Is Less the New More?

The Effect of Choice Overload in Online Dating on Wellbeing and Partner

Selectivity, and how Relational Goals Influence this Effect

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Abstract

Online dating is becoming increasingly popular and the number of users and thus the number of choices people have on dating apps is growing. Having many choices can cause choice overload. Even though there have been several studies on choice overload in online dating, it has not yet been examined how it affects a person's wellbeing (i.e., anxiety and self-esteem) and partner selectivity. The present student investigates this. Furthermore, this study looks at the moderating role of relational goals, examining whether this amplifies the effect of choice overload. To investigate this, 204 participants participated in an online 2x2 between-subjects design experiment, in which they swiped 30 (i.e., no choice overload) or 80 profiles (i.e., choice overload) on a prototype dating app. Results show that choice overload on dating apps does not affect a person's wellbeing or partner selectivity. Moreover, there is no difference between people who are looking for a casual and committed relationship and how they perceive the effects of choice overload. These results show that choice overload does not always have its negative effects, which is contrary to previous research. Future research is needed to further examine when choice overload does or does not have an effect in online dating.

Keywords: online dating, choice overload, wellbeing, partner selectivity, relational goals

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The Effect of Choice Overload in Online Dating on Wellbeing and Partner Selectivity, and how Relational Goals Influence this Effect

Nowadays, an increasing number of singles are meeting online; something that was unimaginable decades ago, when people got to know their partner mainly through their social network (Bojd & Yoganarasimhan, 2022). When people meet online, it happens most commonly through dating apps. People are on these dating apps for roughly two reasons, these reasons are referred to as their "relational goals" (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). The first reason is for seeking a serious, committed relationship, while the other is people using a dating app to engage in a casual relationship (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). These relational goals show that everyone uses dating apps for a different purpose and thus has different expectations of using a dating app (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018).

The dramatic increase of dating app users results in a high number of potential partners for these users, as users encounter on average 140 partner options per day (Smith, 2016). Initially, this high number of choices was seen as a positive aspect of online dating, since it is assumed that with more choices there is a higher probability to find that one person (Patall et al., 2008). However, having many choices was also found to have the opposite effect. For example, it can cause people to be less satisfied with their final choice, because they know there are many other potential partners available (D'Angelo & Toma, 2016). This is called "The Choice Overload Effect", also referred to as "overchoice" (Chernev et al., 2015). Choice overload means that the options people can choose from goes beyond the range of 50 options (Lenton et al., 2008). Having many choices causes a person's cognitive resources to be exceeded, making it challenging for people to make a good decision (Chernev et al., 2015). People on average encounter more than 50 profiles on dating apps, which could lead to choice overload. (Smith, 2016).

Choice overload can negatively affect the wellbeing of dating app users. Wellbeing is defined as "the experience of functioning well", where people have the desire to live a good life (Huppert, 2014). Anxiety is often considered as one of the dimensions of wellbeing (Heady et al., 1993), and anxiety may be negatively affected by choice overload on dating apps. This anxiety is the result of the overload of choices, which complicates making an actual choice (Pfaff, 2013). Previous research within the context of company leaders who had to make many choices found that choice overload led to more stress and anxiety among these managers (Zeike et al., 2019). Since there are also many options on dating apps, it is likely that this may also lead to anxiety among users. Another dimension of wellbeing is self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Self-esteem shows how much a person considers himself worth, so for example, how self-confident a person is (Cherry, 2022). On dating apps, where there are many options, people quickly tend to compare themselves to others (i.e., social comparison) (Fox & Vendemia, 2016). If people subsequently feel that they perform less well than others on a dating app, this could lead to a decrease in self-esteem.

There have already been several studies on choice overload within online dating that have found that it has an impact on wellbeing. For example, it has been found that it has an impact on perceived dating success (Pronk & Denissen, 2019) and fear of being single (Thomas et al., 2022). Thomas et al. (2022) have also studied what effect choice overload has on self-esteem, but this can be investigated further by looking at what situations it does and does not occur in. Anxiety has, to the author's knowledge, not been studied before. However, it is expected that this also occurs as result of online dating, as having many choices (e.g., partner options on dating apps) is the basis for the emergence of anxiety (Pfaff, 2013).

Relational goals are expected to enhance the effect of choice overload on anxiety and self-esteem. Anxiety may increase and self-esteem may decrease even more when someone is exposed to choice overload and looking for a committed relationship. This is because people

who are looking for a committed relationship often have higher expectations of their partner than when people are looking for a casual relationship (De Ridder, 2021). Not being able to live up to your own expectations could affect a person's self-esteem and how much anxiety a person has (Snyder et al., 2021). In addition, having many options raises these expectations because people know they still have many alternative partners available (Thomas et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a person's partner selectivity may also be affected by the number of available potential partner choices (Whitty, 2008). In fact, it is expected that as soon as people encounter more potential partner options they become more selective by adding more criteria to the wish-list of their ideal partner (Whitty, 2008). Choice overload may thus lead to more partner selectivity. Moreover, relational goals could increase this effect, as research in offline dating has shown that people generally have higher standards when they want to engage in a committed relationship than a casual relationship (Surbey & Conohan, 2000). These standards may become higher if someone has recently seen many profiles because they know that if someone does not meet their high standards, there are plenty of other options. So, it could be the case that also in an online dating context, it is also true that the more serious the relationship becomes, the more selective a person becomes.

To investigate this, the present study involves an experiment in which participants are exposed to a prototype dating app, presenting mock-up dating profiles of a large (i.e., 80 profiles) or ideal group (i.e., 30 profiles) of potential partners, which they are allowed to swipe right (like) or swipe left (dislike). Prior to this swiping, participants are asked about their relational goals. After the swiping, questions will be asked regarding the participants' anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity. As such, this study answers the following research question: "What is the effect of choice overload in online dating on one's anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity, and does one's relational goal moderate this effect?"

Theoretical framework

Online Dating

With the emergence of online dating in the 1990s, there was a huge stigma around getting to know your partner via the internet (Finkel et al., 2012). For example, it was considered dangerous, but it was also believed that online dating was only for desperate people (Anderson, 2005). People viewed online dating very negatively during this time period; for example, they criticized their friends and family who were involved in online dating, and the partners of these family and friends were called "nerds" (Anderson, 2005). However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, online dating became increasingly popular and more people considered it mainstream (Finkel et al., 2012). In 1998, even a movie was made, called "You've Got Mail", which reduced the negative stereotypes related to online dating (Ali & Wibowo, 2011).

Whereas online dating was initially done through websites, nowadays dating apps are particularly popular (Johnson et al., 2017). In fact, it is currently the most common way potential partners meet (Bojd & Yoganarasimhan, 2022). Research by Pew Research Center (2020) found that the use of dating apps is most popular among the age group 18 to 29 years old. However, in general, 30% of all American Adults have used one or more dating apps. Furthermore, 23% of these America Adults reported that they have been on a date with someone they met that way and 12% of them reported that they have been in a steady relationship or married to someone they met through a dating platform (Anderson et al., 2020).

Of these dating platforms, Tinder is nowadays the most popular, followed by Bumble and Hinge (Dixon, 2022). Among these apps, a clear distinction can be made between fast and slow dating. Tinder is a typical example of a "fast dating app", where users can make quick decisions that do not require much effort (Orosz et al., 2016). For example, it takes little effort

to create a profile: users only need to add a few photos and a short description of themselves. Often, users of fast dating apps can also link their Facebook to the dating app, making it even more effortless to create a profile (Orosz et al., 2016). In addition, there are many partner options, making it more likely to find a match and thus matching is relatively easy (Orosz et al., 2016). In contrast, Hinge and Bumble are examples of "slow dating apps". On these apps the profiles are more detailed (e.g., answer profile questions, indicate dating intentions), allowing users to get a more complete picture of someone and see if someone is a good fit for them based on more than just appearance (Antonelli, 2021). As such, in these slow dating apps, the focus is more on the quality of the matches (i.e., do you match in terms of interests as well?) than on the quantity of them (i.e., getting as many matches as possible) (Antonelli, 2021).

People have different motivations for downloading one of these dating apps, and have certain needs (i.e., gratifications) in doing so (Sumter et al., 2017). These needs and motivations are also referred to as a person's "relational goals" (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). Research has shown that more people have the desire for a long-term, serious relationship, and these people hope that online dating apps can help them to meet this desire (Sumter et al., 2017). The first relational goal is therefore entering a serious, committed relationship (i.e., relational goal: committed relationship). The other, opposite, goal a person may have when using a dating app is to engage in a casual relationship (i.e., relational goal: casual relationship) (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). All together, these relational goals can basically be described as what users expect to get out of a dating app.

Choice Overload

As dating apps become increasingly popular and more and more people use them as a result, the number of partner choices on these apps increases rapidly (Smith, 2016). Having many choices was initially seen as something positive, because it contributes to having

feelings of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2011). When someone is autonomous, this means that this person feels in control of their own behavior and has the freedom to make their own decisions (Deci & Ryan, 2012). This is why having many choices enhances this sense of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Being autonomous is one of the components of the Self-Determination Theory, which describes that people are more motivated when they believe that what they do affects the outcome and is therefore meaningful (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In other words: people want to feel self-determined. If someone is self-determined, it means that this person has a lot of control, as opposed to non-self-determined, in which people feel that their lives are controlled by others (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In conclusion, having many choices makes people feel self-determined and therefore, according to the Self-Determination Theory, this should have positive effects (Deci & Ryan, 2011).

