

Relationship Status and Its Effect on Interpersonal Relationships, Self-Identity and Life Satisfaction.

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Abstract

The research study aimed to assess relationship status and the effects it had on interpersonal relationships, self-identity and life-satisfaction. A between-subjects cross-sectional correlational design was utilised. Four questionnaires were used: Interpersonal relationships was measured with the Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ); self-identity was measured using the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ) and Life-Satisfaction was measured with The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). 208 participants were recruited via online survey and the workplace. The results from the analysis of data revealed significant differences within the interpersonal relationship subscale. Single individuals were more fearful and preoccupied than individuals in a romantic relationship. There was a significant difference within the self-identity subscale, it resulted that single individuals have higher self-identity compared to romantically involved individuals. There was no significant difference in life-satisfaction scores depending on one's relationship status.

Introduction

Romantic relationships are a fundamental aspect of life and contribute to our psychological state, 'for better or for worse', we all strive to love and to be loved. According to research romantic relationships are the most meaningful relationship a person can endure in their life and contribute to the highest value of human existence (Bowlby, 1969, 1982). As the saying goes "all we need is love" (The Beatles). Research has corroborated this outlook by revealing that high levels of romantic intimacy in one's relationship are one of the strongest predictors of high life-satisfaction and wellbeing (Morris, Morris, & Britton, 1988). But is this always the case? Are people who are in a loving romantic relationship with their partner the only ones who live a happy fulfilled life?

For the purpose of this study relationship status is categorised as being either single or in a romantic relationship.

A single person is defined as "an individual who is not currently involved in a close romantic relationship, whether or not they have been partnered or married in the past". Romantic relationships can be defined as being in a close romantic relationship with a significant other, not solely married (Conley & Collins, 2002, p. 1483).

Society and its view of single over time

Society's view of single people seems to change according to the time period. In the 50s those who were unmarried were seen as suffering from some kind of pathology. In contrast, by the mid-70s remaining single was considered as a potential mechanism for increasing ones happiness (Veroff, Douvan & Kulka, 1981). In more recent decades there has been significant changes and growth in the proportions of single individuals. According to online dating statistics in 2014, there are approximately 54,250,000 single individuals living in the U.S (Online Dating Statistics, 2014) This is in stark contrast to the 1950s where there was

approximately 4 million adults never married in the U.S. Remaining single appears to have become a popular lifestyle choice, individuals are holding out on marriage or are choosing singlehood as a permanent status and lifestyle.

Given the recent change in relationship trends, the aim of this study is to determine whether or not a person's relationship status has an effect on interpersonal relationship skills, self-identity and life-satisfaction.

Relationship status and interpersonal relationships.

Definition:

An interpersonal relationship can be defined as a strong deep, or close relationship with friends, family, work colleagues and/or to a significant other (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

There is no doubt that interpersonal relationships are a fundamental part of our societal system and have been since before the dawn of civilisation. The need for human relationships, has been evident since our ancestors, and they have become an integral part of our physical and emotional composition. In ancient times human companionship was vital to avoid hostility and death (Kalbfleisch, 1993) and remains of importance today. Interpersonal relationships exist in the form of friends, lovers, companions and confidants and make valuable contributions to our everyday lives.

Previous research has found that for many people close relationships, amongst friendships can serve important attachment functions (Zeifman & Hazan, 2008). Individuals who have high quality friendships are more likely to be secure in their attachment orientation (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Attachment lies within interpersonal relationships with other individuals, and the different styles of attachment are largely rooted in early attachment from developmental histories (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1994).

Mikulincer & Shaver (2007) focus on an individual's need for social connection and companionship with trusted attachment figures. Bowlby argues that humans have an innate behavioural system, dedicated to forming these attachment bonds. This is formed in the central nervous system that evolved to aid infants maintain proximity to caregivers, thus ensuring protection and survival. The attachment system is most prominent whenever the infant senses threat or danger, triggering feelings of distress in the hope the caregiver will comfort and restore feelings of safety. The child-parent relationship eventually extends to close relationships with others in which we construct them as attachment figures (Frayley, Brumbaugh, & Marks, 2005; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, it is important for human beings to form these bonds with someone whom they can freely express themselves, freely and securely. They function as a safe haven to provide comfort and security in times of distress (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). As a result human beings have an innate intrinsic motivation to gain and maintain close social connections.

There are four different interpersonal relationship attachment styles a particular individual may have. A Securely attached individual displays high levels of intimacy, warmth and balance of control, a preoccupied individual presents with high levels of disclosure, reliance on attachment figures and negative self-image. A dismissing individual has high self-confidence and is low in emotional expressiveness. Lastly fearful individuals have low self-confidence, assertive self-image and balance of control, while showing little self-disclosure or reliance on an attachment figure as a secure base (Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991)

Furman (2001) observed that securely attached individual's value co-operation and mutuality in friendships. Preoccupied individuals self-sacrifice and displays extreme anger and discomfort in their interpersonal relationships such as friendships. Dismissing individuals are highly autonomous, investing minimally in friendships and minimising their importance.

Research findings suggest that individuals reporting insecure attachments to partners, friends and romantic partners experience lower self-esteem and emotional well-being and score lower on measure of self-perceived strengths (Bureau, Easterbrooks, & Lyons-Ruth, 2009, Rya, McGee, & Stanton, 1992). Berlin and Cassidy (1999) highlighted that security attachment within interpersonal relationships with parents are related to the quality of one's friendships. Romantic relationships should differ from relationships to parents. Research has argued that experiences in friendships lay the foundation for important principles of romantic relationships. Such as compromise and mutual benefits (Fuman, 1999, Furman & Wehner, 1994). Anxiety in friendships and romantic relationships may also be a result of the particular stage that an individual is at in their lives. During late adolescent and early adulthood, unless a romantic partner is present, the central relationship in a person's life is often a friendship.

There is limited research available on the impact that relationship status has on interpersonal relationships. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to contribute an insight and add to the literature within this field.

Interpersonal relationships and single people:

There is a common myth that single individuals yearn for a romantic relationship and that they experience suffering or a lack without (Spielman, et al., 2013). Previous research has stated that it is expected, as one emerges into early adulthood, to settle down/marry and to have a family. When this is not the case, both sexes experience discrimination for being single (Spielman, et al., 2013). In addition, single individuals are expected to have an explanation as to why they are not in a relationship. They are referred to as having a 'condition' or that they missed out on an opportunity (Zhang, & Leung, 2002). It may just be a simple decision not to get involved in a romantic relationship and to build stronger interpersonal relationships, with present friends and to meet new people and experience new

opportunities (Cockrum & White 1985). Despite this, single individuals are associated with having worse personalities and lower self-esteem than their counterparts whom are in a romantic relationship (Spielmann, et al., 2013).

