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Exploring Diverse views on Live-in-Relationship

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Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been a rise in live-in partnerships within Indian society. The growing number of couples choosing to live together shows that people now have positive attitude regarding relationships that are sometimes referred to as "taboo". The modernity of this fast-changing world and globalization has revolutionized all aspects of life due to which changes could be observed in our social life, but a large section of our society is still coming to terms with this modern culture. Therefore, this qualitative research aims to understand the perspective and attitude of female Ph.D. scholars of a university in Assam, towards live-in relationship. An in-depth interview was conducted, the data collected was then analysed using NVivo software. The finding of the study suggests that the feelings/perspectives of the respondents towards live-in relationship were a little more negative rather than positive. Media (social media) has the most mentions as being one of the factors influencing youngsters moving towards live-in relationship.

Keywords: Live-in-relationship, perspectives, challenges, attitude

Introduction

A live-in relationship involves two single people living together for a certain period of time sharing a close emotional or sexual relationship. The modernity of this fast-changing world and globalization has revolutionized all aspects of life due to which changes could be observed in our social life, family structure, conjugal relationship, marriage, education etc. In a developing country like India where people are continuously adapting and coming to terms with changes, the concept of live-in relationship is a modern concept. And therefore, live-in relationship is considered a taboo and not encouraged by the society. Similarly, the idea of having premarital sex was considered to be highly immoral. But recently, there has been a significant increase in couples living together. This rise can be attributed to the positive perception that young people have towards live-in relationships. 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, 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 people who engage into live-in

relationships by categorically separating the socially acceptable institution of marriage from the "taboo" practice of being in a relationship. 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 that 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 *et. al.*, 2021)^[5]. According to National Commission for Women recommendation (2009), women who live with someone should be granted the right to maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973. It was discovered that woman who cannot make a maintenance claim under Section 125 of the CrPC is a divorced wife, not woman who has never been married because the divorced wife is recognised as a wife. Long-term couples are more likely to produce children. But 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 & Dhanashree, 2018)^[3].

Live-in relationships are traditionally thought of as a burden that is being shrugged off. The Indian culture leaning more towards being conservative dislike the idea of live-in relationship, criticizing it as being western-influenced that is posing a threat to our culture and social norms. 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 unless a couple consciously chooses to do so, social pressure cannot be applied to emotional ties and relationships to force them to become socially acceptable.

Though 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. It is the society’s responsibility to channelize the youth in righteous direction. (Manizia & Mishra, 2022)^[4]. A large section of our society is still coming to terms with this live-in culture. Therefore, this qualitative research was taken up to understand the perspectives and attitude of female Ph.D. scholars of a University in Assam, India.

Methods

In this study, ten respondents were selected through convenient random sampling and an in-depth interview was conducted for data collection. The interview was recorded and then transcribed which was later coded for thematic analysis in NVivo software.

Procedure

The data was collected only from PhD scholars who showed interest in the topic and were willing to participate in the study. Before collecting the data, they were assured that their information will be confidential and that it is only for research purpose. After receiving consent, we proceeded with in-depth interview using few guided questions. The interview was recorded which was then transcribed. After which, suitable themes were identified from the series of interviews which were then organised into subthemes to approach to thematic analysis using NVivo software.

