

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

Niharika Yogeesh<sup>1\*</sup>, Davidson Sudalaimuthu<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to explore the effects of dating anxiety on self-esteem and the components of subjective well-being- positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. The study was a quantitative study design, incorporating correlational research method. The sample group consisted of 41 unmarried males and females, aged 19 years to 30 years, residing in Bangalore, Karnataka, India. Indian college students who belong to the emerging adulthood population. The sample was determined by Convenience sampling method. “Dating Anxiety Scale”, “Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale”, “PANAS”, and “Satisfaction with Life Scale” were used for the collection of the data. In addition to descriptive statistics, correlational analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. As per the result of research; it was determined that dating anxiety has significant weak positive correlation with negative affect, and has significant weak negative correlation with positive affect, life satisfaction and self-esteem.

**Keywords:** *Dating Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Subjective Well-Being, Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Life Satisfaction*

Romantic relationships are considered one of the crucial domains of our lives. They aid in sharing intimacy, love, passion, emotional support, belongingness, and companionship. The meaning and concept of relationship could be quite subjective, and is constantly evolving through generations. One main reason for this particular evolution is awareness about healthy relationships, media influence, de-stigmatization of importance of mental health, technological advancement, etc. In comparison with few decades ago, awareness on dating before entering a committed relationship, or a legally bound institution such as marriage has been on the rise. Of course, there has been a significant decrease in divorce rate and domestic abuse, as dating provides a space to know partners, experiment with oneself and relationships, gain confidence in terms of sexuality, increase self-awareness, assess compatibility, etc. On the contrary, due negative impact of media depiction of dating, past experiences, attachment style, peer pressure, increased usage of dating applications, one might face conflicting opinions and feelings about dating. The above-mentioned reasons are closely related to dating anxiety, which often manifests behaviorally, and cognitively while being present in a dating situation.

<sup>1</sup>Montfort Institute of Advanced Studies

<sup>2</sup>Montfort Institute of Advanced Studies

\*Corresponding Author

Received: October 06, 2024; Revision Received: February 01, 2025; Accepted: February 05, 2025

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

### *Dating Anxiety*

Fear of rejection, hopelessness, lack of confidence and fear of getting hurt, are some of the main characteristics of Dating Anxiety. In an effort to cope up with difficult feelings that dating evokes, people frequently avoid dating related behaviors, activities, and interactions. Dating-related avoidance can take many forms such as, avoiding dressing in a way that may attract sexual attention, avoiding non-verbal encouragement of others' interest, avoiding talking and interacting with people you find attractive, pretending to be fiercely independent, and scornful of dating, or rarely talking about feelings of attraction to others.

Another way in which dating anxiety can affect behavior is that you may feel so anxious that it is very difficult to be yourself on dates. This can create a sense that you are being forced, artificial or awkward, making it difficult to get relationships off the ground. (Dating Anxiety: Dr Lissa Johnson & Associates: Clinical Psychologists, Sydney, n.d.)

### *Self-esteem*

Self-esteem refers to a person's overall sense of his or her value or worth. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person "values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself" (Adler & Stewart, 2004). Rosenberg (1965), one of the pioneers in this domain, stated that self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation to the self. He added, that high self-esteem consists of an individual respecting himself and considering himself worthy. In a similar vein, Sedikides and Gress (2003) stated that self-esteem refers to individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self.

### *Subjective Well-being*

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as 'a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 63). It refers to the way individuals experience and evaluate their lives and other specific domains and activities in their lives. It does not only make up to how happy an individual is in his/her life, but it is a measure how content an individual is on a long-term basis. When happiness is experienced over a short period of time, subjective well-being is comparatively long term. Subjective well-being has three components, and they are respectively as follows: life satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect. Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads (Ruut Veenhoven, 1996). Positive affect refers to the extent to which an individual subjectively experiences positive moods such as joy, interest, and alertness. Positive affect is one aspect of pleasurable and positive experience. Although positive affect overlaps to a significant degree with the concept of positive emotions, they are not identical. Positive affect is more closely related to mood states whereas positive emotions involve positive feelings as well as characteristic patterns of physiological arousal, thoughts, and behaviors. (Miller, 2011). Negative affect is a broad concept that can be summarized as feelings of emotional distress (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Although the above concepts have been studied quite in depth, and several studies have been established previously. The effect of dating anxiety on self-esteem and components of subjective well-being (positive effect, negative effect, and life satisfaction) has not been studied empirically in Bangalore, India. In countries like India, where mental health is gradually gaining importance in recent days, dating anxiety is a concept which is still unexplored, and unspoken of. This study aims at bringing the impact, and importance of

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

understanding the effects of dating anxiety to the fore front, in order to facilitate healthy interpersonal relationships, and improve well-being.

