Attitude on live-in relationship: A thematic analysis

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Abstract
In the last ten years, live-in partnerships have increased significantly in Indian society. The growing number of couples choosing to live together shows that people now have a good attitude regarding relationships that are sometimes referred to as "taboo". Indian society is becoming more westernized welcoming western cultures and ways of life, but a major section of our society is still yet to come to terms with this culture since live-in relationship is considered westernize. Therefore, this qualitative research aims to understand the perspective and attitude of female Ph.D. scholars residing at Hostel of Assam Agricultural University, towards live-in relationship. The qualitative data in this study to understand the attitude towards live-in relationship was collected by conducting an in-depth interview. The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis approach. The finding of the study suggests that the feelings/perspectives of the respondents towards live-in relationship were a little more negative than the positive feelings they have. Again, media (social media) has the most mention as being one of the factors influencing youngsters moving towards live-in relationship.

Keywords: Live-in-relationship, perspectives, challenges

Introduction
A live-in relationship is an arrangement where two single people live together for an extended period of time in a close emotional or sexual relationship" (Gopal, S.) [2]. The percentage of couples who want a live-in relationship is rising in a democratic nation like India. The perception of live-in relationships among young people today can be ascribed for this rise. The growing number of couples choosing to live together shows that people have a good attitude regarding relationships that are sometimes referred to as "taboo". Indian society is becoming more westernized welcoming western cultures and ways of life. These days, not everyone wants the responsibility of marriage, which has led to many looking into non-marriage options. The commitment of a traditional marriage is avoided in live-in partnerships, which have recently become popular alternatives to marriage. (Ghosh V, 2021) [1]. Perception of Youth towards Live-In Relationships in India, the International Journal of Indian Psychology.

Years after gaining independence, the Indian legal system still discriminates against persons who engage into live-in relationships by categorically separating the socially acceptable institution of marriage from the "taboo" practise of being in a relationship (Goswami S. et al. 2021) [1]. In India, there is no explicit law addressing live-in partnerships. There is no law that specifies the rights and responsibilities of those involved in a live-in relationship or the legal status of any children they may have. The courts have stepped in to clarify the idea of live-in partnerships as there is no law to define their legal status. The courts hold that if a man and a woman live together as husband and wife for a significant amount of time, the law will presume that they were lawfully married unless proven otherwise. Supreme Court has issued certain guidelines in its judgment for regulating such relationships. (Narayan C. L. 2021) [7]. According to a 2008 National Commission for Women recommendation, women who live with someone should be granted the right to maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973. Recently, it was discovered that the woman who cannot make a maintenance claim under Section 125 of the CrPC is a divorced wife, not a woman who has never been married because the divorced wife is recognised as a wife. Long-term couples are more likely to produce children. According to the Guidelines Governing the Adoption of Children as announced by the Central Adoption Resource Authority, live-in spouses are not permitted to adopt children. (Malatesh G A and Dhanashree K, 2018) [8].

Live-in relationships are traditionally thought of as a burden that is being shrugged off. Thus, those who are still raised with the mentality of earlier generations begin to dislike the idea of a live-in relationship, which they decry as being
western-influenced and a threat to our culture and social norms. (Kalita A and Udgata S). However, with the acceleration of globalisation and the infiltration of western culture into Indian society, the younger generation is now more open-minded and able to reason through their desires. It is important to realise that until and until a couple consciously chooses to do so, social pressure cannot be applied to emotional ties and relationships to force them to become socially acceptable. A democratic nation like India is fundamentally about having the freedom to do as one pleases without worrying about moral or ethical issues. The concept of live-in relationship is not new to the Indian society and a lot of couples are now openly opting for live in relationship but a major section of our society are still yet to come to terms with this culture since live-in relationship is considered westernize. Therefore, we took up this qualitative research to understand the perspective and attitude of female PhD scholars residing at Hostel 13 of Assam Agricultural University, towards live-in relationship.

Methods
The qualitative data in this study to understand the attitude towards live-in relationship was collected by conducting an in-depth interview among the hostellers of Hostel 13. We selected ten respondents through convenient random sampling for the interview and the hostel was selected through convenient sampling since the researchers were from the same hostel. The interview was recorded and then transcribed which was later coded for thematic analysis in vivo software.

Procedure
For data collection, since Hostel 13 comprises of only PhD scholars and most of them were busy with their research work, we conveniently pick scholars that were available to give the interview. Before collecting the data, they were assured that their information will be confidential and it is only research purpose. After getting their oral consent, we proceeded with the in-dept. interview using few guided questions. The interview was recorded which was then transcribed. Then we identified themes from the series of interviews with were organised into subthemes to approach to thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion
Feelings/perspectives of respondents towards live-in relationship

Figure 1 represented that the feelings/perspectives of the respondents towards live-in relationship was a little more negative than the positive feelings they have. And only just few expressed neutral feelings towards live-in relationship. This may be because of the recent case of Shradha’s murder in which the two couple were in a live-in relationship and the male partner murdered the female partner. Also, couples being in live-in relationship openly are just emerging and this culture is consider westernized within the context of Indian culture; therefore, since our people are just getting used to this culture most of them are not opened to the idea of being in LIR.