Cockrum and White (1985) highlighted that it is single men, not women who experience loneliness most frequently. The reason for this may be that women appear to have better interpersonal relationship skills than do men. These numerous relationships that women develop prevent feelings of loneliness, whereas men seem to rely solely on their partner for social support. Interpersonal relationships are important to both single men and women, however, research indicates that single women have greater social skills to develop these relationships than men.

Burr (1936, 1979) studied interpersonal relationships and concluded that supportive interpersonal relationships are vital for unmarried, single individuals. Research suggests that having a social network is an indication to single individuals that singlehood is an acceptable relationship status. Quality friendships with like-minded people is an important source of self-worth and approval from society.

In contrast, some research suggests that even in the presence of interpersonal relationships, a single individual may experience a sense of isolation from those who are in a romantic relationship. Weiss (1975) termed a concept 'emotional loneliness' that can be experienced by someone who is willing to accept and receive love. Possible negative effects of 'emotional loneliness' are insomnia, loss of appetite, and feelings of emptiness (Weiss, 1975). This may be experienced by a single individual who wants to be in a romantic relationship, regardless if they have a good social network or not.

Overall, research found that interpersonal relationships are of vital importance to a single person to maintain a sense of well-being. By creating strong interpersonal relationship skills,

a single individual can maintain social and personal relationships. In doing this they can diminish feelings of loneliness and anxiety about the future (Cockrum & White, 1985). Austrom (1884) highlighted that these close bonds with others are more central to well-being than ones marital status.

Interpersonal relationships and romantic relationships

Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that to maintain strong interpersonal relationships it is essential for an individual to form and maintain lasting and positive relationships. This involves frequent and engaging involvement with an individual. They claim that human beings are "naturally driven toward, establishing and sustaining belongingness." Hence, "people should generally be at least as reluctant to break social bonds as they are eager to form them in the first place." They further argue that in many cases, people are reluctant to dissolve even destructive relationships.

Both researchers agree with the social exchange theory, that individuals desire relationships in which both parties give and receive care thus mutually strengthening their romantic relationship. When this is not the case, it is a strong predictor that dissolution of the relationship will occur. They conclude that apparently "love is highly satisfying and desirable only if it's mutual".

Previous research found that being in a romantic relationship provided benefits of having social support, companionship and sexual involvement (Rhoades, et al. 2011). This indicates that interpersonal relationship needs are met by the romantic partner.

Spielmann, et al., (2013) found that for a small number of individuals, being involved in a romantic relationship provides psychological security for them and puts their future at ease. The absence of the other half may lead to misery and anxiety. Romantic individuals,

including those dating or married, have been reported to have higher subjective wellbeing than those who

are single or than those who are dating multiple people (Rhodes, et al. 2011). This research indicates that those who are in a romantic relationship place more emphasis on their relationship with their partner, who place a lot of importance on their feelings of security and well-being.

Research carried out by Adamczyk, Mickiewicz and Bookwala (2013), examined links between adult attachment and relationship status in single versus partnered people. 173 participants participated. Each completing a questionnaire on adult attachment similar to the relationship scale questionnaire. 157 participants were in a romantic relationship whilst 160 were single.

Results indicated that single individuals had a higher fear of being rejected or unloved than those who were in a relationship. They were also found to experience lower levels of intimacy than their partnered counterparts and a higher proportion of single people were categorised into the fearful and preoccupied attachment category. It concluded that worry of being rejected or unloved was the strongest factor discriminating between single and partnered people. This study is consistent with other research such as Greitemyer (2009) who found that single individuals were evaluated more negatively than partnered subjects, in terms of a wide range of personality characteristics, overall well-being, and satisfaction with relationship status.

This research gives a possible conclusion as to why single individuals are more likely to seek out interpersonal relationships to avoid these negative feelings. Whereas, those in a romantic relationship are less likely to feel the need to reach out to others and create a social network as they feel loved and secure as it is.

Self-identity and relationship status.

Self-identity is defined as “our perception or image of our abilities and our uniqueness (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013).

Identity development has been highlighted in many narratives and biographies of historical figures such as Martin Luther King (Erikson, 1958) and Mohand’s Gandhi (Erikson, 1969). As individuals are emerging into adulthood, society and family expect them to decide what they stand for, what is important to them, what their future holds and whom they are going to share their lives with.

The theory of identity was first written by Erik Erikson (1950). He declared that identity was a lifelong process and commenced during the adolescent years. According to Erikson this period was referred to as the ‘psychosocial moratorium’, when individuals are given opportunities to explore their identity, values and beliefs, reflect on their career paths, without entering into a committed romantic relationship or engaging in full-time work.

Following on from Bowlby’s theory on attachment, which has been discussed under interpersonal relationships, the social self-model by Mead (2011) explains how our relationships reflect/shape our self-concept. Mead’s theory is based on the central argument that the self is a social emergent. The social conception of self, entails that humans learn through social interaction. It is not preconditioned from birth but through social experience and activity which we learn to internalise into the concept of self. Theories like the above indicate that our social relationships play a key role in shaping our self-identity. Therefore, this study will explore whether self-identity is determined by our relationship status.

The association between single individuals and self-identity

In today’s society, identity development appears to be occurring in late adulthood rather than the adolescence period. These changes depend on the country and the individual. In today’s

Western culture, society's opinions regarding which lifestyle is socially acceptable has changed significantly. A new phenomenon appears to exist, where some individuals have chosen to

replace marriage with cohabitation and singlehood (Dykstra & Poortman, 2010). However, does this alternative lifestyle affect one's self-identity?

Existing research paints a negative picture regarding singlehood's effect on self-identity. Berquart (1976) concluded that there exists a very negative public image of never married individuals. These individuals were portrayed as "failures or rather peculiar eccentrics". This research is consistent with that of Bart (1972) who concluded that women may feel a loss of self-identity if they do not fulfil the role of wife and/or mother. In contrast, Gigy (1980) when investigating the self-identity of single and married women, revealed that single women were more likely to be self-determined than married women.

