



# “The Relationship Between Levels Of Loneliness Among Youth And The Evolving Trends Observed In Contemporary Romantic Relationships”: A Qualitative Study

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## Abstract

This qualitative study explores the potential connection between rising loneliness among youth and the changing nature of contemporary romantic relationships. Social and technological shifts have reshaped how young people connect and form partnerships. This research investigates how these trends, such as delayed marriage, increased casual dating through apps, and emphasis on self-discovery, might influence feelings of loneliness and belonging. Through in-depth interviews or focus groups with young adults, the study aims to capture their lived experiences. Examining how their perceptions of romantic relationships impact their sense of connection and social fulfilment will provide valuable insights. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing youth loneliness and offer potential areas of support and intervention to address this growing public health concern.

“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.” - Buddha

**Loneliness** is a universal human experience that goes beyond cultural and religious boundaries. It is a challenging aspect of human existence that has been contemplated by philosophers throughout history. The teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, provide valuable insights into the nature of loneliness and offer guidance on how to sail across its challenges. In the realm of Buddhism, a philosophy

rooted in understanding the nature of existence and the path to liberation from suffering, loneliness is approached with wisdom and compassion.

While exploring the buddhist perspective on loneliness we found a profound approach that provides us with a detailed and meaningful understanding of the individual and the connection to the world and it also seeks to address the source of isolation and guides individuals. Through the teachings of the Buddha, practitioners can find valuable insights and practical wisdom to navigate the challenges of loneliness on the path to inner peace and liberation.

### **Relationships:**

Relationships are the most integral part of our lives, it is the basic need of human beings to form relationships where they feel loved, seen, heard and acknowledged. To feel that you belong here, to feel that you matter or your presence matters. Our relationship to self is as important as our relationship with others. We don't exist in isolation, forming relationships has an evolutionary perspective, in order to survive we all need relationships and understanding. So it might also be a survival instinct we follow. Our lives are woven together by the relationships we form, the complex colourful rainbows of human connection that shapes our beliefs, our experiences, our perspectives, our worldviews, our reactivities and also helps us shape how we view ourselves.

If we dive into the world of modern world connections in terms of partners: there are two significant types that emerge from the wide range of human connections, one is casual relationships and committed partnerships. Each adds its own distinct colours and forms to the painting of our lives.

Casual connections are defined by their own fleeting nature, more like the waves that come and go. They usually are the ones that emerge from the depths of exploration and understanding what matters to us, what is okay for us and what is not. It gives us an insight for us to better understand what kind of partner we need. These relationships mostly develop on their own with low expectations and loose ends of commitments. Casual relationships have their own range from ending up as friends to ending up in a committed relationship. They offer a space for self discovery, sharing special moments without the burden of how things are supposed to be in the future.

On the other hand, Committed relationships are defined by their long lasting companionship and emotional closeness. They are usually based on mutual trust, efforts, partnership, intimacy, loyalty, honesty and choice. Choice because when we get committed we make a choice at that moment to be present, to work on the relationship and build it with the other person. Mostly, relationships start with a sense of friendship between the two. So you choose everyday to work on the relationship and you trust your partner in the same process. Conflicts are a part of the relationships and it depends on who you want to be on that journey with us. A committed relationship is a sacred pact between two individuals who choose to embark on a journey of shared resilience, growth and intimacy. Partners navigate through the complexities of life together, their bond is rooted in genuine affection and a shared vision for the future. Committed relationships fuels emotional

fulfilment, fostering a sense of security, belongingness and safety. Relationship is like a plant that we need to water in order for it to grow otherwise it might just die.

As we enquire the dynamics of casual and committed relationships, we also dive into the advantages, challenges and other facets of each. We explore the complexity that makes relationships a vital and intriguing part of the human experience as we make our way through the land of human interaction and discover the threads that bind us.

In rapidly evolving modern civilisation, the dynamics of human interactions are also changing at a faster pace, reflecting on the quick growth of culture, technology and societal standards. Out of all the facets of human interactions, the connection between a universal feeling of loneliness and the emerging patterns of modern romantic relationships is fascinating and also requires further investigation. The digital era has introduced so many new modes of communication, which has made a significant impact on the mental health of our youth.

This research aims to explore and understand the intricate interplay between loneliness and the changing colours of romantic relationships among the youth. It is designed in a way to dissect the true meaning of loneliness and relationships of an individual. Loneliness is such an universal feeling and being lonely in a time where we are all surrounded with an end number of ways of communication. It is perceived as a silent epidemic in modern times, intersects with the transformations witnessed in the realm of romantic entanglements. The story of modern romance is inseparable to the feelings of loneliness. Among young people, from the impact of Social Media and online dating to the difficulties posed by fast lifestyles and evolving social expectations.

