

A comparative study - quality of life in romantic relationships and singlehood

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Abstract

This research paper explores the differences in the quality of life (QoL) experienced by individuals in romantic relationships versus independent people. This study aims to assess the benefits and challenges associated with both relationship statuses by examining emotional well-being, social support, life satisfaction, and mental health. The study reviews relevant psychological theories, empirical studies, and surveys to determine how these life conditions affect overall happiness, self-perception, and social functioning. The findings show a significant positive correlation between romantic relationships and singlehood in terms of life satisfaction.

Keywords: Relationships; Singlehood; Quality of Life; Mental Health; Life Satisfaction; Social Support; Happiness

1. Introduction

There is an old-aged old and intricate argument over whether or not person in romantic relationships have a higher quality of life than those who are single. Romantic relationships are inherently characterized by companionship, emotional intimacy, and common objectives, all of which can enhance a person's sense of well-being. Conversely, being single is frequently linked to increased independence, liberty, and chances for personal growth, all of which could favor life happiness. This study compares the quality of life of people in partnerships with those who are single, looking at aspects including social support, life satisfaction, mental health, and emotional well-being.

Emotional well-being is influenced differently by romantic relationships compared to singlehood. In romantic relationships, individuals often experience enhanced emotional well-being through companionship, emotional intimacy, and support from their partners. These elements can create feelings of love, security, and stability. However, relationships may also introduce stress due to conflicts or unmet expectations. On the other hand, being single typically fosters a sense of independence and self-reliance, enabling individuals to prioritize personal growth and enjoy greater freedom. While singles may benefit from fewer relationship-related stressors and enjoy greater autonomy, they may also confront loneliness or lack of consistent emotional support. Ultimately, both relationship statuses uniquely shape emotional well-being, presenting their benefits and challenges.

Social support differs between romantic relationships and singlehood, primarily by emphasizing a wider network that extends beyond intimate partnerships. In romantic relationships, the foundation of social support is largely based on the emotional, physical, and psychological bonds established between partners. This connection often provides individuals with a safe space for vulnerability and understanding. Allowing for mutual care and support that may not be as deeply rooted in other types of relationships.

On the other hand, single individuals tend to rely more highly on friends, family, and broader social networks for their emotional and psychological needs. This reliance strengthens the diverse support system that can provide various

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perspectives and forms of assistance. Friends might offer companionship during leisure activities, while family may provide emotional support during challenging times, creating a strong support system.

Dual social networks and the emotional support that comes from their partner's social circles are frequently advantageous to people in relationships^[11] (Umberson et al., 1996). To make up for the lack of a romantic partner, single people could expand their social network with friends, family, and neighborhood associations. Stronger social links within single communities have resulted from the increasing acceptance of singlehood^[12] (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). People in romantic relationships often benefit from their partner's emotional support, which can positively impact mental health by reducing stress and fostering a sense of security. However, the quality of the relationship plays a crucial role. A healthy relationship enhances well-being, but toxic or unhealthy relationships can have the opposite effect^[3], increase stress and anxiety, and reduce life satisfaction (Cramer, 2004). In contrast, single individuals generally avoid relationship-related stress but may face challenges such as loneliness and societal pressure, which can negatively affect mental health. While singlehood offers independence, the absence of a close partner may lead to emotional struggles. In romantic relationships, several essentials, such as emotional intimacy, close companionship, and a sense of shared purpose, often lead to greater life satisfaction. These components provide partners with a sense of security and trust, enabling them to feel supported and valued. People strengthen their emotional bond and create a satisfying partnership when they communicate honestly and show vulnerability. This intimacy greatly contributes to general pleasure and mental health by fostering feelings of attachment as well as mutual support through life's obstacles, whether it's engaging in hobbies together, managing life's ups and downs, or encouraging one another's goals, couples frequently find satisfaction in shared experiences that build a diverse collection of memories that enhance their sense of fulfillment.

On the other side, the ability to choose one's path places a high value on personal development and experience a sense of independence, and experience a sense of independence are frequently traits of a happy single life. According to a research paper by DePaulo (2006), single people are happier because they have greater control over their lives^[4]. Research shows that, in comparison to married people, unmarried people frequently have larger social networks and deeper friendships^[5]. (Harkins, 2019). Single people are more likely to prioritize their interest in life satisfaction^[6]. (Fingerman & Huo, 2020).