In some cases the desire for social companionship coupled with society's stigma of singlehood has the potential to provoke feelings of anxiety and stress. This response can be seen more prevalent in society today, as individuals generally tie their personal and social identity to their relationship status (Schwartzberg et al. 1995). Lewis, (1994) implies there are mixed messages regarding singlehood in the media varying between stigmatisation and glamorisation and this view still remains today. Women are seen as waiting for marriage, while men are seen to be reluctant, unknowledgeable about love and marriage (as cited in Wade and Cughlin, 2012)

A bleak view of being single and its effect on self-identity exists today. A committed relationship can provide someone with a source of psychological security, and without one, a person can be left feeling stressed and anxious. Pressure from friends, family and society with the combination of low self-esteem, insecurity and self-doubt may cause one to feel as though

they do not have a sense of self-identity when they are single, they are their true selves when they are in a relationship (Schwartzberg, Berliner, & Jacob, 1995, p.5).

The association between romantic relationships and self-identity

Quantitative research has demonstrated that the romantic relationship is the most important type of adult relationship for the formation of self-identity (Spielmann et al., 2013).

Research on the development of self-identity, and maturity levels of individuals, whom are in a relationship, during late adulthood have been explored (White et al. 1987; Meeu et al. 1999). It has been concluded that there is a simultaneous development of self-identity and intimacy.

Research has found the experience of “dating” to be very important when it comes to the development of self-identity. Dating during adolescence and adulthood has been found to contribute to learning skills such as intimacy, self-focused identity (Zimmer-Gembeck and Petherick 2006), love, sex, fun (Clark et al 1999) and social status (Mongeau et al.2004; Ott et al. 2006).

Wade and Cughlin (2012) conducted a study on 90 volunteer heterosexual men between the ages of 18-80 years, who were currently involved in a romantic relationship for 1-63 years. Participants were recruited via LISTSERV for a church in the suburbs of New York and the website Craiglist.org in which they completed the questionnaire on a survey building website). The questionnaire determined the participant’s identity dependence, masculinity ideology and relationship satisfaction.

It resulted that the men who did not feel characteristically like other men i.e. as masculine, reported lower levels of satisfaction with their relationship. On the other hand, when the man's self-identity was not dependent on their peer's definition of masculinity, they were more likely to be non-traditional leading to higher levels of satisfaction in their relationship.

The results of this research demonstrates how self-identity can be affected by peer's opinions and can have a negative impact on romantic relationships. Therefore, it may indicate that romantic relationships do not shape self-identity but that having a good self-identity in the first place can lead to a happy relationship.

The quality of the relationship in question has a significant effect on self-identity levels. For instance, when investigating married couples, it appeared that marital quality was positively associated with individual happiness. Relationship quality was positively associated with life satisfaction. This clearly illustrates that although relationships can positively shape self-identity, they may only do so when it is a good quality relationship. However, there were limitations to this study such as a small sample size of 90 heterosexual participants, who were educated American men, thus leading to a generalisation all men.

From all of this research it is evident that being in a romantic relationship undoubtedly has an effect on the formation of self-identity, but it is also clear that other factors need to be taken into account such as relationship quality and self-identity prior to the relationship.

Relationship status and life satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be defined as a summation of feelings and attitudes about one's life. The feelings may be negative or positive given that moment in time (Diener, 1985).

Diener and Diener (2009) stated that most people are found to be happy around the world most of the time. Philosopher Aristotle enshrined happiness as a central purpose of human

life and a goal in itself. Aristotle believed that to live a genuinely happy life required fulfilment and a broad range of conditions including a good sense of self and physical and mental well-being.

This study aims to determine if relationship status determines one's level of life satisfaction or if it is determined by many factors.

The effect of being single on life-satisfaction

Previous studies have investigated women's experiences with singlehood and have found that a sense of having missed an important life transition leaves many women suffering intra- and interpersonal sanctions and feeling ambiguous about what their future holds (Sharp & Ganong, 2007). This may lead to low levels of life satisfaction.

However, being single does not appear to be the only factor which influences an individual's life satisfaction. Factors such as college education, high occupational status, and being of a high status and earner in their job were elements that made singlehood a more satisfying lifestyle (Cokrum & White, 2001).

Contrary to the findings of Spielmann et al (2013) that singlehood is a source of distress and anxiety. Cockrum and White (1985) investigated the social-psychological factors influencing the life-satisfaction of never-married men and woman. A sample of 30 men and 30 women between the ages of 27-46 participated in this study via questionnaire. The questionnaire examined aspects of the individual's life such as their thoughts and feelings about singlehood, marriage, self-esteem, emotional, social loneliness and their global life satisfaction. A brief interview also took place regarding their social support systems.

The results revealed that friends of both genders were important to happiness and life

satisfaction of adults. This is consistent with the study of Adams (1976), Starr and Carns (1972) who found that single individuals enjoy visiting friends and family, and this reduced unhappiness and loneliness. The presence of an affectionate close bond, which provided a sense of security and peace was one of the two variables in the model which predicted life satisfaction.

Although research suggests that being in a romantic relationship positively influences an individual's life satisfaction. Gilligan (1982) reported that women who were not currently dating or in a stable relationship had higher levels of life satisfaction levels than those were in casual relationships. Perhaps this may be as women who are solely single know what they want in relation to their life and understand the nature of their position in relation to others (Borzumato-gainey, Kennedy, McCabe, & Degges-White, 2009).

There are strong suggestions that being single can negatively influence an individual's life satisfaction but it is also clear that many other factors play a part when determining a person's life satisfaction.

The effect of being in a relationship and life-satisfaction

Research has found that individuals who are in a romantic relationship conveyed higher levels of life satisfaction than those who are single, divorced or casually dating, particularly women involved in casual relationships. This is consistent with the research of Kamp Dush and Amato (2005), who discovered that individuals who are in a romantic relationship such as marriage, cohabitating or exclusively dating have reported to have higher life satisfaction than single individuals or individuals who date multiple people. A study was carried out on college students who were in a romantic relationship found that they display fewer mental health problems than single college students (Braithwaite, Delevi and Fincham, 2010).

Research has corroborated this outlook by revealing that having high levels of romantic intimacy in one's relationship is one of the strongest predictors of high life-satisfaction and wellbeing (Morris, Morris, & Britton, 1988). It is questionable whether this is always the case. Perhaps people who are in a loving romantic relationship with their partner are not the only ones who live a happy fulfilled life.

Although relationships were found to increase life satisfaction for an individual in general, not all individuals involved in a relationship are fully happy. Some individuals may be affected by the fear of being single and therefore stay in an unhappy relationship for fear they may not find someone else if they were to leave their partner (Spielmann, et al., 2013). Hence why someone may remain in a relationship in the hope that the relationship would improve. However, Wheaton (1990) explained through the stressful-event-as-stress-relief model that when a stressful event occurs, it can reduce the stress of trying to maintain a role that no longer fits, therefore may increase one's life-satisfaction.

