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Examining the Relationship between Hookup Culture and Self-Esteem among College Students

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Abstract: ***This study examines the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem among college students using standardized scales to measure both variables. A total of 43 college students participated in the study. Results indicate that hookup culture is negatively associated with self-esteem. Specifically, individuals who reported more frequent hookup experiences had lower self-esteem compared to those who reported less frequent or no hookups. These findings highlight the potential negative impact of hookup culture on college students' mental health and well-being. College health programs and counseling services may benefit from developing interventions to support students' self-esteem and to promote healthy sexual behaviors.***

Keywords: hookup culture, self-esteem, college students, mental health, intervention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hookup culture, characterized by casual sexual encounters without the expectation of a committed relationship, has become increasingly prevalent on college campuses in recent years (Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). According to a report by the American Psychological Association, approximately 70% of college students have had at least one hookup experience, with hookup culture becoming an accepted norm on many campuses (APA, 2013). While hookup culture may be perceived as a way to explore one's sexuality and to gain social approval, research has shown that it can also have negative consequences for individuals' mental health and well-being (Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011; Vrangalova, 2015). One area of concern is the impact of hookup culture on self-esteem, an individual's subjective evaluation of their worth (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Self-esteem is an essential aspect of mental health, and it is significantly impacted by sexual experiences and relationships (Thompson & O'Sullivan, 2014).

For example, research has found that individuals who engage in casual sexual relationships may experience feelings of shame, guilt, and regret, which can negatively impact their self-esteem (Fielder et al., 2014). Additionally, individuals who have low self-esteem may be more likely to engage in hookup culture as a way to boost their self-esteem (Blayney & Johnson, 2015). Thus, it is important to examine the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem, particularly among college students, who are at a stage in their lives where they are likely to explore their sexuality and form new relationships (APA, 2013). By understanding the relationship between these two variables, researchers, college administrators, and mental health professionals can develop interventions to support students' mental health and well-being.

This study aims to examine the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem among college students using standardized scales to measure both variables.

The results of this study will contribute to the existing literature on hookup culture and self-esteem and have practical implications for college health programs and counseling services.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed focuses on the relationship between casual sexual relationships or hookups and the potential negative impact on the mental health and self-esteem of young adults, particularly college students. The studies consistently found that individuals who engage in casual sex or hookup culture may experience negative emotional outcomes such as regret, shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem.

Blayney et al. (2014) found that individuals who engage in casual sexual relationships are more likely to experience negative emotions such as regret, shame, and guilt, which can negatively impact their mental health and self-esteem.

Orenstein (2018) found that women are more likely to report feeling objectified and used in hookup scenarios, which negatively impacted their self-esteem.

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Garcia et al. (2012) reviewed multiple studies and found that individuals who engage in hookup culture may experience negative emotional outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem. Fielder et al. (2013), Owen et al. (2010, 2011), and Paul et al(2000) examined the prevalence and characteristics of hookups among college students, and found that hookups were associated with negative emotional outcomes, particularly among women.

Lambert et al. (2003) explored pluralistic ignorance, or the discrepancy between public perception and private behavior, and found that individuals may engage in hookups to conform to perceived norms, even if they personally disagree with the behavior.

Finally, Vrangalova (2015) examined the short-term prospective links between different definitions of hookups and psychological well-being, and found that casual sex may be associated with lower psychological well-being, particularly for women.

Overall, the literature suggests that casual sexual relationships or hookups may be associated with negative emotional outcomes, particularly among women.

While more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between casual sex and mental health, these studies highlight the potential risks of hookup culture and the importance of promoting safe and healthy sexual practices.

III. METHODOLOGY

1) *Research Topic:* Examining the Relationship between Hookup Culture and Self-Esteem among College Students.
2) *Variables:* Hookup Culture and Self-Esteem.
3) *Background:* Hookup culture refers to a casual sexual encounter without the expectation of a committed relationship. Hookup culture is prevalent on college campuses, with studies reporting a high percentage of college students have had at least one hookup experience. Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of their worth and is an essential aspect of mental health. Research has shown that self-esteem is significantly impacted by sexual experiences and relationships, making it a relevant variable to examine in relation to hookup culture.
4) *Research Question:* Is there a correlation between hookup culture and self-esteem among college students?
5) *Hypothesis:* Higher levels of engagement in hookup culture will be associated with lower self-esteem among college students.
6) *Sample:* A convenience sample of 42 college students as recruited for the study. Out of which 32 were female, 10 were male. The study consists of participants from all over India. The participants were selected from Graduate to Post Graduate courses who belong to the age group 18-25 years.
7) *Instruments:* The research will use a cross-sectional correlational design. Participants will complete two standardized scales:

a) *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* - The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item scale used to measure overall self-esteem. study conducted by Schmitt and Allik (2005) reported a test-retest correlation coefficient of .82 over a period of 9 months. The RSES has been found to have good construct validity. A study by Donnellan et al. (2006) found that the RSES correlated positively with measures of positive affect, life satisfaction, and optimism, and negatively with measures of negative affect and depression.