Single people often find great satisfaction in their freedom, which enables them to concentrate on their hobbies and career objectives without having to make concessions for a spouse. This phase of life frequently promotes a path of self-discovery when people can take up new interests, learn talents, and forge a solid of who they are. Being single gives people the freedom to be spontaneous, whether it is through traveling, going to school, or hanging out with friends. This allows them to create relationships and experiences that hold great personal significance. According to studies, independent people who maintain healthy social networks and participate in rewarding activities report being just as happy as their partners^[7]. (Lucas, 2005). According to a 2009 study by Greitemeyer, single people who pursue meaningful connections, professional goals, and personal growth report feeling quite satisfied with their lives. Another element that contributes to happiness in singlehood is the capacity to make decisions on one's own^[8], without the limitation of a love partner (Adamczyk, 2017). According to research, those who are in romantic relationships typically report higher levels of life happiness, physical health, and emotional support. Because committed relationships offer emotional stability and shared responsibility, studies by Diener & Seligman (2002) show that persons in committed relationships report better levels of well-being^[9]. Furthermore, according to Baumeister and Leary's (1995) idea of the desire to belong, people have an innate need for intimate, close relationships^[10], which are essential for psychological health.

Being single does not always translate into a lesser level of life satisfaction, despite what many people think. Recent research shows how people's views of being single are changing. Particularly, as they value independence, professional success, and self-improvement, DePaulo and Morris (2005) argue that single people frequently have a higher sense of autonomy, control over their lives^[11], and possibilities for personal growth, challenging the assumption that singles are less satisfied. Furthermore, those who are single might encounter less conflict, which is occasionally linked to relationship stress.

1.1. Role of attachment style

The biological urge for infants to be close to their caretakers, especially during stressful situations, is known as attachment. This closeness helps them achieve emotional and psychological equilibrium, which gives them the courage to resume exploring their surroundings. The body of studies demonstrating the impact of early experiences and intimate relationships on mental health and well-being later in life is growing [12,13,14]. (Englund, Kuo, Puig, & Collins; Lyons-Ruth, Bureau, Holmes, Easterbrooks & Brooks, 2013; Sroufe, 2005).

In clinical settings, attachment theory is a good fit because many psychologists are searching for unique, in terms of relationship-oriented treatments to use with their patients. An increasing amount of research has shown that attachment-based therapies are beneficial in helping parents and kids form more stable bonds. Attachment theory-based parenting techniques have become more and more popular as the body of research has expanded. Particularly in light of their solid theoretical foundations, the established connections between attachment and psychopathology, and the expanding body of research on successful interventions, recent reviews have examined the potential of attachment-based interventions [15,16,17]. (Barlow et al., 2016; Rose & O'Reilly; Woodhouse). Although participants and medical professionals are beginning to accept these interventions, much more needs to be done to ensure that they receive the same level of support as other commonly used therapies.

Bowlby (1969–1982) defined a secure attachment as a strong and long-lasting emotional connection between a parent and child [18]. A child with a stable attachment is more likely to have a parent who is cooperative, available, sensitive, and accepting (Ainsworth, 1968). Attachment theory's central claim is that character formation is influenced by early contextual factors [19]. (Bowlby, 1940). According to Bowlby (2007), children require a relationship with a caregiver that is warm, personal, and stable. Additionally, Bowlby (1960) identified that the absence of an attachment figure causes sadness and grieving, and that a child's inability to build meaningful relationships with others is caused by a series of replacement attachment figures. According to Cassidy (2016), despite more than 40 years of research, this theory has not faced any significant opposition, and more recent studies have mostly expanded [20]. and enhanced Bowlby's theories. Waters, Belhar, and Ainsworth (1978). Created a classification scheme based on attachment styles. These patterns include children who are firmly linked, have parents who are sensitive and responsive, and are therefore at ease while they are together and exploring. Children with an anxious-avoidant attachment style experience anxiety when they are removed from their parents, but they are not disturbed by this separation and are not soothed by seeing them again.

1.2. Life satisfaction

A key component of subjective well-being is life satisfaction [21], which represents a person's overall assessment of their life experience (Diener et al., 1985). It covers a wide range of topics, including interpersonal relationships, professional success, emotional stability, and health. To shed light on the elements that contribute to general well-being in various relationships statutes, research on life satisfaction has frequently examined its link with romantic involvement and singlehood. Contentment with life in a romantic partnership, life satisfaction is significantly shaped by romantic relationships that frequently enjoy more intimacy, friendship, and social support- all of which are beneficial to psychological health [9]. (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Strong social ties, especially in romantic relationships, are also a significant predictor of happiness [9] and life satisfaction, according to research by Diener and Seligman (2002). But one determining aspect is the relationship's quality. Conflicts, a lack of emotional connection, and discontent in romantic relationships can all have a detrimental effect on life satisfaction, as relationship misery has been associated with higher stress levels and lower levels of happiness overall.

