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# **Value-Driven Vulnerability: Personal Values and Choice Overload in Online Dating**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the phenomena of choice overload in the context of online dating. Specifically, we investigate the influence of underlying personal values on decisionmaking tendencies when exposed to many options. Two hundred and seventy three participants completed items assessing a range of personally-held values, ranging from more self-focused (e.g., achievement, hedonism) to more other-focused (e.g., conformity, benevolence). Participants were randomly assigned to select one online dating profile amongst a large set vs. a small set, before reporting their choice-related stress. Fitting previous choice overload research, individuals who selected from a large choice set reported greater stress than those who selected from a small choice set. When selecting from the large set, individuals who were high in social-focused values reported greater choice-related stress than did those who were 1) low in social-focused values choosing from the large choice set and 2) high in social-focused values choosing from the small set.

For individuals with modest social goals, condition did not predict choice-related stress. Notably, further analyses revealed a three-way interaction between personal values, social values, and condition on choice-related stress. The findings suggest that individuals whose values prioritize others' needs ahead of their personal objectives were more likely to experience choice-related stress when exposed to the large set. The findings indicate that social goals and traditional beliefs influence individual decision-making tendencies and experiences in situations of choice overload.

**Keywords:** Partner choice overload, Online dating, Personal values, Decision-making, Social values, Personal-focused values, Choice-related stress