



A Study on Subjective Loneliness, Dating Anxiety and Happiness among Indian Men

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between dating anxiety, subjective loneliness, and happiness among men navigating the online dating. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from a sample of 44 men (aged 18–35) through a structured online survey. Participants completed the Dating Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (DAS-A), the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and a validated measure of Subjective Happiness. Statistical analysis revealed significant positive correlations between loneliness and all subdimensions of dating anxiety, most notably Social Distress and Fear of Negative Evaluation. These findings suggest that interpersonal anxieties act as a primary psychological barrier that directly exacerbates subjective loneliness in men while dating online. The study concludes that addressing specific social distress and the fear of being judged is essential for mitigating loneliness and enhancing the overall subjective well-being of men in the online dating era.

Keywords: *Subjective Loneliness, Dating Anxiety, Happiness*

1. Introduction

In the modern era of online dating, connection has undergone a radical transformation, shifting largely into digital spaces. For young men, navigating this "digital dating" world presents unique psychological challenges that often go unaddressed in traditional mental health discourse. While dating platforms offer the promise of instant connection, they frequently serve as a catalyst for heightened dating anxiety and profound social distress.

The experience of dating anxiety is not merely a form of temporary shyness rather; it represents a complex interplay of the fear of negative evaluation and social discomfort. For

many single men aged between 18–35, this anxiety acts as a psychological barrier. When individuals feel persistently judged or inadequate in romantic contexts, they often undergo a process of social withdrawal. This is majorly intended as a defense mechanism against rejection, paradoxically exacerbates subjective loneliness and impacts the overall happiness of men. A research study was conducted by Strulov and Aderka (2024) on modern dating as it increasingly relies on digital platforms, yet for those living with Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), this study of young adults shows that individuals with SAD are just as active on dating apps and attend just as many dates as their peers, their internal experience is significantly more taxing. However, the internal experience is quite different. The study found that people with SAD found the dates significantly more draining or negative. They felt a much sharper sting of shame and embarrassment during the process compared to their peers. Essentially, while the outward behaviour of those with SAD matches the typical dating experience, the psychological journey is defined by a much heavier burden of negative emotion and self-consciousness. Another research study conducted by Zhong and Huang (2024) looks at how the fear of being single can either pull you down or help you cope when using dating apps. By surveying over 500 users, researchers found that while this fear naturally makes people more anxious about dating, these changes depending on what you're looking for while dating online.

Current research suggests a critical mediational link between how men perceive their social competence and their actual emotional well-being. If a man's internal emotional thermostat is set to a high state of anxiety, he may find himself "starved of company" despite being digitally connected. This study aims to bridge the gap in existing literature by specifically examining the relationship between dating anxiety, subjective loneliness, and happiness within a male only demographic. By understanding these correlations, we can better develop targeted interventions to support the mental health and relational success of young men in an increasingly isolated world by understanding the factors that contribute to loneliness while dating online.

1.1 Loneliness

Loneliness refers to the distressing psychological state resulting from a perceived discrepancy between an individual's desired and actual social relationships. For this research, loneliness is operationally defined by the scores obtained on the UCLA Loneliness Scale (short version), specifically reflecting the participant's feelings of social isolation and being "shut out" from others.

Loneliness has been defined “as the aversive state experienced when a discrepancy exists between the interpersonal relationships one wishes to have, and those that one perceives they currently have” (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

“A subjective feeling state of being alone, separated or apart from others, and has been conceptualized as an imbalance between desired social contacts and actual social contacts” is referred to as loneliness (Gardiner et al., 2018).

Loneliness is the “unpleasant experience that occurs when a person’s network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively (not enough friends) or qualitatively (relationships lack depth)” (Peplau and Perlman, 1982).

A research study was conducted by Balki (2025) during pandemic on dating apps. The study examined how these dating apps push users towards paid features and how apps use addictive features and hidden 'match-limiting tactics, strategies that hit men the hardest and contribute to higher levels of stress and loneliness.

