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Impact of Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Anxiety on Social Relationships

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ABSTRACT

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One of the maximum simple elements of mental wellbeing and first-rate of lifestyles is the social relationships. The contemporary paper specializes in how shallowness, emotional intelligence (EI), and social tension have interaction in affecting the excellent and amount of social relationships of younger adults. The quantitative cross-sectional studies layout became used to acquire gathered records on a pattern of 320 college students (M age = 21.four years, SD = 2.31) and it became measured by using confirmed psychometric tools: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), and the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI). The SPSS v.26 and Hayes' PROCESS macro have been used to do more than one regression evaluation, Pearson correlation, and mediation evaluation. The effects confirmed that shallowness ($\beta = .41, p = .001$) and emotional intelligence ($\beta = .36, p = .001$) had been crucial effective predictors of courting nice, with social tension ($\beta = -.49, p = .001$) being an vital bad one. The mediation evaluation confirmed that social tension partly mediated the correlation among shallowness and the exceptional of social relationships (oblique impact = $-.18, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.27, -.09]$). The powerful impact of social tension on dating delight turned into mediated through emotional intelligence. These consequences spotlight the decisive significance of intrapersonal mental variables in figuring out interpersonal outcomes and imply that interventions that concentrate on shallowness improvement, improvement of emotional skills, and reducing social tension may want to have a tremendous effect at the social lifestyles of younger adults. There are implications to counselors, educators and intellectual fitness practitioners.

Introduction

Human beings are basically social beings, whose mental fitness, cognitive and subjective properly being are carefully related to the best and intensity in their interpersonal relationships. Throughout a lifetime, social relationships may be very crucial as strain buffers, emotional aid givers, and identity-forming and self-expressive arenas. The cappotential to set up, maintain and

advantage pride thru giant social connections is, however, now no longer similarly shared amongst human beings. A good sized quantity of mental literature has tested that a hard and fast of intrapersonal factor, specially vanity, emotional intelligence, and social tension, creates a powerful effect on how human beings make use of and stumble upon their personal social worlds (Baumeister et al., 2013; Leary and Baumeister, 2000). Although those constructs were researched in element on the man or woman level, fantastically much less has been executed to research their interactive outcomes at the pleasant of social relationships, specifically in younger grownup populations who're at a essential developmental segment of organising the underlying social networks in an effort to sooner or later outline their maturity.

Self esteem that is the subjective degree taken through an character of their personal worthiness and functionality takes the middle level in social mental principle. The sociometer principle recommended with the aid of using Leary and Baumeister (2000) indicates that vanity is an inner mind-set of social inclusion, which will increase whilst universal and reduces whilst rejected. In this view, excessive-shallowness folks aren't simplest individuals who sense top approximately themselves; they're human beings whose social radar machine tells them they may be frequently general a good way to address interpersonal conditions confidently, freely, and steadfastly. Empirical research constantly show the lifestyles of the hyperlink among excessive shallowness and better courting pleasure, higher struggle management, much less jealousy, and extra strong social aid (Erol and Orth, 2013; Rentzsch and Gross, 2015). On the opposite hand, low self confidence has been related to preferred interpersonal sensitivity, immoderate reassurance-searching for behavior, and misinterpretation of impartial social statistics as threatening or rejecting statistics, all which intrude with the great of relationships (Murray et al., 2011; Latif & Ullah, 2024).

Emotional intelligence (EI), which, as Mayer and Salovey (1997) conceptualize it, is the capacity to perceive, make use of, realize and manipulate feelings in others and oneself, is a 2d crucial intrapersonal useful resource in coping with the problems of social existence. Given that excessive EI people are greater a hit at deciphering the emotional cues of others, controlling their personal emotional reactions whilst confronting an interpersonal struggle, in addition to displaying sympathy in a way that complements the connections with others. Empirical literature is growing and exhibits sturdy correlations among EI and diverse factors of social functioning consisting of courting pleasure, prosocial behavior, cooperation and cappotential to have interaction in intimacy (Lopes et al., 2011; Schutte et al., 2012; Javed et al., 2020). It is crucial to say that EI has been validated to mediate the effect of traumatic social events, protecting humans towards the dating-destroying effects they'll convey after battle or perceived rejection. The realistic implication is that EI now no longer handiest acts as a useful resource in dating constructing, however additionally acts as a shielding mechanism that holds the nice of relationships no matter interpersonal adversity (Brackett et al., 2011).

