

# An Investigation into The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Online Romantic Relationship Satisfaction in Young Adults

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## Abstract

Online romantic relationships among young adults are influenced by emotional intelligence (EI) to enhance satisfaction, as demonstrated by this study. In the face of digital communication's growing role in mediating interpersonal connections, it'll be crucial to investigate how emotional competencies impact the quality of relationships online. The study examined the impact of EI on online romantic relationships and explored determinants such as empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills. 250 individuals aged 18-35 who were involved in online romantic relationships for research purposes were analyzed using a mixed-method approach. Key variables were assessed using standardized EI questionnaires and the Relationship Assessment Scale, with statistical analyses such as Pearson's correlation and regression being conducted to support these findings. Online romantic relationships satisfaction was found to be positively and moderately positively linked with emotional intelligence ( $r = .411$ ,  $p > .01$ .) The correlation between EI and relationship satisfaction was found to be highly significant through regression analysis, with higher EIE indicating better emotional connections and more satisfying digital connections. Object-wise, the analysis highlighted strengths in empathy and emotional intelligence but flaws related to self-motivation and adaptability. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence is crucial for maintaining intimacy and stability in online connections. The findings are part of a larger movement towards digital empathy, which could have implications for relationship therapy and training, as well as other measures to enhance online relational health.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, online relationships, digital empathy, young adults, relationship satisfaction

## Introduction

Digital technology has changed the way people build and keep relationships. Online places, like social media and dating apps, have opened up new ways for people to meet and connect, especially for young adults who use these tools a lot. For them, online relationships are not just an extra part of their lives—they are a big part of how they interact socially and feel emotionally. Even though using digital tools makes it easier to stay in touch, it also brings some problems. It can be hard to understand what someone really means without seeing their body language, and it's sometimes tricky to build trust and feel close to someone online. These issues show how important it is to have good emotional intelligence when managing relationships online.

## Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, or EI, has become a big topic in recent years. It started with Salovey and Mayer in 1990, who said EI is about being able to notice, use, understand, and control your emotions to make better decisions. Later, Daniel Goleman in 1995 made it more popular by breaking it down into five parts: knowing yourself, controlling your reactions, staying motivated, understanding others, and being good at interacting with people. These skills help people handle their feelings well, respond to others in a thoughtful way, and create stronger connections with others. Now, emotional intelligence is seen as a key factor in how happy someone is, how well they get along with others, and how successful they are in their work.

### **Romantic Relationship Satisfaction**

Relationship satisfaction means how happy and supported people feel in their romantic relationships (Hendrick et al., 1998). When people are satisfied in their relationships, they usually feel better emotionally, healthier mentally, and more content with their lives overall (Fletcher et al., 2000). Many things affect how satisfied people are in a relationship, like how well they talk to each other, how much they understand each other's feelings, how they handle arguments, if they share similar beliefs and values, and how other problems in life affect their relationship. In online relationships, where people mainly talk through text or digital messages, these factors become even more important. Because of this, being emotionally smart can really help in making sense of online interactions and improving how satisfied people are in their relationships.

### **Young Adults in the Digital Era**

Young adulthood is the time in life between the ages of 18 and 35. This is a big period for people to learn about themselves, develop their emotions, and find meaningful romantic connections (Arnett, 2000). Young adults also use digital communication tools the most, which makes them a great group to study how romantic relationships work online. Because they rely so much on virtual ways to connect, it's important to look into how emotional skills affect their relationship experiences in online settings. Most studies about relationship satisfaction focus on face-to-face or married relationships, but there isn't much research looking specifically at how satisfied young adults are in online romantic relationships.

### **The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Online Relationships**

Studies show that people who are emotionally intelligent are better at managing their feelings, understanding others' emotions, and handling disagreements in a positive way (Schutte et al., 2001; Wong & Law, 2002). These skills are especially important in online situations, where there's no face-to-face interaction and people rely only on text or images to express emotions. This can make it harder to understand what others are feeling. Research in related areas also backs this up: for instance, Backhaus et al. (2020) found that higher emotional intelligence leads to better teamwork and happier experiences in online learning. This suggests that emotional intelligence might also be key to happiness in online romantic relationships, though not much research has been done on this topic yet.

