

How Romantic Relationships Influence the Subjective Well-Being of McMaster University Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

It is evident that the time of adolescence and young adulthood is crucial to our social development. Particularly, past research has found that the romantic relationships we form with others throughout our adolescence are an important part of our social interaction (Roberson et al., 2018). The fields of positive and social psychology are interested in the idea of social relationships and their effects on subjective well-being. Introduced by Ed Diener in 1984, subjective well-being was coined to conceptualize the way people understand their own well-being (Diener, 1984). Researchers in this field explore three components: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and a cognitive evaluation such as life satisfaction (Tov & Diener, 2013). In past research, there has been minimal evidence that explains how subjective well-being and romantic relationships intersect. Therefore, our area of research focuses on romantic relationships and their influence on the subjective well-being of McMaster Undergraduate Students. This is a group-based thesis for the Honours Social Psychology Program at McMaster University (Social Psychology 4ZZ6, supervised by Dr. Sarah Clancy). We believe this is important as romantic relationships among university students are identifiably one of the most impactful social relationships they will establish within the duration of their educational career. Our approach to this topic will differ from previous studies as we will look at social comparisons, resilience, and loneliness/Covid-19 as mitigating factors to determine the results of our research.

We are currently in the process of collecting quantitative data to conduct primary research. This is being done through an anonymous online survey on the MERB approved platform LimeSurvey. It is important to note that non-probability and convenience sampling will be used throughout our recruitment of participants. We have reached out to various clubs and communities at McMaster with approval of the Ethics board as we aim to collect data from McMaster undergraduate students who are 18 years of age and older. Overall, the survey consists of approximately 30 questions, that are both close and open ended.

Once we have completed data collection, we aim to find results that should be able to provide insight into the personal experiences of McMaster undergraduate students. We hope to find if factors such as indulging in social comparisons, characteristics of resilience, and feelings of loneliness directly or indirectly impact romantic relationships and subjective well-being. In other words, there should be a significant correlation between the two variables: romantic relationships and subjective well-being.

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