A 1/3 crucial intrapersonal variable is social tension, that is surprisingly feared terrible evaluation in a social context and which has a much attaining implication of social relationships. One of the maximum not unusualplace intellectual fitness problems withinside the international is the social tension disorder (SAD) that's envisioned to have an effect on thirteen percentage of people at a few example of their lives (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The subclinical degrees of social tension also are unfavourable to social functioning: socially disturbing people keep away from social interactions, self-reveal much less, experience lonelier, document decrease degrees of dating delight, and feature smaller social networks than decrease nerve-racking people (Morrison and Heimberg, 2013; Kashdan et al., 2014). According to the cognitive-behavioral method to social tension, the ideals which can be maladaptive approximately the social self, together with anticipatory and post-occasion rumination, are the basis of a self-perpetuating cycle wherein the dreaded social effects get greater and much more likely because of the presence of behavioral avoidance and protection behaviors that forestall corrective studying experiences (Clark and Wells, 1995).

The degree of improvement of younger maturity makes this organization of humans specially good sized withinside the research of those intrapersonal elements on social relations. The younger maturity, about among the a long time of 18 and 25, is a time of first rate social transition, wherein humans locate themselves juggling among the wishes to depart the own circle of relatives of origin, constructing peer-primarily based totally sorts of aid, constructing romantic relationships in addition to growing expert relationships (Arnett, 2000). These shifts deliver possibilities and vulnerabilities: to social wishes of younger maturity can give a boost to the already present tendencies to social tension or low vanity, on the alternative hand, those adjustments provide fertile grounds with the assist of which emotional intelligence may be educated and utilized. The research preserve locating younger maturity as a vital and touchy segment of improvement of relational sample with a purpose to be persevered to and have an effect on the person social lifestyles (Hartup and Stevens, 2015). This manner that a higher appreciation of the mental components that allow or inhibit a success social navigation on this age offers critical implications to character fitness and the intellectual fitness of human beings at large.

Although the significance of shallowness, emotional intelligence and social tension as non-public predictors of social functioning is already established, little or no studies has centered at the multifaceted nature of the interactions among the 3

constructs and their blended outcomes on numerous elements of the best of social relationships. Some of the theoretical frameworks suggest that those variables do now no longer reason and impact however as an alternative have interaction in big ways. According to cognitive appraisal concept, the low vanity and excessive social tension might be appearing synergistically to growth the terrible checks of social conditions and the excessive EI might be used as a compensatory method which counteracts the relational damage associated with tension and terrible self-regard (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Emotional law fashions additionally endorse that EI modulates the social tension to behavioral avoidance transformation, in which people with better EI have higher adaptive coping techniques to hold a relational interplay regardless of social chance events (Gross, 2015).

The modern-day look at fills those theoretical and empirical gaps through investigating simultaneous and interactive methods of shallowness, emotional intelligence, and social tension at the fine of social relationships in a collection of university students. The have a look at is carried out guided via way of means of 4 principal studies objectives: (1) to test the direct institutions among shallowness and EI and social tension and social courting best; (2) to check the mediation of social tension among vanity and dating first-class; (3) to look how EI mediates the jobs of social tension upon dating pleasure; and (4) to set up the relative predictive roles of the 3 intrapersonal variables. By answering those purposes, the take a look at will make contributions to a extra holistic theoretical angle of the mental structure of social competence and convey evidence-primarily based totally hints of interventions supposed to enhance the social existence of younger adults. The implications of the examine to scientific psychology, counseling, academic psychology, and exercise in intellectual fitness of the populace withinside the college and network environments have an immediate importance and may be immediately implemented via way of means of practitioners to the social nicely-being of younger adults (Neff and Vonk, 2012; Denham et al., 2012; Aldao et al., 2016).

Literature Review

Self-esteem and Social Relationships

Self-esteem has constantly been taken into consideration one of the fundamental variables, that are associated with the psychology of social conduct. It is the groundbreaking paintings of Rosenberg (1965) that has described vanity as a trait-like, regular self-score with far-achieving ramifications of social performance, and the many years considering the fact that then have recorded significantly its relational implications. In a chain of longitudinal research, Murray et al. (2011) mounted that decrease vanity in people correlates with a systematically better sensitivity to perceived relational threats the attribution of ambiguous accomplice movements closer to bad aspects, the anticipation of rejection, and the self-protecting system of distancing that has exactly the alternative impact via way of means of elevating the danger of the very relational decline they're concerned approximately. Such shallowness interactions were recreated withinside the dating contexts of friendship, romance, and workplaces (Erol and Orth, 2013).