b) *Hookup Motives Questionnaire* - The Hookup Motives Questionnaire is a 19-item scale that measures the reasons for engaging in hookup culture, such as social approval or pleasure. A study by Weiser et al. (2018) reported a test-retest correlation coefficient of .83 over a period of 3 months. The HMQ has been found to have good construct validity. A study by Garcia and Reiber (2008) found that the HMQ was positively associated with measures of sexual sensation seeking and negatively associated with measures of relationship commitment.

8) *Procedure:* The questionnaire was through google forms consisting of informed consent from the participants. The google form contained basic demographic details of the participants. The google forms was circulated to various online platforms and offline as well to collect data from the desired age group of students. After the collection of data, it was analysed and interpreted.
9) *Inclusion Criteria:* The study was only limited to college students of the 18 to 25 years. All the participant in this study was literate.
10) *Exclusion Criteria:* Individuals not matching the age group criteria were excluded. School students were not involved in the study.
11) *Data Analysis:* The data collected was analyzed using Spearman ranked correlational statistics to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem. A test of normality was also conducted on both the variables in order to understand the data distribution.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Spearman's Correlation for Self-Esteem and Hookup Frequency

Correlations

			Self_esteem	Hookup_freq
Spearman's rho	Self_esteem	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.081
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.606
		N	43	43
	Hookup_freq	Correlation Coefficient	-.081	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.606	.
		N	43	43

Interpretation - There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and hookup frequency, suggesting that the null hypothesis is accepted, which says that 'Higher levels of engagement in hookup culture will not be associated with lower self-esteem among college students.'

Table 2**:** MANN-WHITNEY U TEST

A. Sex And Self-Esteem

Ranks

	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Self_esteem	Male	10	22.55	225.50
	Female	32	21.17	677.50
	Total	42		

Test Statistics[a]

	Self_esteem
Mann-Whitney U	149.500
Wilcoxon W	677.500
Z	-.311
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.756
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.760[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Sex
b. Not corrected for ties.

Interpretation - Not significant

B. Sex and Hookup Frequency

Ranks

	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Hookup_freq	Male	10	17.50	175.00
	Female	32	22.75	728.00
	Total	42		

Test Statistics[a]

	Hookup_freq
Mann-Whitney U	120.000
Wilcoxon W	175.000
Z	-1.222
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.222
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.248[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Sex
b. Not corrected for ties.

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Interpretation - Not significant

C. Relationship Status And Hookup Frequency

Test Statistics[a]

	Hookup_freq
Mann-Whitney U	120.000
Wilcoxon W	175.000
Z	-1.222
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.222
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.248[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Sex
b. Not corrected for ties.

Test Statistics[a]

	Hookup_freq
Mann-Whitney U	149.500
Wilcoxon W	584.500
Z	-1.098
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.272
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.293[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Rel_stat
b. Not corrected for ties.

Interpretation - Not significant

D. Relationship Status And Self-Esteem

Ranks

	Rel_stat	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Self_esteem	Single	29	21.48	623.00
	In a relationship	13	21.54	280.00
	Total	42		

Test Statistics[a]

	Self_esteem
Mann-Whitney U	188.000
Wilcoxon W	623.000
Z	-.014
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.989
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	1.000[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Rel_stat
b. Not corrected for ties.

Interpretation - Not significant

V. DISCUSSION

For the data analysis normality tests performed on the varaibles self-esteem, hookup frequency, sex, and relationship status. Two tests of normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnova test and the Shapiro-Wilk test, were conducted for each variable. The results indicate that self-esteem is normally distributed and is therefore parametric.

However, the other three variables, hookup frequency, sex, and relationship status, are not normally distributed and are thus non-parametric.

The significance values for each variable show that hookup frequency, sex, and relationship status are all significantly different from normal. The significance values for self-esteem are not significant, indicating that the distribution of self-esteem is not significantly different from normal. It is important to note that the Lilliefors Significance Correction was used to adjust for the possibility of Type I errors due to the small sample size. This correction takes into account the fact that the normality tests have low power when the sample size is small. The results of the normality tests suggest that self-esteem is normally distributed and can be analyzed parametrically, while hookup frequency, sex, and relationship status are not normally distributed and require non-parametric analyses. These findings have important implications for the statistical methods used in analyzing the data related to these variables.