Rinaldi et al. (2024) conducted a research study to examine the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness among users of dating applications. This research investigates how gender moderates the trajectory from dating anxiety relates to loneliness. By examining the i factors that drive loneliness in digital dating spaces, the study advances theoretical models of how social anxiety and romantic exclusion are linked.

Storbeck (2025) did a review study to examine early interaction dynamics, such as social anxiety, dating anxiety, fear of rejection, and heterosocial competence, to define approach anxiety in men social dating behaviour. This research explains why some people face a massive emotional wall when trying to meet someone new. It argues that this anxiety is caused by a combination of human evolution, the cultural expectation that men should go first, and personal struggles with emotional connection

According to Segrin et al. (2003), people struggling with depression tend to view their relationships through a more negative lens, even when their partner sees things differently. Despite this trend, depression is not a guarantee of relationship failure or loneliness; rather, it simply increases the likelihood of experiencing these challenges compared to those without depressive symptoms.

Lehtola (2025) investigates user well-being on dating platforms by integrating frameworks from happiness studies with insights from social psychology, sociology, and demographics. Utilizing robust hierarchical multiple linear regression, the study assesses users' overall happiness and explores the extent to which a sense of social belonging acts as a key influence in that dynamic.

This research explores the impact of digital dating platforms on individual well-being and the efficacy of these services in establishing romantic connections. Amidst conflicting views on the merits of online dating, this study offers empirical evidence to clarify its actual outcomes Tzani et al. (2025)

This study investigates the link between social competence and life satisfaction among 330 young adults. The results indicate that poor interpersonal skills lead to lower life satisfaction indirectly by increasing dating anxiety and romantic loneliness. Notably, while single participants felt lonelier and less satisfied with life than partnered peers, they did not differ significantly in actual social competence or dating anxiety(Adamczyk & Segrin, 2016).

Happiness can be defined “as subjective wellbeing, which encompasses feelings of satisfaction, meaning, and purpose in life” (Steptoe, 2019).

1.2 Subjective Happiness

This variable represents an individual’s overall cognitive and affective evaluation of their life as being happy or satisfied. It is operationally measured through a Validated Subjective Happiness Scale, where higher scores indicate a more positive "internal emotional thermostat" and a greater sense of well-being regardless of external circumstances.

1.3 Dating Anxiety

In the context of this study, dating anxiety is defined as the subjective experience of tension, apprehension, and fear specifically related to romantic or social interactions with potential partners. It is operationally measured using the Dating Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (DAS-A), which evaluates three specific dimensions: Fear of Negative Evaluation, Social Distress in dating situations, and Social Distress in group settings.

A research study was done to show the role of dating and dating violence victimisation, different socioeconomic characteristics, personal experiences of abuse, perceived social support, and the ability to resolve social problems in happiness among adolescents in Europe. This study concludes that adolescent happiness is deeply contingent upon the quality of their romantic and peer environments. These results advocate for a multi-faceted approach to adolescent welfare, emphasizing the necessity of Educational Interventions and Skill-Building Programs focused on social problem-solving and conflict resolution (Jaskulska et al., 2022). A research study was conducted on Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that stated that ACEs constitute the foundation of many problems in an individual’s life. Among these are a diminished sense of belonging and heightened anxiety, particularly in the context of romantic relationships. Individuals who suffer from anxiety in romantic relationships frequently worry about being rejected or feeling inadequate. Under this emotional strain, people could doubt

chances to capture happiness. This study examined how the experience of ACEs influences the fear of happiness through a sequential pathway (Uygun et al., 2026).

A study conducted by Stevens and Morris (2007) investigated the characteristics of computer and Internet use in young adults to determine whether individuals who were high in social/dating anxiety symptoms were more likely to make and maintain social relationships online and are more inclined to utilize online environments as a primary means of establishing and maintaining social connections. To further understand the patterns of these behaviours, several measures of social and dating anxiety were collected and analysed along with demographic, computer use, and relationship characteristics. The results of the study indicated differences between high and low social/dating anxiety with respect to media use and relationship formation.

