Dating and Sexual Satisfaction: The Roles of Demographics, Self-perceptions and Sexual Attitudes

Nicole Garvin
Department of Psychology, Boise State University

Camille Nichols-Blount
Department of Psychology, Boise State University
This study explores how satisfaction levels with dating relationships and sexual experiences vary based on demographic variables. The study examines how dating and sexual satisfaction relate to sexual attitudes, self-perceptions, and relationship anxiety and avoidance. Results indicated that positive correlations exist between dating satisfaction and age, dating satisfaction and synthesis of sexual identity, sexual satisfaction and positive attitudes towards birth control, and women’s self-rated physical attractiveness and sexual satisfaction. Negative correlations were found between religiosity and sexual satisfaction, dating satisfaction and relationship anxiety and avoidance, and women’s sexual satisfaction and relationship anxiety and avoidance. Lastly, political affiliation was unrelated to dating or sexual satisfaction.

Prior research suggests that when women have higher levels of social anxiety, they also experience a lower relationship quality (Cuming, 2010), so being happy and secure in other interpersonal relationships may help you to create more positive romantic relationships. Another study found that when individuals described themselves and their partners, they were more likely to describe themselves as satisfied if they used phrases with ideas of warmth, generosity, and cooperativeness (Lucky, 1964). Having a positive view of yourself and your partner is also important to overall satisfaction. For women, a positive body image may also be an important fact. Pujois, et al. found a significant positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and body image (Pujois, et al, 2010). In this study we seek to find how demographic variables, sexual attitudes, and self perceptions influence sexual and relationship satisfaction. We also looked at gender differences in relationship anxiety and avoidance.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHICS AND SEXUAL AND DATING SATISFACTION BY GENDER.**

There was no significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and age for men (r = .11, p = .26) or for women (r = .12, p = .22). There was also no significant correlation between dating satisfaction and religiosity for men (r = .09, p = .33) or women (r = .01, p = .93). Political affiliation was also not associated with dating satisfaction for either men (r = .00, p = 1.00) or women (r = .03, p = .76). There was not a significant correlation between men’s sexual satisfaction and religiosity (r = .02, p = .80), or political affiliation (r = .10, p = .32). There is not a significant correlation between men’s dating satisfaction and age (r = .05, p = .59) or political affiliation (r = .00, p = 1.00). There was a significant relationship between women’s sexual satisfaction and religiosity (r = .25, p = .01), and between dating satisfaction and age (r = .348, p < .001). For women, a negative correlation existed between sexual satisfaction and political affiliation (r = .228, p = .02) Relationship satisfaction was marginally positively correlated with positive attitudes towards birth control for women (r = .12, p = .19), but not for men (r = .15, p = .00). Relationship satisfaction was not correlated with sexual communion scores for either men (r = .08, p = .37) or women (r = .14, p = .13). Relationship satisfaction was marginally negatively correlated with sexual permissive attitudes for women (r = -.18, p = .06) but not for men (r = .08, p = .42). Sexual satisfaction was marginally positively correlated with positive attitudes towards birth control for women (r = .17, p = .07), but not for men (r = .15, p = .11). Sexual satisfaction was positively correlated with communion scores for both men (r = .22, p = .02) and women (r = .24, p = .01). Sexual satisfaction was not correlated with sexual permissiveness for either men (r = .08, p = .41) or women (r = .13, p = .18).

**RELATIONSHIP ANXIETY AND AVOIDANCE IN RELATION TO SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION.**

Dating satisfaction was negatively correlated with relationship anxiety for both men (r = .23, p = .01) and women (r = .21, p = .03). Dating satisfaction was also negatively correlated with relationship avoidance for both men (r = .34, p = .00) and women (r = .39, p = .00). Sexual satisfaction was not correlated with relationship anxiety and avoidance for both men (r = .02, p = .82) or women (r = .07, p = .49). Sexual satisfaction was negatively correlated with relationship avoidance for women (r = .21, p = .03) but not for men (r = .08, p = .38).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicated that sexual satisfaction is not affected by age and that dating satisfaction was not affected by religiosity or political affiliation for both genders. Political affiliation and religion did not affect men’s sexual satisfaction. Age and political affiliation did not affect men’s dating satisfaction. However women’s sexual satisfaction was affected by religiosity, this could be caused by societal attitudes about sex and romance and religious views (Davidson, et al, 1995). Political affiliation also affected women’s sexual satisfaction; liberal women reported greater sexual satisfaction.

Communication between partners is an important factor in sexual satisfaction for both men and women. It seems that positive attitudes towards birth control affect women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction, but not men’s. Relationship satisfaction was marginally negatively correlated with sexual permissive attitudes for women, but not for men. Sexual satisfaction was not correlated with sexual permissiveness for either men or women. Sexual satisfaction positively correlated with synthesis of one’s sexual identity for both genders.

Physical attractiveness does not affect dating satisfaction for either men or women. Relationship anxiety negatively affects relationship satisfaction but not sexual satisfaction for both men and women. Sexual satisfaction was negatively correlated with relationship avoidance for both men and women. When women are more satisfied with themselves, they are satisfied with their relationship and desire a relationship rather than avoiding intimacy. Dating satisfaction for both genders negatively correlated with anxiety and avoidance in relationships. This supports previous research done by Cuming and Rapee (2010).

**REFERENCES**


**METHODS**

This study had a total of 230 participants, comprised of 115 heterosexual couples (115 men and 115 women). 198 participants identified as exclusively heterosexual, but all were current members of a heterosexual relationship. The average age of participants was 21.6 and the majority of participants were college students, 80%. Psychology 101 students self selected through the Internet program, Experimenter, in order to participate in the study, and gain required class research participation credits.