However, a rising number of studies have also examined the negative consequences of having many choices. This is called the "choice overload effect". According to food research from Iyengar & Lepper (2000), it appears that in a large set of choices (i.e., choice overload), people are less likely to be satisfied with the choice they have made. In particular, this research shows that people are more satisfied with their ultimate choice in a small set of choices than if they had made the exact same choice in a larger set of choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). This can be explained by the fact that when someone has many choices, they find the alternative options more appealing (Dhar, 1997). Then that person wants to consider all the alternatives before a choice can be made. Sometimes the number of alternatives is so large that people become conflicted with themselves about which choice to make and as a result they are not satisfied with their choice, or do not make a choice at all (Dhar, 1997). Yet, when people do make a choice, they are doubting whether it was the good decision (Haynes, 2009), and are more likely to regret the decision they have made, because they know there are many other options available (Thai & Yuksel, 2017).

That people are less satisfied when choosing from a large set, has also been studied in the context of online dating (D'Angelo & Toma, 2016; Pronk & Denissen, 2019). One study found the same results as Iyengar and Lepper's (2000) study, but in the context of online dating (D'Angelo & Toma, 2016). Indeed, this study found that people who could choose from a large set of potential partner options ended up being less satisfied with their final decision than people who chose from a smaller set of partner options (D'Angelo & Toma, 2016). Another study by Pronk and Denissen (2019) found that people are more likely to reject potential partner profiles if there are more other profiles to choose from. In addition, in a small set of options, they were more satisfied with the choice they made. These studies reaffirm the effect of choice overload on a person's satisfaction with the made choice, and it also confirms that choice overload has a significant role in online dating.

Wellbeing

The above studies show that having many choices affects users' satisfaction and whether they reject someone or not. But in addition to these two aspects, choice overload on dating apps can also affect one's wellbeing. First, for example, various game aspects are incorporated into dating apps, such as swiping and receiving rewards (i.e., getting matches) (Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2021). These game aspects make people want to keep "playing" and thus collect as many matches as possible (Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2021). In dating apps on which there are many choices, this can result in people spending hours on the dating app and consequently show addictive behavior (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2020). Having an addiction to dating apps can ultimately have a negative impact on a person's wellbeing (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2020).

Moreover, according to previous research, having many choices can cause users to compare themselves to others (Her & Timmermans, 2020). On dating apps, this includes users comparing themselves to other people on the dating apps, or, for example, filling in what their

"competitors" on the dating app look like (Her & Timmermans, 2020). In the world of online dating, there is primarily upward social comparison (Her & Timmermans). This means that users compare themselves to someone who performs better than them, which in this case means someone who gets more matches or conversations (Rosenthal-von der Pütten et al., 2019). If it turns out that someone else is doing better or is better looking, for example, this can lead to a decrease in wellbeing (Rosenthal-von der Pütten et al., 2019). With fast dating apps on which there is a lot of choice, there are many people to compare with, making this more likely to have a negative effect on wellbeing.

While these two aspects of wellbeing, among others, are influenced by choice overload on dating apps, there are other aspects of wellbeing that can be explored. For example, the present research will look at what effect choice overload has on anxiety, another aspect of wellbeing. Furthermore, it will investigate what effect choice overload on dating apps has on a person's self-esteem. Previous research by Thomas et al (2019) has investigated what the effect on self-esteem is. This research has shown that self-esteem can already decrease the moment a person uses a dating app once. This will be explored further in the current study.

Anxiety

As such, a possible consequence of choice overload is anxiety, because when a person has too many choices (i.e., choice overload), and therefore does not know which choice to make, he/she can get anxious about the possibility of making the wrong decision. Within the literature there are different definitions for anxiety; for example, Epstein (1985) states that anxiety arises from the feeling that something fearful is going to happen. Additionally, Spielberger (1972) states that anxiety is an uncomfortable, emotional experience characterized by feelings of fear and pressure. Therefore, it can generally be said that anxiety is a feeling that can occur when a person feels that a situation is threatening, this can be about major

events, but also smaller things in everyday life. Within anxiety, an important distinction is made between trait and state anxiety (Gaudry et al., 1975). Trait anxiety involves how many signs of anxiety people have in general, in contrast, state anxiety describes how many anxious feelings people have in a specific moment or situation (Gaudry et al., 1975), for example after swiping on a dating app. Research has shown that it is important to make this distinction because the outcomes of trait anxiety and state anxiety can be quite different (Gaudry et al., 1975).

Multiple studies in different domains have already been done that have concluded that having too many choices (i.e., choice overload) leads to an increase in anxious feelings. For example, research by Nagar (2016) has shown that with online shopping, having many choices leads to anxiety. This can be explained by people having a high sense of responsibility for making the right decision. When having many choices, this sense of responsibility increases and this can eventually lead to feelings of anxiety about making the wrong decision (i.e., anxiety increases) (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). This has also been studied with managers of companies; this research has shown that when these managers have a lot of choice options (e.g., choices about transformation processes), they experience a lot of stress and anxiety (Zeike et al., 2019). This can be explained by what Pfaff (2013) demonstrated years ago, namely: Having many choices is the basis of the emergence of anxiety and stress. Whether having too many choices on dating apps also leads to anxious feelings among users has, to the author's knowledge, not been studied before. Yet, in online dating apps, there is endless choice, which could, according to the theory and previous studies, cause anxiety. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1a: Participants who are presented with a large set of potential partner options experience higher anxiety levels than those who are presented with an ideal set of potential partner options.

For these reasons, it is expected that having many choices on dating apps leads to higher levels of anxiety. In addition, it could be that this effect is stronger for people who are looking for a committed relationship. This is because when people are looking for a romantic, committed relationship, they have high expectations of what this relationship should look like (Miller, 2011). If they feel that these expectations will not be realized, there may be anxiety about the feeling what not having this relationship will be like (i.e., people are fearing they will not be okay when they don't get the "perfect" relationship they want) (Miller, 2011). Other research by Larson et al. (1999) has additionally shown that wanting to have romantic experiences (i.e., wanting a committed relationship), is associated with having intense emotions. As a result, wanting to engage in a committed relationship can be seen as challenging and fearful, which can lead to feelings of anxiety (Larson et al., 1999).

So, the many choices on dating apps can lead to more anxious feelings, for example, because people are afraid of making the wrong decision. These anxious feelings and thus the consequences of choice overload may be bigger for people seeking a serious, committed relationship. To test this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1b: The positive effect of a large set of potential partner options on anxiety is stronger when dating app users are looking for a long-term relationships than when they are looking for a casual relationship.

Self-esteem

Another possible consequence of choice overload, is a decrease in self-esteem. Self-esteem demonstrates how much a person considers themselves worth; it shows how a person feels about themselves and is therefore an affective process (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). This includes, for example, how attractive a person considers himself/herself and whether that person feels that others respect him/her (Heatherton's and Polivy 1991). Within self-esteem, a distinction can be made between trait and state self-esteem. Trait self-esteem shows how a

person feels in general and state self-esteem focuses on how someone feels in a specific moment (Leary, 1999). State self-esteem shows the extent to which a person feels accepted in the immediate situation, instead of rejected and excluded (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The outcomes of state self-esteem are therefore specifically emotional responses to things that happened shortly before (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), something that could be of interest in an online dating context where a person may feel a certain way about themselves immediately after swiping.

The reason why choice overload on dating apps can lead to a decrease in self-esteem is because on dating apps, someone's physical attractiveness is seen as the most important factor for contacting someone (Olivera-La Rosa et al., 2019). So, this means that the more attractive someone is, the more likely someone is to meet a potential dating partner online. A possible reason for this could be that people who have an attractive appearance are also considered more social, sensitive and successful than people who have a less attractive appearance (Dion et al., 1972). This is consistent with the "physical attractiveness stereotype", which describes that people who are physically attractive are also expected to be more likeable than people who are physically less attractive (Dion et al., 1972). Therefore, it can be concluded that in order to be successful on dating apps, people should have an attractive profile.

To have the most attractive profile possible, many users choose to edit their photos to fit the beauty ideal (Fullwood & Attrill-Smith, 2018). Thus, the photos people upload on dating apps may differ from how these people look in reality. In addition, due to the frequent swiping on dating apps, it is likely that people also encounter more of these idealized photos. As a result. As a consequence they might start comparing themselves to these photos, creating a gap between the ideal-self and the current self-image (Moretti & Tory Higgins, 1990). Because this gap can become bigger as a person encounters more profiles (i.e., choice

overload), people may be feeling dissatisfied with, for example, their own appearance and performance.

This could eventually lead to a decrease in self-esteem, because it can make people feel rejected. For this reason, the following hypothesis was established:

H2a: Participants who are presented with a large set of potential partner options score lower on self-esteem than those who are presented with an ideal set of potential partner options.

The choice overload on dating apps may therefore lead to a decrease in self-esteem, additionally, this decrease in self-esteem may be stronger for people who are looking for a committed relationship.

As described in the "anxiety" section, people seeking a serious relationship often have high expectations of what this relationship should look like. When someone has achieved what they wanted to achieve, a sense of pride arises, which is equivalent to having high self-esteem. Being able to meet your own expectations should therefore lead to higher self-esteem, this is also what research by Snyder et al. (2021) has shown. In contrast, if a person in a large partner set (i.e., choice overload) does not find the partner he/she wants, this person may begin to doubt, for example, his/her own ability and attractiveness. These doubts can lead to feelings of "not being enough" and thus to a decrease in self-esteem. This effect is stronger for people looking for a serious relationship because they often have higher expectations of what they want to find on a dating app, for example when someone is looking for a partner for life. For people looking for a casual relationship this is less of an issue because this is often for a shorter term.