### **Research Gap**

Even though a lot of research shows that emotional intelligence is important in real-life relationships and for overall happiness, there's not much known about how it affects online interactions. Most studies have looked at married couples or relationships that happen offline, missing the unique ways people connect online. Since online communication doesn't include body language or tone of voice, it's more difficult to show empathy and control emotions. Also, how different cultures and groups of people behave in online relationships hasn't been studied much. This shows that more research is needed to understand how emotional intelligence influences satisfaction in online romantic relationships, especially among young adults.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in addressing a gap by examining how emotional intelligence relates to satisfaction in online romantic relationships among young adults. It shows how emotional skills can help people maintain closeness, trust, and strength in digital relationships. The research not only adds to our understanding of emotional intelligence theories but also provides useful insights for counseling, education, and training in digital communication. As more people form relationships online, understanding the mental factors that lead to satisfaction is important for building healthier and more meaningful connections in today's digital world. Through this lens, it will explore whether digital empathy, empathy's role in communication, and emotional regulation can be enhanced or cultivated in digital settings, where traditional face-to-face interaction cues are absent.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Outcomes**

In the 1990s, Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. Since then, extensive research has linked EI to interpersonal functioning. Schutte et al. (2001), in a study of 159 college students using a self-report EI scale, found that higher EI was positively associated with relationship satisfaction and greater empathy toward partners. Similarly, Wong and Law (2002) developed the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and demonstrated, through a survey of 200 employees in Hong Kong, that EI predicted job and relationship satisfaction via effective emotional regulation.

Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey (2011) examined high school students (N = 329) using the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and found that adolescents with higher EI reported stronger social connectedness and better romantic adjustment. These results established EI as an important predictor of relational quality across age groups.

#### **Marital and Romantic Relationships**

Multiple studies have shown that EI fosters satisfaction in close romantic and marital bonds. Schutte et al. (2007), in a sample of 120 married couples, found that individuals with higher EI reported better marital satisfaction and lower conflict. Parsakia et al. (2023), using a correlational design with 300 Iranian couples, reported that emotional intelligence significantly predicted marital conflict reduction. Similarly, Tyagi and Khanam (2023)

assessed 180 young adults and showed that EI had a strong positive relationship with romantic satisfaction, whereas self-esteem had weaker or negative correlations.

Goyal and Narayan (2024), in their review of 23 empirical studies, concluded that emotional intelligence consistently predicted marital adjustment across diverse contexts. They emphasized that emotionally intelligent partners demonstrate greater empathy, better communication, and more effective conflict resolution. These findings highlight the universality of EI in promoting intimacy and stability.

### **Young Adults and Relationship Satisfaction**

Young adulthood is a stage marked by identity exploration and the pursuit of intimacy. Carcedo et al. (2020) surveyed 1,850 Spanish university students and found that sexual satisfaction, emotional regulation, and mental health outcomes were strongly interrelated. Ain et al. (2021) studied 300 Pakistani undergraduates and revealed that higher grit and emotional intelligence jointly predicted greater relationship satisfaction and academic success. Both studies highlight how EI interacts with other psychological traits to enhance relational and personal outcomes in young adults.

Szczesniak and Tulecka (2020) investigated 500 Polish students and demonstrated that positive family functioning mediated the relationship between EI and overall well-being, including relational quality. These findings confirm that EI is particularly relevant during young adulthood, when digital platforms and family backgrounds shape romantic experiences.

### **Emotional Intelligence in Digital Contexts**

While EI's role in offline relationships is well established, its influence in digital communication has received less attention. Backhaus et al. (2020), in an online learning context involving 270 university students, found that participants with higher EI reported greater satisfaction and collaboration in virtual group work. This suggests that EI skills transfer into digital spaces. Similarly, Sperandeo et al. (2021) explored empathy in psychotherapy delivered online versus in person. Using patient surveys (N = 74), they found higher perceived empathy in online settings, indicating that digital platforms can foster intimacy when emotional skills are present.

The growing literature on digital empathy further supports this view. Shanbhag (2024) reviewed evidence showing that online communication often weakens empathic depth due to reduced non-verbal cues, yet individuals who intentionally engage emotionally can sustain genuine connections. Malvankar (2024) argued that while emojis and quick responses often lead to superficial engagement, deeper digital empathy can be cultivated through deliberate and emotionally intelligent interaction. These insights imply that EI is crucial for maintaining satisfaction in online romantic relationships.