Overall marriage is beneficial to an individual as it may elicit more additional resources than unmarried cohabitation (Waite & Gallagher, 2001). Although, marriage is more ideal with regards to the legal aspects and rights of the relationship, when dissolution of the relationship occurs it can be very difficult for both individuals, especially when children are involved. It leads to a loss of important resources and results in a decrease in life satisfaction.

Divorced women can have significantly higher depressive symptoms and stressful events than married women (Rhoades, Kamp Dush, Atkins, Stanley, & Markman, 2011). Although symptoms decrease over time, they do not usually return to the levels of married women. These results are in line with Wheaton's (1990) theory for both the social causation and the selection perspectives.

Overall research suggests that a person can experience high levels of life satisfaction when in a romantic relationship. However, the quality of the relationship is very much significant. Also single people can experience high levels of life satisfaction by having other interests and goals.

Maslow (1962) established a theory of quality of life. Maslow's theory is based on an individual's development of happiness and its actualisation, based on personal growth. Maslow concluded that when one takes more responsibility for their life, that is when the good qualities we possess come into good use and we become happier, freer and healthier (Ventegodt, Merrick & Jorgen Angerson, 2003).

Rationale

This study attempts to be unique and contribute significantly to previous research in the field of psychology. In the hope to expand upon existing knowledge, this study will contribute understanding of the link between an individual's relationship status and the quality of their lives. This will be achieved by comparing interpersonal relationship skills, self-identify and life-satisfaction by relationship status. Previous research has mainly focused on levels of well-being and life satisfaction in accordance with an individual's relationship status. Less attention has been given to one's self-identify and interpersonal relationships. This study will shed more light on this topic.

Hypotheses include:

Hypothesis 1

Single individuals will have higher quality interpersonal relationships than individuals who are in a romantic relationship.

Hypothesis 2

Individuals who are in a romantic relationship will have a clearer, more defined sense of self-identity than single individuals.

Hypothesis 3

There will be no difference in life-satisfaction levels between single and romantically involved individuals.

Method

Participants

The participant sample included 208 participants (M=64, F=144) through online sampling and through the workplace. The majority of participants were in the 18-24 age category (36.5%). Participants were assigned to two groups based on whether they were single (N=78) or in a relationship (N= 130). The average duration of participants who were in a relationship was 1-5 years. Inclusion criteria to participate in the study included being 18 or older and being single or involved in a romantic relationship. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Design

This study utilised a cross-sectional, between-subjects design. The independent variable was relationship status (single and in a relationship). Self-reported questionnaires were used to gather the data and measured the three dependant variables; interpersonal relationships, self-identity and life-satisfaction. To compare the group scores, relationship status (IV) was taken as the grouping variable and the means of the continuous dependent variable were compared for each group. Demographic variables included age, gender and length of time in current relationship status in order to control for confounding variables. Data was analysed using SPSS 21.0, and an alpha of .05 was set for determining statistical significance.

Materials

Questionnaires were accessed through a survey website link (www.surveymonkey.com) via Facebook and e-mail, while self-administered paper and pen questionnaires were given out to each participant through the workplace, a doctors' clinic and through snowballing sampling. Three questionnaires and a section for demographic variables such as gender, age and relationship status were included. The questionnaire as a whole took participants approximately 10 minutes but no time limits were imposed.

1. *Relationship status*: Participants were asked to indicate their current relationship status in the demographic section of the questionnaire using the following responses (1) single individual (2) in a romantic relationship. Participants who endorsed option (1) comprised the single group (N=78) and participants who checked option (2) currently in a romantic relationship (N=130).
2. *Interpersonal-relationship*: The Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ) was used to measure an individual's interpersonal relationships. The questionnaire comprises of four subscales. Containing 30 short statements drawn from Hazan and Shavers (1987) attachment measure, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) Relationship Questionnaire and Collins and Reads (1990) adult attachment scale. This represented the average of four indicators of general orientation to close relationships. The scale evaluates the four styles of attachment (secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) by means of four items representing the prototype of each. The participant marked their degree to which the item reflected their preferred way of relating to other people on a 5-point Likert scale. (1= Not at all like me and 5= Very like me). Four dimensional scores

were obtained for each person- one for each attachment style. Cronbach's alpha was .790 showing high internal reliability/consistency for the current sample.

3. *Aspects of identity questionnaire (AIQ-IV)*: A participant's self-identity was measured using Cheek & Briggs (2013) Aspects of Identity Questionnaire. The AIQ-IV scale consisted of a 5-point Likert scale of sense of self and others. The scale evaluated individual's four styles of identity orientation (personal, relational, social and collective) by means of four items representing the prototype of each. The participants marked their degree to which the item reflected their sense of self on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= not important to the sense of who I am and 5= extremely important to my sense of who I am). Cronbach's alpha was .727 showing high internal reliability/consistency.
4. *Life Satisfaction (LS)*: The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) was used to measure overall satisfaction in the participants life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). It consisted of a five-item scale which includes items such as "The conditions of my life are excellent" and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing", rated on a 7-point Likert scale (7= Strongly agree and 1= Strongly disagree). Total responses to the seven point scale are averaged to give a single measure of total life satisfaction. The internal consistency of the five-item instrument has been supported by multiple studies in which both alpha and test-retest coefficients consistency exceeded .80 (Pavot&Diener, 1993). The Cronbach's alpha was .871 to test for internal reliability/consistency for the current sample.

Procedure

The project was approved by the ethical committee of Dublin Business School. Permission was obtained from the author's parents to delegate questionnaires in the work place. A questionnaire booklet was given to each participant. The booklet included a cover letter, one demographic questionnaire, three questionnaires, followed by a thank you letter, debriefing sheet and a contact email address if participants wished to ask any further questions regarding the study (See Appendix). Consent from the adults was collected prior to participation. Following completion of the questionnaires, the author debriefed the participants and thanked them for their time.

Surveys questionnaires were also produced on a survey building website (www.surveymonkey.com). A link was then posted on Facebook and sent via email. When the participant clicked onto the link a cover letter stated that by participating in the study that it was completely confidential and voluntary. Attached to the end of the questionnaire was a letter thanking the participant for participation in the study and a debrief sheet.

