Seminar Paper

Advanced Topics in Social Network Analysis

I can't get no satisfaction: Do opposites attract?

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1. Abstract

The purpose of the following study is to examine the correlation between relationship satisfaction and homophiles in romantic relationships. A survey was used in order to conduct the research. There were 38 participants in the study. There were two conditions created in order to fill out the survey. 17 participants were instructed to think about the most satisfying relationship they have had, whereas 21 participants were asked to think about the most unsatisfying relationship they have had in order to answer the survey. The researchers found that the most significant factors in determining relationship satisfaction were political and religious views.

2. Introduction

With today's fast paced society and technologies such as social media, dating websites and mobile applications, make it easier for us to broaden our social network. Social networks are a core aspect within our society and the study of them help us better understand how people interact with one another. Social networks are formed based on various types of connections (i.e. relationships). These relationships are affected by many variables regardless of the relationship type. For the purpose of this paper, the researchers will discuss romantic relationships. They believe it is important to study this phenomenon due to the fact that these are the most intimate and intricate relationships within the social network. Furthermore, studying dyadic relationships, the most basic structure within a network; can be the most important to study and help us understand the broader concepts within networks.

Why do some romantic relationships end while others last forever? This is a complex question with no one correct answer; however, the researchers seek to examine the variables of homophily and how it contributes to an overall satisfying romantic relationship. Homophily (the level of similarity between people) may increase one's likelihood to remain in a partnership and be more satisfied in the relationship. Romantic relationships are complicated, yet are part of our humanistic need for procreation. Since the beginning of time, humans have bonded romantically in order to continue civilization (the largest social network) and fulfill different needs. The needs and reasons to be in a romantic relationship have shifted over the years from peacekeeping and bloodlines, to companionship and happiness (Gerstel,1987).

Nowadays, the motivation to stay in a romantic relationship has a lot to do with *satisfaction and instant gratification*. Young adults seek to satisfy their needs in an immediate manner. If one compares the beginning of the 20th century, where divorce was considered shameful and staying in a marriage was a social norm (Gerstel,1987); to today's more liberal ideas of being in a romantic relationship (where happiness trumps all), one can understand why divorce rates are on the rise. For instance, one is more likely to separate from a romantic partner if they do not feel *fulfilled* or if their needs are not met. A study conducted by Cleek and Pearson (1985), found that the second most popular reasons for getting a divorce are due to

incompatibility and unhappiness. This shift has inspired a lot of research that focuses on what keeps people happy and satisfied while involved in a romantic relationship.

For the purpose of this paper, homophily will be studied in particular as a variable affecting relationship satisfaction among those involved in a romantic relationship. This paper will analyze and try to answer questions such as the following one: Is similarity to the romantic partner an indicator of how satisfying the relationship is?

3. Related Work

One can define romantic relationships as partnership between two people who have mutually agreed to engage in constant interaction mostly characterized by affective and anticipated sexual behavior (Collins, W. A., Welsh, D. P., & Furman, W., 2009). This definition can be applied to both hetero and homo sexual relationships. Once a romantic relationship is established, the satisfaction one gets within the said relationship affect its viability. Satisfaction refers to the idea of feeling that all wishes and expectations are being fulfilled. In the particular context of a relationship, it refers to the extent to which one feels content with the relationship (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006).

Gender stereotyping refers to the traditional roles that men and women play within the context of a relationship. This may be an indicator to how satisfied one might feel within the context of a romantic relationship. For instance, stereotypically, men are supposed to be assertive and dominant, while women play a more passive and obedient role. In a situation where those gender roles are reversed or unfulfilled, a member of the relationship may feel unsatisfied (Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003).

There are many factor that affect romantic relationship satisfaction. For example, the research conducted by Anderson & Emmers-Sommer (2006) studied the key predictors in online romantic relationship satisfaction. They analyzed 114 surveys in order to measured variables such as similarity, commitment, intimacy, trust, attributional confidence, communication satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, relationship length and amount of online communication. Their research found that intimacy, trust and communication satisfaction were the strongest predictors of overall relationship satisfaction for people involved in online romantic relationships. Even though their research focused on online relationship, it may shed light on what factors influence overall relationship satisfaction. One could argue that these factors may also apply in an offline relationship and not merely virtual ones.

