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Exploring the Relationship between Sexual Desires, Fulfilment and Relationship Satisfaction among Long-Distance Couples

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Abstract: ***The current study is an attempt to understand the influence of sexual fulfilment on relationship satisfaction among long-distance relationships. A correlational research design with quantitative approach was adopted. The data for the study was gathered from across the country through Google Forms using a method of convenient sampling. The tools used in the study include the Index of Sexual Satisfaction and the Couple Satisfaction Index. The participants were 74 adults aged 18-30 compromising of males and females who have been in a long-distance relationship or are currently in a long-distance relationship from different geographical regions of India. The results of the current study suggest that there is a moderate negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and the relationship satisfaction among long distance couples.***
Keywords: Sexual Satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction, Long Distance Relationships, Sexual Desires, Relationship Quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Long distance relationships have been quite prevalent in recent years. LDRs, or long-distance relationships, are romantic partnerships in which the couples are geographically separated by a considerable distance. These relationships can be difficult since there isn't much in the way of in-person interaction, there isn't much face-to-face communication, and there is a lot of emotional strain from being apart from your partner or spouse for long periods of time. In today's globalized society, when people relocate and travel more often for business, school, or personal reasons, long distance relationships are becoming more and more prevalent. The development of technology has also made it simpler for long-distance couples to stay connected despite their distance. However, geographical distance is generally perceived as a challenge to romantic relationships, and there is a commonly held popular belief that long-distance dating relationships are difficult and likely to fail (Helgeson, 1994; Sahlstein, 2004). In LDRs physical distance between partners or spouses creates difficulties for developing intimacy and maintaining sexual satisfaction. The degree of intimacy and sexual satisfaction between couples can be affected by factors including insufficient face-to-face interaction and the emotional strain of frequent long-distance separations. Due to physical distance, lack of engagement can be difficult. Partners in LDRs may feel frustrated, lonely, and anxious due to lack of physical contact. Sexual desires and fulfilment may determine the overall quality of the long-distance relationship (Arditti, J. A., & Kauffman, M., MA).

Physical separation between partners in LDRs may result in less possibilities for sexual engagement, which may lower their level of sexual satisfaction.

This, in turn, can affect their emotional well-being and sense of intimacy in the relationship. Lack of sexual fulfilment may lead to infidelity and other negative feelings which might deteriorate the relationship. Couples who have sexual fulfilment in their LDRs, on the other hand, could feel more emotionally connected to and pleased with their relationships despite being separated by physical distance (Neustaedter, C., & Greenberg, S.).

Despite the paucity of studies on the topic, numerous studies suggest that sexual satisfaction has distinct effects on LDR and GCR relationship satisfaction. LDR partners might, for example, place more importance on communication and emotional connection than on sexual fulfilment. On the other hand, other studies have revealed that in LDRs, sexual enjoyment is a significant predictor of overall relationship happiness.

For this reason, it's critical to comprehend and address how sexual desires and pleasure affect the nature of relationships in LDRs in order to keep a relationship healthy and fulfilling. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to better understand how sexual fulfilment might impact the overall quality of long-distance relationships in LDRs as well as how sexual desires affect relationship quality in LDRs. The study is particularly keen on understanding how sexual desires and fulfilment affect communication, emotional closeness, and overall relationship satisfaction in LDRs.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous literature on LDRs focus on outcomes such as commitment, stability, relationship quality (Gretchen, Galena, Scott, Howard, 2012), sexual expression and self-confidence (Morgan Kidwell, 2021), intimacy (Neustaedter, Carman; Greenberg, Saul, 2012), etc. While these issues may be of interest in terms of understanding broad concerns of couples who are geographically separated, little in-depth information is available describing how couples experience their relationship and maintain intimacy while geographically separated (Van Horn, Arnone, Nesbitt, Desilets, Sears, Giffin, & Brudi, 1997). This section examines these themes in long distance relationships:

A. Relationship Quality In Long Distance Relationships

A study conducted by (Gretchen, Galena, Scott, Howard, 2012), compared people in long-distance dating relationships to people in close-proximity dating relationships and it was found that in terms of relationship quality, commitment, and stability, people in long-distance relationships expressed higher levels of relationship quality on a number of indices, such as relationship adjustment, love for partner, fun with partner, and conversational quality, as well as lower levels of problematic communication when compared to people in close-proximity relationships. Those in long-distance relationships did not differ from those in close proximity in terms of perceived or actual limits on commitment, but they did report much lower levels of feeling trapped and significantly greater levels of dedication.

In contrast, another research shows that relationships typically begin between people who live close by since being separated makes communication more difficult and makes partners less motivated to make an effort to maintain connection (Rohlfing). In other words, suppressions hinder the development and maintenance of intimacy in relationships. Moreover, physical separations give partners the means and chance to start new romantic connections. They may also serve as a convenient means to end a relationship or as explanation for doing so in order to establish psychological distance from someone that is no longer desired. (Schwebel, Dunn. Moss and Renner, 1992).

B. Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction and sexual fulfilment have a favourable correlation, according to research (Byers, 2005; 43 Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997; Sprecher, 2002). Sexual relations are significant in romantic partnerships. According to a few studies (Byers et al., 1998; Davies, Katz, & Jackson, 1999), there is a connection between sexual satisfaction and overall relationship satisfaction in dating relationships. According to a 2010 study by Susan Spreacher, sexual satisfaction is associated with love, fidelity, and fulfilment in relationships for both men and women. Higher levels of sexual satisfaction were generally reported by those who said they felt the most love, commitment, and fulfilment in their relationships. Furthermore, changes in sexual fulfilment were associated with similar changes in love, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. According to the associations that have been found between sexual satisfaction and love and commitment, sexual satisfaction may influence how couples feel about one another and how committed they are to their relationships (Susan Spreacher, 2010). LDR partners, however, can only have physical sex with one another when they are truly together. It's probable that partners find it more difficult to engage in sexual activity as frequently as they'd want when there is little in-person contact, which has a negative impact on LDR sexual pleasure. But even if sexual pleasure is less in LDRs than GCRs, it might not have a detrimental effect on relationship satisfaction since it might not be equally important to LDR partners (Amanda Bloom, 2015).

C. Sexual Expression In Long Distance Relationships

In the past, LDRs were typically characterised by limitations and constraints on partners' communication (Stafford, 2005), so knowing technology and its usage in romantic relationships may be crucial to understanding today's LDRs. A study on sexual expression and self-confidence in long-distance relationships by Kidwell, M. found that partners in long-distance relationships report significantly higher rates of technology-mediated sexual expression than couples in close relationships. The study emphasizes how technology-mediated sexual expression differs from short-distance partnerships in long-distance relationships (Morgan Kidwell, 2021), which is congruent with previous research findings indicating that technology plays a crucial role in communication and sexual expression for those in long-distance relationships (Belus et al., 2019; Jiang & Hancock, 2013; Shaughnessy et al., 2011).

Another study conducted by Neustaedter, C., & Greenberg, S suggest that for many, the lack of genuine physicality between partners makes it difficult for many people to achieve complete sexual intimacy through a video channel.

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Since cybersex is so constrained, partners need improved ways to physically interact while separated. It can be difficult to engage in physical acts like kissing, embracing, and caressing when the camera and video window are separated. Beyond these design issues, however, what all the couples had in common was that they viewed sex—regardless of how far they pushed it—exclusively as an extension of intimacy. In other words, it wasn't so much about the sex as it was about being intimate and together (Neustaedter, Carman; Greenberg, Saul, 2012).

