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## **Loneliness, Psychological Need Satisfaction and Romantic Inclination among Youth**

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### **Abstract**

*This research study delves into the intricate interplay between loneliness, psychological need satisfaction, and the degree of romantic inclination among the youth. Against the backdrop of an increasingly interconnected yet socially complex world, understanding the psychological underpinnings that drive romantic inclinations becomes crucial for unravelling the dynamics of contemporary relationships. Utilizing a research framework, this study employs quantitative surveys to explore the correlations between loneliness, the fulfilment of psychological needs, and the strength of romantic inclinations within the demographic of individuals aged 18 to 25. Through the application of well-established psychological models, the research seeks to offer a nuanced comprehension of how experiences of loneliness and the satisfaction of fundamental psychological needs, including autonomy, relatedness, and competence, contribute to shaping and influencing the romantic dynamics among young adults. The outcomes of this research are expected to provide significant insights applicable to both academic and practical spheres. Through an examination of the intersection between loneliness and the fulfilment of psychological needs, the study aims to shed light on potential pathways by which these elements influence the development and strength of romantic relationships. This comprehensive perspective acknowledges the intricate interconnections that form the foundation of emotional and psychological dimensions influencing romantic inclinations among young individuals.*

**Keywords:** *Loneliness, Psychological Need Satisfaction, romantic inclinations, social dimensions, relationships*

## **Introduction**

### **Loneliness**

Loneliness is a complex and multifaceted emotional state characterized by a subjective perception of isolation, disconnection, or a lack of meaningful social connections. It goes beyond physical solitude, encompassing a sense of inadequacy in the quality or quantity of one's social relationships. Individuals experiencing loneliness may feel emotionally or socially detached, even in the presence of others. Loneliness is subjective, meaning that it is based on an individual's perception of their social relationships rather than solely on the actual level of social interaction.

Loneliness can manifest for various reasons, including social isolation, the absence of close relationships, feelings of social rejection, or a mismatch between desired and actual social interactions. It is a universal human experience, and its impact can be both emotional and physical, influencing mental well-being, overall health, and quality of life.

The causes of loneliness are diverse and can be influenced by factors such as life transitions, societal changes, cultural dynamics, and individual personality traits. Addressing loneliness often involves understanding the specific factors contributing to an individual's sense of isolation and working towards fostering meaningful connections, whether through social interactions, support networks, or other interventions aimed at improving well-being.

### **Psychological Need**

Psychological needs refer to fundamental requirements for emotional and mental well-being that individuals must satisfy for optimal functioning and overall psychological health. These needs are essential components of various psychological theories and frameworks, recognizing that fulfilling these requirements is crucial for an individual's overall satisfaction and positive mental state. Three primary psychological needs often emphasized in psychological theories are autonomy, relatedness, and competence:

Autonomy: Autonomy is the need for independence and the ability to make one's own choices. It involves a sense of personal agency, self-determination, and the freedom to act in alignment with one's values and interests. Meeting the need for autonomy contributes to a sense of control over one's life and decisions.

Relatedness: Relatedness is the need for meaningful connections and social interactions with others. It encompasses the desire for companionship, emotional support, and a sense of belonging within interpersonal relationships, whether they be with friends, family, or a broader social community.

Competence: Competence is the need to feel effective and capable in one's actions and endeavours. It involves the pursuit of mastery, achievement, and the ability to navigate and control the environment. Meeting the need for competence contributes to a sense of self-efficacy and accomplishment.

These psychological needs are considered essential for fostering psychological well-being and are often incorporated into various psychological theories, including Self-Determination Theory

(SDT) and Deci and Ryan's Cognitive Evaluation Theory. The satisfaction of these needs is seen as vital for promoting positive mental health, motivation, and a sense of fulfilment in various aspects of life.

