

Dynamics of Conflict and Emotional Support in Romantic Relationships: Implications for Depression

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the impact of conflict dynamics and emotional support in dating relationships on depression levels, emphasizing their significance for mental health. **Method:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted involving individuals aged 18 to 35 years. Data collection focused on measuring conflict frequency, emotional support, and their correlation with depression levels. **Results:** The analysis revealed that conflict frequency in dating relationships has a positive correlation with depression levels, while emotional support shows a negative correlation. These findings align with the Social Stress and Attachment Theory, which suggests that insecure attachment patterns and poor emotion regulation contribute to increased depression vulnerability. **Novelty:** This study underscores the importance of targeting communication skills and enhancing emotional support in romantic relationships as potential intervention strategies to reduce depression risk among couples.

INTRODUCTION

Dating relationships are an integral part of an individual's social and emotional life, especially in young adulthood. These relationships often serve as a means to establish intimacy, support, and understanding between individuals. However, the dynamics of dating relationships do not always proceed harmoniously. Conflicts that arise in relationships can become a significant source of emotional stress, especially if not managed well. Conversely, emotional support from a partner can serve as a buffer against the negative impacts of such conflicts. This study aims to explore how the frequency of conflict and emotional support affect the level of depression in individuals in dating relationships, using a quantitative approach to identify correlation patterns among these variables [1].

In the context of Social Stress Theory, conflicts in dating relationships can trigger significant stress responses, potentially increasing the risk of depression. Frequent conflicts can cause emotional tension that affects an individual's mental health, especially if there are no adequate stress regulation skills. Additionally, Attachment Theory highlights that individuals with insecure attachment patterns, such as anxiety or avoidance, are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of conflict. These attachment patterns can exacerbate an individual's inability to build stable and supportive relationships, ultimately increasing the risk of depression. Therefore, it is important to understand how the interaction between conflict, attachment, and emotional support affects the mental well-being of individuals in dating relationships [2].

This study uses a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from individuals aged 18 to 35 who are currently or have previously been in a romantic relationship. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire that included measurements of conflict frequency, emotional support levels, and depression symptoms. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into how the dynamics of dating relationships affect mental health. In addition, this research also aims to inform the development of psychological-based interventions that can help individuals manage conflicts and enhance emotional support in their relationships [3].

Various theories support this research framework, including Cognitive-Behavioral Theory and Emotion Regulation, which highlight the importance of individuals' ability to manage thoughts and emotions to reduce the negative impact of relationship dynamics. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory explains that maladaptive thought patterns, such as feelings of worthlessness or fear of rejection, can exacerbate depressive symptoms in romantic relationships [4]. Meanwhile, Emotion Regulation Theory emphasizes the importance of individuals' skills in managing their emotions [5], especially when facing conflicts in relationships. By integrating findings from various theories, this research contributes to a better understanding of the impact of interpersonal relationships on mental health, while also offering depression prevention strategies based on improving communication skills and emotional support [6].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative design with a cross-sectional survey approach to explore the relationship between dating relationship dynamics and depression levels. This approach allows for the collection of data from a large number of respondents at one time, providing a comprehensive overview of the relationship between the variables being studied. This study uses a structured questionnaire to measure the frequency of conflicts, level of emotional support, and symptoms of depression, with standardized scales for data validity and reliability. The research population includes individuals aged 18–35 who are currently or have been in a dating relationship, with this age range chosen due to its social and emotional relevance. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques, which included individuals with at least six months of dating experience. The researcher distributed the questionnaire online through social media and online communities, facilitating broader and more geographically diverse participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Relationship Between the Frequency of Conflicts in Dating and the Level of Depression

The results of the analysis show a significant positive relationship between the frequency of conflicts in dating relationships and the level of depression. Pearson correlation analysis reveals that the more frequent conflicts occur in dating relationships, the higher the level of depression experienced by individuals. These findings are

consistent with the Social Stress Theory, which states that negative interpersonal dynamics can be a significant source of stress. Repeated conflicts can trigger excessive stress responses, which negatively impact an individual's mental health.

Effective conflict management in dating relationships is very important to avoid negative impacts on mental health. Unresolved conflicts can exacerbate symptoms of depression, especially for individuals who lack adequate emotion regulation skills. Therefore, interventions that focus on improving communication skills and conflict resolution can help reduce the frequency of conflicts and lower the risk of depression [7].

Regression analysis shows that the frequency of conflict remains a significant predictor of depression levels even after controlling for demographic variables. This confirms that the impact of conflict on depression is universal, unaffected by age or gender factors. In the context of Attachment Theory, individuals with insecure attachment patterns are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of conflict in relationships, which can increase susceptibility to depression. Therefore, improving emotional regulation skills and social support from partners can serve as a buffer against these negative impacts, creating more stable relationships and enhancing mental well-being.