### *Study*

To investigate the relationship between Dating Anxiety, Self-esteem, and components of Subjective Well-being (Positive Affect, Negative Affect, and Life satisfaction) in males and females aged between 19 years to 30 years, residing in Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 41 participants, males and females, aged between 19 years to 30 years, residing in Bangalore, Karnataka, India. The participants were unmarried, did/did not have previous dating experience, and did not have any clinical diagnoses for mental disorders. English-speaking population was chosen, as the questionnaires did not have regional language adaptations.

### *Measures*

- **Informed consent form:** The informed consent form was developed and prepared by the researcher. It contained brief information about the research study, ensuring confidentiality and will obtain consent from the participants if they are willing to participate.
- **Socio-demographic datasheet:** The socio-demographic detail sheet was developed. This was prepared by the researcher to record socio-demographic details, like name, age, gender, educational level, etc.
- **Self Esteem Scale:** The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES) is the most commonly used measure of self-esteem in psychology research (Blascovich and Tomaka 1991; Demo 1985). It was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg as a measure of global self-esteem, one's overall sense of being a worthy and valuable person (Rosenberg 1965).
- **Dating Anxiety Scale:** Dating anxiety was measured using a six-item subscale from Glickman and La Greca's (2004) dating anxiety scale. Examples of items include "I feel nervous in dating situations", and "I am usually nervous going on a date with someone for the time".
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale:** The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed to assess satisfaction with people's lives as a whole. The scale does not assess satisfaction with specific life domains, such as health or finances, but allows subjects to integrate and weigh these domains in whatever way they choose.
- **The PANAS Scale:** The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is the most widely and frequently used scale to assess positive and negative affect. It is a self-report scale for measuring affect. It has 20 items on the whole, 10 items measuring positive affect and 10 items measuring negative affect.

### *Procedure*

A survey questionnaire was created using Google Forms, and was sent out to acquaintances who were requested to further invites people they know. The invitation link was sent through social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. Detailed instructions and consent form were explained and included in the Google Form before the participants could access the questionnaires. Convenience sampling method was used in attempt to recruit a heterogenous sample, in order to represent and include males and females of different ethnicity, race, and socio-economic background, aged between 19 years

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

to 30 years, residing in Bangalore, India. The above-mentioned sampling method was particularly used as the study was exploratory in nature, and required participants from diverse groups. After collecting the data through Google Form responses, statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Descriptive analysis like mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the variables. The analysis of correlation between the variable was conducted using Pearson's Correlation Analysis.

### RESULT

The results presented below analyzed based on the data collected and research findings of the above conducted study. The results may vary according to sample considered for the data collection and time period and geographical location that the study was conducted, even though the basic tenet of the study, that is correlation between dating anxiety, self-esteem, and the components of subjective well-being, that is positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction, remains the same.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Scales**

| Statistics               | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | 25th quartile (Q1) | Median | 75th quartile (Q3) |
|--------------------------|------|----------------|---------|---------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|
| <b>Self-Esteem</b>       | 29.6 | 5.9            | 14      | 40      | 27                 | 29     | 34                 |
| <b>Dating Anxiety</b>    | 58.8 | 22.1           | 24      | 105     | 39                 | 57.5   | 74.75              |
| <b>Life satisfaction</b> | 21.3 | 6.4            | 6       | 32      | 16.25              | 22     | 27                 |
| <b>Positive affect</b>   | 38.4 | 6.8            | 24      | 50      | 34                 | 39     | 43                 |
| <b>Negative affect</b>   | 25.6 | 8.2            | 11      | 48      | 20.25              | 24.5   | 29.75              |

*Note: Quantitative variables are expressed in Mean (SD) and qualitative variables are expressed in Frequency (%)*

Among the study participants of 41, males and females, aged 19 years to 30 years, unmarried, residing in Bangalore, it was found out through SPSS that the standard deviation for self-esteem turned out to be 5.9, Dating Anxiety was 22.1, and the components of Subjective Well-being, that is Life Satisfaction was 6.4, Positive Affect was 6.8 and Negative Affect was 8.2. The mean value of dating anxiety was 58.8, self-esteem was 29.6, components of subjective well-being, that is positive affect was 38.4, negative affect was 25.6, and life satisfaction was 21.3. As the standard deviation data points are closer to the mean, it indicated that the dataset was relatively consistent and reliable.