### **Romantic Inclination**

Relationship researchers have often viewed that love is a multifaceted attitude and an aspect of the individual's personality or experience which transcends particular persons and situations (Rubin, 1970). Though romantic relationship is an interpersonal phenomenon, the intrapersonal aspects like passionate need for a partner, positive attitude towards such relationship and romantic fantasies about the partner actually precedes the basic formation of relationship. This clearly indicates that individuals develop a degree of readiness and inclination to fall in love. Such inclination or propensity for love may be termed as 'Romantic Inclination'. It can be defined as "a degree to which an individual is inclined to initiate or accept a romantic relationship with a member of opposite sex" It is the propensity or readiness a person shows to involve himself / herself in a romantic relationship process with the other person. It reflects a degree of desire to fall in love and enjoy being in love and being loved. It involves a set of positive attitudes towards love and love marriages, a strong interpersonal attraction towards opposite sex, craving for an exclusive relationship and also feeling empty without it. It also involves marriage ideation, match making and fantasy thoughts about the partner. It can be construed as a strong trait dependent interpersonal need. To understand the psychological mechanisms behind love, it must be understood as a basic interpersonal need strongly powered by individual, interpersonal and social factors. The need to love and to be loved is the central aspect of the development and maintenance of romantic relationship. In fact, it is the starting point of whole relationship dynamics that would follow. As romantic inclination refers to the romantic interests of the individual, it might be a predicting factor of one's future romantic relationship which would take a lot of time, energy and psychological cost. Thus, romantic inclination can be viewed as an indicator of a person's interest, attitude and to a great extent predictor of romantic relationship. Hence, in the present study romantic relationship is projected in terms of romantic inclination.

### **Significance of Romantic Relationship in Youth**

Development of love is multi-factorial which is influenced by factors such as age, gender, attachment styles, changes within the relationship, and on the social contexts in which they occur (Furman & Collins,2008; Furman & Shaffer, 2003). It also depends on the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional processes occurring in the individual characteristics of the youth. Empirical studies have found associations between adolescents' romantic experiences and multiple aspects of individual development such as developing a healthy personal identity, handling family relationships, maintaining harmonious relations with peers group, success in academics, developing health views on sexuality and consolidating career choices (Furman & Collins, 2008; Furman & Shaffer,2003). Also, self-esteem, self-confidence, and social competence were correlated to the quality of romantic relationship (Pearce, Boergers & Prinstein 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner & Collins 2001, 2004). Longitudinal studies have shown that quality of romantic relationships in middle adolescence was significantly and positively

related to commitment in other relationships in early adulthood (Seiffge-Krenke & Lang, 2002). While romantic relationship in youth contributes to some developmental advantages, it is not the case for every youth. Studies have shown that poor quality romantic relationships are associated with alcohol and drug use, decreased academic performance, pathological symptoms such as externalizing and internalizing symptoms, poor emotional health, and low job competence (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner & Collins 2001, 2004). Self-silencing due to anxiety over preserving a relationship was associated with poorer communication between partners, depressive symptoms, and greater rejection sensitivity (Harper, Dickson & Welsh, 2006, Harper & Welsh, 2007). Dating behaviour was found to be associated with subsequent misconduct and poor academic performance (Collins, Welsh & Furman 2009, Zimmer Gembeck, 2002). It is understood that romantic relationships can be associated with healthy, normative development in some youth and at the same time can lead to negative and pathological consequences in others. As noted by Welsh, Grello, Harper and Florsheim (2003), better understanding is needed of the factors that differentiate adolescents whose romantic relationships are developmentally positive and constructive and those whose romantic relationships are destructive and pathological.

## **Review of Literature**

- 1. Ganth, D. B., & Kadiravan, S. (2017):** This study delved into the psychosocial determinants of romantic inclination among Indian youth aged 18-24. It discovered that males and individuals with current or past romantic involvement tended to exhibit higher levels of romantic inclination. Additionally, factors such as personality traits, attachment style, and social influences emerged as significant predictors of romantic inclination. These findings underscore the influence of cultural and individual factors on romantic tendencies among young adults in India.
- 2. Kumar, A. (2020):** Examining romantic tendencies across gender and relationship status among college students, this study highlighted gender and relationship status differences in romantic inclination. Male students and those in relationships demonstrated higher levels of romantic inclination compared to their counterparts. The findings shed light on the nuanced interplay between gender dynamics, relationship experiences, and romantic tendencies among young adults in college settings.
- 3. Aziz, S., Chaudhary, A., & Ali, N. (2021):** This study focused on relationship satisfaction and loneliness in romantic relationships, revealing a high prevalence of poor relationship status, dissatisfaction, and loneliness among participants. The findings underscored the importance of addressing dissatisfaction and loneliness to enhance relationship quality. By highlighting the prevalence of these issues, the study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing relationship dynamics and well-being among individuals in romantic relationships.
- 4. Birni, G., Satici, S. A., & Deniz, M. E. (2023):** Investigating the role of self-criticism and romantic relationship satisfaction in loneliness, this study identified that childhood psychological maltreatment predicted loneliness through self-criticism and relationship dissatisfaction. Addressing self-criticism and enhancing relationship satisfaction emerged as potential strategies to alleviate loneliness among individuals. These findings underscore the

