

Young Adults' Romantic Relationship Status: A Study of Psychological Influences

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ABSTRACT

The study delves into the rising trend of situationships among young adults, offering flexibility and freedom without the commitment pressure of traditional relationships. Situationships serve as a compatibility test, fostering intimacy, communication, and transparency while allowing individuals to explore relationships with less emotional investment. This shift challenges conventional relationship structures, providing a framework for understanding non-traditional partnerships. However, the lack of defined rules in situationships can lead to ambiguity and potential stress. The study analyzes descriptive statistics related to relationship quality, parenting styles (permissive and authoritative), impulsivity, and emotional intelligence, revealing differences between individuals in romantic relationships and situationships. Conducted in Pune city, the research involved 114 participants in romantic relationships and 100 in situationships. Using scales like the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) to assess parenting styles, the Barratt Impulsivity Scale for impulsivity, the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale for emotional intelligence, and the Relationship Quality scale to measure the quality of relationships, the study highlighted the significant impact of these factors on romantic relationship status. Additionally, the research explored differences related to the influence of dating apps on relationships and gender differences within romantic relationships. These insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics in young adults' romantic relationships, emphasizing the need for thorough research to grasp these intricate interactions fully.

Keywords: *Situationships, Parenting styles, Impulsivity, Relationship quality, Emotional intelligence, Dating apps, Gender difference*

A romantic relationship is defined as mutual, ongoing and voluntary interactions between two partners that are characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy (Collins, et al., 2009). Romantic relationships can start as friendship or infatuation and then proceed to romantic love and eventually consummate love (Stritof, 2022). They can be between individuals who are casually or seriously dating, married, or in any other conduct that involves sexual contact or intimacy. Romantic relationships can be challenging but also rewarding, and they can fulfill our need for human connection both physically and emotionally (Libretexts, 2021).

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The quality of young adult romantic relationships is a critical aspect of their overall well-being. Individuals in early adulthood who are able to create and sustain fulfilling close relationships often experience greater life satisfaction and better overall adjustment as they progress through life. This positive impact of healthy intimate connections in young adulthood can extend well into later years, contributing to long-term well-being and personal development (Xia et al., 2018). The transition from traditional romantic relationships to situationships among young adults reflects changing attitudes and approaches to dating and intimacy. This shift is characterized by various factors. Situationships are becoming increasingly popular among young adults as a way to develop a relationship with less pressure (Noenickx, 2022). A situationship is an informal arrangement that goes beyond the conventions of an exclusive relationship, offering emotional presence and connection in person. But when apart, also give the freedom of not being in a committed relationship (Tugnait, 2022).

Situationships provide a fresh perspective on relationships that don't conform to traditional norms, allowing couples to build their relationship with less pressure and a chance to reflect on their needs and expectations for their partner. However, the absence of rules can create uncertainty and anxiety, making it a delicate situation. While situationships offer less responsibility, they can also lead to stress and mental health problems.

Positive parenting strategies such as parental involvement, acceptance, appropriate strictness, and supervision are associated with more mutuality and more relational satisfaction in adolescent relationships (Candel, 2022). In contrast, permissive parenting, which is characterized by parents who are responsive to their children but lack rules and discipline, is associated with negative outcomes for children's mental health, including anxiety and depression (Ran et al., 2021b).

Impulsivity is another factor that has been found to mediate the association between parenting styles and self-harm in Chinese adolescents (Ran et al., 2021b).

Emotional Intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Șițoiu & Panisoara, 2023). It has been suggested that Emotional Intelligence is an important factor in various aspects of life, including academic and professional success, mental health, and interpersonal relationships (Șițoiu & Panisoara, 2023; Rathakrishnan et al., 2023).