Due to the nature of personal questions about certain aspects of an individual's personal life, the cover sheet also indicated that if participants felt uncomfortable at any time they could withdraw from the survey. Helpline numbers to certain volunteer organisations were supplied at the back of the questionnaire along with an email address if the participant wished to ask any further questions regarding the study. Once the results were collected and inputted into SPSS 21.0, descriptive and inferential statistics were run followed by an independent t-test.

RESULTS SECTION

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the demographic variables for gender, age, relationship status length and current relationship status.

Figure 1 shows the relationship status category of the participants for the 208 participants.

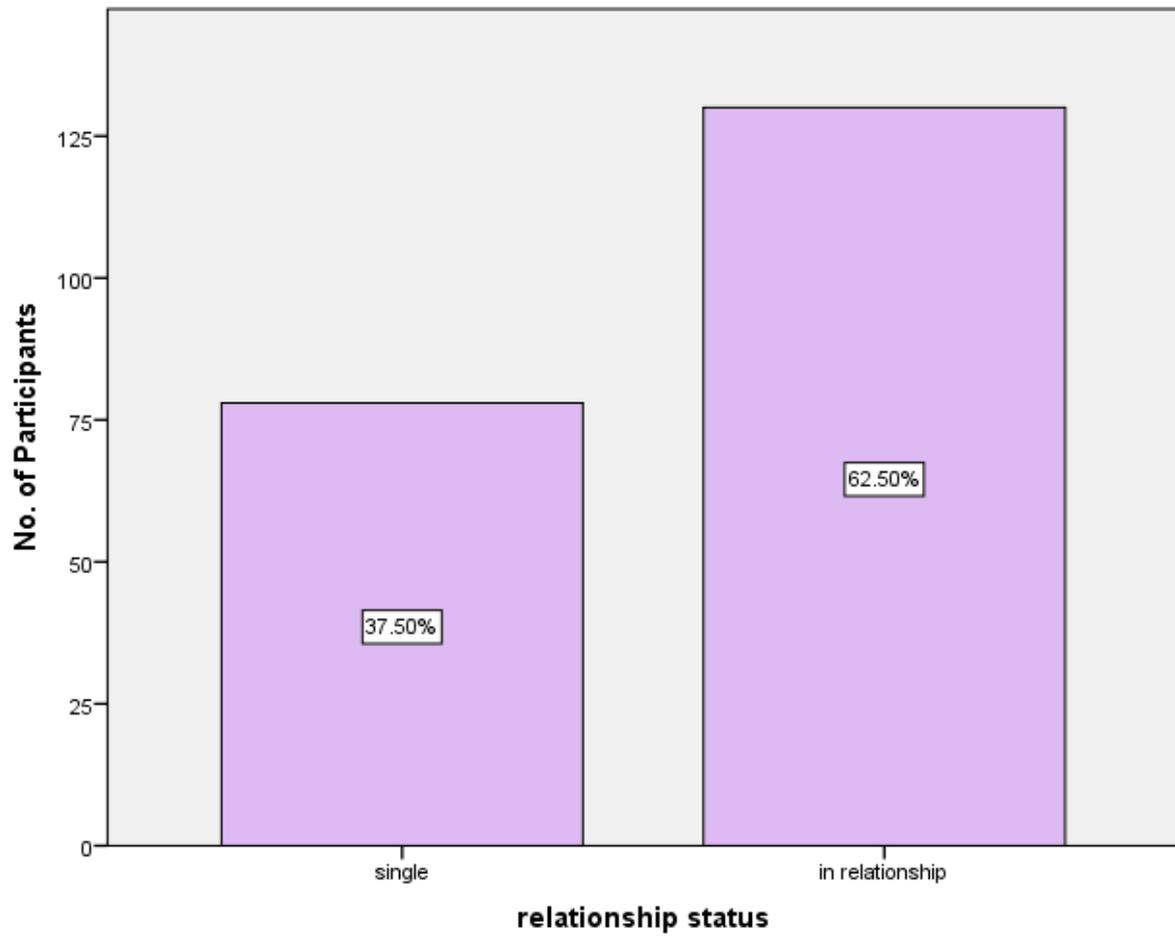


Figure 1 Participants current relationship status

Figure 2: Shows the average length of time the participants are in their current relationship status.

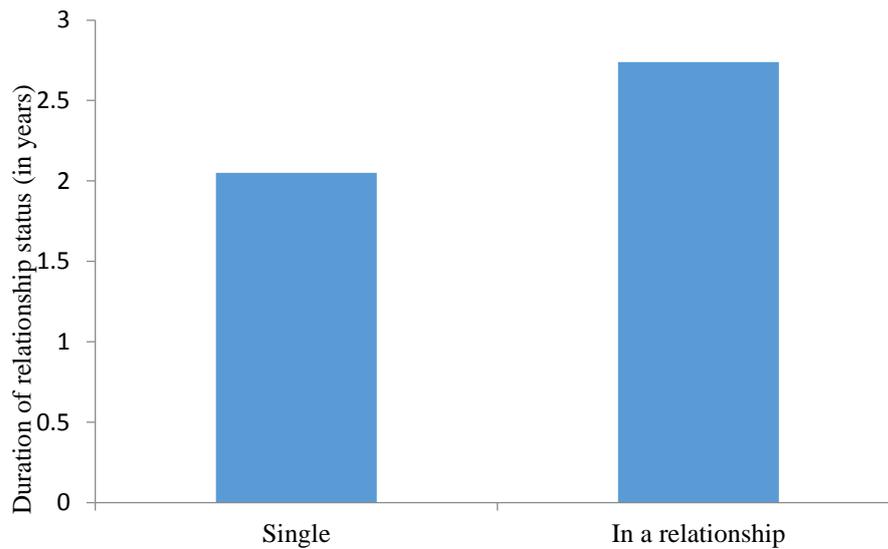


Figure 2 Mean scores of the duration of participant's current relationship status whether single or in a relationship.

Inferential Statistics

Data was analysed using the Statistical Package SPSS 21.0. Comparison of group means were carried out using an independent-samples t-test to compare interpersonal-relationship skills, self-identity and life satisfaction on single individuals compared to those who are in a romantic relationship. The significance level for all statistical analyses was set at 0.05.

Hypothesis 1: Single individuals will have higher quality interpersonal relationships than individuals who are in a romantic relationship.