**Table 2: Correlation table for dating anxiety and subjective well-being components (N=41)**

|                       |             | Life satisfaction | Positive affect | Negative affect |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Dating Anxiety</b> | Correlation | -0.09             | -0.392          | 0.408           |
|                       | P-value     | 0.562             | 0.008**         | 0.006**         |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

It consists the result of correlation between Dating Anxiety and Components of Subjective Well-being, that is Positive Affect, Negative Affect and Life Satisfaction. Through SPSS, Pearson Correlation was carried out to find the correlation between the above-mentioned variables. Results from Table 2 show the correlation between life satisfaction and dating anxiety to be -0.09, at P-value 0.562, indicating that there is a significant weak negative correlation between dating Anxiety and life satisfaction. Likely, the correlation between dating anxiety and positive affect was found to be -0.392, at p value 0.008, which indicated weak negative correlation between dating anxiety and positive affect. According to previous studies, it has been found that there exists a negative correlation between anxiety and life satisfaction (Tsitsas et al., 2019), which strengthens the findings of the current research, as dating anxiety is a form of social anxiety. The findings show the correlation between dating anxiety and negative affect to be, 0.048. at p-value 0.006, which indicated there exists significant weak positive correlation between dating anxiety and negative affect (p-value <0.001).

**Table 3: Correlation table for dating anxiety and self-esteem (N=41)**

|                       |             | <b>Self-Esteem</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| <b>Dating Anxiety</b> | Correlation | -0.379             |
|                       | P-value     | 0.011*             |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Pearson Correlation was used to find the correlation between Dating Anxiety and Self-esteem in SPSS. The result in the table indicates that there is a significant weak negative correlation between Dating Anxiety and Self-esteem (p-value <0.05). The correlation was found out to be -0.379, at p-value 0.011. Previous studies conducted on self-esteem and anxiety, also prove inverse relationship with each other (Rosenberg, 1962). The result obtained above adds on the pre-existing inverse relationship between anxiety and self-esteem, by exploring specific form of anxiety, that is dating anxiety.

## **DISCUSSION**

Establishing healthy interpersonal relationships becomes crucial in adult life. Dating is a part of establishing and developing new interpersonal relationships. It contributes in the process of communication, finding potential partners, identity formation, development of self-concept, increases self-awareness, generates positive feelings, etc. On the contrary, individuals having dating anxiety, are characterized by fear of commitment, hopelessness, fear of rejection and embarrassment, and face difficulty in dating situations. They experience dating situations in tense and reserved sense. Due to the above-mentioned fears, individuals feel scrutinized to establish emotional connections, meet new people, to start new conversations, which leads to more hopelessness with regard to finding suitable partner and isolation.

The study explored the relationship Dating Anxiety with Self-esteem and components of Subjective Well-being, that is positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. Firstly, self-esteem is the core factor that determines individuals' behavior and adaptation, and a major contributor to quality of life. Inferring from the analysis conducted above, significant weak negative correlation was found between dating anxiety and self-esteem. Which indicates that individuals with high dating anxiety showed lower self-esteem. The average self-esteem according to Rosenberg Self-esteem scale, in the participants of the study was found to be 29.6. Individuals who showed high dating anxiety were shown to have dissatisfaction with oneself, feeling useless at times, inclined to feel failure, unable to take

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

positive attitude towards oneself, etc. Having low self-esteem can directly contribute towards dating anxiety and likewise, having dating anxiety can contribute towards lower self-esteem. Having higher self-esteem helps individuals to facilitate better communication, develop interpersonal relationships, increases community participation, and increases self-confidence. It also helps in positive perception about oneself and their surroundings, plus leads to better quality of life. Participants having high dating anxiety showed characteristics like excessive worry that they may look foolish/silly in front of their potential partners, they might look unattractive, feeling diffident, feeling nervous in dating situations, etc. On the contrary, individuals with low dating anxiety, showed characteristics such as being confident in dating situations, absence of excessive worry about looking foolish/silly in front of dating partners or excessive worry about looking unattractive. These individuals also agreed on feeling worthy, taking positive outlook to self, higher self-satisfaction, awareness and accepting of positive qualities, etc. Hence, it can also be inferred that high self-esteem can reduce dating anxiety in individuals.