Overall, the literature shows that being in a long-distance relationship has both advantages and disadvantages. While some research indicates that long-distance relationships can have higher levels of relationship quality and dedication than near relationships, other research contends that physical distance can thwart closeness and increase the likelihood of making new love connections. Yet, sexual satisfaction in LDRs can be maintained with the use of technology-mediated sexual expression.

Hence, when evaluating the overall effect of distance on relationship quality, it is crucial to take into account both the benefits and disadvantages of long-distance partnerships. Furthermore, this study will continue to focus on how sexual desires and satisfaction influence the relationship quality in couples when they are separated by distance.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Statement of Purpose

The aim of this study is to investigate how sexual desires and the fulfilment of those desires affect the quality of long-distance relationships. This research will focus on:

1) Age group: 18-30 years
2) People who have been or are currently in a long-distance relationship

B. Objectives of the study:

O1- To explore the relationship between sexual desires and fulfilment and the quality of long-distance relationships

O2 - To provide a better understanding of the factors that influence the quality of long-distance relationships, particularly in the context of sexual intimacy

C. Hypothesis:

H0**:** There is no significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.

H1**:** An increase in sexual satisfaction is significantly related to an increase in relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.

D. Variables:

1) Sexual Satisfaction
2) Relationship Satisfaction

E. Research Design:

A correlational research design was employed to explore the influence of sexual satisfaction on the quality of long-distance relationships aka relationship satisfaction.

F. Sampling and Techniques

The sample of the study compromised of 74 young adults (43 female and 31 male) who have been or are in a long-distance relationship and belonging to the age group of 18-30 years. Purposive sampling technique was used for collecting the sample of 74 young adults from different geographical regions of India. Correlational research design was used. The data was collected using two questionnaires: Index of Sexual Satisfaction and the Couple Satisfaction Index and the self-reported questionnaires were filled by the participants via Google forms.

G. Tools Used:

1) Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS): was developed by Walter W. Hudson and is used to measure the degree of dissatisfaction in the sexual component of a dyadic relationship. It is a standardized tool compromising of 25 category-partition items that are scored on a relative frequency scale. Some of the items are worded negatively to counteract any potential response set bias. Scores on the scale can range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating a greater level of sexual discord.

A clinical cut-off score of 30 has been established, and scores above this value indicate the presence of a clinically significant level of sexual discord in the relationship. The ISS is suitable for use with all English-speaking individuals who are 12 years of age or older. Cronbach's Alpha for ISS was calculated to be .92 and SEM is 4.24. Validity coefficient of ISS is calculated to be .76.

2) Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI**):** was developed by Funk and Rogge to measure one's satisfaction in a relationship. It is a brief 32-item scale with variety of items with different response scales and formats. The authors have also specified that the scale safely be shrunk to either a 16-item format or even a 4-item format depending on a researcher's needs. Reliability for CSI 32-item version was calculated to be .90 to .93 and CSI scales demonstrate strong construct and convergent validity.

H. Inclusion Criteria

1) Young Adults of Age group 18-30 were included in the study.
2) Young adults who have been or are in a long-distance relationship were included in the study.
3) All genders included in the study

I. Exclusion Criteria

1) Young adults above the age of 30 were excluded from the study
2) Young adults below the age of 18 were excluded from the study
3) Young adults who aren't in a long-distance relationship were excluded from the study.
4)

J. Procedure

The survey was conducted via google forms and the study was initiated by choosing individuals who belong to age group 18-30 and have been or are in a long-distance relationship. Informed consent was taken from the participants and they were encouraged to seek any clarifications with respect to the study. On an average the questionnaire could take 8-10 minutes.

K. Ethical Considerations:

1) The consent of the participants was taken prior to the study.
2) The responses were kept confidential.
3) Anonymity of the participants name and data was ensured
4) The responses of the participants were not used for any other purposes, other than the agreed research study.

IV. RESULTS

The aim of this study is to investigate how sexual desires and the fulfilment of those desires affect the quality of long-distance relationships. There were two scales used in the study. They are index of sexual satisfaction and couple satisfaction index. These two scales were used to assess the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance relationships. The hypothesis of the study states that an increase in sexual satisfaction is significantly related to an increase in relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.

