical touch and trust levels, Pearson's correlation coefficient will be calculated, providing a measure of the strength and direction of the association between these two variables.

Tools

The variables of the present study were measured by using the following tools.

1. **The Touch Avoidance Questionnaire:** The Touch Avoidance Questionnaire (TAQ) is a validated instrument designed to assess attitudes towards physical touch in relation to others, and it has been found to have sound psychometric properties, including reliability and validity.
2. **The General Trust Scale:** The Generalized Trust Scale (GTS) is a validated tool for assessing trust across different cultures, demonstrating structural and convergent

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validity in large samples and is useful for examining the relationship between trust and social factors like happiness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis that was used to describe the sample and address the research questions and associated hypotheses are presented in this chapter.

H1: There is no significant difference in physical touch levels among male and female young adults.

Table 1 Independent Samples T-Test

Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	p
TH total	Student's t	1.27	312	0.206
TT TOTAL	Student's t	1.64	312	0.101

Note. $H_a \mu_{\text{Female}} \neq \mu_{\text{Male}}$

Table 1 displays the results from Independent Samples T-Tests conducted to compare physical touch levels (TH total) and trust levels (TT TOTAL) between male and female young adults. For physical touch levels, the t-statistic is 1.27 with a p-value of 0.206, and for trust levels, the t-statistic is 1.64 with a p-value of 0.101. These p-values, both greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicate that there are no significant differences in physical touch levels or trust levels between genders. Thus, the hypothesis asserting no significant gender differences in physical touch and trust levels among young adults is supported by the data.

H2: There is no significant difference in trust levels among males and females.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

		TH total	TT TOTAL
TH total	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
	N	—	
TT TOTAL	Pearson's r	0.134**	—
	p-value	0.009	—
	N	314	—

Note. H_a is positive correlation

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, one-tailed

The correlation matrix explores the relationship between physical touch levels (TH total) and trust levels (TT TOTAL) among young adults. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) for the relationship between TH total and TT TOTAL is 0.134, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.009, indicating a positive correlation. This significance level (** $p < .01$) demonstrates a meaningful relationship between higher physical touch levels and increased trust levels among the participants, with a total sample size (N) of 314. The positive correlation supports the hypothesis that an increase in physical touch is associated with an increase in trust levels among young adults.

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H3: Physical touch and trust levels are related.

Linear Regression

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R ²
1	0.134	0.0179

Model Coefficients - TH total

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	163.772	4.349	37.66	< .001
TT TOTAL	0.567	0.238	2.39	0.018

The linear regression analysis investigates the predictive relationship between trust levels (TT TOTAL) and physical touch levels (TH total) among young adults. The model's fit measures indicate an R value of 0.134 and an R² value of 0.0179, suggesting that trust levels account for approximately 1.79% of the variance in physical touch levels.

The regression coefficients provide further insight into this relationship:

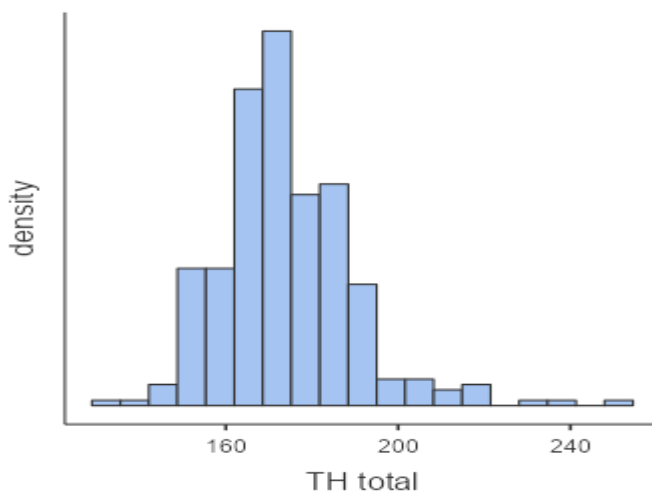
Intercept: The estimated intercept is 163.772 with a standard error (SE) of 4.349, which is significantly different from zero ($t = 37.66$, $p < .001$). This suggests that when the trust level (TT TOTAL) is zero, the expected value of physical touch levels (TH total) is 163.772.

TT TOTAL (Trust Levels as Predictor): The coefficient for TT TOTAL is 0.567 with an SE of 0.238, indicating that for each one-unit increase in trust levels, physical touch levels are expected to increase by 0.567 units. This relationship is statistically significant ($t = 2.39$, $p = 0.018$), supporting the hypothesis that trust levels positively predict physical touch levels.