Another study identifies a critical distinction in user intent. Results indicated that utilizing dating applications primarily for social approval is a longitudinal predictor of increased loneliness. Conversely, when these platforms are used with the specific goal of pursuing romantic relationships, no such detrimental effect on loneliness was observed. This suggests that the psychological impact of dating technology is heavily contingent upon the user's underlying objective.

Potential effects of dating app use on psychological well-being may also depend on how successful people feel they have been. Research suggests that feelings of achievement come from positive feedback on dating apps and connections that form online (Her & Timmermans, 2021) which can improve daters' affect.

Consequently, identifying the specific motivations underlying dating app engagement is critical, as a user's perceived efficacy their belief in their ability to successfully realize these goals serves as a primary determinant of their subsequent psychological well-being and loneliness.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose is to study subjective loneliness, dating anxiety and happiness among men.

1.5 Hypothesis

H₁: To examine the relationship between subjective loneliness and Dating anxiety among men.

H₂: To examine the relationship between Happiness and Loneliness in men.

H₃: To examine whether loneliness mediates the relationship between dating anxiety and subjective happiness among men.

2. Method

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the relationship between subjective loneliness and Dating anxiety among men. For which the data was collected using standardized psychological instruments, including the Dating Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (DAS-A) and the UCLA Loneliness Scale (short version) and The Subjective Happiness Scale, the research also used correlational design because the primary objective of the study was to examine the predictive and mediational relationship between the variables.

2.1 Sample

Data were collected from 44 men in India using purposive-snowball sampling to investigate subjective loneliness, dating anxiety on the happiness of Indian men in online dating. Inclusion criteria ensured relevance to modern relationship dynamics: (a) active use of at least one dating application, (b) aged 18–35 years.

2.2 Measures

The Subjective Happiness Scale as developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), is a 4-item instrument designed to measure a person's global subjective happiness. The scale consists of four items; each answered on a 7-point Likert scale. A score of 1 represents a very low level of subjective happiness. A score of 7 represents a very high level of subjective happiness.

Dating Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (DAS-A) developed by Glickman and La Greca (2004) is a 26-item self-report measure assessing social and dating-related anxiety (e.g., "I am usually nervous going on a date with someone for the first time"). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all characteristics of me to 5 = Extremely characteristic of me), with higher scores indicating greater levels of dating anxiety. The scale consists of three primary subscales: Fear of Negative Evaluation - Dating, Social Distress - Dating, and Social Distress - Group, alongside five filler items not used in scoring.

UCLA Loneliness Scale-Questionnaire (short version) is a 10-item self-report measure designed to assess subjective feelings of loneliness and social isolation (e.g., "How often do you feel completely alone?"). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, and 4 = Always. A total score of 20 is considered average, while scores between 25 and 29 indicate a high level of loneliness where harmful chronic effects may begin. Scores of 30 or higher represent a very high level of loneliness.

2.3 Procedure

The data was collected using google forms survey (approximately 5–7minutes) was administered to a sample of 44 men to investigate the variables. Section 1 provided a comprehensive overview of the study's aims, informed consent protocols, data confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. Section 2 captured relevant demographic information (such as age and relationship status) to be utilized for screening and as covariates in the final analysis. Section 3 administered randomized, validated Likert scales to measure key psychological constructs. These included the Dating Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (DAS-A) to evaluate social and dating-related distress through 26 items rated on a 5-point scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale (short version) to assess levels of social isolation via 10 items rated on a 4-point scale, and a validated scale for Happiness.

2.4 Analysis of Data

The obtained data were analysed using Jamovi software. A combination of Descriptive and Inferential statistics was used to interpret the results. Correlation was conducted to test the hypotheses.