The maximum impactful theoretical clarification of why the shallowness have to be related to the best of the relationships is sociometer concept (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). The concept indicates that shallowness is a advanced mental mechanism that maintains tune of the surroundings symptoms and symptoms of social inclusion and exclusion, that are then transformed into affective messages that encourage technique or avoidance conduct. In this sense, excessive self-worth human beings aren't simply greater assured, they're those whose social structures of tracking had been tuned via way of means of recurrent reviews of recognition that permit such human beings to view social conditions as much less threatening and feature a greater open and much less protective mind-set toward relationships. The simple premise of sociometer idea has been and remains empirically showed through the truth that vanity is a predictor of social inclusion (Leary et al., 2013). Besides, research performed with the aid of using Deci and Ryan (2012) withinside the framework of the self-dedication concept additionally accomplice shallowness with pleasure of the simple mental wishes relatedness and display how proper shallowness (in place of contingent or susceptible shallowness) enables the status quo of actually near and pleasant relationships with the aid of using minimising the want to be externally proven and set up controlling and dependency-inducing relationships.

The look at of cross-cultural proven the affiliation among shallowness and relationships fine in a whole lot of cultural settings, and a few vast modulating forces. The authors concluded that the high quality correlation among shallowness and dating pride turned into partially reflected through cognitive appraisal style: excessive vanity people evaluated the connection conflicts extra positively, and this reality predetermined better degrees of pride (Rentzsch and Gross, 2015). The longitudinal facts supplied with the aid of using Orth et al. (2012) additionally showed that vanity is a predictor of courting delight withinside the destiny, even if the connection pleasant of the beyond is taken into account, indicating that shallowness is a real causal antecedent of courting effects with out always appearing as a predictor of courting conditions.

Social Relationships and Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence as a predictor of social functioning has already led to a wealthy empirical literature for the reason that traditional theoretical paintings of Mayer and Salovey (1997) and the tremendous popularization of the assemble with the aid of using Goleman (1995). The version of EI evolved with the aid of using Mayer et al. (2002) is a four-department version that introduces the subsequent talents of emotional intelligence because the perceiving feelings, the usage of feelings to facilitate thought, information feelings, and dealing with feelings, and every has express implications at the first-rate of social relationships. A have a look at carried out via way of means of Brackett et al. (2011) found out that human beings with better EI, in particular withinside the emotion law and the interpersonal emotion control arm, document being lots extra glad of their intimate relationships, in addition to use extra positive mechanisms while relationships come across conflicts. Some of the mechanisms through which EI impacts relationships are, advanced empathic accuracy, greater adaptive emotional expression, higher war resolution, and stepped forward perspective-taking (Lopes et al., 2011).

The EI-courting first-class affiliation has been broadly repeated in different varieties of relationships and dimension techniques. Based on a meta-evaluation of 18 research, Schutte et al. (2012) stated a weighted imply correlation among trait EI and romantic dating delight of $r = .42$ with the identical impact sizes differing friendship pleasant. Notably, EI additionally appears to be a predictor of self-mentioned courting delight, in addition to, behavioral measures of courting pleasant: observational studies research have decided that people with better EI show greater responsive and validating communications styles with their courting companions, and are higher capable of mend relationships whilst conflicts are gift (Fitness, 2011). A look at carried out through Mayer et al. (2014) using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) mounted that the-capacity-primarily based totally EI presumes observer-rated social competence compared to popular cognitive cappotential and persona traits, which indicated that emotional abilities had a specific function to play in social effectiveness.

The increase sample of EI in younger maturity has considerable implications to the research at the position of EI in social relationships thru this level. Denham et al. (2012) found in a longitudinal look at that the improvement of emotional capabilities speeds up at a teen degree and early maturity, and the contexts of a college can manage to pay for teenagers with the nice possibilities to expand EI withinside the shape of publicity to a number of social conditions and the need to address the formation of latest non-own circle of relatives social structures. Nonetheless, now no longer all college students have the equal stage of developmental possibilities: the scholars with excessive stages of social tension may pass over this developmental possibility because of the avoidance conduct reducing the fine and frequency of social exposures at some point of which emotional abilities are educated and honed (Kashdan et al., 2014).