Other research conducted regarding mindfulness within the context of relationships, suggests that the more mindful one is the better quality one may have within his or her relationship; leading to an overall more satisfying relationship (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell & Rogge, 2007). Many different scholars have

supported the idea that mindfulness promotes a healthy romantic relationship. For instance, Davis & Oathout (1987) stated that a high level of mindfulness is correlated with an increase in self-reported empathy, which is a characteristic that is likely to influence the preservation of relationships, anticipate positive adaptive behaviors, and eventually all lead to relationship satisfaction. Brown, Krusemark, Campbell & Rogge (2007) conducted two experiments that found a positive relation between mindfulness and relationship satisfaction. This is not to ignore the heavy influence that physical intimacy play within the context of a relationship.

One's sexual satisfaction is a major indicator in how satisfied one is regarding an overall relationship (MacNeil & Byers, 2005). A study conducted by Byers (2005) suggests that females have fewer sexual partners than their male counterparts, however, are less likely to stay in a sexually unsatisfying relationship than men are. Byers (2005) continue to suggest that other than sexual fulfillment, there may be a third factor that affects overall relationship satisfaction: communication. According to the research, good sex and good communication is the perfect formula to a satisfying and fulfilling romantic relationship (Byers, 2005). Nevertheless, one may argue that overall similarity may contribute to altogether satisfying relationship.

Homophily is the tendency of people to relate and bond with similar others. Previous studies have demonstrated that gender plays a significant role in online interactions (Hayat, Lesser & Samuel-Azran, 2017; Lesser, Hayat, & Elovici, 2016). Furthermore, researchers suggest that homophily may be a huge influencer when discussing relationship satisfaction. Homophilic qualities in online dating relationships may include life-paths, marital history and whether a person wants children or not. However, offline homophiles have a lot more to do with physical appearances; such as physical build, attractiveness and smoking habits (Fiore & Donath, 2005).

4. Research Question and Hypotheses

Different studies have focused on different aspects of companionship. As reviewed in the previous section, it is clear that there are many factors that can affect one's extent of satisfaction while involved in a romantic relationship. The factors may vary from mindfulness, sexual satisfaction, communication, gender stereotyping, homophily, among others. These factors have been found to be key aspects on determining the extent of satisfaction one may feel while involved in a romantic relationship.

Mindfulness which has been connected to high levels of self report, forces one to enjoy their partner more which leads to an overall high relationship satisfaction level (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell & Rogge, 2007). In a relationship physical connection is crucial for nourishing the relationship bond, when partners feel sexually satisfied they are more likely to stay in that relationship (MacNeil, & Byers, 2005). However sex must come along side with communication in order for a relationship to last (Byers, 2005). Communication within a romantic relationship makes both members feel understood and appreciated.

The main focus of this research, however, is to determine how significant the role of homophily plays within the context of romantic couple hood. For instance, the main interest of this study is to find if people that are satisfied in their romantic relationships are more likely to be more similar to their partners, as opposed to the people who are not satisfied with their romantic relationship, that are more likely to be less similar to their partners.

This led the researchers to the following questions: (Q1) Are romantic partners that share many similar qualities more satisfied in their romantic relationships than couples who do not? (Q2) Which type of similarities are the more significant for a couples overall satisfaction? (upbringing, ideology etc.)

The researchers hypothesis that (H1) the more similarities one has to their partner, the higher chances they will be satisfied in their relationship. (H2) The

biggest factors that affect overall relationship satisfaction are similar ideologies and upbringing.

5. Methodology

The researchers conducted a quantitative exploratory (descriptive) study to try and find a correlation between similarities of romantic partners and relationship satisfaction. The study was conducted using surveys shared on various Facebook groups.

Population

While studying this correlational research, the researchers chose to study young adults between the ages of 24 to 30 foreigners living in Israel that use Facebook. The reason why this population was chosen was due to the fact that both researchers fall into this age range and lifestyle. Furthermore, the researchers believe that many people at these ages start forming mature and serious relationships that can potentially last or lead to marriage and cohabitation.

Sample

Due to logistical and practical limitations the researchers chose a sample size of 38 young adults who are Facebook users among the ages of 24 to 30 years old. The reason behind this sample size was that the researchers assume that most serious relationships are created and build on this age frame.

The researchers utilized this comfort sample by using Facebook as their distribution platform. The researchers were able to reach a wider range of non-biased participants, as well as participants from various backgrounds.

Instruments

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section had general questions such as age, gender, and country of origin. Followed by the second section that asked participants about their romantic relationships similarity (or dissimilarity): political views, education level, religious views, attractiveness and upbringing. All the surveys contained the same questions. There were two versions of the same survey; the only difference was in the instructions. The people who answered the first survey were instructed to think of the most satisfying relationship they have ever been in.