By delving into this intersection, we seek not only to unravel the underlying factors contributing to heightened levels of loneliness but also to comprehend how the dynamics of modern romantic relationships act as catalysts or mitigators in this scenario. Through empirical investigation, theoretical analysis, and a comprehensive review of existing literature, this research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform mental health initiatives, relationship counselling, and societal strategies to foster more meaningful connections among the youth. As we navigate the uncharted waters of this dynamic relationship, our quest is not only to understand but also to pave the way for fostering healthier, more fulfilling connections in the digital age.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

**Aim:**

This qualitative research study aims to explore live experiences of young adults and to investigate the potential connection between loneliness and the evolving trends observed in contemporary romantic relationships.

### Objective:

- To gain a deeper understanding of how young adults are experiencing loneliness in the context to their romantic relationships
- To identify trends in contemporary youth relationships and also explore their relationship with the feelings of loneliness
- To uncover and understand the underlying mechanisms through which there is a change in Current relationship trends
- To explore potential variations which can include social, economic background, gender, geographical location et cetera.

### Variables:

Dependent variable: evolved trends in contemporary romantic relationships ( example, reliance on online platforms for dating, social media, presence of casual dating, delayed commitment)

Independent, variable: experiences of loneliness among youth.

### Sample:

The target population will be young adults between the age of 18 to 28

Purposive sampling will be used to collect a diverse sample in terms of gender, social economic background, sexual orientation, geographical locations.

There were 15 participants for the semi structured interviews.

Participants contributed to research through online platforms.

### Description of the tools:

Semi structured interviews: There will be a few questions that will be developed prior to the interview to explore and understand participants' experience with loneliness, their current and past romantic relationships and their views on evolving relationship trends. The open ended questions will motivate an individual to share their personal opinion or their unique perspective on certain things which are required for the study.

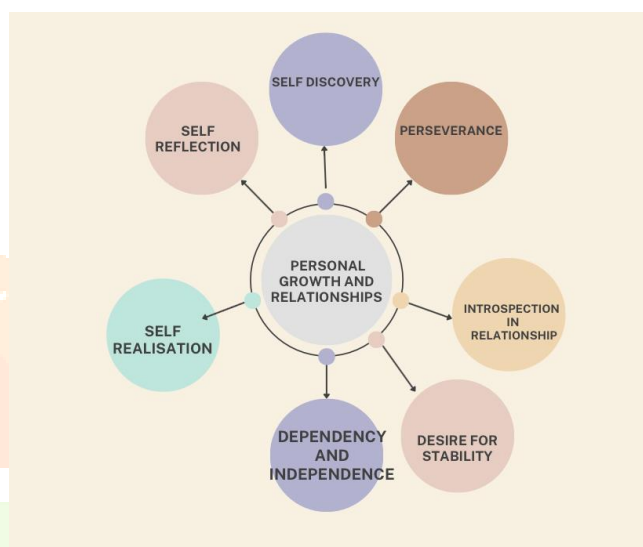
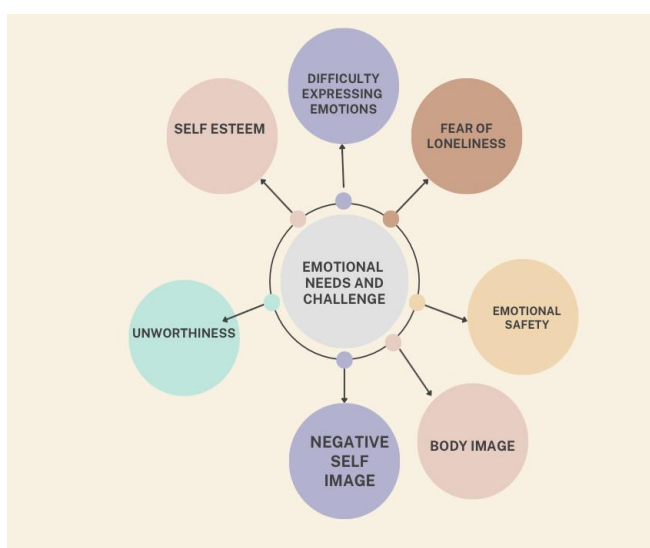
### Procedure:

This research delves into the link between loneliness in young adults and the evolving landscape of modern romance. With ethical approval secured, the study will explore how trends like delayed marriage, app-driven dating, and the focus on self-discovery might be impacting feelings of connection and belonging among young people. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participants will share their lived experiences. Their perspectives on romantic relationships will be meticulously captured, offering valuable insights into how these perceptions might influence social fulfilment and combat feelings of loneliness. To ensure transparency and participant autonomy, a detailed explanation of the research purpose and requirements will be provided upfront. Only with informed consent will the journey begin, with all interviews recorded (with

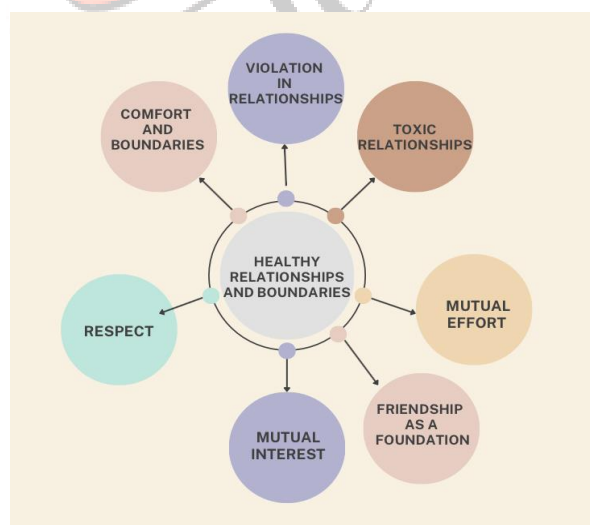
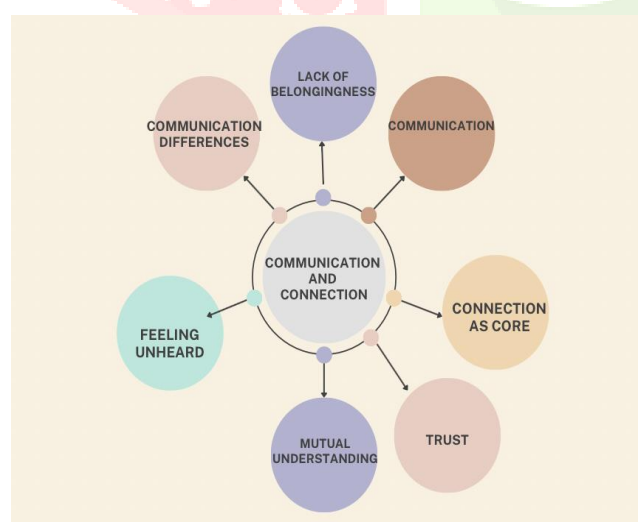
permission) and meticulously transcribed verbatim for in-depth analysis. This research promises to shed light on the complex factors influencing youth loneliness, paving the way for potential support systems and interventions.

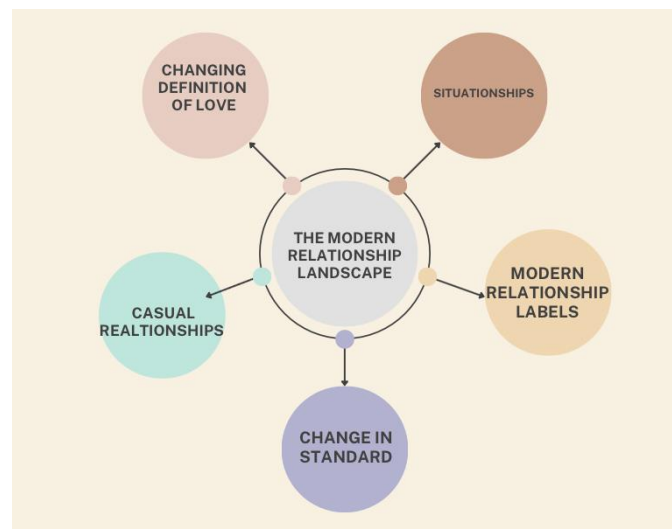
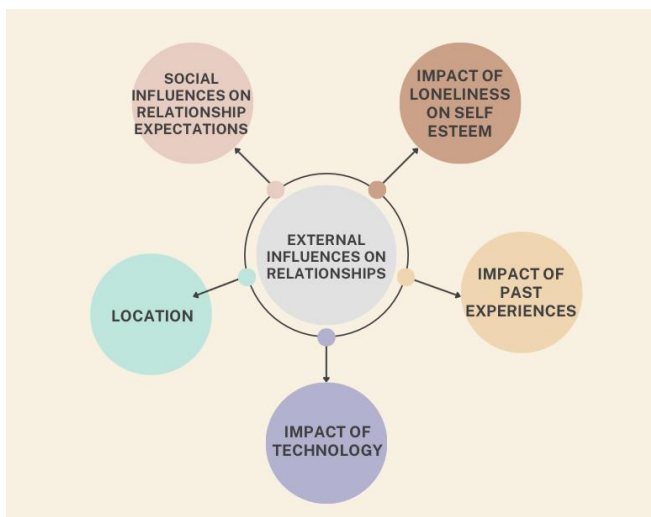
Statistical analysis:

Qualitative data analysis will be employed. Thematic analysis will be used to identify various recurring themes and patterns from the transcripts of the interviews. This will help us with the deeper understanding of the lived experience of young individuals and the connection between loneliness and contemporary relationship trends.