The relationship between Parenting Styles, Impulsivity, Quality of Relationships, and Emotional Intelligence of young adults based on their romantic relationship status is a complex and multifaceted topic that has been studied by researchers from various fields. While positive parenting strategies are associated with more mutuality and more relational satisfaction in adolescent relationships, permissive parenting is associated with negative outcomes for children's mental health, including anxiety and depression. The quality of young adult romantic relationships is a critical aspect of their overall well-being, Parenting styles continue to play a role in romantic relationship quality in emerging adulthood child development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a paucity of research on how parenting styles influence romantic relationships, specifically in the context of young adults. In light of this research gap, the study has constructed hypotheses to examine the relationship between parenting styles, impulsivity,

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and relationship quality and emotional intelligence among young adults. Research papers from 2003 to 2023 are considered for review.

Young adults are adopting this trend because situationships are the ideal compatibility test without the whole commitment pressure, can help experience intimacy, build communication, foster transparency from the get-go, and offer more flexibility (Agrawal, 2023). This arrangement facilitates a less complicated disengagement process, as individuals typically maintain a lower level of emotional investment. The reduced emotional stakes in situationships often result in an easier transition when parting ways, allowing participants to move forward with fewer lingering attachments or emotional complications. (Tugnait, 2022). Studies have also shown that impulsivity is related to externalizing problem behavior in adolescents (Jiménez- Barbero et al., 2014). Research indicates that authoritarian and rejecting parenting styles are associated with higher rates of self-harm, anxiety, and depression in adolescents, that can negatively impact their future romantic relationships. Additionally, parental emotional intelligence and self-esteem contribute to parenting competence, influencing child outcomes and potentially the quality of young adults' romantic relationships. Furthermore, exposure to parenting education and training programs in one's family background may positively influence young adults' romantic relationship experiences. Research indicates that authoritarian and rejecting parenting styles are associated with higher rates of self-harm, anxiety, and depression in adolescents, which can negatively impact their future romantic relationships. Additionally, parental emotional intelligence and self-esteem contribute to parenting competence, influencing child outcomes and potentially the quality of young adults' romantic relationships. Furthermore, exposure to parenting education and training programs in one's family background may positively influence young adults' romantic relationship experiences (Șițoiu & Panisoara, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

- Young adults in a relationship will be higher on authoritative parenting style as compared to young adults in a situationship
- Young adults in a relationship will be lower on permissive parenting style as compared to young adults in a situationship
- Young adults in a relationship will be lower on impulsivity as compared to young adults in a situationship
- Young adults in a relationship will be higher on relationship quality as compared to young adults in a situationship
- Young adults in a relationship will be higher on emotional intelligence as compared to young adults in a situationship

Sample

A total of 215 responses were collected from young adults between the ages of 17 to 24. 114 participants were in a romantic relationship and the remaining 100 were in a situationship. After removing the outliers, a total of 189 samples were considered for performing statistics, were in 93 participants were in a romantic relationship and 96 participants were in a situationship. The sampling technique used was Purposive Sampling.

Tools

Relationship Quality (RQ) by Jill M. Chonody, Jacqui Gabb, Mike Killian and Priscilla Dunk-West (2016)

The 9-item scale showed strong reliability and validity. The RQ scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89) and test-retest reliability (correlation coefficient = 0.83). It also exhibited good construct validity, correlating highly with other relationship quality measures and lowly with other constructs. The scale was found to be sensitive to changes in relationship quality over time, indicating its validity (Chonody et al., 2016).

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by Buri (1991)

The scale consists of 30 items per parental style, with three subscales: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative/flexible. The internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the PAQ are high, indicating stability over time. The PAQ has good construct validity and predictive validity, correlating with other measures of parenting styles and predicting child outcomes such as academic achievement and behavioral problems (Ra, n.d.). For this research, the authoritative and permissive parenting styles will be used.