This finding is supported by similar researches done in India which aimed to study the perception of youth towards live-in relationship. The study found that female have more negative attitude towards live-in relationship than man (Malatesh G A and Dhanashree K, 2018) [4]. Since our samples were all female so this study could be considered as supportive to our finding.

Factors influencing current youngsters to move towards live-in relationship

![Factors influencing current youngsters to move towards live-in relationship](image-url)
Figure 2 depicts respondent’s perspective on factors that is influencing the youngsters to move towards live-in relationship; the factors which they have mentioned are - financial needs, physical needs, family, individual preferences, media, friends, social influences, education, exploration, environment and generational change. Here according to the respondent’s perspective, financial needs as in when people are in crisis and needs financial support, they opt to live in together to support each other. Some of the respondents have expressed their perspective regarding factors influencing live-in relationship as.

“Couples in live-in relationship can support each other mentally and financially and whenever there’s any crisis.”

“Youngsters to move towards live-in relationship mostly is the media, change in generation, surrounding, family and friends.”

“Factors influencing the youngsters to move towards live-in relationship could be due to change in our society, development and western influences, people being more broad-minded now a days, financial factors, physical needs and friends.”

Family here as in family becoming more open-minded and are slowly accepting changes; social influences here according to respondent’s perspective refers to witnessing people in successful live-in relationship which influenced them to be open and accepting to the concept of live-in relationship; exploration as in people ready to experience life and see for themselves how it is like being in live-in relationship; environment here being people raised in a particular environment which could contribute to them having a negative or positive perspective towards live-in relationship; and generational changes according to respondent’s perspective is the lifestyle changing with different generation and how older generation have to adapt with these changes. Among all this factors which they have mentioned we can see in Figure 2a that media (social media) has the most mention as being one of the factors influencing youngsters moving towards live-in relationship followed by social influence, then friends. Although there was no study stating social media as the most influencing factor for youngster for opting live-in relationship but few studies mentioned family, social modelling, economic factor, peer pressure etc. (Rhoades G.K et al. 2009, Jiya J, 2019) [5, 3].

![Figure 2a: Factors influencing current youngsters to move towards live-in relationship](image1.png)

**Respondent’s perspective on the possible challenges of live-in couples in India**

![Figure 3: Possible challenges faced by live-in couples in India](image2.png)
The data in figure 3 refers to the perspective that respondents have regarding possible challenges faced by live-in couples in India. The common challenges which they have mentioned are - society, religion, family values, culture, child bearing and accommodation. The respondents expressed that the Indian culture being conservative have made it hard for the society to be opened to the idea of being in live-in relationship, especially the older generation. They have also expressed that if the partner in a live-in relationship gets pregnant then that could be challenging for them because of how our society is. And when it comes to accommodation, they have expressed that it is hard to get a place to rent for unmarried couples in India. Below here are some of the respondent’s perspective.

“Our culture does not accept it.”

“Doesn’t get a place (renting apartment) to stay as a live-in couple. Family doesn’t accept and our community disrespect live-in couples.”

“Patriarchal society and men dominate and undermine women.”

“Less acceptance and negative attitude of the society.”

This finding is supported by another study which says though a live-in relationship is legalised, it is still a taboo in Indian society and is considered as morally and ethically wrong. Indian society is sceptical about live-in relationship; therefore, couples usually face multifold problems like rejection from family, a problem in getting home for rent, refusal by the society. Other challenges mentioned were documentation, cultural issues etc. (Sepaha P, 2021) 6).

Respondents reply on if they’ll ever consider being in a live-in relationship

According to figure 4, it can be observed that majority of the respondents were uncertain if they’ll ever be in a live-in relationship. While there were equal number of respondents who replied positively that they will consider being in a live-in relationship and also those who would not consider being in live-in relationship.

Conclusion

In recent years, an increasing number of couples have chosen to live together, which demonstrates that people are now starting to maintain a positive mindset. Therefore, this study was to understand the attitude and perception towards live-in relationship but contradictorily it is found that the feelings/perspectives of the respondents towards live-in relationship was a little more negative than the positive feelings they have. Respondents mentioned financial needs, physical needs, family, individual preferences, media, friends, social influences, education, exploration, environment and generational change as the influencing factors although media had the highest mention. The respondents also stated some challenges faced by live in couples in India. The common challenges which they have mentioned are - society, religion, family values, culture, child bearing and accommodation.

Reference