Table 1:
Showing the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples using Spearman rho's correlation:

	ISS	CSI
ISS	1.000	-.528**
CSI	-.528**	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table shows the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples. The Spearman rho's correlation was used and the correlation method shows that there is a moderate negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.

The correlation coefficient between ISS and CSI is -.528, which indicates a moderate negative correlation between the two variables. The negative sign means that higher scores on one variable are associated with lower scores on the other. The significance value of .000 for both correlation coefficients indicates that the results are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, meaning that the likelihood of these results occurring by chance is less than 1%. The sample size for both variables is 74, which is a relatively small sample size, but it is still sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between these variables.

Overall, the table suggests that there is a moderate negative correlation between ISS and CSI, which means that as the score on one variable increases, the score on the other variable tends to decrease.

However, the scores obtained suggest that hypothesis was not supported by the data. In other words, the findings suggest that as sexual satisfaction increases, relationship satisfaction tends to decrease, and vice versa. One possible explanation for the negative correlation is that there may be other factors that are influencing the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the research was to investigate the relationship between relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction in long-distance relationships. According to the results, there is moderately negative correlation between the two variables, suggesting that when sexual satisfaction increases, relationship satisfaction tends to decline and vice versa. Given the presumption that increased sexual fulfilment would also increase relationship fulfilment, these results are surprising. The data, however, contradicts the hypothesis.

One possible explanation for the negative correlation can be that there might be more factors influencing the association between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. For example, in long-distance relationships, communication and emotional closeness may be more important than sexual gratification. This demonstrates that sexual fulfilment may not be enough to provide overall relationship satisfaction in long-distance relationships. Additionally, trust, commitment, and support may be necessary for a good long-distance relationship.

Another explanation is that each person's perception of the importance of romantic and sexual pleasure differs and this difference could have an impact on the association that has been seen. In their relationships, some partners may place more importance on sexual fulfilment than others.

The difficulties that long-distance relationships present, such as the distance, lack of physical closeness, and restricted time spent together, may also be contributing causes. These difficulties could strain their connection and make it challenging to uphold high levels of sexual and relationship fulfilment.

A. Implications Of The Study

The study's implications imply that sexual fulfilment may not have an important influence on maintaining relationship satisfaction in long-distance relationships. Focusing more on elements like communication and emotional connection helps keep a long-distance relationship satisfying and healthy. According to the findings, long-distance couples may need to exert more effort in order establish emotional connections and maintain open lines of communication in order to maintain a successful relationship.

B. Limitations Of The Study

1) The relatively small sample size of 74 may have hampered the study's ability to generalise its findings.
2) No other potential variables were looked at in regard to the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.
3) The study only looked at long-distance relationships; it did not compare its findings to those of similar relationships that were not long-distance.
4) The study solely looked at long-distance relationships; it did not compare its results to those of similar relationships i.e non-long distance relationships.

C. Suggestions

The study highlights the need for more investigation into the intricate connection between sexual satisfaction and satisfaction in long-distance relationships as well as to find additional elements that may be crucial for preserving happy and fulfilling long-distance relationships.

The negative association between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction in long-distance relationships can be investigated further by looking at additional potential causes. Future research can also look into the potential mediating or moderating impacts of additional factors as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and cultural background.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our study challenges the assumption that an increase in sexual satisfaction leads to an increase in relationship satisfaction among long-distance couples.

Instead, we found a moderate negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. This highlights the importance of considering other factors such as communication and emotional connection in maintaining healthy long-distance relationships. While the study has limitations such as a small sample size and reliance on self-reported measures, it provides important insights for couples in long-distance relationships. Future research should explore these factors in more detail to help couples better navigate the challenges of maintaining a healthy and fulfilling long-distance relationship.