impact of early experiences and self-perception on relationship well-being and loneliness among adults.

**5. Leung, A. N. M., & Law, W. (2019):** Two studies explored how intrinsic and extrinsic goals relate to relationship well-being mediated by psychological need satisfaction. The findings revealed that intrinsic goals positively predicted need satisfaction and relationship well-being, while extrinsic goals had a negative impact mediated by need satisfaction. These insights highlight the importance of goal orientation in fostering psychological well-being and relationship satisfaction among individuals.

**6. Oz-Soysal, F. S., Bakahm, O., Tasdelen-Karckay, A., & Ogan, S. (2023):** Investigating the association between autonomy need satisfaction and perceived relationship quality among emerging adults, this study found a positive correlation between autonomy satisfaction, openness, and relationship quality. Autonomy need satisfaction was associated with higher relationship quality through increased openness. These findings underscore the role of autonomy in fostering positive relationship dynamics and wellbeing among emerging adults.

## **Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this study involved a systematic and scientific approach, emphasizing the selection of appropriate tools and statistical techniques. By employing a quantitative research design, the study aimed to provide numerical insights into the complex relationships under investigation.

A crucial aspect of the study was the careful formulation of hypotheses, which served as guiding principles for testing specific relationships among the variables. These hypotheses were structured to explore various facets of the interplay between loneliness, psychological need satisfaction, and romantic inclination, providing a roadmap for data analysis and interpretation.

The research design, characterized by a cross-sectional approach, facilitated the collection of data at a single point in time, allowing for a snapshot view of the variables' relationships. Statistical analyses, including regression analysis and subgroup comparisons, were employed to explore the predictive power of loneliness and psychological need satisfaction on romantic inclination, as well as potential differences based on factors like gender and relationship status.

Central to the study's methodology were the carefully selected tools, including the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and Romantic Inclination Scale. These instruments provided comprehensive measures of the constructs under investigation, ensuring robust data collection and analysis.

The sample, drawn from Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, was carefully selected to represent a diverse range of young individuals. Inclusion criteria ensured that participants fell within the specified age range and possessed the necessary language proficiency, while exclusion criteria aimed to maintain data quality by excluding individuals with cognitive impairments or language barriers.

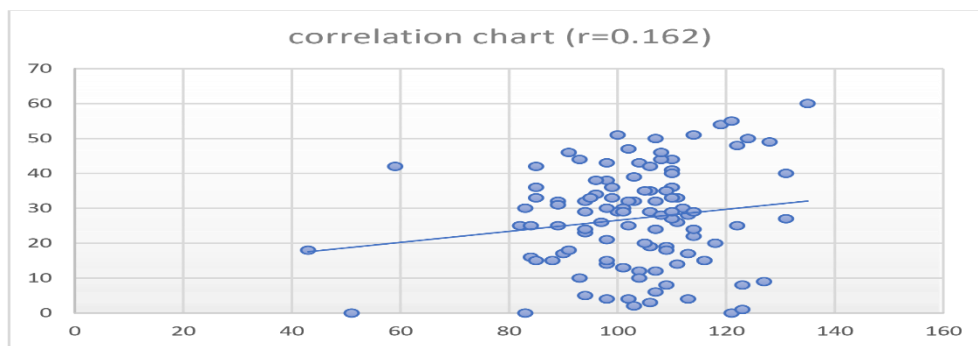
The data collection process was conducted with utmost care and respect for participants' autonomy and privacy. Participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Throughout the process, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, ensuring their comfort and understanding.

Overall, the methodology employed in this study was comprehensive, systematic, and ethically sound, aiming to provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between loneliness, psychological need satisfaction, and romantic inclination among youth.