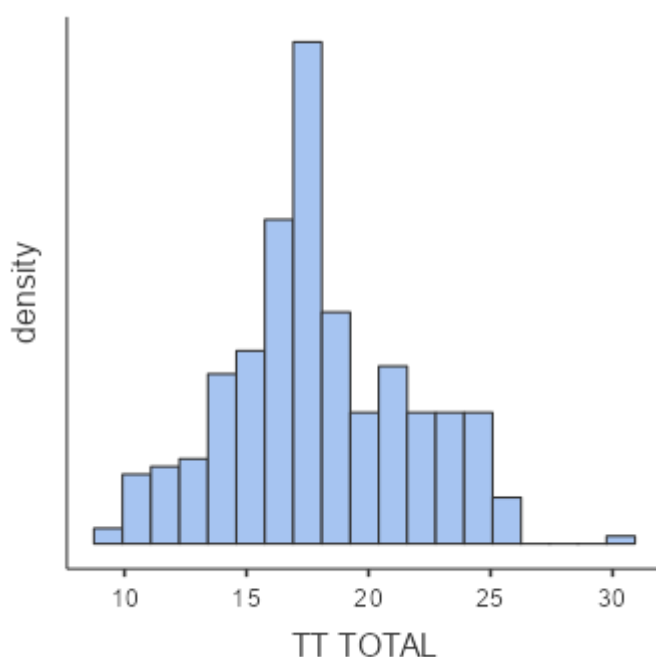
Overall, the linear regression analysis highlights a significant, though modest, positive relationship between trust levels and physical touch levels among young adults. The model suggests that as trust levels increase, there is a corresponding increase in physical touch levels, albeit this predictive relationship explains a small portion of the variance in physical touch levels.

Plots

TH total



TT TOTAL



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between physical touch and trust levels among young adults within Karnataka. This study specifically targeted a demographic of 18 to 40-year-olds residing in Karnataka to understand how these critical social factors interact within this age group. After the data collection process, statistical analyses were conducted to interpret the gathered information.

As depicted in the results, there were no significant gender differences in physical touch levels or trust levels among the participants, affirming the hypothesis that gender does not significantly influence these variables in the context of young adults. This finding is crucial as it suggests that the dynamics of physical touch and trust transcend gender distinctions within this age group, pointing to more universal patterns of social interaction.

Furthermore, the study revealed a significant, though modest, positive correlation between physical touch (TH total) and trust levels (TT TOTAL) among young adults. This correlation underscores the importance of physical touch as a component of building trust within interpersonal relationships among the youth, albeit indicating that other factors also play a significant role in the trust-building process.

Findings

1. There is no significant difference in the levels of physical touch among male and female young adults.
2. There is no significant difference in trust levels among male and female young adults.
3. A significant positive relationship exists between physical touch and trust levels among young adults, suggesting that higher levels of physical touch are associated with slightly higher levels of trust.

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These findings contribute to our understanding of the nuanced ways in which physical touch serves as a non-verbal mechanism for fostering trust among young adults. They highlight the continued relevance of physical interactions in an era increasingly dominated by digital communication, suggesting that despite the prevalence of online interactions, physical touch remains a potent tool for expressing trust and building connections.

In light of previous research emphasizing the importance of physical touch in social and emotional development, this study adds to the body of knowledge by specifically focusing on its role in trust-building among young adults. It underscores the necessity of considering physical touch in psychological and social models of trust, particularly in developmental stages marked by significant social exploration and relationship building.

Implications of the study

The findings from this study shed light on the subtle yet significant relationship between physical touch and trust levels among young adults. This connection suggests that physical touch serves not only as a fundamental human need but also as a crucial element in the formation and maintenance of trust in interpersonal relationships. Understanding this relationship has practical implications for various fields, including psychology, education, and social work.

For clinicians and psychologists, these insights highlight the importance of considering the role of physical touch in therapeutic settings, especially when dealing with issues related to trust and relationship dynamics. Interventions could include strategies that safely incorporate physical touch in therapy or counseling, considering individual comfort levels and cultural sensitivities.

In educational contexts, this knowledge can inform the development of programs aimed at enhancing social skills and emotional intelligence among young adults. These programs can emphasize the value of appropriate physical touch as a tool for building trust and fostering deeper connections with peers.

Moreover, the study's findings can guide social initiatives designed to address the increasing sense of isolation and digital disconnect experienced by many young adults today. By promoting environments and activities that encourage positive physical interactions, such initiatives can contribute to stronger, trust-based communities.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between physical touch and trust among young adults, it is not without limitations. The sample size, restricted to 100 participants from Karnataka, limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger, more diverse sample would enable a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship across different cultural and social contexts.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants' perceptions of physical touch and trust could be influenced by factors not accounted for in the study. Future research could benefit from incorporating observational or experimental methods to complement self-reported data, providing a more nuanced understanding of how physical touch influences trust.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the role of physical touch in the development of trust levels among young adults, revealing a positive, albeit weak, relationship between these two variables. The findings indicate that while physical touch is associated with higher trust levels, the complexity of trust dynamics necessitates a multifaceted approach to understanding and enhancing trust in interpersonal relationships.

The absence of significant gender differences in physical touch and trust levels suggests that the impact of physical touch on trust is relatively consistent across male and female young adults. This universality underscores the importance of physical touch as a fundamental component of human interaction and trust-building.

Clinicians, educators, and social workers can draw on these findings to foster environments that promote healthy physical interactions as a means of building trust among young adults. By incorporating strategies that encourage positive physical touch, these professionals can contribute to the emotional and social well-being of this demographic.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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