Subjective Well-being being major factor of an individuals' quality of life, was measured in three components- Positive Affect, Negative Affect and Life satisfaction. Higher life satisfaction and positive affect is shown to contribute to higher subjective well-being, which ultimately leads to flourishing. On the contrary, higher the negative affect, lesser the subjective well-being, which contributes to languishing. Higher subjective well-being leads to higher level of positive emotions, positive relationships, sense of purpose in life, more accomplishments and active participation in trivial activities. Relationships and subjective well-being are interconnected, as components such as interpersonal relationships play crucial role in production of positive emotions, and provide a sense of meaning. Positive relationships also contribute to higher self-esteem, like explored above, which leads to formation of positive self-concept and self-acceptance. Dating anxiety is evidently a hinderance in forming new interpersonal relationships which can have negative impact on an individual's subjective well-being. The study infers significant negative correlation between positive affect and dating anxiety, indicating higher the dating anxiety, lesser the positive affect. PANAS questionnaire was used to measure positive affect, where in which individuals with high dating anxiety more often did not feel/slightly felt emotions associated with positive affect, such as determination, proud, feeling inspired, enthusiastic, inspired, etc. Whereas, individuals with low dating anxiety showed higher levels of emotions associated with positive affect, such as higher levels of determination, feeling inspired, enthusiastic, alert, etc. It indicated that dating anxiety contributed to lesser emotions associated with positive affect.

The results inferred showed significant weak positive correlation between negative affect and dating anxiety. Dating anxiety tends to be closely related with emotions associated with negative affect. Individuals who scored high on Dating Anxiety scale, reported to feel extreme levels of emotions such as nervousness, jittery, upset, afraid, guilt, stress, etc. The before mentioned emotions were slight felt/not at all felt by individuals who scored low Dating Anxiety scale. Plus, individuals stated to feel nervous while going out on dates, or worry excessively about the impression they might leave on opposite sex partners, inability to relax in dating situations etc. Hence, higher levels of dating anxiety can be associated with higher level of negative affect.

Life satisfaction being one of the contributing factors to subjective well-being, showed weak significant negative correlation with dating anxiety. Life satisfaction levels were found to be lower in individuals with higher dating anxiety. Individuals with high dating anxiety

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

disagreed on statements such as “The conditions of my life are excellent”, “I am satisfied with my life”, “In most ways my life is closest to the ideal”, etc. On the contrary, individuals with low levels of dating anxiety agreed on the above-mentioned statements in Satisfaction with Life Questionnaire. Life satisfaction is closely related with higher performance and stronger social relationships. As all the components of subjective well-being are interconnected with each other, higher life satisfaction leads to more meaningful interpersonal connections and vice versa. Dating anxiety being one of the major barriers in formation of romantic interpersonal relationships, which in turn produces positive emotions, can cause hindrance in life satisfaction.

Taken together, the findings above suggest that higher the dating anxiety, higher the negative affect and lower self-esteem, positive affect and life satisfaction. Individuals with higher self-esteem, life satisfaction, positive affect and lower negative affect tend to take more positive outlook towards themselves and towards dating as well. They are found to be more open to dating situations, with decreased hopelessness towards finding a dating partner.

### ***Limitations and Future Recommendations***

As the study was conducted on males and females aged between 19 years to 30 years, it fails in exploring dating anxiety in population aged over 30 years. This study could be further conducted on individuals who are divorced/separated. Individuals who have faced divorce or separation before, might sometimes have distorted perception on relationships, and dating. Which can further develop into dating anxiety. To establish an evidence-based correlation between dating anxiety and divorce/separation, further research can be continued. Additionally, the study was heteronormative in nature, hence questionnaires and inventories to explore dating anxiety in inclusive groups (LGBTQ+) could be established.

As dating anxiety is a relatively new concept, to understand the better implication of these results, future studies can address preventive measures and intervention planning for individuals dealing with dating anxiety. As online dating has been on the rise due to high usage of online dating applications, the impact of self-criticism and social rejection prevalent in dating applications on self-esteem has been studied previously. The study indicated the correlation of high usage of dating apps leading to low self-esteem (*Swipe for Self-Esteem Decline?: The Impact of Usage, Frequency, and Type of Online Dating Applications on Self-Esteem - University of Twente Student Theses*, n.d.). Hence, both the research could be considered as a groundwork to further explore the correlation between dating anxiety and dating app usage.