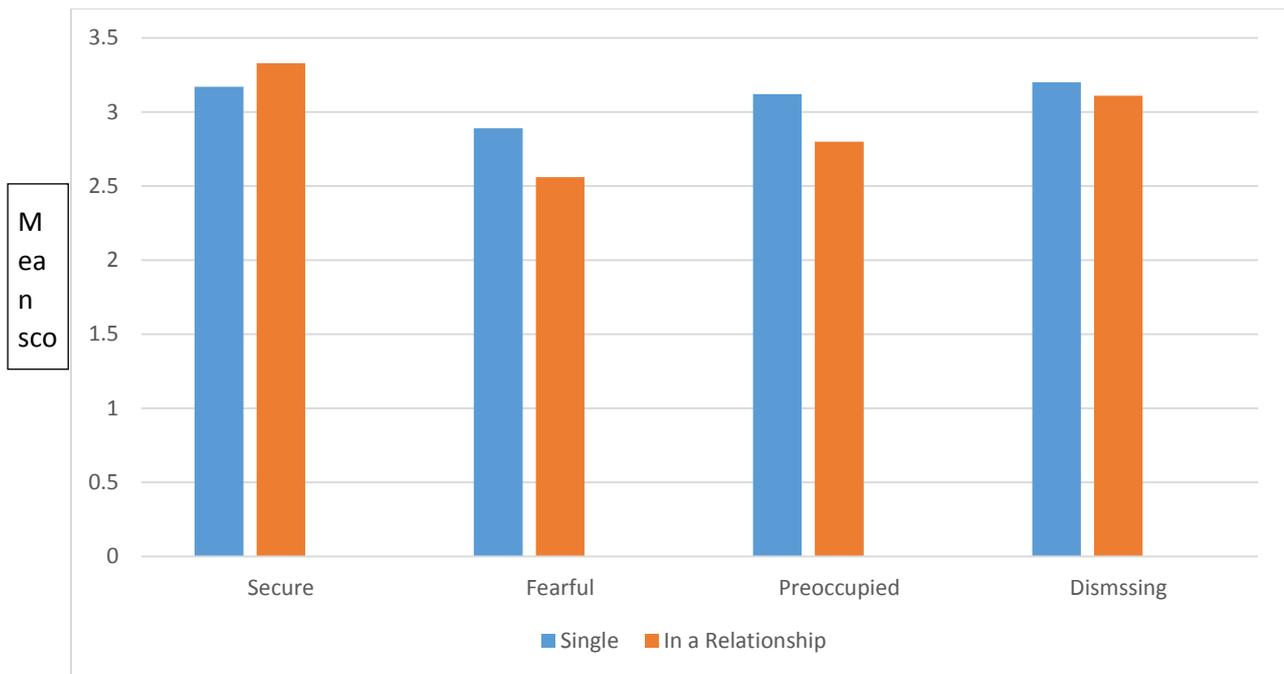


Figure 3: Bar chart representing mean score differences on attachment styles'.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics results of an independent sample t-test for interpersonal-relationships and relationship status

Variables	Status	N	M	SD	F	P
Secure Attachment	Single	78	3.17	.64	.24	.074
	Relationship	130	3.33	.56		
Fearful Attachment	Single	78	2.89	.78	.02	.003**
	Relationship	130	2.56	.77		
Preoccupied Attachment	Single	78	3.12	.71	.91	.001***
	Relationship	130	2.80	.65		
Dismissing Attachment	Single	78	3.20	.61	.06	.275
	Relationship	130	3.11	6.04		

Note: p significant at .05 level.

A Bonferoni adjustment method was conducted on Interpersonal-relationship models. The result show that there was no significant difference between the mean group of the secure and

dismissing scale between interpersonal-relationship scores of the single participants and the participants in a relationship (See table 1).

However, the fearful scale had a significant value ($t = .887$, $p = .003$) and the preoccupied subscale had a significant value ($t = 3.346$, $p = .001$). As shown in the group statistic table, the participants who were single were more fearful and preoccupied compared to participants in a relationship (See Table 1). The magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (mean difference = $-.720$, 95% CI: -1.14 to $-.39$) (eta squared $.004$).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who are in a romantic relationship will have a clearer, more defined sense of self-identity than single individuals.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of an independent sample t-test on self-identity and relationship status.

Variables	Status	N	M	SD	F	P
Personal Identity	Single	78	40.04	5.04	.63	.66
	Relationship	130	39.73	4.76		
Relational Identity	Single	78	41.18	6.29	.25	.64
	Relationship	130	41.59	6.04		
Social Identity	Single	78	25.63	4.91	.001	.004**
	Relationship	130	23.63	4.68		
Collective Identity	Single	78	22.71	5.85	1.14	.16
	Relationship	130	21.44	5.17		

Note: p significant at .05 level.

A Bonferoni adjustment method was conducted given that 4 comparisons were being assessed. As revealed in Table 2, there is no significant difference between the mean of the group for self-identity, relational identity and collective identity. However, single individuals have a significantly higher social identity value ($t = 2.92$, $p = .004$) than romantically involved individuals. The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference = 72.00 , 95% CI: $.650$ to $.3.35$) (eta squared = $.04$).

Hypothesis three: There will be no difference in life-satisfaction between single and romantically involved individuals.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics results of an independent sample t-test for life-satisfaction levels and relationship status.

Variables	Status	N	M	SD	F	P
Life Satisfaction	Single	78	18.17	7.11	.47	.096
	Relationship	139	16.52	6.76		

Note: p significant at .05 level.

As shown in Table 3, results found no statistical significance differences in the self-identity scores of single individuals and individuals in a romantic relationship. A clear indication of no statistical difference was found between the mean of the groups (single and in a relationship). The magnitude of the difference in the means was very small (mean difference = 1.75, 95% CI: -.295 to 3.59) (eta squared = 0.01).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine whether an individual's relationship status (defined as having a romantic relationship or no relationship at present) had an effect on their interpersonal relationships, self-identity and life-satisfaction. The results from the statistical analysis provide evidence in support of one of the three hypotheses. The findings will be discussed in relation to how they fit the three proposed hypotheses and previous literature will be drawn upon in order to demonstrate the contribution they make to what is known about relationship status and the three variables above. Implications will be drawn from the findings of the present study and recommendations for future research will be presented.

In order to examine the difference between single and romantically involved individuals, three separate independent t-tests analyses were carried out. The discussion of the results will be presented separately for relationship status, and its effect on, interpersonal relationships, self-identity and life-satisfaction. The second section is devoted to implications and limitations of the results and finally, the third section includes recommendations for future research.

Relationship status and interpersonal relationships results

The results from this current study have rejected hypothesis one which states that:

“Single individuals will have higher quality interpersonal relationships than individuals who are in a romantic relationship”.