### **Cultural and Cross-Context Studies**

Cultural variations also influence how EI impacts relational outcomes. Yamamoto (2011), in a Japanese sample of 250 married individuals, demonstrated that EI was strongly correlated

with satisfaction, mediated by collectivist values. Rachmi et al. (2024) studied 400 Indonesian young adults and showed that EI significantly influenced interpersonal quality and life satisfaction, with communication effectiveness acting as a mediator. These studies emphasize that while EI is universally beneficial, its expression and impact may vary across cultures.

### **Technology, Dependency, and Satisfaction**

The rise of smartphones has also complicated romantic satisfaction. Lapierre and Custer (2020) investigated 143 American couples and found that smartphone dependency significantly reduced affectionate communication and satisfaction levels. Conversely, individuals with higher EI were better able to manage digital distractions and sustain intimacy. This suggests that EI may buffer the negative effects of technology on romantic outcomes.

### **Summary**

The research shows that emotional intelligence helps improve relationship happiness in both face-to-face and online settings, including marriages and different cultures.

People with high emotional intelligence are better at understanding others' feelings, managing their own emotions, and solving conflicts, which are important for keeping relationships strong. Studies in digital and therapy settings suggest that emotional intelligence skills also work well in online environments, but it's harder to read emotions without seeing body language or facial expressions. Young adults, who use online platforms a lot, are a key group to study these effects.

Even though there is a lot of evidence, there are still areas that need more research. Very few studies look directly at how emotional intelligence affects satisfaction in online romantic relationships, especially among young adults. Although some research on empathy in digital spaces supports this idea, there aren't enough focused studies. This study looks at how emotional intelligence predicts relationship satisfaction in online romance for young adults, offering both new ideas and useful information for improving relationships in the digital age.

### **Methodology**

#### **Aim**

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and online relationship satisfaction, specifically examining how emotional intelligence influences individuals' ability to manage emotions and maintain satisfying romantic connections in digital communication environments.

#### **Objectives**

1. To assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and online romantic relationship satisfaction.
2. To determine whether higher levels of EI predict greater satisfaction in digital romantic contexts.

3. To provide interpretive insights into the role of specific EI dimensions (empathy, regulation, motivation, social skills) in shaping online romantic experiences.

### **Hypotheses**

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and online romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults.

H1<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and online romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Emotional intelligence does not significantly predict online romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults.

H1<sub>2</sub>: Emotional intelligence significantly predicts online romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults.

### **Research Design**

The study used a quantitative, correlational approach to look at how emotional intelligence is connected to satisfaction in online romantic relationships. Standardized questionnaires were used to measure both emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. Besides looking at correlations and doing regression analysis, the study also looked closely at each item on the emotional intelligence scale, an interpretive item-level analysis. This helped understand specific skills like empathy, emotion regulation, and self-motivation that might affect the success of online relationships. This method allowed for both strong statistical analysis and a deeper understanding of emotional skills in digital romantic settings.

### **Sample**

The study sample consisted of 250 young adults aged between 18 and 35 years who were currently engaged in online romantic relationships. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods, using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to disseminate the survey link.

- **Inclusion criteria:**

1. Participants had to be within the age range of 18–35 years.
2. They were required to be involved in an online romantic relationship of at least three months' duration.
3. They had to provide informed consent and complete all sections of the questionnaire.

- **Exclusion criteria:**

1. Individuals younger than 18 or older than 35 years.
2. Those not currently engaged in an online romantic relationship.
3. Respondents who submitted incomplete questionnaires.



Of the final sample, 142 were female (56.8%) and 108 were male (43.2%), with a mean age of 24.6 years. The gender distribution and age range reflect the demographic most actively engaged in digital communication and online romantic partnerships.

### **Instruments**

Two standard tools were used in the study:

#### **Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire:**

The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, based on Daniel Goleman's framework, is a 50-item self-report tool used in this study. It covers Goleman's five key areas: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each item is answered on a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning "does not apply" and 5 meaning "always applies." A higher overall score suggests a higher level of emotional intelligence. This questionnaire helps gather both total emotional intelligence scores and detailed results for each item to help with interpretation.