Thus, it is expected that if someone wants to get a committed relationship out of a dating app, but cannot find their "perfect" partner in a large set of partner options (i.e., choice overload), they start doubting their abilities and this results in a decrease in self-esteem. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H2b: The negative effect of a large set of potential partner options on self-esteem is stronger when dating app users are looking for a committed relationship than when they are looking for a casual relationship.

Partner Selectivity

Besides the possibility that choice overload could affect the wellbeing of dating app users (i.e., anxiety and self-esteem), it could also affect how selective a person is when choosing a potential partner. This means how much they value certain characteristics in a partner (Evers et al., 2015). Buss and Barnes (1986) researched different characteristics and what characteristics people find most important in a partner. Examples of important characteristics that emerged from that research are: loyalty, honesty and intelligence. It can be concluded that the more important people find these characteristics, the more selective they are (Buss & Barnes, 1986)

How selective a person is can depend on how a person makes choices. Theoretically, there are two different strategies for making choices: maximizing and satisficing (Lenton & Stewart, 2008). When people use the maximizing strategy, they want to go through as many options as possible to make sure they do not miss out on the best option (Lenton & Stewart, 2008). Satisficers, on the other hand, choose the first sufficient option they come across, without going through all the other possible options (Lunenburg, 2010). In the context of online dating, this would mean that maximizers are less likely to be satisfied with the partner options they encounter, while satisficers are more likely to settle for someone they consider "good enough".

People usually fall into one of these two categories, but research has shown that when there is choice overload people are more encouraged to keep searching until a better option is found (Besedeš et al., 2015). Maximizers tend to do this all the time, but satisficers will also become more critical when they are exposed to choice overload (Besedeš et al., 2015). This

has not been studied before in the context of online dating. However, it can thus be expected that when there is choice overload, people are less likely to settle for a partner and therefore become more selective. To be even more specific: it is expected that the more potential partners a person encounters, the more criteria this person adds to their wish-list for the ideal partner and thus the more selective they become (Whitty, 2008). For the above reasons, the following hypothesis is established:

H3a: Participants who are presented a large set of potential partner options are more selective in choosing a partner than those who are presented an ideal set of potential partner options.

It is expected that a person's relational goal may reinforce this positive effect of choice overload, as this selectivity is expected to be higher for people who want to have a committed relationship. After all, research by Kenrick et al. (1990) has shown that the more involvement there will be in relationship, the more selective a person becomes in choosing a potential partner. For example, this research has shown that people are more selective in terms of accepted intelligence in a partner when they seriously want to date someone than they are in a sexual relationship (Kenrick et al., 1990). This is also true for, for example, how kind people want someone to be (Kenrick et al., 1990). It can be concluded from this study that the more serious a relationship becomes, the more selective a person becomes (Kenrick et al., 1990).

This selectivity has been studied in the area of offline relationships, but not yet in the area of online dating. It is expected that the choice overload on dating apps, leads to higher selectivity in selecting a potential partner, and that this effect is stronger for people who are looking for a committed relationship. This will be true for all aspects of selectivity (e.g., kindness, understanding, intelligence), because people who look for a committed relationship, find social personality traits more important than people looking for a casual relationship (Armstrong & Reissing, 2015). A reason for this can be that in a serious relationship, people want to feel connected to someone on a deeper level. In contrast, people engage in a casual

relationship because they want to have fun or are looking for an adventure (Armstrong & Reissing, 2015). For this reason, people seeking a committed relationship can be expected to be more selective in terms of personality traits, than people seeking a casual relationship. This effect may be enhanced if the person seeking a committed relationship has recently been exposed to choice overload. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3b: The positive effect of a large set of potential partner options on partner selectivity is stronger when dating app users are looking for a committed relationship than when they are looking for a causal relationship.

Based on all the formulated hypotheses, the following theoretical framework is proposed:

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework for the Effect of the IV on the DV's, Including a Moderator
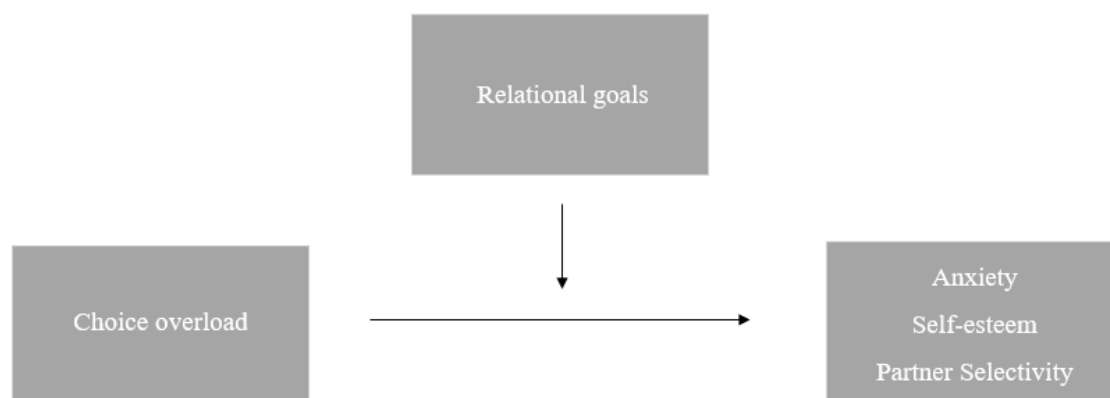
Method

Design

The current study used a between-subjects design with one binary independent variable (ideal set of partner options vs. large set of partner options), and three dependent variables (anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity). In addition, the participants' intended relational goals was included as a moderating variable. This variable consists of two levels

(i.e., two relational goals): casual relationship and committed relationship. To answer the research question, an existing prototype dating app was built on. In this app two different groups with potential partners were created: 30 dating profiles (i.e., no choice overload) and 80 dating profiles (i.e., choice overload). These numbers are based on numbers found in prior studies that found that the ideal number of potential partners to encounter is between 20-50 profiles; going well above this range will cause choice overload (Lenton et al., 2008; Pronk & Denissen, 2019). In this study, there was a large (i.e., 80 profiles) and ideal group (i.e., 30 profiles) of profiles consisting of potential female partners (for heterosexual men and homosexual women) and a large and ideal group consisting of potential male partners (for heterosexual women and homosexual men). Those participants who indicated they feel attracted to females and males were randomly assigned to a set of profiles of one of the two genders. Participants could swipe right (like) and left (dislike) on these profiles, giving the prototype the impression of a real dating app.

Participants

Requirements to participate in this study were that the participants are between 18-30 years old, this specific age group was established because it allowed the participants to more or less match the age group of the picture of the potential partners in the mock-up dating app. As one of the study's main goals is to examine the moderating role of relational goal on the effects of choice overload on wellbeing and partner selectivity, participants also needed to be single to participate in the study.

In total, 428 people started the study. However, 224 participants could not be included for the analysis, because they did not give informed consent ($n = 8$), were not between 18 and 30 years old ($n = 5$), were not single ($n = 27$) or dropped out during the study ($n = 184$). Consequently, data of 204 participants was analyzed to test the hypotheses. The mean age of these participants was 22.01 years ($SD = 2.54$), 78 of them identified as male (38.2%) and 126

identified as female (61.8%). Of all 204 participants, 125 indicated to feel most attracted to men (61.3%), 74 to women (36.2%), and five participants indicated to feel attracted to both genders (2.5%). Of the 204 participants, 22 participants had secondary school as highest completed or current education (10.8%), for 29 participants this was intermediate vocational education (14.2%), 122 participants had a bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences or a university (59.8%) and 31 participants are attending or have completed a master's degree, post-master or PhD at a university (15.2%).

Materials

A mock-up dating app was used for this experiment, for which 80 male and 80 female profiles were created. The photos for these profiles were taken from previous master theses that used a comparable dating app prototype (Korver, 2022; Waleson, 2022). However, as the current study needed more photos to create these 80 profiles, another 50 photos were collected from from Unsplash and Pexels to create the additional profiles. Unsplash and Pexels are websites where people can upload photos, which are then allowed to be used for free by others (e.g., for in research studies). The people on the selected photos are of different attractiveness levels (i.e., low, moderate and high attractive), to ensure that reality is replicated as closely as possible. All 80 profiles are used in the choice overload condition, and 30 of these profiles were randomly selected from the total set of 80 profiles for the no choice overload condition.