Overall when investigating the subscale of interpersonal relationships, no significant differences were found between those who were single and those who were in a romantic relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that relationship status does not impact the quality of an individual's interpersonal relationships.

However, interestingly, significant results were obtained for single individuals, who displayed fearful and preoccupied attachments. Drawing on previous research, these negative

feelings may be a result of a previous negative relationship that the single person experienced e.g. with friends and family. Therefore, their attitudes regarding interpersonal relationships may have changed thus affecting their interpersonal relationships, and leading them to become a fearful and/or preoccupied individual in their social relationships (Imamoglu & Imamoglu 2006). As discussed in the introduction, preoccupied participants may feel insecure, discomfort or extreme anger in their interpersonal relationships with their friends or family (Furman, 2001). Whereas, fearful participants can be low in confidence, disclosure and self-image resulting in them not relying on friends and family as a secure base (Bartholomew & Howowitz, 1991).

Therefore, although research suggests that single individual's rely heavily on, and place more emphasis on, interpersonal relationships than those who are in a romantic relationship, this study has found that this is not the case as there are other underlying factors playing a role. In conclusion, relationship status is not the biggest determinant of the quality of an individual's interpersonal relationships.

Relationship status and self-identity results

From interpretation of the results of this study, hypothesis two was rejected:

“Individuals who are in a romantic relationship will have a clearer, more defined sense of self-identity than single individuals”.

Overall there exists limited studies on relationship status and its effect on self-identity. Previous research tends to infer that romantic relationships promote the formation of self-identity. When it comes to single individuals and the formation of self-identity, a bleak picture is painted (Paul & White 1990). Contrary to previous research, the results of this study may have very much proven the opposite. Overall when looking at four different areas of self-identity (personal, relational, social and collective identity) it was found that overall

there was no significant difference between single individuals and those that were in a relationship. Also, surprisingly, it was found that it was single, not romantically involved individuals, who had a greater sense of social identity with a significant difference obtained. Previous research suggests that society's perception of single people is negative, viewing them as failures or rather peculiar eccentrics (Berquart, 1976). This was thought to result in single individuals having a low self-identity with regards to their relationship status. The results obtained in this study could infer that times have changed and so too have society's views of single individuals. It appears to be more acceptable in 2014 to be a single individual, therefore, enabling single individual's to effectively form a good sense of self-identity within their social group.

This result contributes significantly to the field of psychology as it shows that society's perception of single individuals and the way single people view themselves is changing and is more positive. These results are consistent with Tayifel (1979), who found that it is important for an individual to be part of a social network with likeminded people, to develop a sense of who they are.

In conclusion, relationship status does not appear to impact greatly on the formation of a clear sense of self-identity, as was implied in previous research. Similar to the results of interpersonal relationships, perhaps other factors play a bigger role when it comes to the formation of one's self-identity such as society's view of their relationship status as well as the make-up and/or one's status in their social circle.

Relationship status and life-satisfaction

This study did not find any significant differences between life satisfaction levels in single people when compared to those that were in a relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted:

“There will be no difference in life-satisfaction levels between single and romantically involved individuals”.

As discussed in the introduction, this may be due to the fact that single individuals have other motivations in life such as education and being of a high status both in their occupation and social group (Cokrum & White, 2001). These motivations appear to add greatly to one’s life satisfaction. This is consistent with the findings of Cockrum and White 1985 study, who found that a supportive social group is essential for a single individual to substitute for not having a partner. They believed that these factors contributed to a happy life for a single individual.

Some studies suggest that romantic relationships do enhance one’s life satisfaction with high quality intimacy being a strong predictor of high life satisfaction and well-being in one’s relationship (Morris, Morris, & Britton, 1988). However, the quality of the relationship will greatly impact on the life satisfaction levels and this too must be taken into account.

Overall, it can be concluded from the results of this study, that relationship status is not the biggest determinant of one’s life satisfaction levels. Numerous factors play a role when determining how satisfied one is with life particularly in today’s society. We are living in the 21st century and both times and people’s opinions have changed regarding an individual’s relationship status. Individuals have more opportunities today, and it appears that some people would prefer to excel in their education and career as well as travel. Could the world slowly become predominantly a single’s world?

Limitations and Strengths

While the results of this study were enlightening, limitations always exist. The method consisted of self-report questionnaires which leave room for error in such cases as individuals not answering honestly. More romantically involved individuals (n= 130) participated in the

study than single individuals ($n = 78$). An even number of participants from each category would give clearer and fairer results. Limited up-to-date research exists in the area of study, therefore, old research was used. With times changing and societies view of single individuals is more widely accepted then it was in the 1950s, the study's comparison to other research was not as relevant as desired. Although participants were asked in the demographic section to state their gender and length of time in their current relationship status, tests on these variables however, were not carried out, thus limiting the results of the current study.

This study has a lot of strengths and will contribute significantly to the field of psychology. The study had a large sample of 208 participants who partook in the study leading to trustworthy and reliable results. To the knowledge of the author, original variables were tested. It is interesting that although there were more romantically involved participants in the study than single individuals, it was found that here was no difference between the two groups's on interpersonal relationships, self-identity levels and life satisfaction levels. The findings of previous research have suggested that differences would have existed particularly in favour of romantically involved individuals.

Implications

The results of this study have highlighted that a clear change has occurred with regards the impact of romantic relationships have on our lives. Current research on the topic is limited and further research is warranted in the area with particular focus on society's impact on an individual's quality of life. The results of this study are reliable and dependable for use in future research and to build upon research previously conducted in this field of psychology. In order to facilitate this, it is envisioned that the findings of this research along with the methodology will appear in an open access platform.

Future research

It would be advisable for future research to measure gender differences among self-identity, interpersonal relationships and life-satisfaction to determine whether these variables differ according to gender. Further investigation and research on social identity amongst single individuals and romantically involved individuals would be advisable as it could provide a more in depth understanding as to why there is a difference. Future research could measure these three variables on individuals who have never been in a relationship compared to individuals who have been in a romantic relationship but who are now single to see if there is any difference as a result. Also as stated previously, further research is warranted on the change in society's view of single people over time and the subsequent effect on quality of life as a result.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study found that, despite previous research a sample of 18-65 year olds in 2014, demonstrated that interpersonal relationships are not affected by relationship status. Previous research also suggested that those who are in a romantic relationship would also find it easier to form a clear and defined sense of self as opposed to a single individual. Again this study rejected this hypothesis and instead found that similar to interpersonal relationships that the formation of self-identity is not impacted on by relationship status. On the contrary, this study found more positive results in favour of being single i.e. a better sense of social identity. Finally this study was consistent with previous research that suggested that life satisfaction levels are not determined by relationship status alone, but are determined by many factors such as education, career and social status.