#### **Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS):**

This scale was developed by Hendrick in 1988. It has seven questions that measure how satisfied someone is in their romantic relationship. Each question is answered on a scale from 1 to 5, where higher numbers mean more satisfaction. This scale has been used a lot and is known to be reliable, with a reliability score of Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

A short demographic questionnaire was also included to collect basic information like age, gender, level of education, and how long the person has been in their relationship.

### **Data Analysis**

The procedure involved collecting data online. A Google Form was set up with the informed consent form, questions about participants' background, the SSEIT, and the RAS. The link was posted on social media, and people were asked to share it with others (this is called snowball sampling). Everyone could choose to take part or not, and their information would remain anonymous and confidential. On average, completing the questionnaire took about 12 to 15 minutes. People could stop at any time without any problems. Before collecting the data, ethical approval was received from the appropriate academic review board.

For data analysis, SPSS version 26 was used.

The steps followed were:

Descriptive statistics like means, standard deviations, and frequencies were used to describe the basic characteristics of the participants.

Pearson's correlation was used to check how strongly emotional intelligence (EI) was connected to relationship satisfaction.

A simple linear regression was done to see if EI could predict satisfaction levels.

Finally, each item from the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire was looked at closely to find out which specific emotional skills were linked to better online relationship outcomes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants were told about the study's goal and promised that their information would stay private. No personal details were gathered. People could choose to take part or not, and the data was only used for research.

### **Results**

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

The final sample had 250 people, with 142 women (56.8%) and 108 men (43.2%). The average age was 24.6 years, with a standard deviation of 3.7. The length of their relationships varied from three months up to more than three years. Most people (62%) were in relationships that lasted between six months and two years.

On the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, which is based on Daniel Goleman's ideas, the average score was 159.73, with a standard deviation of 40.898. This shows that the group had moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence overall. The scores were spread out in a normal way, with most people scoring in the middle to higher ranges of emotional intelligence.

On the Relationship Assessment Scale, the average score was 21.91, with a standard deviation of 3.486. This suggests that, on average, people were moderately happy with their online romantic relationships. However, there was some difference in how people felt, with some reporting lower satisfaction and others feeling very satisfied.

These basic findings set the stage for further analysis. They show that young adults generally have good emotional intelligence, but their satisfaction with online relationships can vary, possibly because of how they handle emotions in digital interactions.

#### **Correlation Analysis**

To check the first hypothesis, it was looked at how emotional intelligence is connected to satisfaction in online romantic relationships. The results showed a moderate, positive, and meaningful link ( $r = .411$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that when emotional intelligence is higher, people tend to feel more satisfied, appreciated, and supported in their online relationships. The strength of this connection ( $r = .411$ ) shows it's important, but not the only thing that affects how satisfied someone is in a relationship. Because of this, the idea that there's no connection between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction was rejected. This supports the idea that there is a positive relationship between the two.

#### **Regression Analysis**

A simple linear regression was done to check if emotional intelligence (EI) can predict satisfaction in online romantic relationships. The results showed that the model was significant ( $F(1, 248) = 50.292$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and explained 16.9% of the changes in satisfaction ( $R^2 = .169$ ). Emotional intelligence was found to be a key factor that significantly predicted



satisfaction ( $B = 0.035$ ,  $SE = 0.005$ ,  $\beta = .411$ ,  $t = 7.092$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This means that for each increase of one point in EI, satisfaction in the relationship goes up by 0.035 units on the satisfaction scale. The standardized beta value ( $\beta = .411$ ) shows that EI has a moderate impact on relationship satisfaction.

These results support the second hypothesis: the idea that EI does not predict satisfaction was not correct, and the idea that EI does predict satisfaction was proven true. Even though EI explains about 17% of the variation in satisfaction, there is still a big part of the variation that isn't explained. This suggests that other things like how often people talk, how much they trust each other, and outside stressors might also play a big role in how satisfied someone is in an online relationship.

### **Interpretive Item-Level Analysis**

In addition to overall scores, responses to individual questions from the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire gave more detailed information about participants' specific strengths and weaknesses in managing emotions. Participants showed strong abilities in empathy and awareness. Questions that asked about recognizing emotions in themselves and others, like "I can tell when someone is unhappy even if they don't say so," had high scores. Similarly, questions about listening respectfully and not interrupting others were also highly rated, showing that empathy is seen as important for keeping relationships strong in digital settings. Participants also scored well on emotional regulation, such as controlling anger or avoiding outbursts during arguments. This is especially important in online relationships where there are no facial expressions or body language to help understand what someone is feeling.