All the profiles consist of a photo and a name. These are common names in the Netherlands, which were then randomly assigned to a different dating profile for each participant. In addition, each profile could be liked or disliked, allowing the user to express their interest in the individual represented in the profile. To prevent that other factors (i.e., confounding variables) such as age and interests would affect the participants' swiping

behavior, no other information was available on the profiles. Examples of the dating app profiles are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Example of a Female and Male Dating Profile*
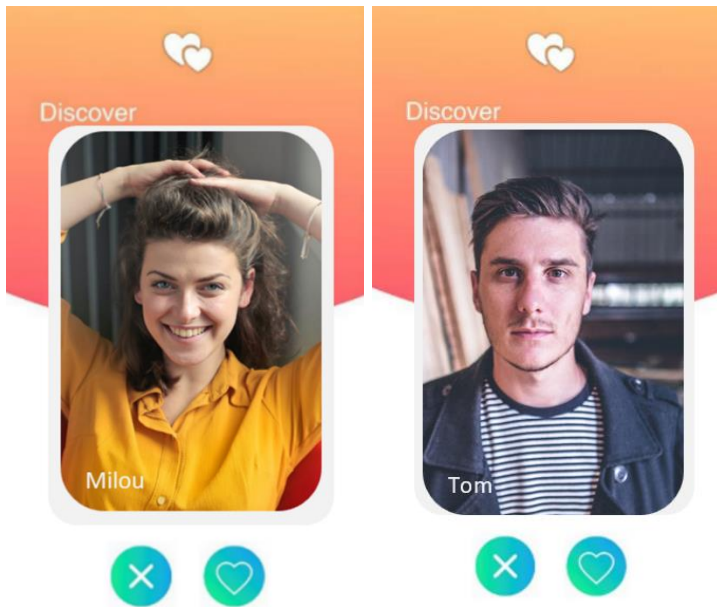
Measures

Relational Goal Measurement

The participant's relational goals were expected to play a moderating role in this study. Roughly speaking, there are two types of relational goals that research distinguish: those looking for a casual relationship and those looking for a committed relationship (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). Since it was expected that a person's relational goal is not always either of these two specific reasons, it was decided to measure relational goal by means of a slider, from scale 1 (casual relationship) to 100 (committed relationship). This variable was thus initially measured as a continuous variable. However, in order to run the Two-way MANOVA, this variable was transformed into a categorical variable. The participants who scored 50 or lower were classified as casual relationship seekers ($n = 64$; 31.4%) and those who gave a score of 51 or higher were categorized as committed relationship seekers ($n =$

140; 68.6%). The reason it was transformed into a categorical variable, was because most

participants had a clear preference for one of the two relational goals (i.e., only few

participants scored between 40 and 60). The distribution of the relational goal scores is shown

in Figure 3. This figure confirms that there is a fairly large spread, and that most of the scores

are not in the middle. The average indication of participants' relational goals was 65.39 ($SD =$

23.89), meaning that on average participants indicated more often that they were looking for a

committed relationship than for a casual relationship.

Figure 3

Distribution relational goal scores
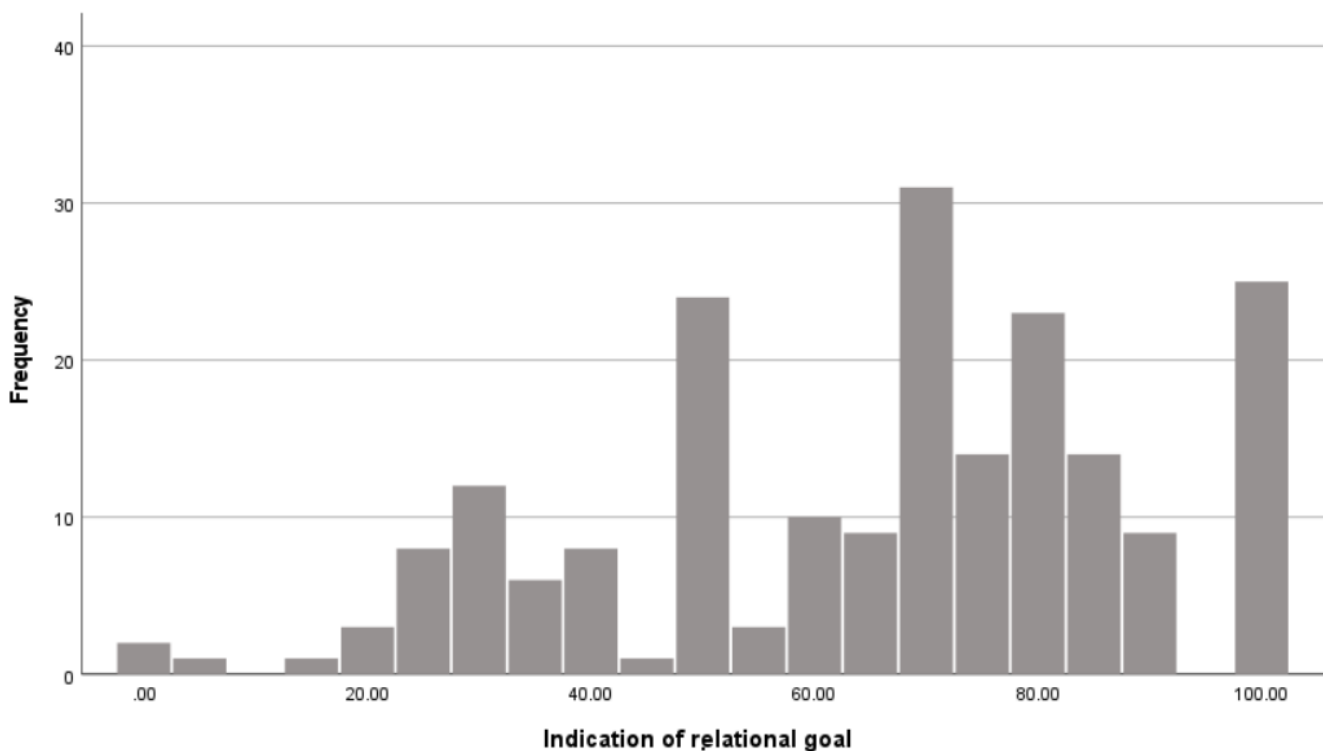
Wellbeing Measurements

To measure the effect of different numbers of potential partners on wellbeing (i.e.,

self-esteem and anxiety), two scales were adopted. To measure anxiety, the "State-Trait

Anxiety Inventory" scale is adapted (Spielberger et al., 1983). This scale originally consists of

40 items and is used as an indicator of distress; 20 of these items determine "state anxiety" and 20 items determine "trait anxiety". In this study, 10 items of state anxiety were included because these items focus on how the participants feel at this moment, that it how they feel immediately after swiping and not how they feel in general. Not all 20 items of state anxiety were included. This was done because some of the original items were less relevant to this study. The selection of ten items was also made to avoid participant burden, as answering 20 statements – in addition to answering other statements related to other constructs – could be considered a lot of work. To measure the participants' current state of anxiety, participants could indicate on a 5-point scale the extent to which they agreed with the items, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Examples of items include: "I feel nervous" and "I feel confused". The Cronbach's α for the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Scale was .86 ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.58$).

To measure self-esteem, the "State Self-Esteem Scale" of Heatherton's & Polivy (1991) was used. This scale measures state self-esteem, which means that it measures self-esteem at a given point of time (i.e., right now, after swiping). Originally, the State Self-Esteem scale consists of 20 items, of which 10 are used in this study. Not all items were included in this study, for the same reasons as why not all 20 items of the State-Trait Anxiety scale were included. Participants could indicate by means of a 5-point scale to what extent they agreed with the 10 items, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Examples of items include: "I feel that others respect and admire me" and "I feel good about myself". The Cronbach's α for the Self-Esteem Scale was .85 ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.60$).

Partner Selectivity Measurement

Partner selectivity was measured using the results of a study by Buss and Barnes (1986). They examined 76 character traits potential partners can have, the more important a person considers these character traits in a potential partner, the more selective the person is.

The ten character traits that were considered most important in that study were included in the current study to measure participants' selectivity. Participants could indicate by means of a 5-point scale to what extent they desire for the specific characteristic in a potential partner, ranging from 1 (very undesirable) to 5 (very desirable). Examples of characteristics include: "Intelligent," "Kind" and "Affectionate". The Cronbach's α for this partner selectivity scale was .71 ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.35$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, using the researcher's network. A recruitment text (see Appendix D) was composed to recruit participants, which also indicated that participants should be single and between 18-30 years old in order to participate. This text also asked the participants if they could conduct the study on their mobile phones, as this gives the impression of a real dating app. The recruitment text was first shared on social media and in various WhatsApp groups on Wednesday November 9, this was also the day the study was published. The survey closed on Friday November 18, meaning the data was collected for 9 days.

The moment the participants made the decision to click on the link in the recruitment text, they were directed to the Qualtrics page with an information letter about the study (see Appendix D). This information letter described what the study entailed, how long the study would take, what would happen with the data obtained, and whether there were any consequences regarding participation in the study. After reading the information letter, participants were asked if they wanted to give informed consent, thus agreeing to participate in the study.

After giving informed consent, the participants were asked demographic questions about their gender, age, level of education, sexual preference, and relationship status. If these questions determined that some participants did not fit the target age group (i.e., between 18-

30) or were not single (according to the question about relationship status), they were directed to the end of the experiment. Those participants who matched the study's target group were asked to answer the slider scale question on their intended relational goal.

After indicating their relational goal, participants were directed to a screen explaining how to use the mock-up dating app, including how they were expected to swipe their matches left (dislike) or right (like). Participants were then randomly assigned to either the large or the ideal set of partner options condition. The profiles they encountered depended on which gender they indicated to feel most attracted to. Important to mention is that participants were not shown a notification on whether they had a match or not, because this might be a confounding variable that also affects wellbeing (Her & Timmermans (2020). As such, this was not included to avoid the possibility that the effect was caused by having a match, rather than by choice overload.

 After the participants saw and evaluated all the profiles in their condition, they were asked a manipulation check question for verification, namely: "How many dating profiles do you think you just saw?". This was a dichotomous question, with the two sets being the two options. This was asked to see if the participants realized how many profiles they have just seen. Results showed that 43 participants answered this question incorrectly. Of them, two participants thought they had seen the 80 profiles, while they had seen 30. In contrast, 41 participants thought they had seen 30 profiles when they had in fact seen 80.