This study has highlighted a clear change in society's view of single people when compared to the 1950s. Singlehood today is a more acceptable way of life and is not affecting individual's quality of life. More research is warranted in this area.

Although romantic relationships are a pleasurable contribution to life, they alone do not hold the key to our happiness. "The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams. - Oprah Winfrey"

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Appendix



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My name is Aisling Loughlin and I am conducting research, to determine if there is a difference in single individuals in comparison to individuals in a romantic relationship. I will be determining this by looking at self-identity, life-satisfaction and interpersonal relationships. This research is being conducted as part of my studies in Dublin Business School and will be submitted for examination.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. All data collected will be stored on a USB stick for one year and then it will be destroyed. By taking part in this questionnaire, you have agreed to give your full consent. It will take roughly 10 minutes to complete. It will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been

collected. All participants must be over 18 years of age to complete this survey. Many thanks for participating and taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Aisling Loughlin.

Demographic questionnaire

Please tick the most relevant box below

1. **Age**

2. **Gender**

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. **Current Relationship status**

Single individual (e.g. casually dating, separated, divorced)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Romantic relationship (exclusively dating, boyfriend/girlfriend, partner, civil partnership, engaged and married)	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. **Length of time in your current status (single or in a romantic relationship)**

Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 to 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 to 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

16-19 years	
20-24 years	
25 years +	

Aspects of self-identity questionnaire (AIQ)

Instructions: Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each question that best describes your stand

1. = Not at all like me
2. = Rarely like me
3. = Somewhat like me
4. = Often like me
5. = Very like me

1	I find it difficult to depend on other people.	
2	It is very important to me to feel independent.	
3	I find it easy to get emotionally close to others.	
4	I want to merge completely with another person	
5	I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.	
6	I am comfortable without close emotional relationships.	
7	I am not sure that I can always depend on other to be there when I need them.	
8	I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others	
9	I worry about being alone	
10	I am comfortable depending on other people.	
11	I often worry that romantic partners don't really love me.	
12	I find it difficult to trust others completely.	
13	I worry about others getting too close to me.	
14	I want emotionally close relationships	
15	I am comfortable having other people depend on me.	
16	I worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.	
17	People are never there when you need them.	
18	My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away.	
19	It is very important to me to feel-sufficient	
20	I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me.	
21	I often worry that romantic partners won't want t to stay with me.	
22	I prefer not to have other people depend on me.	
23	I worry about being abandoned.	

24	I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others.	
25	I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.	
26	I prefer not to depend on others.	
27	I know others will be there when I need them.	
28	I worry about having others not accept me.	
29	People often want to be closer than I feel comfortable being	
30	I find it relatively easy to get close to others,	

Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ) Interpersonal relationship questionnaire part i

INSTRUCTIONS: These items describe different aspects of identity. Please read each one carefully and consider how it applies to you. Fill in the blank next to each item by choosing a number from the scale below:

- 1 = Not important to my sense of who I am
- 2 = Slightly important to my sense of who I am
- 3 = Somewhat important to my sense of who I am
- 4 = Very important to my sense of who I am
- 5 = Extremely important to my sense of who I am

1	The things I own, my possessions.	
2	My personal values and moral standards.	
3	My popularity with other people.	
4	Being a part of the many generations of my family.	
5	My dreams and imagination.	
6	The ways in which other people react to what I say and do.	
7	My race or ethnic background.	
8	My personal goals and hopes for the future.	
9	My physical appearance: my height, my weight, and the shape of my body.	
10	My religion.	
11	My emotions and feelings.	
12	My reputation and feelings.	
13	My reputation of what others think of me.	
14	My thoughts and ideas.	
15	My attractiveness to other people.	
16	My age, belonging to my age group or being part of my generation.	
17	My gestures and mannerisms, the impression I make on others.	
18	The ways I deal with my fears and anxieties.	
19	My sex, being a male or a female.	
20	My social behaviour, such as the way I act when meeting people.	

21	My feeling of being unique person, being distinct from others.	
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Relationship scale questionnaire part interpersonal relationships part ii

- 1 = Not important to my sense of who I am
 2 = slightly important to my sense of who I am
 3 = somewhat important to my sense of who I am
 4 = Very important to my sense of who I am
 5 = extremely important to my sense of who I am

22	My relationships with the people I feel close to.	
23	My social class, the economic group I belong to whether lower, middle or upper class	
24	My feeling of belonging to my community.	
25	Knowing that I continue to be the same inside even though life changes externally.	
26	Being a good friend to those I really care about.	
27	My self-knowledge, my ideas about what kind of person I really am.	
28	My commitment to being a concerned relationship partner.	
29	My feeling of pride in my country, being proud to be a citizen.	
30	My physical abilities, being coordinated and good at athletic activities.	
31	Sharing significant experiences with my close friends.	
32	My personal self-evaluation, the private opinion I have of myself.	
33	Being a sports fan, identifying with a sports team.	
34	Having mutually satisfying personal relationships.	
35	Connecting on an intimate level with another person.	
36	My occupational choice and career plans.	
37	Developing caring relationships with others.	
38	My commitments on political issues or my political activities.	
39	My desire to understand the true thoughts and feelings of my best friend or romantic partner.	
40	My academic ability and performance, such as the grades I earn and comments I get from my lecturer/boss.	
41	Having close bonds with other people.	
42	My language, such as my regional accent or dialect or a second language that I know.	
43	My feelings of connectedness with those I am close to.	
44	My role of being a student in college/work.	

45	My sexual orientation, whether heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.	
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Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (SWL)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the box preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

In most ways my life is close to my ideal	
The conditions of my life are excellent	
I am satisfied with my life	
So far I have gotten the important things I want from life	
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	

Closing page of questionnaire



Thank you for participating in my research project. If any part of the questionnaire has upset you in any way please don't hesitate to contact the following support groups:

Aware: provide face-to-face, phone and online support for individuals who are experiencing mild to moderate depression.

Tel: 01 661 7211

72 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

Accord: a counselling service that helps with relationship issues such as marriage and relationship counselling i.e. communication, intimacy, sexual issues, infidelity, problem behaviours, conflict, domestic violence, health, family issues, finances, loss.

Contact details available here: www.accord.ie

If you have any queries on any of the questionnaire please email me at:

or my supervisor