Spearman's correlation test performed on the relationship between self-esteem and hookup frequency. The correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0.081, indicating a weak negative correlation. However, the significance value of 0.606 suggests that this correlation is not statistically significant. Based on these findings, we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and hookup frequency among college students. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that, “higher levels of engagement in hookup culture will not be associated with lower self-esteem among college students.” It is important to note that the sample size for this study is relatively small, with only 42 participants. This may have limited the power of the study to detect a significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, future research with larger sample sizes may be necessary to provide more conclusive evidence on this topic.

The results of the Spearman's correlation test suggest that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and hookup frequency among college students. These findings have important implications for understanding the relationship between self-esteem and engagement in hookup culture among college students, and may inform interventions aimed at improving students' mental health and well-being.

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in self-esteem and hookup frequency based on sex and relationship status. The results showed that there were no significant differences in self-esteem between males and females ($U = 149.500$, $p = .760$), hookup frequency between males and females ($U = 120.000$, $p = .248$), hookup frequency between single and in-a-relationship participants ($U = 149.500$, $p = .293$), or self-esteem between single and in-a-relationship participants ($U = 188.000$, $p = 1.000$). Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, which suggests that there are no significant differences in self-esteem or hookup frequency based on sex and relationship status. The lack of significant differences between self-esteem and sex is interesting because previous research has shown that males have higher self-esteem than females (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & de Vries, 2004). The current study's findings are in contrast to this previous research. However, the current study had a relatively small sample size, which may have affected the results. Future studies could explore this relationship with a larger sample size to determine if sex and self-esteem are indeed related.

The results also showed that there were no significant differences in hookup frequency between males and females or between single and in-a-relationship participants. These findings suggest that hookup culture is not significantly influenced by sex or relationship status, which may be contrary to popular beliefs that men engage in hookup culture more frequently than women (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). However, similar to the discussion on self-esteem, the small sample size may have influenced the results. Future studies could further investigate the relationship between hookup culture and sex or relationship status with a larger sample size to provide more conclusive results. Overall, the current study's findings suggest that there are no significant differences in self-esteem or hookup frequency based on sex or relationship status. However, the small sample size may have influenced the results, and future studies with a larger sample size could provide more conclusive findings.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that there is no significant correlation between self-esteem and hookup frequency among college students. Despite the weak negative correlation between self-esteem and hookup frequency, the lack of statistical significance indicates that higher engagement in hookup culture is not associated with lower self-esteem among college students. Additionally, the study found no significant differences in self-esteem or hookup frequency based on sex or relationship status.

However, it is important to note that the small sample size of this study may have limited its power to detect significant relationships or differences. Therefore, future research with larger sample sizes may be necessary to provide more conclusive evidence on this topic.

Overall, the findings of this study have important implications for understanding the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem among college students.

They suggest that the popular belief that hooking up frequently leads to lower self-esteem may not be accurate. These findings may inform interventions aimed at improving students' mental health and well-being by challenging societal norms and stigma surrounding hookup culture. Further research is needed to expand upon these findings and explore the potential factors that contribute to the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem among college students.

Implications: The study's findings will have implications for college health programs and counseling services, which can use the results to develop interventions to support students' mental health and well-being. The results could also be used to inform future research on the impact of hookup culture on the self-esteem of young adults.

1) Limitations

The current study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, the sample size is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of college students. A larger sample size would increase the statistical power of the study and improve the precision of the estimates.

Second, the study only examines the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem, and does not take into account other potential factors that may influence these variables. Future studies should consider including measures of other relevant constructs, such as gender, sexual orientation, or relationship status.

Third, the study uses self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Participants may be reluctant to report their true feelings and behaviors, especially in a sensitive topic like sexual behavior. Future studies should consider using alternative data collection methods, such as behavioral observation or physiological measures, to minimize the impact of social desirability bias.

2) Recommendations For Future Research

Future research should address the limitations of the current study and expand on its findings. Specifically, the following recommendations are proposed:

Increase the sample size: Future studies should aim to recruit larger and more diverse samples of college students to increase the generalizability of the findings.

Include other relevant variables: Future studies should consider including measures of other relevant constructs, such as gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, and cultural background, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence hookup culture and self-esteem.

Use alternative data collection methods: Future studies should consider using alternative data collection methods, such as behavioral observation or physiological measures, to minimize the impact of social desirability bias and provide more objective measures of sexual behavior and self-esteem.