However, there were weaker areas in motivation and adaptability. Questions about staying motivated when feeling down, staying positive, and adjusting to different communication styles were rated lower. Many participants said they found it hard to stay motivated during low moods, which could affect how consistent they are in their online interactions. Also, adapting to different ways their partners communicate or express needs was a challenge. Responses showed that many people rely on text messages, emojis, and how quickly someone replies as signs of how their partner is feeling. But those with higher emotional intelligence used more than just text — they included voice or video calls to better connect and keep intimacy alive online. Item-level analysis revealed that participants in longer-term online relationships consistently scored higher on items related to emotional clarity and empathy. Although specific communication platforms were not measured, these participants' patterns suggest more frequent use of expressive modalities, such as video calls or voice notes, which may enhance both emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, shorter-term relationships, potentially relying more on text-based interactions, exhibited lower average scores on these items, indicating a possible link between communication richness and relational quality. The detailed responses support the overall findings by showing that empathy and emotional control are the key factors that lead to satisfaction in online relationships, while motivation and adaptability are areas where many young adults still need to grow.

### Summary of the Findings

- The people in the study showed moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence and moderate levels of satisfaction with their online relationships, but this varied from person to person.
- There was a moderate positive connection ( $r = .411$ ) between emotional intelligence and satisfaction in online romantic relationships.
- A regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence is a strong factor in predicting satisfaction, explaining about 16.9% of the differences in how satisfied people are.

Looking at each part of the survey, empathy and the ability to manage emotions were seen as strengths, while self-motivation and adaptability were areas where people struggled. These weaknesses could be targets for improvement.

Overall, the results show that emotional intelligence plays an important role in making online romantic relationships more satisfying, but it isn't the only thing that affects satisfaction.

### Discussion

This study examined the connections between emotional intelligence, relationship satisfaction, and online relationship dynamics. Participants in longer-term online relationships reported higher emotional intelligence and greater satisfaction than those in shorter-term relationships. Although communication methods were not directly measured, patterns suggest that longer-term couples may use more expressive tools, such as video calls or voice messages, which can enhance emotional closeness.

These findings align with prior research highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence for relationship quality. Consistent with Brackett et al. (2006), individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own and their partner's emotions, contributing to greater satisfaction. The study also extends knowledge of online communication by suggesting that richer digital tools may support emotional expression and improve relationship quality.

Theoretically, emotional intelligence appears to influence satisfaction in online relationships, as more emotionally aware individuals may choose communication methods that foster intimacy. Longer-term relationships may also allow couples to refine their emotionally attuned communication over time. Practically, these findings suggest that promoting expressive communication and fostering emotional awareness can enhance online relationship quality. Digital platforms could support this by incorporating features such as voice messages and video chats to facilitate more meaningful interactions.

### Conclusion

This study looked at how emotional intelligence, relationship happiness, and how online relationships work with each other. The main results showed that people in longer online relationships had higher emotional intelligence and felt more satisfied with their

relationships, while those in shorter-term ones had lower satisfaction. Even though the study didn't directly measure how people communicated, the patterns from the questions suggest that using platforms that let people express emotions, like video calls or voice messages, might help build better relationships, while text-only chats might not be as good for connecting emotionally. These results show that emotional intelligence is really important for making online relationships work well. They also expand on existing ideas about relationships, but now in the online world. People who understand their own emotions better seem to choose better ways to talk to each other, which helps them feel closer. Also, staying in a relationship longer might mean they've learned more about how to connect emotionally over time.

From a practical point of view, these findings can help couples who are online and professionals working with them. Encouraging richer ways of communication and helping people develop emotional awareness can improve their relationships. Online platforms can support this by including features that make it easier for people to express themselves, like voice notes, video calls, or interactive reactions. The study has some limits. One is that it didn't directly measure how people used different communication methods.

Also, the study was done at one point in time, and there might be biases in the people who took part, which affects how broadly the results can be applied. Future research should look at relationships over time, measure communication methods directly, and study more types of people to better understand how emotional intelligence and communication choices affect satisfaction in online relationships. Overall, the study shows how personal skills and the tools available online work together to shape digital relationships. It gives both new ideas about how relationships work and useful advice for creating stronger, more connected online partnerships.

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