Participants were then asked to answer the ten statements about anxiety and ten statements about self-esteem. After answering these statements, they could indicate how selective they are in choosing a future partner by indicating how important they consider the 10 different character traits.

Finally, after answering these questions, participants were debriefed (see Appendix D), thanked for their participation and were given the opportunity to ask questions or request the results of the study.

Statistical analysis

The collected data were exported to SPSS. In order to test the hypotheses and answer the research question "What is the effect of choice overload in online dating on one's anxiety, self-esteem & partner selectivity, and how does one's relational goal influence this effect?" a factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed. Here, the number of potential partners is the independent variable (IV). In addition, relational goals was included as a moderator, to test if this enhanced the effect of choice overload. Finally, three dependent variables (DVs) were tested: anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity.

Results

To test the hypotheses a Two-way MANOVA was performed, with anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity as the three dependent variables. The number of potential partner options was included as an independent variable, and relational goals operated as a moderator in this study.

Swiping Behavior

From the prototype dating app that was used, a number of findings emerged regarding the number of likes given by the participants. The average number of likes given in the choice overload condition (i.e., 80 profiles) was 17.75 (22.19%). Men gave an average of 26.50 likes (33.13%) and women gave an average of 12.64 likes (15.80%). So, this means that there is a big difference between the number of likes given by men and women in the choice overload condition. In the no choice overload condition, an average of 6.41 likes was given (21.37%). Men in this condition gave on average of 9.70 likes (32.33%) and women 4.23 likes (14.10%). Again, men gave more than twice as many likes as women.

What is remarkable is that the percentage of likes between the different conditions does not differ much, which means that percentagewise, people are not liking fewer profiles as they encounter more potential partners.

Assumption Testing

Before conducting the MANOVA, there were preliminary checks to assess the assumptions of linearity, multicollinearity, univariate outliers, multivariate outliers, normality, equal variances and covariances and the assumption of homogeneity of variances. First, there was a linear relationship for most of the dependent variables, as assessed by the scatterplot. In addition, there was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by Pearson correlation ($|r| <$ 0.9). Thirdly, by inspection of the boxplot, there was one univariate outlier. For statistical reasons, it was decided to remove this outlier from the dataset. In addition, there were no multivariate outliers, as assessed by inspecting the Mahalanobis Distance; for three dependent variables the critical value for Mahalanobis Distance is 16.27. All datapoints had a smaller score than 16.27, so this assumption is met. Additionally, anxiety scores were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). However, self-esteem and partner selectivity scores were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). In addition, there was homogeneity of covariance matrices, as assessed by Box's M test ($p = .002$). Finally, not all variables had homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ($p <$ .05). Although MANOVA is robust against violations, the results should still be interpreted with caution.

Hypotheses testing

Prior to describing the results of the hypotheses testing, table 1 provides an overview of the scores within the different conditions. All means and standard deviations are displayed in this table.

Table 1

Means (SD) on the Dependent Variables, per Condition, for the Different Relational Goals

	Choice overload		No choice overload	
	Casual relationship (n = 30)	Committed relationship (n = 72)	Casual relationship (n = 34)	Committed relationship (n = 68)
Anxiety	2.32 (0.65)	2.26 (0.61)	2.09 (0.48)	2.22 (0.57)
Self-esteem	3.85 (0.58)	3.79 (0.64)	3.91 (0.64)	3.76 (0.56)
Selectivity	4.32 (0.42)	4.62 (0.23)	4.35 (0.41)	4.51 (0.33)

Anxiety

The first hypothesis stated that participants who are presented with a large set of potential partner options experience higher anxiety levels than those who are presented with an ideal set of potential partner options (H1a). Even though the anxiety levels of people in the choice overload ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.62$) and no choice overload condition ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 0.54$) seem to differ, the MANOVA showed no significant main effect of choice overload on anxiety ($F (1,200) = 2.485$, $p = .116$, partial $n^2 = .012$). Therefore, H1a is rejected.

It was also expected that the effect of choice overload would be stronger for people who are seeking a committed relationship, than for people who are seeking a casual relationship (H1b). Even though the anxiety levels of people who are seeking a committed ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 0.58$) and casual relationship ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.57$) seem to differ, the MANOVA showed no significant interaction effect of choice overload and relational goals on anxiety ($F (1,200) = .260$, $p = .611$, partial $n^2 = .001$). This is why H1b is also rejected.

These findings suggest that choice overload has no effect on how much anxiety a person has. Also, there is no difference between people with different relational goals and their anxiety levels as a result of choice overload.

Self-esteem

The second hypothesis (H2a) stated that participants who are presented with a large set of potential partner options have a lower self-esteem than those who are presented with an ideal set of potential partner options. The MANOVA showed no significant main effect of choice overload on self-esteem, $F(1,200) = .040$, $p = .842$, partial $n^2 = .000$, as people presented with 30 profiles ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.59$) scored similar on self-esteem than those presented with 80 profiles ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.62$). H2a should thus be rejected.

Additionally, it was expected that the negative effect of choice overload on self-esteem would be stronger for people who are looking for a committed relationship than for those looking for a casual relationship (H2b). Even though the self-esteem esteem of people who are seeking a committed ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.60$) and casual relationship ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.61$) seem to differ, no significant interaction effect of choice overload and relational goals on self-esteem is found ($F(1,200) = .260$, $p = .611$, partial $n^2 = .001$). H2b should therefore also be rejected.

These findings suggest that choice overload does not affect one's self-esteem. In addition, it implies that there is no difference in self-esteem, as a result of choice overload, between people looking for a committed relationship and those looking for casual relationship.

Partner Selectivity

The final hypothesis stated that participants who are presented a large set of potential partner options are more selective in choosing a partner than those who are presented an ideal set of potential partner options (H3a). Even though the partner selectivity of people in the choice overload ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.33$) and no choice overload condition ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.37$) seem to differ, the MANOVA showed no significant main effect of choice overload on

partner selectivity (F (1,200) = .703, p = .403, partial n^2 = .004). Therefore, H3a is not confirmed by the data.

In addition, this effect was expected to be stronger for those seeking a committed relationship than for those seeking a casual relationship (H3b). Although it seems that people seeking a committed relationship (M = 4.57, SD = 0.29) are more selective than those seeking a casual relationship (M = 4.33, SD = 0.41), the interaction effect of choice overload and relational goals on partner selectivity was not significant (F (1,200) = 1.911, p = .168, partial n^2 = .009). This is why H3b is also rejected.

These findings show that choice overload on dating apps does not affect how selective a person is in choosing a partner. Additionally, this effect is not stronger for people looking for a committed relationship.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of choice overload in online dating on self-esteem, anxiety and partner selectivity. It was also examined whether this effect is stronger for people who are looking for a committed relationship. To investigate this, an online experiment was conducted where 204 participants interacted and swiped either 30 (i.e., no choice overload) or 80 (i.e., choice overload) profiles on a prototype dating app. After swiping the profiles, participants answered statements about their anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity.

General Findings

It was expected that when a person was exposed to choice overload in online dating, this would have a negative impact on one's wellbeing, However, in this study it was found that the presence of choice overload has no effect on a person's wellbeing. This is inconsistent with previous research on choice overload in online dating, which did find that a person's self-esteem decreased when this person was exposed to choice overload (Thomas et al., 2021). In

addition, this is not consistent with research by Zeike et al. (2019), which has shown that having many choices can lead to higher anxiety levels. One possible reason for this inconsistency could be that people have become used to having a lot of choices over the years, and that choice overload does not occur as quickly anymore. Consider, for example, having infinite choices regarding webshops, foods and potential partners on dating apps. If people are used to something, and thus it is a habit, they are less likely to experience the negative consequences of it (Jager, 2003). Even if a person knows that this habit is bad, but experiences the immediate outcomes as positive, this person will not stop their behavior. (Jager, 2003). In online dating, this could mean that there is no effect of choice overload on wellbeing because people may see a dating app as a way to get social affirmation from others (i.e., lots of potential partners is lots of affirmation). Since people are constantly seeking for affirmation from others today, this is perceived as something positive (Backström et al., 2020). Therefore, at that point the negative effects, such as a decrease in wellbeing, are not consciously experienced.

In addition, it was expected that choice overload on dating apps would lead to a person being more selective when choosing a partner. However, the current study found that this was not the case. These results are inconsistent with the findings of Whitty (2008), who described that the more partners a person encounters, the more selective that person becomes. A possible reason for this inconsistency could be that people today have high standards when it comes to their partner (Kretz, 2019). They want their partner to meet a lot of requirements, nor will they settle for someone who is not "perfect" in their eyes (Kretz, 2019). This is regardless of whether someone has seen many or few profiles in a dating app. This is in line with the high mean partner selectivity ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.35$) in this study, which shows that the participants consider all described character traits important when looking for a partner.