Social Anxiety and Social Relationships

Social tension is one of the maximum drastically mentioned social mental impediments to the success of social relations. According to the cognitive version of social tension (Clark and Wells, 1995), cognition-primarily based totally mechanisms, which disrupt social functioning, had been identified: socially beside the point use of cognitive sources via way of means of spending immoderate self-centered interest in social interactions; disturbed social reciprocity because of protection behaviors which are designed to defend towards feared social disasters; post-occasion processing in which opinions of beyond social interactions are looking for to locate proof of failure; and bad self-appraisal that is perpetuated via way of means of anticipatory tension approximately destiny interplay. The implications of every of those mechanisms at the first-rate of relationships are at once the subsequent: a social interplay companion this is both self-absorbed, behaviorally inhibited, or later ruminating over terrible self-displays isn't always possibly to be perceived as a heat accomplice, engaged accomplice, or without a doubt gift through the opposite party (Morrison and Heimberg, 2013).

Evidence continually statistics that social tension has been related with reduced social community size, much less courting pride, extended loneliness and disturbed intimacy improvement. According to Kashdan et al. (2014), contributors with excessive degrees of social tension expressed that the first-rate and intimacy of relationships and intimacy in friendship and romantic dating have been considerably decrease and the findings are mediated with the aid of using a loss of self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness. Prospective proof of the causal courting among social tension and dating deterioration turned into furnished through longitudinal studies through Rodebaugh et al. (2014) that confirmed that social tension predicts the waning of courting exceptional over the years no matter the preliminary dating traits and preferred bad have an effect on. Notably, social tension does now no longer most effective have an effect on the aggravating man or woman however additionally the human beings of their relationships: a look at carried out with the aid of using Wenzel et al. (2010) mounted that courting companions of socially aggravating people self-suggested decrease dating pride because of the intercommunication competencies and social avoidance that described the way wherein their irritating opposite numbers had been behaving.

Integrative Model and Mediating/Moderating Mechanisms

The fashion in the direction of integrative fashions which have a look at the interactive relationships among vanity, EI, social tension and social consequences has been current scholarship. Aldao et al. (2016) advised transdiagnostic version of emotional law problems as a shared pathway in which numerous intrapersonal weaknesses including low vanity and excessive social tension are transformed into interpersonal dysfunction. In this context, EI additionally serves as a main moderating factor, which dictates whether or not people having different hazard elements can preserve up with adaptive social functioning. This moderating position of EI is supported with the aid of using studies that has installed that excessive EI cushions the terrible courting effect of social tension (Schutte et al., 2012), and experimental research which have observed that schooling in emotion law competencies decreases the connection fees of social tension (Gross, 2015).

Mediation channels in which self-worth impacts the exceptional of social relationships via social tension have had minimum empirical studies. Theoretical motives that rely upon cognitive fashions of social tension advocate that low shallowness via way of means of producing terrible self-value determinations and growing sensitivity to social judgment can growth social tension, which in flip reasons impairment of social functioning and first-rate of relationships (Clark and Wells, 1995). This mediation speculation aligns with the sociometer concept that places vanity at a center as a social tracking gadget and the opportunity that low shallowness can result in social tension in element thru the technique of accelerated danger tracking of a signal of social rejection (Leary et al., 2013). The modern-day studies empirically checks this mediation version because it seals an opening withinside the current literature and it could display social tension discount as an intervention via which shallowness-improving interventions can enhance the first-class of relationships (Neff and Vonk, 2012).

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional survey turned into selected on this examine. The goal of the observe in figuring out the concurrent institutions and checking out mediation and moderation hypotheses in a one time factor evaluation machine became taken into consideration ok to apply cross-sectional methodology. Although longitudinal designs entail advantages on the subject of putting a temporal precedence, the cross-sectional layout will permit acquiring green and cost-powerful facts on a huge pattern, that may then be subjected to the supposed statistical analyses, together with more than one regression and mediation modeling (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Participants and Sampling

