

Why Men Choose Situationships and How They are Maintained

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Introduction

- Situationships can best be described as a relationship in which there are no clear labels or commitment, yet there is some level of romantic connection which can include quality time and physical activities.
- Research surrounding similar types of non-traditional relationships such as “hook-up” culture and “friends-with-benefits” amongst college students has been established. However, research surrounding situationships lacks significantly. Moreover, gendered experiences in situationships, especially in males, has yet to be divulged.
- **The aim of this study is to study the male perspective on situationships and the motivations to pursue and maintain these relationships.**
- **This research also looks at factors that hinder situationships from becoming traditional relationships.**

Methods

Participants

- Participants for this study were 13 men between ages of 18 and 25 who have experienced at least one situationship.

Materials

- Participants answered a series of 10 questions related to their situationships experience (e.g. “Describe your most recent situationship” “What emotions did you experience while in this situationship?” “What is/was your motivations for starting this situationship?”).
- Questions were subsequently repeated for every situationship the participant engaged in.

Procedure

- Participants were asked to complete a survey to determine if they met the qualifications.
- Those who met qualifications were asked to consent to take part in a short Zoom interview. Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their feelings and motivations throughout the duration of the situationship.
- Participants’ responses were then audio recorded.

Data Analysis

- Reflexive thematic analyses were used to address each of the research questions.
- The six steps of this analytic technique involve: **1) familiarization with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) generating themes; 4) reviewing potential themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report.**

Results

- Men were **motivated** to pursue situationships due to logistics, hope for future relationships, and/or ideal partner characteristics.
- Men **maintained** these situationships through both in-person and virtual communication, actions of intimacy, and setting expectations.
- Men’s situationships were **hindered** due to uncertainty surrounding the relationship, avoidance of traditional relationship behaviors, and unfavorable partner characteristics.

Research Question #1	Themes	Subthemes	Quote Examples
What motivations did men have to form situationships?	Men were motivated to form situationships for logistical reasons.	Military training; long distance; COVID19	“I still have to do that 3 year training, and it doesn't feel right to jump into something”
	Men were motivated to form situationships as a source of hope for developing a relationship in the future.	Catching "Feelings"; hoping for more; building connections	“Some hope that, I don't know, maybe something could come out”
	Men were motivated to form situationships due to characteristics that promoted attraction.	Nice personality; physically attractive	“She's genuinely just like a beautiful person, like in every way”

Research Question #2	Themes	Subthemes	Quote Examples
How did men maintain their situationships?	Men often relied on virtual communication to maintain their situationships.	Texting; Talking over phone	“We've met in person a few times, but most of it's over text”
	Men often engaged in face-to-face communication in their situationships.	Talk to partner frequently; sharing deep thoughts	“We were seeing each other pretty much every day at that point”
	Men engaged in affectionate and intimate behaviors in their situationships.	Physically intimate; hugs; kisses	“We'd be really affectionate, just kind of hands on. Hug, that kind of stuff”
	Men had expectations about how they and their partner should behave in their situationships.	Exclusivity; online presence; commitment; labels	“I feel like we both understand that this is going to be a short-term thing”

Research Question #3	Themes	Subthemes	Quote Examples
What experiences hindered men's situationships?	Men were uncertain regarding their partner's perception of the situationship.	Inconsistent time spent; "blurred lines"	“I asked him again, 'are you still like, set on being just friends? Or like, is there more?’”
	Men avoided traditional relationship behaviors in situationships.	No end goal; no exclusivity	“We would still talk to other people...and then we didn't really have a title or anything”
	Certain characteristics of situationship partners hindered attraction.	Not proud of partner; red flags	“I don't know, it's always like a little bit stressful like hanging out with the person”

Discussion

- The findings suggest that men are more eager to enter situationships due to the influence of external factors, positive partner characteristics, and hope for a potential future with the partner.
- This is similar to results found in prior research, specifically when addressing communication about the future of the relationship. This aligns with other research that found that the goal of any intimate relationship is to find a long-term partner.
- Maintaining factors, such as communication style and intimacy aligns with data found from similar non-traditional relationship studies.
- Limitations of the data include having an unrepresentative sample population and limited participant responses.
- Further research must be conducted in order to understand more broadly why males choose situationships, even when they show interest in long-term relationships.
- A similar study conducted longitudinally would allow for a more accurate depiction of these situationships as they evolve with time.

References



Acknowledgements

Delaney Rose, Madelyn Alcantara, Lexi Caldwell, Taylor Harty, Albert Mobley, and Marilyn Pablo