Finally, the study also shows that people's relational goals do not affect how strong the effect of choice overload is on their anxiety, self-esteem and partner selectivity. To be more precise, people who want a committed relationship were expected to have lower self-esteem and more anxiety caused by choice overload on dating apps. They were also expected to be more selective in choosing a partner than people looking for a casual relationship. That the results do not match these expectations could be because people do not always have a specific relational goal when using a dating app. For example, in addition to meeting other people, people use these apps for fun, because they are bored or because they feel alone (Chin et al., 2018). Thus, some people are not looking for a relationship (i.e., committed or casual), but had to indicate their relational goal in this study. So it could be that these people filled in their relational goal randomly, which might explain why the results were different than the expected moderation effect.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

Although the expectations of this study were not met, there are important implications that can be added to the literature. This study shows, contrary to the expectations, that having choice overload in online dating has no effect on both wellbeing (i.e., anxiety and self-esteem) and partner selectivity. So, this implies that choice overload does not always have negative consequences and that it may vary depending on the situation. This could be seen as an important implication for the research field, since, so far mostly negative effects of choice overload were found. It could be that more cognitive effort is needed to experience the negative effects of choice overload. Future research could further investigate this by using a slow-dating app, rather than a fast-dating app as in this study. On these apps, there is more information available on the profiles, such as interests, hobbies, and personality type (Antonelli, 2021). So, it takes more effort to consider the profiles, and this may increase cognitive load - which is a cause of choice overload (Chernev et al., 2015)

Next, this is the first study to include relational goals in an investigation of choice overload in online dating. It was expected that if people were looking for a committed relationship, they would experience the effects of choice overload more strongly than if they were looking for a casual relationship. This was expected because people seeking a committed relationship might have higher expectations of a partner than people seeking a casual relationship. Indeed, it seems that the moderating effects of relational goals do not exist for choice overload in an online dating context, which is a new finding that can be added to the literature. Further research could look at whether other reasons for using a dating app might enhance or weaken the effect. For example, someone who is active on a dating app out of boredom may not experience the negative effects of choice overload as much as someone who uses the app because they feel alone. Therefore, future research could look at other reasons for using a dating app and whether these reasons do moderate the effect of choice overload on wellbeing and partner selectivity.

Another important implication is that this study is the first study on choice overload using a prototype dating app. This dating app is designed to be as close as possible to real dating apps in terms of look and feel. This includes the colors used on Tinder and swiping left and right similar to real dating apps. Previous studies gave people the option to like or dislike a profile by clicking a heart or a cross (Pronk & Denissen, 2019; Thomas et al., 2022). However, these experiments had no other features of a real dating app besides this (e.g., people could not swipe in the dating apps of the previously conducted studies). Although these studies did find significant results, the results of the current study are important because of the higher ecological validity of the experiment. In other words, the experiment of this study included a better representation of reality by using the prototype dating app, which has not been done before. This prototype could be used again for future research on choice overload in online dating. Future research could for example examine whether there is still a

rejection mindset, as Pronk and Denissen (2019) examined, or whether this no longer exists when using a prototype dating app. This rejection mindset in particular is interesting to test again because the swiping behavior of the participants in this study shows no difference in the percentage of likes in the choice overload compared to the no choice overload condition. Something that would imply that people are not more likely to reject someone in a large partner set, which contradicts the results of previous research (Pronk & Denissen, 2019).

This study also has a practical implication, which might be of interest to the creators of dating apps. Because no effect was found of choice overload on wellbeing, it can be argued that seeing many profiles does not have a negative effect on wellbeing and that dating apps therefore do not need to put a limit on the number of profiles a person encounters. Initially, there were mostly fast-dating apps, on which people could swipe and get unlimited matches (Orosz et al., 2016). There is a lot of criticism for this, as excessive swiping is seen as something that could negatively impact a user's wellbeing (Dorado, 2022). Because of this criticism, slow dating apps were developed, where people have more information about someone and cannot swipe unlimitedly (Antonelli, 2021). However, the current study has shown that excessive swiping does not affect a person's wellbeing, and thus the use of fast dating apps – that work similarly as the prototype dating app used in this study – has no negative effects in this aspect. This is something that was previously unknown.

Limitations

The results of this study provide new insights about choice overload on dating apps. However, the study has a few limitations, which should be considered while interpreting the results. The first limitation is the issue of ecological isomorphism, which means that the experimental situation does not fully reflect external reality (Treadwell & Davis, 2019). Despite being the first study within choice overload to use a realistic prototype dating app, this prototype also has a limitation, which is that it did still not fully reflect a real dating app.

For example, participants did not have to create an account and/or add photos of themselves, as happens on a real dating app. This may have made it feel more distant and caused the participants to swipe through the profiles with less thoughtfulness. If they felt that this was a real dating app, they probably would have swiped in a different way and perhaps the effect of choice overload would have been apparent. This is because choice overload will mainly occur when difficult choices have to be made (Greifeneder et al., 2010), something that is not the case when choices on dating apps are not thought through. Therefore, future research could further improve the prototype dating app by having people create a profile. This makes it more realistic, making people think more about their choices and thus choice overload is more likely to occur.

The second limitation is the age group among which this study was conducted, namely 18- to 30-year-olds. It could be the case that they did not experience the effects of choice overload strongly because they know there are plenty of other options in their natural environment to meet someone (e.g., at school, at the bar, at work). Perhaps the effects may be present in a group that already experiences scarcity in the number of partner options they have, such as elderly adults (McWilliams & Barrett, 2012). Because this group of people is no longer working or going to school, they rely much more on dating apps when it comes to meeting a partner. Therefore, people in this age group may experience that the choices they make are less easily replaceable and therefore more valuable. Future research could further explore this possibility.

Finally, the study was shared in groups with other Master's students and on the platforms SurveySwap and SurveyCircle. In these WhatsApp-groups and on these platforms, many students share their surveys with the goal of getting as many people as possible to complete them. However, there are things that indicate that not all participants took the study seriously; for example, 43 participants (21.08%) filled out the manipulation check incorrectly,

these are mostly people who had seen 80 profiles and thought they had seen 30 profiles. In addition, it appears that 53 participants (25.98%) took less than 2 seconds to determine whether to like or dislike a profile. Most of these participants (38 participants) were part of the choice overload condition. These findings could mean that several participants swiped through the profiles very quickly. As a result, they did not pay much attention to the profiles and this could affect whether or not they add more requirements to their wish list for the perfect partner (i.e., partner selectivity). Future research should clarify more that they need to take their time when swiping; after all, in real life you look carefully at who you are swiping left and right as well. So taking the time to swipe could result in an effect of choice overload.

Conclusion

As the number of users of dating apps grows rapidly, so does the number of choices people have on these dating apps. This is also known as the choice overload effect, which was investigated in this study. The results of the experiment show that choice overload in dating apps has no effect on one's wellbeing and partner selectivity. In addition, there are no differences between people with different relational goals and how they perceive the effects of choice overload. The overall findings of this study contradict findings from previous studies, that found choice overload effects. One reason for this could be that this study used a realistic prototype dating app. This is something that has never been done in previous studies and increases the ecological validity of the present study. Future research can be done to further investigate in what circumstances the effects of choice overload are or are not present. For example, future research can examine whether there are effects of choice overload when a slow-dating app is used. Also, future research can look at other reasons for using a dating app, and whether these reasons do moderate the effect of choice overload. In summary, it can be concluded from the current study that choice overload in online dating does not always have

the negative consequences that were expected. Something that is comforting, given the fact that swiping is on the rise.