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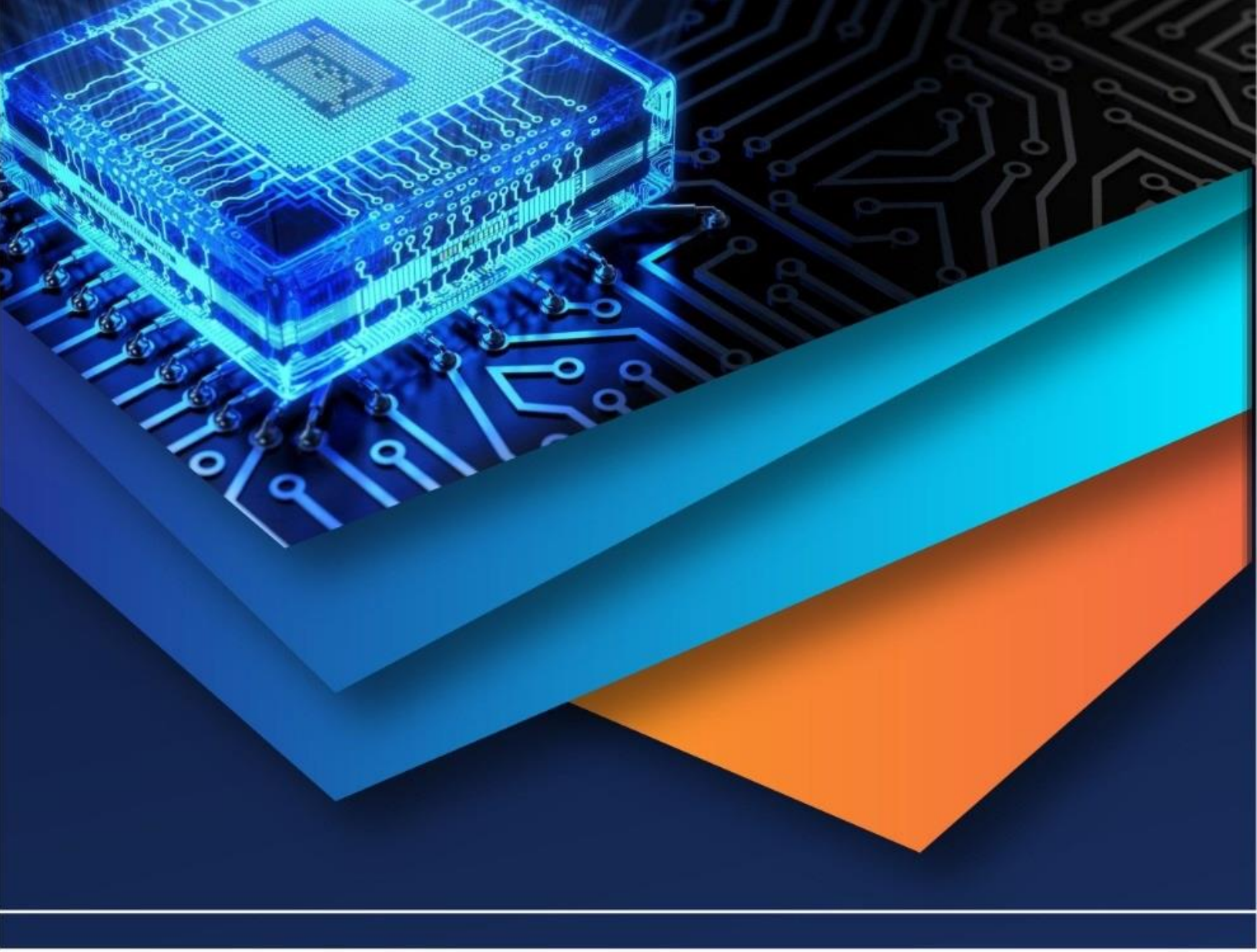
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