## Result And Discussion

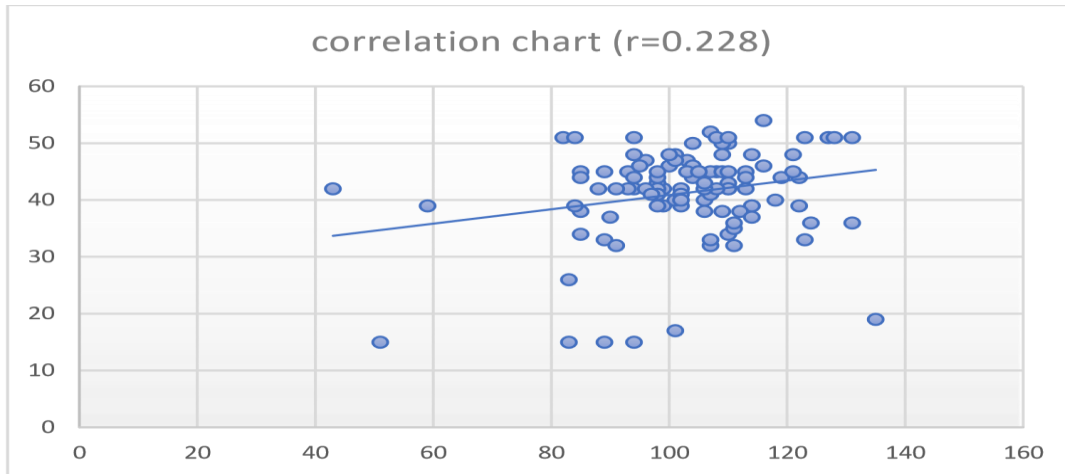
The pursuit of romantic relationships is a fundamental aspect of human social behaviour, particularly among youth. Understanding the psychosocial determinants that influence romantic inclination is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between romantic inclination and two key factors: loneliness and psychological need satisfaction. Additionally, the study explored how these relationships vary based on participants' relationship status.

### Romantic Inclination and Loneliness

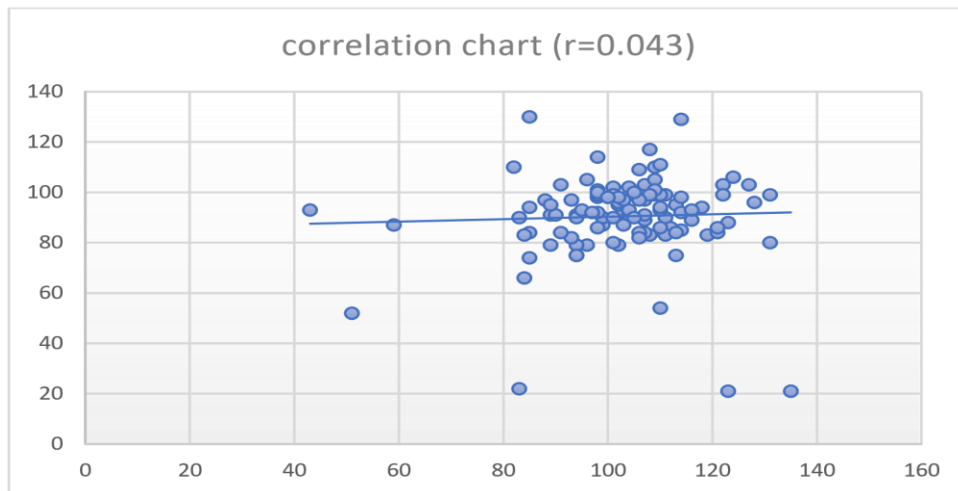


The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between romantic inclination and loneliness among the youth participants ( $r = 0.162$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding suggests that individuals experiencing higher levels of loneliness tend to exhibit a greater inclination towards romantic relationships. However, the effect size was relatively small, indicating that while there is a connection between loneliness and romantic inclination, other factors may also play significant roles. Several possible explanations could elucidate this relationship. Individuals may seek out romantic relationships as a means of alleviating feelings of social isolation or loneliness, perceiving them as sources of companionship and emotional fulfilment. Moreover, the bidirectional nature of the relationship between loneliness and romantic inclination suggests that engaging in romantic relationships may mitigate feelings of loneliness by providing opportunities for social connection and intimacy.

