

The Consequences of Men in Situationships

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Introduction

Ambiguity and confusion have become common factors in the modern dating scene. Some find themselves in unlabeled relationships with uncertain levels of commitment and exclusivity between partners, that many have come to refer to as a “situationship” (Langlais, 2024). Although some research has been done regarding the concept of situationships, none has been conducted specifically regarding the experiences of men. As such, this study aims to examine the experiences of men in situationships and determine the consequences they face as a result of navigating such ambiguous relationships.

Methodology

- 17 men, ages 18-24, were recruited through convenience sampling
- Participants signed up through surveys shared by researchers on college campuses to ensure eligibility
- Participants were required to be male and have situationship experience, whether current or past
- Accepted participants were contacted by researchers via email to schedule Zoom interviews
- Researchers selected to record the call upon the start of the Zoom meeting
- Prior to the 30-minute semi-structured interview, participants gave verbal informed consent, were reminded to keep all parties mentioned anonymous, and asked if they had any questions
- Example questions:
 - What emotions did you experience while in this situationship?
 - What are/were the drawbacks to this relationship?

Data Analysis

- Interview video files were reviewed and transcribed
- Participant quotes related to research question were collected
- Each quote was given a code
- Codes were analyzed through thematic analysis

Results

Men experienced complacency in situationships.

“It kind of made me feel a little bit guilty about it”

“I knew it wasn’t really gonna work out”

Men experienced damage to intrapersonal well-being during and after the situationship.

“It’s definitely a big emotional stress”

“I lost so much of me”

Men experienced damage to relational well-being during the situationship

“[It became] unenjoyable to be in a relationship with her”

“We were really close as friends and so losing that was like the biggest drawback”

Men experienced relational fluctuations and changing expectations during the situationship.

“There were times when it was great, times when it wasn’t”

“Over time, [satisfaction] has sloped off very quickly”

Men experienced personal growth after the situationship.

“I learned more about what I’m looking for”

“I learned a lot about myself”

Discussion

- The results of this study demonstrate that contrary to popular belief, men do not have preference for low effort and low commitment relationships
- Although some reflect on their situationships positively, a majority of men were discontent with their experience and hoped for more out of the relationship
- Oftentimes participants reported the relationship being complicated and confusing, leading to negative effects such as:
 - Overthinking
 - Worsened self esteem
 - Decline in mental health
 - Loss of motivation
- Some participants noted that they foresaw negative outcomes to their relationship, and chose to remain complacent
- Further research can be conducted to explore factors that relate to the evolution of situationships to committed relationships

References

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