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Appendix A

Stimuli Experiment Males
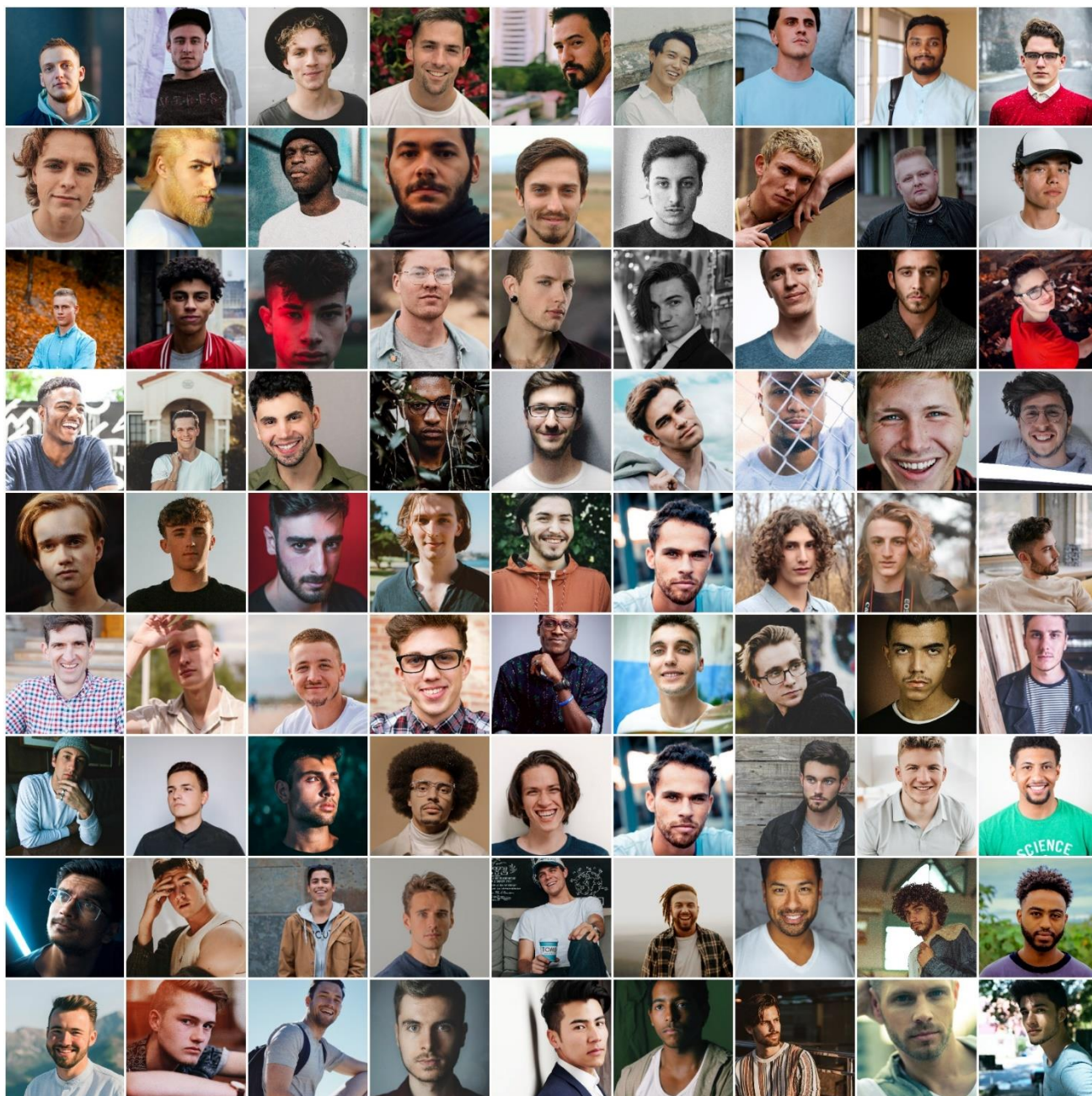
Appendix B

Stimuli experiment females
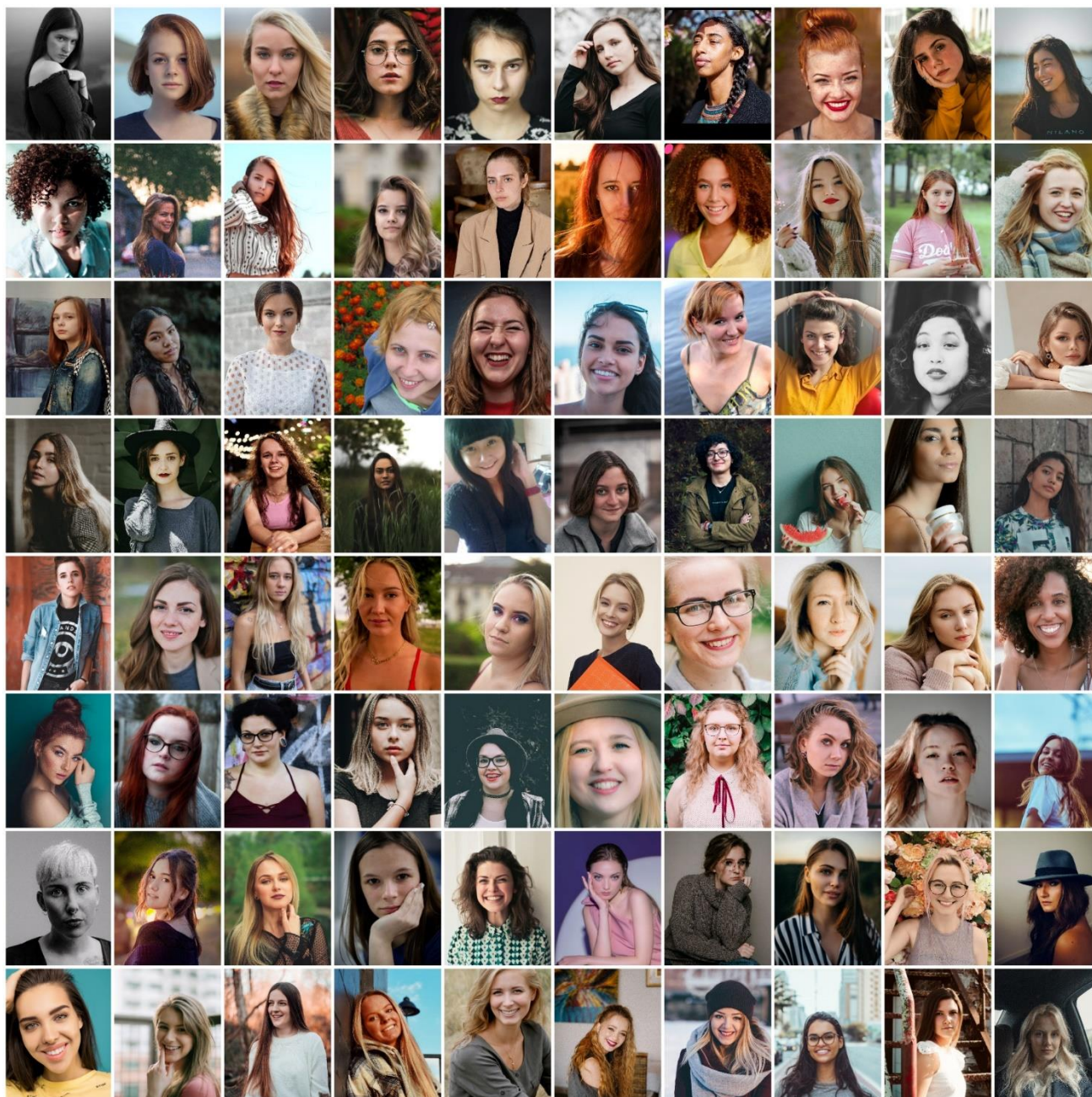
Appendix C

Dating Profiles Experiment Examples
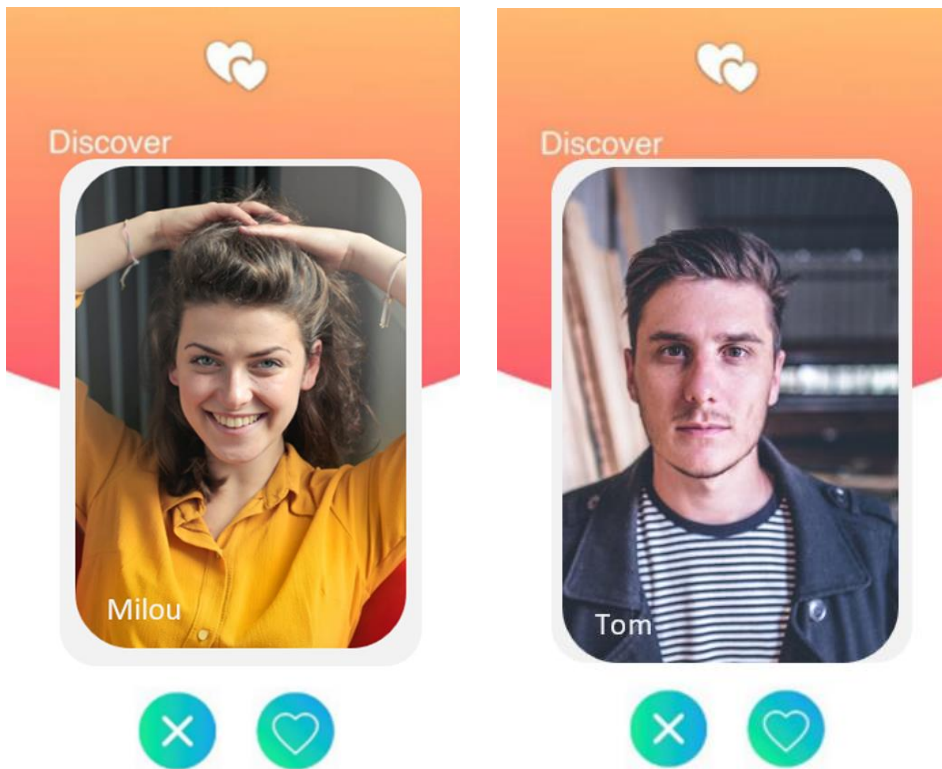
Appendix D

Recruitment Text, Information Letter, Consent Form and Debriefing

Recruitment text

Ben jij single en tussen de 18 en 30 jaar oud? Dan kan jij mij helpen afstuderen?

Het enige wat je hoeft te doen is swipen op een fictieve dating app (niet verkeerd toch?) en

paar vragen beantwoorden, via deze link → "link experiment"

Het duurt ongeveer 10 minuutjes! (Je kan het onderzoek het beste invullen op je telefoon)

Dankjewel!

Information letter

Ben jij single en tussen de 18-30 jaar oud? Dan kan je mij helpen met afstuderen!

Met mijn afstudeeronderzoek wil ik meer inzicht krijgen in wat de gevolgen zijn van swipen

op een dating app. Daarom vraag ik je straks om gebruik te gaan maken van een prototype

datingapp, dit is dus geen bestaande app en deze wordt alleen binnen dit onderzoek gebruikt.

In de onderstaande tekst kun je alle informatie lezen die nodig is om te starten met dit

onderzoek, lees dit dus aandachtig.

Om deel te nemen aan de studie, moet je tussen de 18 en 30 jaar oud zijn, en moet je single

zijn. Om een optimale datingappervaring te creëren, wil ik je vragen het onderzoek uit te

voeren op je mobiele telefoon. De deelname aan dit onderzoek zal ongeveer 10 minuten

duren. Er zitten geen risico's aan je deelname aan dit onderzoek; alle dataverzameling gaat

conform de regels van AVG (Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming). Daarnaast heeft

de Research Ethics and Data Management Committee van Tilburg School of Humanities and

Digital Sciences goedkeuring gegeven voor het uitvoeren van dit onderzoek.