The contributors consisted of 320 undergraduate college students decided on in certainly considered one among Pakistan's biggest public universities via stratified random sampling so as to have a balanced illustration of college students in all of the educational faculties (Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Engineering, and Arts). The inclusion standards had been full-time enrollment, age among 18- 28 years, and written knowledgeable consent. The evaluation of electricity executed in G + Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) with the subsequent parameters $f^2 = .15$ (medium effect), $\alpha = .05$, and energy = .eighty confirmed that the minimal length of pattern utilized in a more than one regression with 3 predictors become 88; the goal pattern length changed into 320, which proven tons better degrees of statistical electricity and allowed good sized mediation evaluation. The pattern populace consisted of 178 and 142 ladies and males, respectively, with a mean age of 21.four years ($SD = 2.31$, range = 18-28). The precis of demographic capabilities is supplied in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 320)

Variable	n	%	M (SD)
Gender			
Female	178	55.6	—
Male	142	44.4	—
Age (years)	320	100	21.4 (2.31)
Faculty			
Social Sciences	96	30.0	—

Natural Sciences	82	25.6	—
Engineering	76	23.8	—
Arts & Humanities	66	20.6	—

Measures

Self-Esteem. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item self-esteem measure, which is unidimensional regarding the concept of global self-esteem and rated on a 4 items Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree). The most common tool of self-esteem in psychological studies is the RSES; it has shown good psychometric qualities in a wide range of samples. Internal consistency was good in the current study (Cronbachs alpha =.87).

Emotional Intelligence. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong and Law, 2002) is a 16 item self-report scale to evaluate four dimensions of EI, namely self-emotion appraisal, others emotion appraisal, use of emotions, and emotion regulation on a 7-point Likert scale. The WLEIS has proven convergent and discriminant validity across different populations. The alpha of the current sample was =.89.

Social Anxiety. The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Mattick and Clarke, 1998) is a scale comprising of 20 items which measure anxiety in specific relation to social interactions and apply on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Not at all characteristic, 4 = Extremely characteristic). The SIAS has many applications in clinical and research practice and has established psychometric characteristics. The alpha of this study was.g1.

Quality of Social Relationship. Network of Relationships Inventory Relationship Quality Version (NRI-RQV; Furman and Buhrmester, 2009) measured relationship quality in three spheres support, negative interactions, companionship, and a composite Relationship Quality Index (RQI). NRI-RQV is considerably reliable and valid among young adults. Cronbach's alpha = .88.

Procedure and Ethics

The records become acquired after being accrued in an eight-week time body on dependent questionnaire booklets that have been given in monitored lecture room settings. Ethical clearance at the take a look at changed into acquired through the Institutional Review Board of the university (Psy/2024/043). All respondents had signed an knowledgeable consent, have been assured anonymity and confidentiality and had been notified in their proper to withdraw with out repercussions. No private identifiable information had been gathered. Answered questionnaires have been coded in numerical shape and saved in a secure place. Those individuals who regarded distressed at facts series had been additionally knowledgeable approximately campus counseling services.

Data Analysis Strategy

The evaluation of the information became carried out with the assist of IBM SPSS Statistics, model 26 and Hayes (2018) MACRO model 4.0, named PROCESS. The initial analyses consisted of descriptive facts, take a look at of normality (Shapiro-Wilk) and check of a couple of regression assumptions (linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity via Variance Inflation Factors). To take a look at bivariate relationships, Pearson correlation evaluation changed into executed to analyze the connection amongst all of the take a look at variables. The unbiased and blended predictive fee of self-esteem, EI, and social tension became analyzed via way of means of hierarchical more than one regression in predicting dating nice. The mediation evaluation (PROCESS Model 4) the use of 5,000 bootstrap samples became performed to decide whether or not social tension mediated the self-esteem-courting great association. The moderated mediation evaluation (PROCESS Model 8) changed into used to decide the lifestyles of an irritating mediation pathway that became moderated with the aid of using EI. A two-tailed alpha of.05 changed into utilized in all of the statistical tests.

Data Analysis And Findings

The analyses and descriptive information The preliminary analyses and descriptive facts are offered in 4.1.