Life satisfaction in singlehood, contrary to the belief that romantic relationships are necessary for happiness, research has shown that singlehood can also be a fulfilling and satisfying life phase. Single individuals often experience greater autonomy, independence, and self-growth [11]. (DePaulo & Mooris, 2006). Studies suggest that those who actively embrace singlehood and cultivate strong social networks report high levels of life satisfaction [8]. (Adamczk,2017). Moreover, research by Ely, Melton, and Stratton (2018) suggests that personal fulfillment and self-determined goals contribute significantly to happiness among single individuals [22]. Factors such as career success, friendships, and personal hobbies play a crucial role in determining life satisfaction. Additionally, single individuals who perceive their singlehood positively tend to experience greater well-being [23]. than those who feel pressured to enter a relationship (Spiellmann et al., 2013).

A comparison of singlehood and romantic relationships. There is still disagreement regarding whether being single or in a romantic relationship results in higher levels of life of life satisfaction. According to some research, those who are married or romantically attached report feeling better because they have more social and emotional support [24]. (Lucas & Dyrenforth,2005). Some contend that being single offers a chance for independence and self-discovery [7], both of which can lead to a high level of life satisfaction (Greitemeyer, 2009). Additionally, life satisfaction in both relationship statuses is influenced by demographic parameters [25] as age, personality, and cultural expectations (Bucher,2014). Even while romantic partnerships are frequently favored by society, more and more studies are recognizing that being single may be just as enjoyable when combined with close social bonds and personal growth.

2. Methods

2.1. Research questions

- How does the quality of life differ between individuals in romantic relationships and those who are single?
- What psychological and social factors contribute to differences in life satisfaction in these two life conditions?
- How do gender, age, and cultural factors mediate the impact of relationship status on QoL?

2.2. Research objectives

- To compare the quality of life in romantic relationships and singlehood.

2.3. Hypothesis

- There is no significant difference in the quality of life between individuals in a romantic relationship and those who are not in a romantic relationship.

2.4. Operational definition

Quality of life in romantic relationships refers to an individual's subjective well-being and overall satisfaction derived from being in a romantic relationship. It will measure through several dimensions, which include emotional well-being, interpersonal satisfaction, social integration, physical well-being, and life satisfaction.

Quality of life in singlehood refers to an individual's overall well-being and life satisfaction while not being in a romantic relationship. It will measure through the dimensions, which include emotional well-being, life satisfaction, and social satisfaction.

2.5. Variables

2.5.1. Independent variables

- Relationship status: categories in romantic relationships vs single.

2.5.2. Dependent variables

- Quality of life.

2.6. Inclusion criteria

- Both male and female
- Individuals must provide informed consent to participate in the study.
- Relationship group: This group includes those who are married or in a long-term romantic relationship.
- Singlehood group: This group includes those who are currently not in a romantic relationship,
- The participant must be a resident of Chennai and Bengaluru.

2.7. Exclusion criteria

- Individuals who do not belong to the age 18- 45 years.
- Participants are currently in the traditional group phase.

2.8. Research design

The present study adopts a quantitative approach to the comparative study of the quality of life of romantic relationships and singlehood, targeting a sample of 100 participants who are in a relationship and 100 participants who are not in a romantic relationship. Aged between 18-45 years, one assessment was administered to identify their quality of life based on four key dimensions: emotional well-being, social support, mental health, and life satisfaction. The main objective is to compare the quality of life between individuals in relationships and individuals who are not in relationships. By analyzing the data using SPSS statistical software, this comparative analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of how two distinct life circumstances impact an individual's overall well-being and life satisfaction.

2.9. Participants

The target population consists of participants in relationships and those not in relationships. Aged between 18-45 years. Participants will be recruited through convenient sampling, focusing on their willingness to participate.

2.10. Sample size

A sample of 150 participants (100 individuals in relationships and 100 individuals not in relationships) ensured diversity in demographics, including name, age, and gender.

2.11. Data collection tools

The participants will complete an online survey consisting of the WHOQOL-BREF (the World Health Organization Quality of Life- BREF questionnaires. The study will be administered through a secure platform, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Before data collection, informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and they will be briefed on the study's purpose and rights.

2.12. Tools of assessment

This research used a convenient approach; a survey was administered to 200 participants, 100 of whom were in romantic relationships and 100 of whom were single. The survey measured their subjective quality of life based on four key dimensions: emotional well-being, social support, mental health, and life satisfaction.