3. Results

Table 1. *N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Loneliness	Happiness	Social Distress Dating	Fear of Negative Evaluation - Dating	Social Distress Group	Dating Anxiety Total
N	44	44	264	44	44	44
Mean	16.9	19.3	4.34	20.9	8.36	44.3
Median	16.0	19.5	3.00	19.5	8.00	44.0
Standard deviation	5.07	3.37	5.31	8.28	3.32	15.6

Table 2. *Correlation between variables*

	Loneliness	Happiness	Social Distress Dating	Fear of Negative Evaluation - Dating	Social Distress Group	Dating Anxiety Total
Loneliness	—					
Happiness	-0.022	—				

Social Distress Dating	0.557***	0.118	—			
Fear of Negative Evaluation - Dating	0.519***	0.241	0.822***	—		
Social Distress Group	0.512***	0.182	0.796***	0.696***	—	
Dating Anxiety Total	0.570***	0.206	0.940***	0.953***	0.848***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The result found that there is a significant positive relationship between Social Distress dating and loneliness ($r = 0.55$, $p < .001$); between Fear of Negative Evaluation Dating and loneliness ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$), between Social Distress group and loneliness ($r = .51$, $p < .001$).

4. Discussion of Results

The results of this study clearly show that for Indian men, there is a strong and significant link between dating anxiety and feelings of loneliness. Essentially, as levels of anxiety in romantic or social situations increase, feelings of loneliness tend to rise right along with them. Men who feel tense or uncomfortable in dating situations (Social Distress - Dating) are much more likely to report feeling lonely. This suggests that the stress felt when trying to connect with a partner can create a barrier that leads to a sense of being alone in online dating. A major factor of this loneliness is the Fear of Negative Evaluation. When men worry excessively about making a bad impression or being "found out" for their flaws, they may pull back from dating altogether to avoid being judged, which ultimately fuels their loneliness. It isn't just one-on-one dates that matter, anxiety in larger mixed-gender groups (Social Distress - Group) also shows a strong connection to loneliness. Feeling "quiet" or "tense" in a group setting seems to make it harder for men to feel understood or included by others.

A research study conducted by Glickman and La Greca (2004) showed that Dating anxiety was associated with peer-related anxiety and depressive symptoms and was a significant predictor of adolescents current and usual dating status, even when controlling for adolescents' peer-related social anxiety. The findings provide support for the reliability and validity of the DAS- A. Another research study was conducted by Adamczyk and Segrin (2016) This study investigated the role of romantic desolation on life satisfaction in young adulthood. Using data from a Polish sample of 330 (205 females and 125 males) young adults aged 20–

30, who completed Polish versions of the Satisfaction With Life Scale, Dating Anxiety Scale, Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire-Revised, and Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults-Short Form, romantic desolation (romantic loneliness and lack of a romantic partner) and dating anxiety were tested as mediators of the association between interpersonal competence and life satisfaction. Therefore, it can be said that the emotional strain of dating anxiety and the persistent fear of being negatively evaluated act as significant psychological barriers that fuel subjective loneliness in men in online dating. Addressing these specific interpersonal distresses is essential for mitigating social isolation and enhancing the overall subjective happiness of men navigating the online dating landscape within this demographic.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that for men aged 18–35, dating anxiety and social distress serve as significant psychological barriers that directly exacerbates chronic loneliness. The strong positive correlations found between loneliness and both Social Distress ($r = 0.55$) and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($r = 0.51$) as shown in Table 2 indicate that the internal strain of being judged or feeling inadequate in romantic contexts creates a persistent sense of social isolation. Crucially, these findings specifically apply to this demographic within the online dating landscape in India, highlighting the unique cultural and digital challenges faced by young Indian men. These results suggest that addressing specific relational anxieties is essential for mitigating the subjective loneliness and enhancing the overall well-being of Indian men navigating the online dating landscape.

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