Likewise, dating anxiety could also be further explored in terms of attachment style. Previous studies have shown that social anxiety can mediate attachment insecurity and depression (Eng et al., 2001). As dating anxiety is a form of social anxiety, attachment styles could be further specifically explored in terms of dating anxiety as well.

## **REFERENCES**

- Dating anxiety: Dr Lissa Johnson & Associates: Clinical Psychologists, Sydney. (n.d.). Retrieved September 28, 2021, from [https://www.lissajohnson.com.au/relationships\\_dating.htm](https://www.lissajohnson.com.au/relationships_dating.htm)
- Du, H., King, R. B., & Chi, P. (2017). Self-esteem and subjective well-being revisited: The roles of personal, relational, and collective self-esteem. *PLOS ONE*, 12(8), e0183958 . <https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0183958>

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

- Duy, B., & Yıldız, M. A. (2017). The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem in the Relationship Between Optimism and Subjective Well-Being. *Current Psychology* 2017 38:6, 38(6), 1456–1463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12144-017-9698-1>
- Eng, W., Heimberg, R. G., Hart, T. A., Schneier, F. R., & Liebowitz, M. R. (2001). Attachment in Individuals With Social Anxiety Disorder: The Relationship Among Adult Attachment Styles, Social Anxiety, and Depression. *Emotion*, 1(4), 365–380. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.1.4.365>
- Hacimusalar, Y., Kahve, A. C., Yasar, A. B., & Aydin, M. S. (2020). Anxiety and hopelessness levels in COVID-19 pandemic: A comparative study of healthcare professionals and other community sample in Turkey. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 129, 181–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JPSYCHIRES.2020.07.024>
- Introduction - Subjective Well-Being - NCBI Bookshelf. (n.d.). Retrieved September 27, 2021, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179225/>
- Lew, B., Huen, J., Yu, P., Yuan, L., Wang, D.-F., Ping, F., Talib, M. A., Lester, D., & Jia, C.-X. (2019). Associations between depression, anxiety, stress, hopelessness, subjective well-being, coping styles and suicide in Chinese university students. *PLOS ONE*, 14(7), e0217372. <https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0217372>
- Maričić, A., & Štambuk, M. (2015). Uloga osamljenosti u odnosu socijalne anksioznosti i subjektivne dobrobiti: Upotreba inventara socijalne fobije (Spin) kao mjere. *Drustvena Istrazivanja*, 24(3), 407–426. <https://doi.org/10.5559/DI.24.3.05>
- Miller, D. N. (2011). Positive Affect. *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*, 1121–1122. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9\\_2193](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9_2193)
- Moses, O., Agbolade, A., & Oguniola, J. (2020). Self-esteem and peer influence as predictors of romantic relationship quality among young adults of Methodist Church Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 48–60. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijer/article/view/197130>
- Rosenberg, M. (1962). The association between self-esteem and anxiety. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 1(2), 135–152. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3956\(62\)90004-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3956(62)90004-3)
- Shimokobe, T., & Miranda, M. A. (2018). I Have Clout. *Swipe Right: Dating Apps and Implications on Self-Esteem and Body Image*.
- Stead, H., & Bibby, P. A. (2017). Accepted Manuscript Personality, Fear of Missing Out and Problematic Internet Use and their Relationship to Subjective Well-Being. Personality, Fear of Missing Out and Problematic Internet Use and their Relationship to Subjective Well-Being. *Computers in Human Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.08.016>
- Stringer, D. M. (2013). Negative Affect. *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, 1303–1304. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9\\_606](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_606)
- Swipe for self-esteem decline? : The impact of usage, frequency, and type of online dating applications on self-esteem - University of Twente Student Theses*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 11, 2022, from <http://essay.utwente.nl/81546/>
- Tsitsas, G., Nanopoulos, P., & Paschali, A. (2019). Life Satisfaction, and Anxiety Levels among University Students. *Creative Education*, 10(05), 947–961. <https://doi.org/10.4236/CE.2019.105071>
- Víllora, B., Yubero, S., & Navarro, R. (2020). Subjective well-being among victimized university students: comparison between cyber dating abuse and bullying victimization. *Information Technology & People*, 34(1), 360–374. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-11-2018-0535>

## Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being

### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Niharika, Y. & Davidson, S. (2025). Effects of Dating Anxiety on Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(1), 580-588. DIP:18.01.054.20251301, DOI:10.25215/1301.054