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale Revised (BIS-R-21) by Fövény, Urbán, R., Varga, Potenza, M. N., Griffiths, M. D., Szekely, A., Paksi, B., Kun, B., Farkas, J., Kökönyei, G., & Demetrovics, Z (2020)

The 21-item Barratt Impulsiveness Scale Revised (BIS-R-21) demonstrates strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, suggesting that the items on the scale are effectively measuring the same underlying construct; additionally, the BIS-R-21 exhibits high test-retest reliability, with a correlation coefficient of 0.83. The scale is temporally stable and produces consistent results over time, and it has been found to possess good convergent and discriminant validity. The test shows high correlations with other established measures of impulsivity and low correlations with measures of unrelated constructs, demonstrating that it aligns well with the broader construct of impulsivity while effectively discriminating between it and other psychological attributes. (Kapitány- Fövény et al., 2020).

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) by Schutte (1998)

SSEIT or the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test is a 33-item self-report measure of emotional intelligence (Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), 1998). Schutte and her colleagues reported a reliability rating of 0.90 for their emotional intelligence scale, which is relatively reliable for adults and adolescents (Statistics Solutions, 2023). However, the utilizing emotions subscale has shown poor reliability (Statistics Solutions, 2023). Emotion Perception and Utilizing Emotions are two subdomains that were used for this research. (Musonda et al., 2013).

Procedure

An online form was distributed to solicit information, explicit consent was obtained, assuring participants that their data would be safeguarded and solely utilized for research purposes. Following data collection, meticulous analysis was undertaken to extract meaningful insights. The form included various demographic inquiries such as age, gender, parental awareness of their relationship, participants' sources of income, single-child status, use of dating apps, and willingness to engage in long-term relationships.

Research Design and Statistics

For the comparative research design, a methodology involving the comparison and analysis of quantitative data will be employed. Furthermore, the research adopted a cross-sectional study approach. This enables the analysis of relationships between variables within the study population at a particular point in time. Statistical technique used was Independent Sample student's T- test.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis according to hypothesis

Table 1 Group Statistics and Independent Sample T-test for Relationship Quality Scale based on their romantic relationship status

Relationship Status	Variable	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
In a relationship	RQ	93	187	13.23*	39.15	4.74	.49
In a situationship	total	96			28.92	5.80	.59

*T-test is significant at $P < 0.05$

Table 2 Group Statistics and Independent Sample T-test for Permissive Parenting based on their romantic relationship status

Relationship Status	Variable	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
In a relationship	Permissive	93	187	0.73	31.45	5.97	0.61
In a situationship	total	96			30.79	6.30	0.64

Table 3 Group Statistics and Independent Sample T-test for Authoritative Parenting based on their romantic relationship status

Relationship Status	Variable	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
In a relationship	Authoritative	93	187	3.8**	36.93	5.90	0.61
In a situationship	total	96			33.54	6.24	0.63

** T-test is significant at $P < 0.001$

Table 4 Group Statistics and Independent Sample T-test for Baret Impulsivity Scale based on their romantic relationship status

Relationship Status	Variable	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
In a relationship	BIS	93	187	-	42.70	7.31	.75
In a situationship	TOTAL	96		4.76**	48.10	8.21	.83

** T-test is significant at $P < 0.001$

Table 5 Group Statistics and Independent Sample T-test for Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale based on their romantic relationship status

Relationship Status	Variable	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
In a relationship	Emotional	93	187	2.53*	46.48	4.24	.44
In a situationship	intelligence total	96			44.53	6.15	.62

** T-test significant at $p < 0.05$

Additional Findings

Table 6 Student's T Test Compared on usage of dating app

Variable	Do you use a dating app	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
RQ total	Yes	77	187	-	31.013	7.1	0.81
	No	112		4.817**	35.98	6.87	0.64

** T-test is significant at 0.001 level of significance

Table 7 Student's T-test for Relationship Quality based on Gender

Variable	Gender	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
RQ total	Male	97	185	-	32.18	7.31	0.74
	Female	90		3.66**	35.98	6.83	0.72

** T-test is significant at 0.001 level of significance

Table 8 Student's T-test for Authoritative Parenting Compared on Gender

Variable	Gender	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
Authoritative	Male	97	185	-	34.01	6.54	.66
Total	Female	90		2.80*	36.55	5.83	.61