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig anoniem; de data is daarom op geen enkele manier te

associëren met jouw naam. De antwoorden die je geeft zullen volledig geanonimiseerd

worden en hoogst vertrouwelijk behandeld worden. De geanonimiseerde data van deze studie

zullen 10 jaar bewaard blijven en kunnen (alleen voor niet-commerciële doeleinden) gedeeld

worden met anderen.

Het onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig en tijdens het onderzoek heb je het recht om je te allen tijde terug te trekken, om welke reden dan ook en zonder dat dit nadelige gevolgen heeft. Als je vragen hebt over je deelname, of over het onderzoek kan je contact opnemen met Tess van der Zanden (T.vdrZanden@tilburguniversity.edu) of Eva Groenen (e.a.t.groenen@tilburguniversity.edu). Voor eventuele opmerkingen of klachten over het onderzoek kan je ook contact opnemen met de Research Ethics and Data Management Committee van Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences, via tshd.redc@tilburguniversity.edu

Nogmaals bedankt en veel plezier met swipen!

Consent form

Voor deelname aan het onderzoek, bevestig ik dat:

- Ik de voorgaande informatie zorgvuldig heb gelezen;

- Ik ouder ben dan 18 jaar;

- Ik weet dat ik me op elk moment uit dit onderzoek kan terugtrekken;

- Ik weet dat ik bij vragen contact kan opnemen met de onderzoeker;

- Ik ermee akkoord ga dat mijn geanonimiseerde gegevens tien jaar worden bewaard;

- Ik ermee akkoord ga dat mijn geanonimiseerde gegevens worden gebruikt voor mogelijke toekomstige studies of een wetenschappelijke publicatie;

- Ik ermee akkoord ga dat mijn geanonimiseerde gegevens met anderen kunnen worden gedeeld (voor niet-commerciële doeleinden).

    o Ik ga hiermee akkoord en wil graag met het onderzoek beginnen.

    o Ik ga hiermee niet akkoord en wil niet aan het onderzoek deelnemen.

Debriefing

Dit is het einde van het onderzoek; nogmaals bedankt voor je deelname!

Deze studie ging over de mogelijke impact die het hebben van (te) veel keuzes in potentiële partners op dating apps heeft op hoe iemand zich voelt en op hoe selectief diegene is in het kiezen van een uiteindelijke partner. De verwachting is dat als mensen te veel keuzes krijgen, ze meer stress en angst ervaren en ook dat ze selectiever worden. Daarbij kijk ik ook naar wat voor relatiedoel iemand heeft, omdat ik verwacht dat het effect van veel keuzes sterker is voor mensen die op zoek zijn naar een serieuze relatie.

Heb je vragen of opmerkingen? Dan kan je contact met Tess van der Zanden (T.vdrZanden@tilburguniversity.edu) of met mij (e.a.t.groenen@tilburguniversity.edu). Voor eventuele opmerkingen of klachten over dit onderzoek kun je ook contact opnemen met de Research Ethics and Data Management Committee van Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences via tshd.redc@tilburguniversity.edu.

Vergeet niet op de pijl om je antwoorden op te slaan.

Appendix E

Questions Experiment

Block 1: Demographic questions

We beginnen met een aantal algemene vragen over jou.

- Met welk geslacht identificeer je je het meest?

    o Man

    o Vrouwen

    o Anders, namelijk … (non-binair, multigender etc.)

    o Dat wil ik liever niet zeggen

- Wat is je leeftijd (in jaren)?

    [   ]

- Wat is hoogst afgeronde of huidige opleidingsniveau?

    o Basisschool

    o Voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (vmbo)

    o Algemeen voortgezet onderwijs (havo/vwo)

    o Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (mbo)

    o Bachelor (hbo/wo)

    o Master, Post-master, PhD

    o Dat wil ik liever niet zeggen

- Ben je momenteel single?

    o Ja

    o Ja, maar ik ben wel met iemand aan het daten

    o Nee

    o Weet ik niet

    o Dat wil ik liever niet zeggen

- Tot welk geslacht voel je je het meest aangetrokken?

    o Mannen

    o Vrouwen

    o Beide

    o Dat wil ik liever niet zeggen

Block 2: Relational goals

De volgende vraag gaat over het relatiedoel dat je hebt als je op een datingapp actief bent. Mocht je zelf geen gebruik maken van dating apps, probeer je dan te bedenken wat je doel zou zijn als je hier wel gebruik van zou maken. Deze vraag kun je beantwoorden op een schaal 0 tot 100, waarbij 0 staat voor een volledig vrijblijvende relatie en 100 voor een volledig serieuze, toegewijde relatie.

Vrijblijvende									Serieuze,
relatie									toegewijde relatie
0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
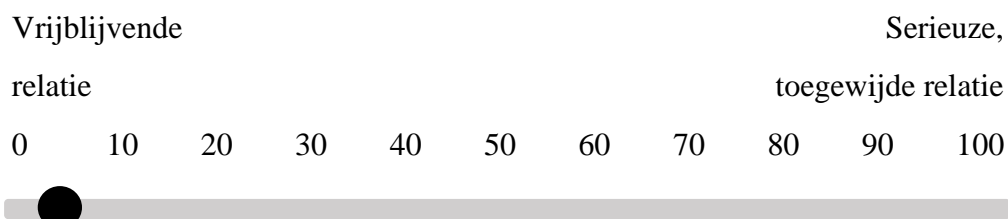
Block 3: The experiment

Introduction ideal set of potential partner options

Tijd voor het leukste deel van het onderzoek: het swipen. Je krijgt dadelijk 30 datingprofielen te zien, probeer je daarbij in te beelden dat je daadwerkelijk gebruik maakt van een datingapp. Dus, vind je iemand leuk? Swipe naar rechts. Vind je iemand niet leuk? Swipe dan naar links. Na het swipen zal je worden teruggestuurd naar de enquête om het onderzoek af te ronden. Veel plezier met swipen!

Start

Introduction large set of potential partner options

Tijd voor het leukste deel van het onderzoek: het swipen. Je krijgt dadelijk 80 datingprofielen te zien, probeer je daarbij in te beelden dat je daadwerkelijk gebruik maakt van een datingapp. Dus, vind je iemand leuk? Swipe naar rechts. Vind je iemand niet leuk? Swipe dan naar links. Na het swipen zal je worden teruggestuurd naar de enquête om het onderzoek af te ronden. Veel plezier met swipen!

> **Start**

Block 4: Manipulation check

Je hebt zojuist gebruik gemaakt van de fictieve datingapp. We gaan nu door met de enquête waarin je nog wat vragen moet beantwoorden.

- Hoeveel datingprofielen denk je dat je net hebt gezien?
  - o 30 profielen
  - o 80 profielen

Block 5: Self-esteem statements

In het volgende onderdeel zullen er vragen worden gesteld met betrekking tot hoe je je voelt na het gebruik van de datingapp.

Selecteer voor elke stelling de antwoordoptie die het meest van toepassing is **op dit moment.**

	Totaal niet (1)	*Een beetje (2)*	*Enigszins (3)*	*Heel erg (4)*	*Extreem (5)*
Ik heb vertrouwen in mijn capaciteiten	○	○	○	○	○
Ik maak me zorgen of ik als een succes of	○	○	○	○	○

een mislukking beschouwd wordt					
Ik voel me teleurgesteld over mijn prestaties	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel dat anderen mij respecteren en bewonderen.	○	○	○	○	○
Ik heb het gevoel dat het niet goed met me gaat.	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me ontevreden over mezelf	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me goed over mezelf	○	○	○	○	○
Ik maak me zorgen over wat anderen van me denken	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me minderwaardig aan anderen	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me onaantrekkelijk	○	○	○	○	○

Block 6: Anxiety statements

In het volgende onderdeel zullen er vragen worden gesteld met betrekking tot hoe je je voelt

na het gebruik van de datingapp.

Selecteer voor elke stelling de antwoordoptie die het meest van toepassing is **op dit moment.**

	Totaal niet *(1)*	*Een beetje* *(2)*	*Enigszins* *(3)*	*Heel erg* *(4)*	*Extreem* *(5)*
Ik voel me rustig	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me veilig					
Ik voel me verward	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me boos	○	○	○	○	○
Ik maak me zorgen	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me tevreden	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me zelfverzekerd	○	○	○	○	○
Ik ben ontspannen	○	○	○	○	○
Ik ben bezorgd	○	○	○	○	○
Ik voel me stabiel	○	○	○	○	○

Block 7: Partner selectivity measurements

We zijn aangekomen bij het laatste onderdeel van het experiment en daarvoor wil ik je

vragen om voor elk van de volgende karaktereigenschappen aan te geven hoe belangrijk je het

vindt dat je match voldoet aan deze karaktereigenschappen. Het gaat er hierbij om wat je **op dit moment** zoekt in een match.

Mijn match moet … zijn

	Zeer onbelangrijk (1)	*Enigszins onbelangrijk (2)*	*Niet belangrijk /niet onbelangrijk (3)*	*Enigszins belangrijk (4)*	*Zeer belangrijk (5)*
een goede vriend	○	○	○	○	○
aantrekkelijk	○	○	○	○	○
eerlijk	○	○	○	○	○
liefdevol	○	○	○	○	○
betrouwbaar	○	○	○	○	○
intelligent	○	○	○	○	○
vriendelijk	○	○	○	○	○
begripvol	○	○	○	○	○
een interessante gesprekspartner	○	○	○	○	○
loyaal	○	○	○	○	○