B. The Role of Emotional Support in Reducing the Risk of Depression in Dating Relationships

Research findings indicate that emotional support from partners plays a significant role in reducing the risk of depression in individuals in dating relationships. The results of the correlation test revealed a significant negative relationship between the level of perceived emotional support and the level of depression. The higher the emotional support from a partner, the lower the level of depression experienced. These findings support the Social Support Theory, which emphasizes the importance of emotional support in maintaining mental health in interpersonal relationships.

Emotional support can act as a buffer against stress caused by conflicts in dating relationships. This support can enhance feelings of being valued and understood, thereby reducing feelings of loneliness and helplessness that are often associated with depression. Therefore, interventions that enhance the quality of emotional support in dating relationships can be an effective strategy to reduce the risk of depression and improve mental well-being.

Regression analysis shows that emotional support remains a significant predictor of depression levels even when controlling for demographic variables. This indicates that the role of emotional support in reducing depression is universal, not limited to specific demographic groups. In the context of Attachment Theory, individuals with secure attachment patterns are more likely to provide and receive effective emotional support, which reduces vulnerability to depression due to conflicts in dating relationships. Therefore, the development of communication and empathy skills can strengthen more stable and supportive relationships, enhancing overall mental well-being [8].

C. The Impact of Insecure Attachment Patterns on Depressive Symptoms

Research findings indicate that individuals with insecure attachment patterns, such as anxiety or avoidance, are more likely to experience higher levels of depressive symptoms in dating relationships. Correlation tests revealed a significant positive relationship between insecure attachment patterns and levels of depression, supporting Attachment Theory, which states that insecure attachment can affect an individual's mental health. The inability to feel safe and emotionally connected with a partner increases vulnerability to depression.

Individuals with insecure attachment patterns may struggle with managing emotions and handling conflicts, exacerbating depressive symptoms, especially if they feel unsupported by their partner. Interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation skills and fostering more secure attachment patterns can help mitigate the negative impact of insecure attachment on mental health.

Regression analysis shows that insecure attachment patterns remain a significant predictor of depression, even when controlling for demographic variables. This suggests that the impact of attachment patterns on depression is universal and not confined to specific demographic groups. Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to develop more secure attachment patterns to maintain optimal mental health in dating relationships.

D. Emotional Regulation Ability as a Protective Factor Against Depression in Dating Relationships

Research findings suggest that emotional regulation ability serves as a protective factor against depression in dating relationships. Correlation results revealed a significant negative relationship between emotional regulation ability and levels of depression. Individuals with strong emotional regulation skills tend to experience lower levels of depressive symptoms even when facing conflict in relationships. These findings support the Emotion Regulation Theory, which emphasises the importance of managing emotions to maintain mental health.

Emotional regulation ability enables individuals to cope with stress and conflict more adaptively, allowing them to resolve conflicts constructively and reduce the negative impact on mental health. Therefore, interventions focusing on developing emotional regulation skills can serve as an effective strategy to protect individuals from the risk of depression in dating relationships.

Regression analysis indicates that emotional regulation ability remains a significant predictor of depression, even when controlling for demographic variables. This suggests that emotional regulation skills universally contribute to reducing depression risk, regardless of demographic background. Thus, it is essential for individuals to cultivate good emotional regulation skills to maintain optimal mental health in dating relationships.

E. Demographic Analysis: Age and Gender Variables in Dating Relationships and Depression

Demographic analysis results show that age has a significant influence on the relationship between dating and depression. Younger respondents, particularly those

aged 18–24, tend to experience higher levels of depression compared to older age groups. This may be due to a lack of experience in managing relationship dynamics and greater social pressures in this age group. These findings highlight the importance of age-tailored interventions to support mental health.

Additionally, the analysis reveals that gender also affects depression levels in dating relationships. Women report higher levels of depression than men, which may be related to differences in emotional management and conflict resolution. Women may be more vulnerable to the emotional impact of conflict in relationships, necessitating additional support. These findings support the need for gender-sensitive approaches in mental health interventions.

However, despite differences in depression levels based on age and gender, regression analysis indicates that interpersonal factors in dating relationships remain significant predictors of depression across all demographic groups. Therefore, interventions focusing on improving the quality of dating relationships can benefit individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds. A holistic approach that strengthens interpersonal and emotional regulation skills can help individuals face challenges in dating relationships, reduce depression risk, and enhance overall mental well-being.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study highlights that conflicts in romantic relationships significantly impact individual depression levels, with high conflict frequency closely linked to increased depressive symptoms. Emotional support from partners serves as a protective factor, reducing depression risks, while insecure attachment styles and past emotional experiences exacerbate vulnerability to depression. **Implication:** The findings emphasize the importance of effective conflict management and enhanced emotional support in maintaining mental health. Holistic interventions targeting interpersonal skills and emotional regulation could foster healthier and more supportive relationships, ultimately promoting mental well-being. **Limitation:** This study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias, and the lack of longitudinal analysis, preventing causal inference. Additionally, cultural and contextual variations in relationship dynamics were not extensively explored. **Future Research:** Future studies should investigate longitudinal relationships between conflict, emotional support, and depression, while considering cultural and demographic diversity. Expanding research to include various relational contexts could enhance understanding and applicability of findings.

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