Before number one analyses, the information had been filtered through non-happening values, outliers, and non-observance of statistical assumptions. The percent of lacking information changed into low (much less than 2%); therefore, listwise deletion turned into used to deal with those statistics. Mahalanobis distance (chi-rectangular critical = 18.forty seven at df = 4, $p < .001$) was used to detect multivariate outliers and three cases dropped out to give a final analytic sample of $N = 317$. All variables satisfied the normality assumption ($ps > .05$ after removal of outliers). Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) values have

been 1.12-2.34 that is lots decrease than the same old threshold of 10 indicating that there may be no difficulty of hassle multicollinearity. Table 2 suggests descriptive data and reliability coefficients of all of the take a look at variables.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables (N = 317)

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max	alpha
Self-Esteem (RSES)	27.43	5.12	10	40	.87
Emotional Intelligence (WLEIS)	82.61	11.34	45	112	.89
Social Anxiety (SIAS)	31.28	14.67	0	78	.91
Relationship Quality (NRI-RQV)	3.61	0.74	1.2	5.0	.88

Note. RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (score range of 10-40, with the higher the score, the higher the self-esteem); WLEIS = Wong and Law Emotional intelligence Scale (range 16-112); SIAS = Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (range 0-80, the higher the score, the higher the anxiety); NRI-RQV = Network of Relationships Inventory Relationship Quality Version (range 1-5).

Correlation Analysis

To test bivariate relationships, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the relationship among all the study variables. Table 3 gives the results. Emotional intelligence ($r = .48$, $p < .001$) and relationship quality ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) and social anxiety ($r = -.53$, $p < .001$) had a positive correlation with self-esteem, and negatively. Emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with relationship quality ($r = .46$, $p < .001$) and a negative relationship with social anxiety ($r = -.41$, $p < .001$). There was a negative relationship between social anxiety and relationship quality ($r = -.58$, $p < .001$). The entire correlations were expected in accordance with the theory and were of moderate to large magnitude, which all supported the hypotheses of the study.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables (N = 317)

Variable	1. SE	2. EI	3. SA	4. RQ
1. Self-Esteem	—			
2. Emotional Intelligence	.48***	—		
3. Social Anxiety	-.53***	-.41***	—	
4. Relationship Quality	.52***	.46***	-.58***	—

Note. SE = Self-Esteem; EI = Emotional Intelligence; SA = Social Anxiety; RQ = Relationship Quality. *** $p < .001$.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine the independent and combined predictive contributions of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social anxiety to social relationship quality. Predictor variables were entered in two steps: Step 1 included self-esteem and emotional intelligence as established predictors; Step 2 added social anxiety to examine incremental variance explained. All continuous predictors were mean-centered prior to entry. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Social Relationship Quality (N = 317)

Predictor	B	SE B	beta	t	p	sr2
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Step 1

Self-Esteem	.048	.007	.41	6.91	< .001	.11
Emotional Intelligence	.024	.004	.36	5.82	< .001	.09

$R^2 = .38$, $F(2, 314) = 96.21$, $p < .001$

Step 2

Self-Esteem	.033	.007	.28	4.71	< .001	.07
Emotional Intelligence	.019	.004	.28	4.41	< .001	.06
Social Anxiety	-.025	.003	-.49	-8.21	< .001	.17

$R^2 = .55$, $\Delta R^2 = .17$, $F(1, 313) = 119.44$, $p < .001$

Note. $B = 15.782$ unstandardized regression coefficient; $SE\ B = 6.311$ standard error; $\beta = 0.129$ standardized coefficient; $sr^2 =$ squared semi-partial correlation (unique variance). Centralizing all predictors.

The first step of the regression model to include self-esteem and emotional intelligence had an explanation of the relationship quality by 38, $R^2 = .38$, $F(2, 314) = 96.21$ and $p = .001$. Self-esteem ($\beta = .41$, $t = 6.91$, $p < .001$) and emotional intelligence ($\beta = .36$, $t = 5.82$, $p < .001$) were also significant positive predictors. Introduction of social anxiety in Step 2 yielded a large increment in the explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .17$, $F(1, 313) = 119.44$, $p < .001$ and the entire model explained 55 percent of the variance in relationship quality. Social anxiety was the best predictor ($\beta = -.49$, $t = -8.21$, $p < .001$), followed by self-esteem ($\beta = .28$, $t = 4.71$, $p < .001$) and emotional intelligence ($\beta = .28$, $t = 4.41$, $p < .001$). Reduction in the self-esteem and EI coefficients between Step 1 and Step 2 is in line with the partial mediation of the effects by the social anxiety.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrap samples through PROCESS Model 4 was done on whether the relationship between self-esteem and relationship quality was mediated by social anxiety. Table 5 shows the results and Figure 1 demonstrates them. The overall impact of self-esteem on the quality of the relationship was high ($c = .048$, $SE = .007$, $p < .001$). Self-esteem was a negative predictor of social anxiety which was significant ($a = -1.52$, $SE = .18$, $p < .001$), and social anxiety was a negative predictor of relationship quality controlling self-esteem ($b = -.016$, $SE = .003$, $p < .001$). The relationship between self-esteem and relationships quality via social anxiety was also also meaningful ($ab = .025$, 95% CI [.014, .038]) because the confidence interval was not equal to 0. Self-esteem directly affected the quality of relationships even with control of the mediator ($c' = .023$, $SE = .007$, $p = .001$), which relative to the other is not entirely mediated. The percentage of the total effect mediated by social anxiety was 52.1.