* T-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 9 Student's T-test for Barratt Impulsivity Scale Compared on Gender

Variable	Gender	N	df	T	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
BIS total	Male	97	185	-	46.79	8.66	.88
	Female	90		2.35*	43.98	7.49	.78

* T-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance

DISCUSSION

The study examined authoritative parenting, finding significant differences in the mean scores between individuals in romantic relationships and those in situationships. The mean scores for authoritative parenting in romantic relationships were 36.93, and in situationships it was 33.54 (Table 3). The study findings support the hypothesis that young adults in relationships would exhibit higher levels of Authoritative Parenting Style compared to those in situationships. This due be the fact that relationships are often seen as more serious and long-term in nature, leading to a greater emphasis on providing guidance and setting limits while still allowing autonomy and emotional support (LPC, 2023).

In terms of permissive parenting, there was no significant difference in the mean score between individuals in romantic relationships and those in situationships. The mean scores for permissive parenting in romantic relationships were 31.45, while in situationships, the mean scores were 30.79 (Table 2). The rejection of the hypothesis that young adults in a relationship would exhibit lower permissive parenting style compared to those in situationships challenges conventional assumptions about the influence of relationship status on parenting behaviors. The lack of a significant mean difference in permissive parenting style between individuals in relationships and situationships further complicates the relationship between parenting styles and romantic partnerships. These results suggest that factors beyond relationship status may play a more substantial role in shaping parenting practices among young adults.

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With the acceptance of the hypothesis that young adults in a relationship exhibit lower impulsivity compared to those in situationships, supported by a significant mean difference between groups, participants in romantic relationships had a mean score of 42.70, in contrast to participants in situationships who scored 48.10 (Table 4). This can be interpreted in the Indian context by considering the impact of relationship dynamics on individual behavior and decision-making.

Regarding relationship quality, the study found that individuals in romantic relationships reported higher scores compared to those in situationships. The mean scores for relationship quality in romantic relationships were 39.15, whereas for situationships, the mean scores were 28.92 (Table 1). In the Indian context, the acceptance of the hypothesis that young adults in a relationship exhibit higher relationship quality compared to those in situationships aligns with cultural norms and societal expectations surrounding romantic partnerships (Bonnie et al., 2015). Relationships in India are often viewed as sacred bonds that are nurtured and valued, emphasizing emotional connection, commitment, and mutual respect. This cultural emphasis on the sanctity of relationships can contribute to higher perceived relationship quality among individuals in committed relationships compared to those in situationships. Furthermore, the dynamics of relationships in India are influenced by traditional values that prioritize stability, family harmony, and long-term commitment (Sahithya et al., 2019).

For Emotional Intelligence a significant mean difference was found between participants in romantic relationships and those in situationships. Participants in romantic relationships had a mean score of 46.48, in contrast, participants in situationships had a mean score of 44.53 (Table 5). In the Indian context, where cultural values, family dynamics, and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping emotional intelligence and parenting styles, these research findings offer valuable insights. The significant difference in emotional intelligence based on relationship status highlights the complexity of factors influencing emotional development among young adults in India.

Additional Findings

Usage of Dating apps

In the analysis of Relationship Quality based on the use of dating apps, a notable distinction in the average score was observed between the groups. Participants who reported using a dating app (N = 77; M = 31.01; SD = 7.1) had a lower mean score compared to those who did not use a dating app (N = 112; M = 35.98; SD = 6.87) with a T score of -4.817, which was statistically significant at the 0.001 level in Table 6. These results suggest that participants who do not engage with dating apps have a significantly higher level of relationship quality, regardless of their romantic relationship status. This finding is particularly relevant in the Indian context, where traditional matchmaking and personal networks continue to play a significant role in romantic relationships.