The instructions on the second survey asked participants to think of the most unsatisfying relationship they have ever been in.

The independent variable of this study was the satisfaction level, which each participant rated accordingly. The dependent variables were the political views, education level, religious views, attractiveness and upbringing.

Process

The study was conducted by using surveys distributed on various Facebook groups. The surveys were then posted along with a short description explaining to potential participants what the study seeks to investigate. In addition, at the beginning of the surveys before any questions were asked there was also a small paragraph explaining who the researchers are (including contact information) and assuring that the participants' identities would remain confidential.

The surveys were then posted over a one week time period throughout various times a day. The reason for this was that different types of facebook users log on and off at different times a day. For example, a late night user may have a different lifestyle than a morning user. Researchers seek to find a wide variety of participants.

6. Results and Discussion

The participants of the survey were young adults from many different parts of the world answering our survey. These regions included the United States, South America and Russia. All participants' ages ranged from 24-30 and were both male and female. The researchers instructed the two groups of participants to answer the survey.

One group, the larger of the two (N= 23 participants) had 15 female participants and 6 males participants whose ages averaged to 26.5. They were instructed to think about their most unsatisfying relationship and answer the survey. The other groups (N=17) which consisted of 10 females and 7 males, whose ages averaged to be 26.9 were given the same survey however were instructed to think of the most satisfying romantic relationship they were involved in.

In order to analyze the results of this study, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. The independent sample T-test helps researchers compare the means between two different groups. For the purpose of this study, the means compared were of the groups mentioned in the paragraph above. Political views, religious level, upbringing similarity level, education level and attractiveness were the dependent variables of this study. The independent variable tested was the level of satisfaction each participant rated based on the group they were assigned to. The researchers hoped to find that the more similar one is to their partner, the more likely one is to be satisfied in the overall relationship, same goes to those who are not similar to their partners. According to these findings, political and religious views are the only significant different results.

There was a significant difference in score of *religious views* (M=2.43, SD=1.63), unsatisfied relationship compared to that of satisfied relationship (M=3.88 SD 1.054) conditions; $t(34.4)=3.319$, $p=0.02$. There was a significant difference in score of *political views* (M=2.33, SD= 1.390), unsatisfied relationship compared to that of satisfied relationship (M=3.41, SD= 0.87 conditions); $t(34.06)=2.918$, $p=0.006$. There was a not significant difference in score of *upbringing* (M=1.9, SD=

1.446), unsatisfied relationship compared to that of satisfied relationship ($M=2.41$, $SD= 1.502$) conditions; $t(3.790)=1.052$, $p=0.3$. There was a not significant difference in score of *education level* ($M=3.24$, $SD= 1.375$), unsatisfied relationship compared to that of satisfied relationship ($M=3.71$, $SD= 1.213$) conditions; $t(35.699)=1.113$, $p=0.273$. There was a not significant difference in score of *attractive level* ($M=2.76$, $SD= 1.3$), unsatisfied relationship compared to that of satisfied relationship ($M=3.41$, $SD= 1.004$) conditions; $t(35.939)=1.738$, $p=0.091$.

Group Statistics

	V ₁	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How similar were are your religious views	1	21	2.43	1.630	.356
	2	17	3.88	1.054	.256
How similar were are your political views	1	21	2.33	1.390	.303
	2	17	3.41	.870	.211
How similar were are your upbringing how you were raised	1	21	1.90	1.446	.316
	2	17	2.41	1.502	.364
How similar were are your education level	1	21	3.24	1.375	.300
	2	17	3.71	1.213	.294
To what extent do you believe that you and your partner are were	1	21	2.76	1.300	.284
	2	17	3.41	1.004	.243

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
How similar were are your religious views	Equal variances assumed	8.701	.006	-3.175	36	.003	-1.454	.458	-2.382	-.525
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.319	34.489	.002	-1.454	.438	-2.343	-.564
How similar were are your political views	Equal variances assumed	5.381	.026	-2.783	36	.009	-1.078	.387	-1.864	-.293
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.918	34.068	.006	-1.078	.370	-1.830	-.327
How similar were are your upbringing how you were raised	Equal variances assumed	.016	.900	-1.056	36	.298	-.507	.480	-1.481	.467
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.052	33.790	.300	-.507	.482	-1.487	.473
How similar were are your education level	Equal variances assumed	1.527	.225	-1.098	36	.279	-.468	.426	-1.331	.396
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.113	35.699	.273	-.468	.420	-1.320	.385
To what extent do you believe that you and your partner are were	Equal variances assumed	1.203	.280	-1.691	36	.099	-.650	.384	-1.429	.129
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.738	35.939	.091	-.650	.374	-1.408	.108

Based on this results, the research questions have been answered: Are romantic partners that share many similar qualities more satisfied in their romantic relationships than couples who do not? Which type of similarities are the more significant for a couples overall satisfaction?