Table 5

Mediation Analysis: Social Anxiety as Mediator of Self-Esteem –Relationship Quality (N = 317)

Pathway	Coefficient	SE	p	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Total effect (c): SE →RQ	.048	.007	< .001	.034	.062
a path: SE →SA	-1.52	.18	< .001	-1.87	-1.17
b path: SA →RQ (controlling SE)	-.016	.003	< .001	-.022	-.010
Indirect effect (ab): SE →SA →RQ	.025	.006	—	.014	.038
Direct effect (c'): SE →RQ	.023	.007	.001	.009	.037

Note. SE = Self-Esteem; SA = Social Anxiety; RQ = Relationship Quality. Bootstrap confidence intervals based on 5,000 resamples. Indirect effect CI excludes zero, indicating significant mediation.

Moderation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence as Moderator

The moderated mediation analysis based on the PROCESS Model 8 was used to test the hypothesis that emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between relationship quality and social anxiety (the b path in the mediation model). The social anxiety emotional intelligence interaction term was also a greater predictor of relationship quality ($\beta = .19$, $t = 3.24$, $p = .001$) which implies that EI moderated the effect of social anxiety on relationship quality. Simple slopes analysis (at +1 SD, mean, and -1 SD of EI) indicated that the negative relationship between social anxiety and relationship quality was significantly stiffer when those with low EI were used (simple slope = $-.042$, $SE = .006$, $p < .001$) as compared to those with high EI (simple slope = $.009$, $SE = .005$, $p = .07$). This trend, as shown in Figure 2, shows that high EI people were more capable of preserving relationship quality when subjected to social anxiety, and this is a result that bolsters the buffering effect of emotional intelligence.

Interaction of Social Anxiety x Emotional Intelligence on Relationship Quality

Social Anxiety Level	High EI (+1 SD): Mean RQ	Low EI (-1 SD): Mean RQ
Low (-1 SD)	3.98	3.51
Mean	3.74	3.12
High (+1 SD)	3.67	2.61

Note. RQ: Relationship Quality (1-5). High EI individuals experience much reduced deterioration in the quality of relationships as social anxiety grows, compared to low EI individuals. Simple slope Low EI group: $b = -.042$, $p = .001$; High EI group: $b = .009$, $p = .07$ (no significant).

Gender Differences

To test the differences between the genders on the all the study variables, independent-samples t-tests were performed. Women were showing more emotional intelligence ($M = 84.31$ vs. $M = 80.41$, $t(315) = 2.82$, $p = .005$, $d = 0.35$) and had reported more social anxiety ($M = 33.14$ vs. $M = 28.87$, $t(315) = 2.47$, $p = .014$, $d = 0.30$). There were no major differences in self-esteem ($t(315) = 1.14$, $p = .256$) or relationship quality ($t(315) = 0.89$, $p = .374$). All further regressions had gender as a covariate to control these gender differences; no material difference in the results.

Discussion

The current article offers an all-inclusive empirical analysis of the interactive and coexisting impacts of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social anxiety on the quality of social relationships among young adults. The conclusions of the findings narrow to three main points. To begin with, the independent effects of all three intrapersonal variables on the relationship quality were significant, and social anxiety proved to be the most powerful one. Two, the relationship between self-esteem and relationship quality was partially mediated by social anxiety with about one-half of the entire effect of self-esteem conducted through the social anxiety reduction route. Third, emotional intelligence intermediated the negative impact of social anxiety on relationship quality, and acted as a true resilience resource that has hedged relationship functioning in people with high levels of social anxiety. The findings have a significant contribution to the existing literature in that they give a unified understanding of the way these three important intrapersonal variables work together rather than added independently as independent predictors, but rather they are components of an integrated psychological system where EI moderates and social anxiety propagates the relational effects of low self-esteem.