### Romantic Inclination and Psychological Need Satisfaction



The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between romantic inclination and psychological need satisfaction within specific relationships ( $r = 0.228, p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that individuals who experience greater satisfaction in their close relationships are more likely to exhibit higher levels of romantic inclination. Fulfilling psychological needs within these relationships contributes to feelings of emotional connection and intimacy, thereby enhancing romantic attraction and interest.



However, the correlation between romantic inclination and psychological need satisfaction in general was non-significant ( $r = 0.043, p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that while satisfaction within specific relationships influences romantic tendencies, overall psychological well-being across various life domains may not directly impact romantic inclination among youth.

### **Romantic Inclination Based on Relationship Status**

### Descriptive Statistics

|                    | N  | Mean     | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|----|----------|----------------|
| 1                  | 39 | 105.4359 | 10.42465       |
| 2                  | 32 | 109.1563 | 10.94004       |
| 3                  | 37 | 94.4865  | 17.09227       |
| Valid N (listwise) | 32 |          |                |

Group 1 = never been in romantic relationship

Group 2 = presently in romantic relationship

Group 3 = experienced romantic relationship at least once

#### ANOVA

1 & 2

|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Between Groups | 243.290        | 1  | 243.290     | 2.141 | 0.148 |
| Within Groups  | 7839.808       | 69 | 113.620     |       |       |
| Total          | 8083.099       | 70 |             |       |       |

#### ANOVA

1 & 3

|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.  |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Between Groups | 2276.325       | 1  | 2276.325    | 11.501 | 0.001 |
| Within Groups  | 14646.833      | 74 | 197.930     |        |       |
| Total          | 16923.158      | 75 |             |        |       |

#### ANOVA

2 & 3

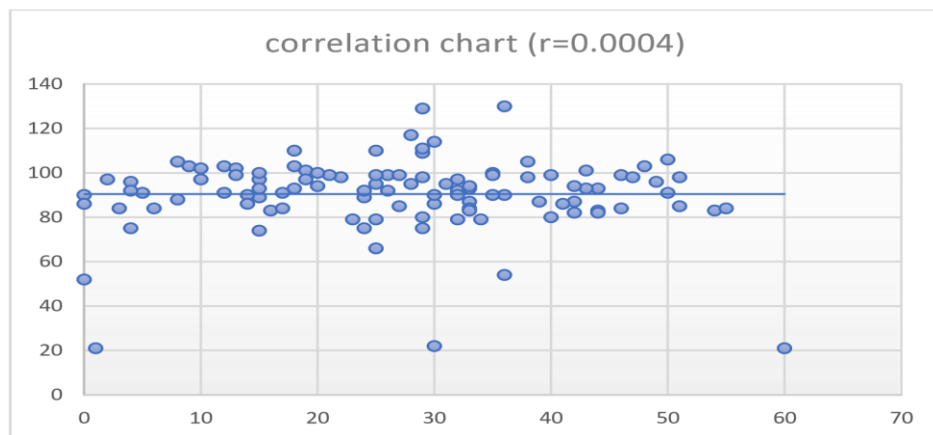
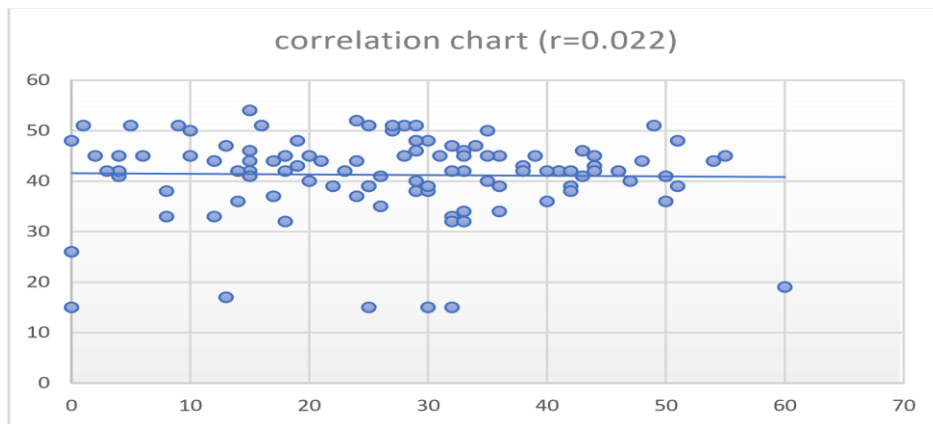
|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.  |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Between Groups | 3692.741       | 1  | 3692.741    | 17.390 | 0.000 |
| Within Groups  | 14227.462      | 67 | 212.350     |        |       |
| Total          | 17920.203      | 68 |             |        |       |