Romantic partners that share similar qualities are not necessarily more satisfied in their relationships. However, one the biggest indicators in overall satisfaction are common ideologies such political and religious views. Based on the

results, the main hypothesis of the study has been partially confirmed depending on which factors are being discussed.

Researchers can thereby conclude that the more similar the one's political and religious views are to their partners, the more likely one will be satisfied in the overall relationship. Furthermore, it can be said that political and religious views are significant factors in determining overall relationship satisfaction. However, the researchers suggest that further research should be done in regards to the *level of attractiveness*, because it did show semi-significant results. This is not to say that the all other factors tested are less crucial in determining overall relationship satisfaction. Further research with a bigger sample size must be conducted to prove or disprove those factors.

Last but not least, the findings that were discovered in this research do not negate the findings done by other researchers in other similar studies (see Related Works). In contrary, they add up to the list of crucial factors that affect overall relationship satisfaction. This results shed light on the great complexity of romantic relationships and the infinite factors that can affect satisfaction.

7.Challenges

As the research was being conducted, the researchers encountered a few challenges. These were direct results from implementing the type of methodology chosen. A few of these challenges include the impossibility of validating the answers that each participant gave. Since the survey was conducted online, the true identity of each participant will never be confirmed. However, with that in mind, the researchers found this as an advantage as well, because there was no social pressures or judgments while answering, and thus no reason to lie. Moreover, participants were in the comfort of their own space, enabling them to answer freely. Last but not least, the questionnaire was untimed, so the participant had the option to answer the survey at any time, anywhere, whenever was most convenient for them. In addition, the researchers were unable to monitor how many participants took each survey. This resulted in one survey being taken more than the other.

Another challenge was the extent of accuracy in which the participants answer. For instance, people face obstacles and challenges in their daily lives that may affect their relationship perception and satisfaction. As it was reviewed in previous sections, there are many factors influencing one's overall satisfaction while being in a romantic relationship of any type. For instance, mindfulness was proven to be a factor influencing the way people encounter obstacles in life, therefore affecting how one communicates with their significant other, which may lead to a satisfying or not satisfying relationship (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell & Rogge, 2007).

One of the most significant challenges the researchers faced was that of sample size. In order to further validate the results, a sample size bigger than 38 respondents is needed. One may suggest that for future studies on this topic, a minimum sample size of 100 participants would be more ideal.

Another suggestion for further research could be that due to the participants young age; long term relationship satisfaction could not be determined. The researchers did not ask how long each participant was involved in a romantic

relationship, however it would be assumed that (even among the older participants) a relationship of over ten years was not the case.

Last but not least, a big part of the challenges included the generation in which the researchers fall into. One is required to acknowledge the fact that the researchers fall into the same age category as the respondents, therefore the questionnaire created for the purposed of this study may have been written in a biased manner.

8. Conclusion

The researchers aimed to find if there is a correlation between relationship satisfaction and homophilic qualities in a romantic relationship. Through the online surveys, the researchers found a significant correlation between relationship satisfaction and ideological views in particular religious and political views. These findings help better understand the great complexity of romantic relationships in today's society, and further add to the list of factors that determine relationship satisfaction.

9. References

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10. Appendices

Survey Questions

What is your gender?

How old are you?

What is your country of origin?

The following questions (question 5-9) refers to the similarity between you and a romantic partner. Think of the most unsatisfying romantic relationship you were/are in -- and answer the following questions

OR

The following questions (question 5-9) refers to the similarity between you and a romantic partner. Think of the most satisfying romantic relationship you were/are in -- and answer the following questions

Rank 0-5 scale:

How similar were/ are your: political views

How similar were/ are your: religious views?

How similar were/ are your: education level?

How similar were/ are your: upbringing (how you were raised)?

To what extent do you believe that you and your partner are/were on the same level of attractiveness?