3) Some Further Suggestions For Researchers

In addition to the above recommendations, researchers interested in studying hookup culture and self-esteem may consider the following suggestions:

Longitudinal designs: Future studies should consider using longitudinal designs to examine the causal relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem. Longitudinal designs allow researchers to track changes in self-esteem over time and to identify potential predictors of changes in self-esteem.

Intervention studies: Future studies should consider developing and testing interventions to support students' self-esteem and to promote healthy sexual behaviors. Such interventions may include educational programs, peer mentoring, or counseling services.

Cross-cultural studies: Future studies should consider comparing the relationship between hookup culture and self-esteem across different cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies can provide insights into the impact of cultural norms and values on sexual behavior and self-esteem.

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Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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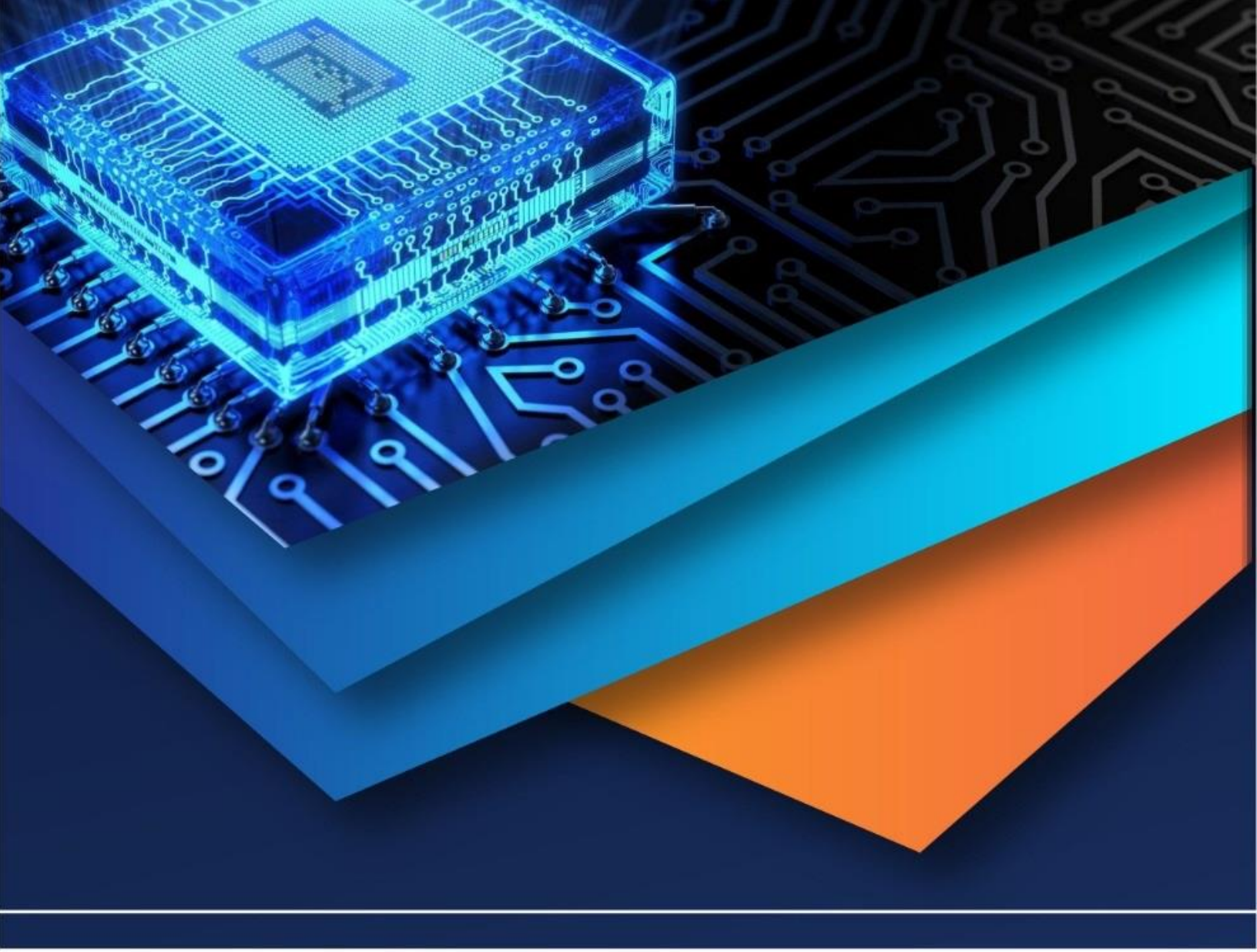
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