## RESULTS





## DISCUSSION

The world of love for young adults today is a rollercoaster ride exciting new possibilities, collide with confusing trends and nagging sense of loneliness.

This research del is into the very human experience, exploring how young people approach relationships and it might be linked to the feelings of isolation and we not just talking about numbers here, but we are talking about real people and the complex web of emotions that come with navigating love in the modern world.

### -The modern relationship landscape

The landscape of youth relationships is undergoing a fascinating transformation and there is a shift in societal norms and values of how a relationship is understood. This shift has led to a blossoming diversity, in a way of how youth these days approach an experience, the romantic relationships or connections.

It includes various aspects like casual relationships in metropolitan cities, changes in standard, changing definition of love, modern relationship labels and situationships.

### Supported transcript:

Our generation is very very very transparent about things. We have made it better. It's like if you want to be friends with benefits with someone you talk about it And not keeping you behind the curtain. Earlier it was so common that even to have any kind of relationship you would have to promise that we'll get married or whatever. But now it's a lot more transparent and easy and it's we are only I think it's better in that scenarios that people are very aware and they know that what they are signing up for people are very happy about it.

### Supported case study:

Modern dating culture has seen a rise in "situationships," where partners enjoy emotional intimacy and physical connection without traditional labels like "boyfriend" or "girlfriend." This case study explores the complexities of situationships and how they redefine commitment and expectations in romantic relationships. This case study focuses on Sarah (23) and Michael (24) who have been involved for six months. They spend significant time together, have sleepovers, and share secrets, but haven't discussed exclusivity or long-term goals. Sarah desires a deeper commitment, while Michael prioritizes casual dating and exploration.



## -Emotional needs and challenges

The world of young adults is an emotional rollercoaster. These days, while the desire for acceptance and emotional safety is stronger than ever a unique set of challenge can make navigating relationships difficult This includes sub themes like: acceptance, body image, emotional safety, emotional challenges, fear of loneliness, feeling unheard, negative self image, self esteem and unworthiness.

### Supported transcripts:

I've been always, since childhood, in a bigger body. And that has had a massive impact. Perhaps the biggest impact on my romantic life has been that part of my identity as a plus-sized person. So, right now I'm in a stage in life where if I listen to these questions, i have a lot of opinions ki like, um, like my first thing would be to be like, oh yeah short-term things are a distraction and people should not do them because of, you know, uh, they should be true to themselves or something. I might have these lofty like big opinions and stuff. But the reality, like my actual reality is that i'm very, uh, relationship wise completely stunted because i've been I've experienced a lot of people, like a lot of bullying, jokes, exclusion because of my body, especially from men. So, it's like, and also lots of rejection. Like I've maybe liked 7-8 men in my life and I've maybe asked out 5 of them after good degree of friendship and closeness and stuff. So, It's okay if it happens once or twice but if it happens once in your life and where some people have very openly said that you're not my body type, I really like you but you're just not my body type is one thing I'd heard. (t-6)

When I moved to Canada. Because after I've come here, I've realized the importance of places I've had where I felt that belonging, where I felt I can rely on somebody or somebody's there. Even if somebody's not there in my lonely moment.

which you truly know would be there or at least wants to be there when you are not doing okay. So I think when I came here, I redefined loneliness. I think I mixed being alone with loneliness a lot. (t-2)

### Supported study:

Emily's fear of loneliness, stemming from witnessing her parents' unhappy marriage, has led her to prioritize staying in relationships over finding healthy connections. This case study explores how her fear manifests in overlooking red flags, tolerating disrespect, and rushing into relationships with incompatible partners. By addressing this fear through therapy and building a strong support system outside of romance, Emily can redefine her approach to relationships, prioritizing compatibility and emotional security over the sole desire to avoid being alone.

## -Communication and connection

Communication is the pillar of the healthy relationship, it can build or break the relationship as it is one of the important factors.

This includes all the aspects like communication, communication differences, connection as a core, feeling unheard, lack of belongingness, loneliness, mutual understanding and trust.