Social anxiety as the strongest predictor of relationship quality ($\beta = -.49$) is confirmed and conformed to previous studies that reported the eminent social expenses of anxious social cognition (Morrison and Heimberg, 2013; Kashdan et al., 2014). The mediation conclusion: that social anxiety is the cause of the greater part of the overall effect of self-esteem on relationship quality implies that one of the significant ways in which self-esteem influences social relationships is its control of anxious social observation. This observation corresponds to the hypothesis of sociometer theory that self-esteem is a social acceptance detector: people with lower self-esteem can be more sensitive to the symptoms of social rejection and, as a result, they experience high levels of social anxiety, which directly impairs the functioning in relationships through avoidance, inhibited self-disclosure, and decreased social engagement (Leary and Baumeister, 2000; Leary et al., 2013). Interventionally, this mediating process implies that social anxiety interventions may be a specifically effective pathway to relaxation of relationship quality in individuals with low self-esteem, and that self-esteem-enhancing interventions may in part accomplish their relational outcomes by the downstream mediating process of lowering social anxiety.

The emotional intelligence moderating effect on the relationship between social anxiety and relationship quality is a new and practically important discovery that can be used to supplement and expand the existing theoretical explanations of the EI as a social resilience factor (Brackett et al., 2011; Schutte et al., 2012). The trend of easy slopes indicated that among those with high EI, the negative relationship between social anxiety and relationship quality was significantly reduced to the level of insignificance, but among those with low EI, the negative relationship between social anxiety and poorer relationship quality was significantly and strongly negative. This contradictory trend indicates that high EI persons have emotional abilities such as the ability to detect, manage and communicate their nervous emotions in an adaptive manner that allows them to be relationally involved even during social anxiety. The findings have direct clinical implications: the improvement of emotional intelligence abilities in socially anxious individuals can become a possible intervention target to alleviate the relational cost of social anxiety without or in combination with the existing interventions on social anxiety disorder like cognitive-behavioral therapy (Gross, 2015; Aldao et al., 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research is a part of a growing body of literature that shows that the situational and interpersonal factors are not the only determinants of the quality of social relationships of young adults but rather a constellation of intrapersonal psychological factors that define how people perceive and enter and maintain social interactions. The results indicate that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social anxiety explain a 55 percent variance in relationship quality, with social anxiety serving as a direct predictor and as an intervening variable through which self esteem provides its relationship influence. Emotional intelligence is found to be a protective intervening variable that significantly reduces the relational costs of social anxiety. Collectively, these findings indicate that a psychological architecture that constituted self-regard, emotional competence, and fear of social evaluation is highly significant in defining the quality of social relationships and that the interplay between these factors is very critical in establishing effective strategies to enhance social well-being among young adult populations.

Based on these results, a number of suggestions are presented to the researchers, practitioners, and learning institutions. To clinical and counseling practitioners, the experiment brings to the fore a thorough psychological assessment that considers all the three variables in the analysis of self-esteem, EI as well as social anxiety because the interdependence of these variables have obvious treatment implications. The reason is that cognitive-behavioral interventions aimed at overcoming social anxiety in university students should be viewed not just as a means of sympathetic reduction of symptoms of anxiety per se, but also as a mechanism of enhancing the relationship quality on a broader level. Adding the elements of emotion regulation skills development, based on the emotional intelligence theory, to the already existing social anxiety treatment should help to achieve better results since people will have the adaptive coping skills that they will be able to depend on when facing the threat of social rejection. In the case of educational institutions, the results imply the value of incorporating social-emotional learning programs in the university curricula that systematically trains the emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and self-esteem of students, especially in the first year of university entry when social transitions are most significant, and anxiety is usually at its peak. To the researchers, the partial mediation result of the study, which reveals that social anxiety is not the sole factor determining the self-esteem-relationship quality relationship, is an indication that there are other mediating variables that are worth future study, such as attachment insecurity, rejection sensitivity and self-compassion. Further studies need to use longitudinal designs to determine the temporal precedence between these variables and need to generalize the research findings to a wider range of samples such as older adults, clinical and across-cultural settings, to determine the generalizability of the relationships found.

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