Based on Gender

The results in Table 7, examining gender disparities in Relationship Quality revealed significant differences in the means of the groups. The data for Females (N = 90; M = 35.98; SD = 6.8) and Males (N = 97; M = 32.18; SD = 7.3), yielded a t-value of -3.66 as shown in Table 7. The p-value was found to be less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference between the groups. This finding suggests that gender influences relationship quality, with distinct patterns observed for each gender category. In the Indian context, gender dynamics play a significant role in relationships, particularly in the context of

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arranged marriages, which are still prevalent in many Indian communities. Existing research suggests that gender role expectations and ideologies impact marital satisfaction in Indian couples, with women often experiencing less intimacy and support from their husbands (Patel, n.d.).

As shown in Table 8 while understanding differences in Gender on Authoritative Parenting, Males ($N = 97$; $M = 34.01$; $S.D. = 6.5$), Females ($N = 90$; $M = 36.55$; $S.D. = 5.8$), with t value -2.80 significant at 0.05 level of significance. Indicating that there is a significant mean difference between groups. We can conclude that Females in the age group of 17 -20 have scored higher on Authoritative Parenting Style. The higher scores observed in females for Authoritative Parenting Style in the Indian context can be attributed to the collectivistic nature of Indian society and the traditional emphasis on family and community values. Further research is needed to understand the factors contributing to these differences and to explore the implications for child development and well-being in the Indian context.

While studying Gender differences in Impulsivity Males ($N = 97$; $M = 46.79$; $S.D. = 8.66$), Females ($N = 90$; $M = 43.98$; $S.D. = 7.4$), with t value 2.35 significant at 0.05 level of significance as shown in Table 9. Indicating that there is a significant mean difference between groups. We can conclude that Males in the age group of 17 -20 have scored higher on Impulsivity when compared to Females. In the context of situationships, impulsivity may be particularly relevant, as people in situationships may be more prone to impulsive decisions and behaviors due to their lack of commitment and structure.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that there were significant differences in Authoritative Parenting Styles between young adults in relationships and those in situationships. Conversely, there were no significant variations in permissive parenting style between the two groups. However, young adults in relationships exhibited lower impulsivity levels compared to those in situationships, highlighting a distinction in behavior between the two relationship statuses. Moreover, individuals in committed relationships showed higher relationship quality, suggesting a positive impact of commitment on relationship satisfaction. Similarly, participants in a romantic relationship exhibited higher emotional intelligence when compared to participants in a situationship. Interestingly, participants in romantic relationships who did not use dating apps showed higher relationship quality, emphasizing the role of technology in relationship dynamics. Furthermore, the analysis revealed gender differences, with males displaying higher Impulsivity. Moreover, females have scored higher on Authoritative Parenting Style and Relationship Quality. The study suggests that factors beyond relationship status, such as individual characteristics, family dynamics, and societal norms, play a more substantial role in shaping emotional intelligence.

In the Indian context, the study's findings have important implications for policy development, relationship education initiatives, and cultural sensitivity. Understanding the impact of parenting styles on adult relationships can inform policies that support families in creating nurturing and supportive environments, contributing to stronger and more resilient relationships. Additionally, this research can promote cultural sensitivity and awareness by recognizing the influence of cultural norms and values on parenting styles and relationship dynamics.

Limitations

Reliance on self-report measures may have introduced response or social desirability biases, impacting data accuracy. The study's cross-sectional design limited the ability to establish causal relationships. The Cultural context might have influenced the results, reducing generalizability. Unaccounted confounding variables could have affected the relationships studied, and socially desirable responses might have skewed results. Additionally, a limited sample size could have reduced the study's statistical power to detect significant differences.

Suggestions

A cross-cultural study on parenting styles, impulsivity, relationship quality, and emotional intelligence in romantic relationships can offer valuable insights. Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking changes in these factors throughout young adulthood, and a comparative study across various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Exploring mediating variables and related constructs like self-esteem, conflict resolution skills, or coping strategies may also offer a holistic view of their impact on young adults' romantic relationships.

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Conflict of Interest

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