The study investigated whether relationship status plays a role in shaping romantic inclination among youth. Interestingly, while no significant difference was found between individuals who have never been in a romantic relationship and those currently in one ( $p = 0.148$ ), significant differences were observed between those who have never been in a romantic relationship and those who have experienced one at least once ( $p = 0.001$ ), as well as between individuals presently in a romantic relationship and those with prior romantic experiences ( $p = 0.000$ ).

These findings suggest that prior romantic relationship experiences may influence individuals' romantic tendencies. Factors such as expectations, preferences, and relationship skills developed through past experiences may impact current romantic inclinations. Moreover, individuals in current romantic relationships may exhibit higher levels of romantic inclination due to active engagement in romantic activities and experiences within their relationships.

### Loneliness and Psychological Need Satisfaction



The correlation analysis between loneliness and psychological need satisfaction provided valuable insights into their relationship. Surprisingly, the correlations were non-significant, both within specific relationships ( $r = -0.022$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and in general ( $r = 0.0004$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). These findings suggest that feelings of loneliness may not significantly influence individuals' satisfaction with their psychological needs, challenging the proposed mediation model.

Overall, the study sheds light on the complex interplay between loneliness, psychological need satisfaction, and romantic inclination among youth. While loneliness and satisfaction within specific relationships were found to influence romantic tendencies, general psychological wellbeing and relationship status also played significant roles. These findings underscore the need for further research to explore the underlying mechanisms driving these relationships and to develop targeted interventions that support positive romantic outcomes among young individuals.

## Overview

The present research delves into the intricate dynamics of romantic inclination among youth, focusing on the influence of loneliness and psychological need satisfaction, while also examining the role of relationship status. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study offers valuable insights into the factors shaping romantic tendencies and interpersonal relationships among young individuals.

The findings reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between romantic inclination and loneliness among youth participants. Despite the small effect size, the connection suggests that individuals experiencing higher levels of loneliness tend to exhibit a greater inclination towards romantic relationships. Possible explanations include seeking companionship and emotional fulfilment in romantic connections, as well as the bidirectional nature of the relationship between loneliness and romantic inclination.

The analysis uncovers a significant positive correlation between romantic inclination and psychological need satisfaction within specific relationships. This indicates that individuals who experience greater satisfaction in their close relationships are more likely to exhibit higher levels of romantic inclination. However, the correlation between romantic inclination and psychological need satisfaction in general was non-significant, suggesting that overall psychological well-being may not directly impact romantic tendencies.

Exploring the role of relationship status, the study finds significant differences in romantic inclination between individuals with varying relationship experiences. While no significant difference is observed between individuals currently in a romantic relationship and those who have never been in one, significant disparities are noted between those with prior romantic experiences and those without. This suggests that past relationship experiences may influence current romantic tendencies among youth.

Surprisingly, the correlation analysis between loneliness and psychological need satisfaction yields non-significant results, challenging the proposed mediation model. This implies that

feelings of loneliness may not significantly impact individuals' satisfaction with their psychological needs, both within specific relationships and in general.

The study's findings underscore the complexity of romantic inclination among youth, highlighting the multifaceted interplay between loneliness, psychological need satisfaction, and relationship status. While loneliness and satisfaction within specific relationships emerge as influential factors, broader psychological well-being and past relationship experiences also play significant roles. These insights pave the way for further research to explore the underlying mechanisms driving romantic tendencies and to develop targeted interventions promoting positive romantic outcomes among youth.

In summary, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial determinants shaping romantic inclination among youth, contributing valuable insights to the fields of psychology, sociology, and youth development.

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