### Supported transcript:

Because, you know, if you know that you are engaging in something short-term basis, you know, everything is clearly communicated to the other person. So, I think that's fine. if people are like engaging in short-term casual relationships just to cope with loneliness even though this is not a very sustained coping mechanism but yeah for for single while it's fine okay one what do you mean by casual relationships here um i mean my understanding is you know when you are when you both know that this is not going to go anywhere but

you're hanging out and going to places, engaging in physical intimacy and everything, but you know that this is never going to turn into a real relationship. (t-3)

Supported study:

The constant silent treatment plaguing David (32) and Sarah's (30) five-year relationship exemplifies how communication breakdowns can cripple a relationship. David's withdrawal and Sarah's frustration highlight their lack of healthy communication skills – perhaps unclear emotional expression or resorting to blame. By prioritizing open communication, active listening, and assertively expressing needs, they can bridge this gap. Learning conflict resolution strategies through couples therapy could equip them to navigate disagreements constructively, ultimately strengthening their bond and fostering a more fulfilling relationship.

-External influences on relationships

Young adults don't exist in the world around them, shapes their perspective, relationship, site expectation, cultural norms, and even media portals can influence how they approach and connect with each other.

This includes sub themes like, impact of loneliness on self esteem, impact of past experiences, impact of technology, location and social influences on relationships expectations.

Supported transcript:

You can't express what you want to you can't share what's happening to you so that's more or less loneliness for me. so there is a guy who went through this terrible thing and he wants to talk about that thing to someone. He doesn't have anyone he can talk to. This probably feels that people will judge him or he thinks that he is not comfortable around people or maybe he's not that comfortable that he can share things with the people around Maybe as very superficial relationships and he doesn't have anyone he can share things with so I think that's how loneliness works or more or less. If there is some happy Event also happening in his life but he doesn't have anyone to share that with. Also that again is loneliness. He has no one to celebrate it with, so that's kind of lonely. (t-4)

Personal growth and relationships

Relationship can create delicate balance between dependency and independence. Young adults might create the support and emotional intimacy from their partner, but yet also desire their own sense of growth and sense of autonomy.

This includes themes like dependency, independence, desire for stability, introspection in relationships, perseverance, self reflection and self realisation through experiences.

Supported transcript:

In the relationships where you have choice you can choose to be there or you can choose to not be there. Depending on how they treated you or how you want to be there for them. Basically I think from my point of you it's more or less that you should not expect much from relationships. You should be the person who is giving rest happen automatically I would say don't expect but also be aware what is the intention of the other person Like you would know that why the other person is asking you what they're asking about so it's always the factor that why the other person is asking Or why they want to know what they want to know and if you think it's fine, then you can share with them then irrespective of they'll be there for you or not you will always be there. and if we talk about romantic relationships the most important thing is trust the basics that they should not lie to each other. (t-12)



### -Healthy relationships and boundaries

Healthy relationships provide a sense of comfort and security partner feels safe in expressing themselves and they also feel accepted unconditionally. The feeling of comfort goes hand-in-hand. With clear boundaries. They can be personal or interpersonal healthy boundaries create a space where both partners can feel respected and protected.

This include sub themes like, toxic relationships, comfort boundaries, friendship as foundation, violation in relationships, respect and mutual effort.

#### Supported case study:

Maya and Chloe's best friendship exemplifies how unclear boundaries can strain relationships. Maya feels suffocated by Chloe's constant need for attention and disregard for her personal time. Establishing boundaries by setting limits on communication, politely declining draining requests, and openly communicating her need for space can help Maya reclaim her well-being without jeopardizing their friendship. This allows them to redefine their connection, fostering a more respectful dynamic where both individual needs are acknowledged.

#### Supported transcript:

If you're talking about relationships, there are different levels of comfort that you do with people. The first level of people is where you don't know them. The people are just acquaintances. They just exist. They have a very relationship with you. You would have a very surface level of conversation with them. You won't tell them about you. You won't ask them about them, so you don't share a bond with them but kind of they just exist in your life. This was the relationship are you just strangers and the second level of relationship comes when you just know people you would know what's going on their life how they are what kind of a person they are, you would know on the superficial level that what they are doing where are they and this is third category where you know people a little more, we can be your friends colleagues who would actually know what's going on with you they don't know how you feel about things. They don't know every event in your life but they would know majorly what is going on with you and the next level is friendship where you would go and tell those people yourself that what is going on, if you are going through something, then you would go to them or Run to them to tell them that it's fucked up or that you made a mistake and then there are even more close friends to people who you can share your insecurities as well. (t-14)

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