WHOQOL-BREF) the World Health Organization Quality of Life-BREF: is a shortened form of the quality-of-life questionnaire, which is specially designed to assess concerns regarding physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. it consists of 26 items; each rated on a 5-point scale. The higher the score for each item, the greater the level of dissatisfaction with their life and personal life. The total score is obtained by adding up the scores from all 26 items; a higher total score indicates a higher level of dissatisfaction with their life and their personal life.

Internal reliability for all domains was done at 0.70 except for the domain of social relationships (0.5535). The test-retest reliability for all domains was significant at $P < 0.01$ level.

2.13. Procedure

Informed consent, individuals showing interest will receive a comprehensive form for informed consent that will explain the purpose, procedure, potential risks, and benefits of the study. Consent will be requested before proceeding with data collection.

Questionnaire administration: Participants will be asked to complete a structured questionnaire, including the World Health Organization quality of life-BREF questionnaire, WHOQOL-BREF

2.14. Analysis

The data analysis will involve using the statistical software SPSS to conduct to compare the mean quality of life score between the two groups, identifying whether there are significant differences.

3. Result

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the quality of life between individuals in a romantic relationship and those who are not in a romantic relationship.

To study the connection between romantic relationships (RR) and singlehood (SH), a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. RR and SH have a weak negative connection, according to the results ($r = -0.103$, $p = 0.421$). Although the association is modest and statistically insignificant ($p > 0.50$). it implies that the sensation of singlehood may somewhat decline as romantic relationship engagement rises. This suggests that the two variables in this study do not significantly correlate with one another. According to the sample registration system (SRS) statistical report of 2018, approximately 9.2% of Tamil Nadu's women are single, whether they are widowed, divorced, or separated, which is nearly double the national average of 5.5%, according to the 2018 sample registration system (SRS) data report. This implies that women in Tamil Nadu are more likely to be single, which can be a reflection of patterns in Chennai, the state's capital. On the other hand, particular data for Karnataka or Bengaluru is not easily accessible. But according to a 2014 survey, 7.1% of

married people in Karnataka and 7.9% of those in Tamil Nadu were single. This implies that Karnataka, and hence Bengaluru, may have a somewhat lower rate of singlehood than Tamil Nadu.

Table 1 The correlation between romantic relationships and singlehood.

Correlations			
		RR	SH
RR	Pearson Correlational	1.0	-0.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.421
	N	90.0	63.0
SH	Pearson Correlational	-0.103	1.0
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.421	
	N	63	63

4. Discussion

The Pearson correlation coefficient between romantic relationship (RR) and singlehood (SH) is -0.103, indicating a very weak negative relationship. This implies that individuals who are in Romantic relationships and those who are single may have slightly different experiences in terms of psychological well-being or quality of life; However, this association is not statistically significant ($p=0.421$). Based on this data, we cannot conclude that relationship status has a significant impact on the variable studied. These findings overlap with Adamczyk and Sergey's research, which indicated that while people in romantic relationships generally report higher levels of life satisfaction, the effect size was small and varied depending on other moderating factors such as attachment style and relationship quality. Similarly, Grime et al. highlight that single people with good social support networks can have well-being levels equivalent to those in committed partnerships, emphasizing that relationship status is not a reliable predictor of emotional stability or quality of life. In contrast, Dush and Amato discovered a greater difference in subjective well-being between married individuals and those who were single or cohabiting, implying that long-term committed relationships may bring emotional and social benefits that singlehood may lack. The result of this study, however, emphasizes the significance of evaluating not only the status of relationships but also relationship quality and context because of the non-significant association and small sample size ($N=90$ for RR, $N=63$ for SH). The presence or absence of a romantic partner may not have as much of an impact on emotional outcomes as other factors, including communication style, emotional control, and mutual support.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationships between romantic relationships and singlehood. The results show no significant correlation between these two variables, indicating that being in a romantic relationship does not necessarily have a meaningful impact on one's experience of singlehood; the weak negative correlation found is statistically insignificant, highlighting the possibility that other factors may be important in determining experience related to romantic relationships and singlehood. Conclusion and research gap. Although this study offers some initial insights, the lack of significant correlation highlights the need for additional research into other variables, such as emotional well-being, social support, and cultural influences. Further studies could use a larger sample size and a qualitative approach to obtain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the quality of life in both.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

- Prioritized informed consent, making sure that participants understood the purpose and possible consequences of the study.
- Anonymity and confidentiality safeguards to protect participants' privacy.
- There were no incentives in the research. The research was genuine, and the data collected were genuine.

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