Results and Discussion

Feelings/perspectives of respondents towards live-in relationship

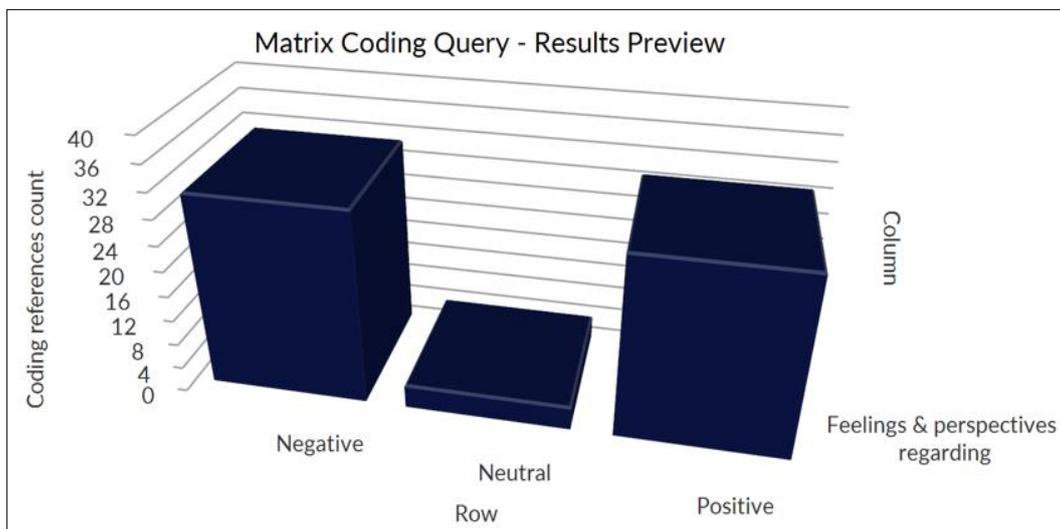


Fig 1: Respondent’s feeling/perspectives towards live-in relationship

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 and Dhanashree, 2018)^[3]. 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

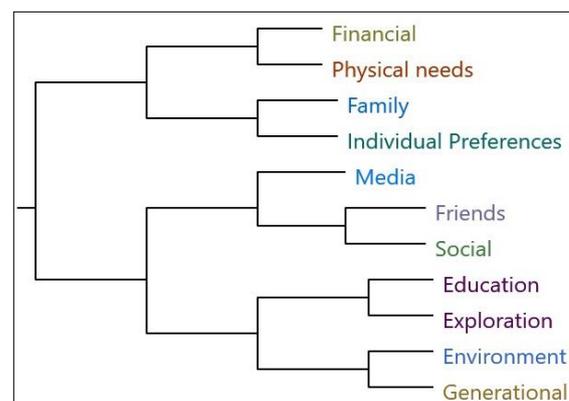


Fig 2: Factors influencing current youngsters to move towards live-in relationship

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 *et al.* 2009, Jiya, 2019) ^[6, 2].

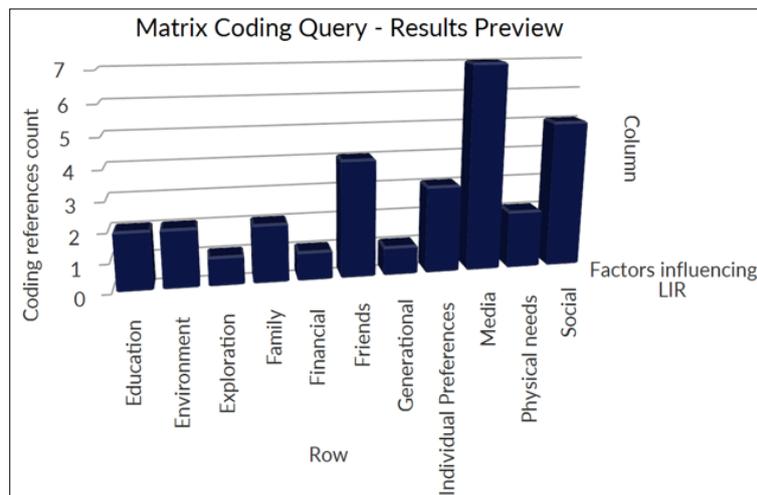


Fig 2a: Factors influencing current youngsters to move towards live-in relationship

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

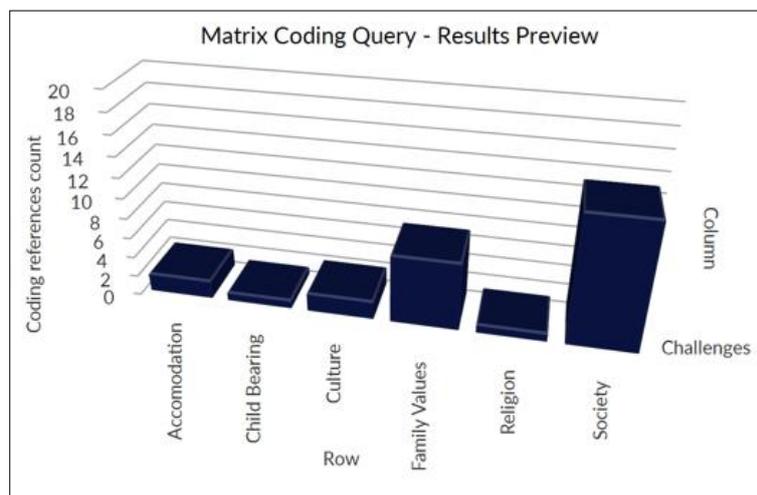


Fig 3: Possible challenges faced by live-in couples in India

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 multi-fold 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, 2021) [7].

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

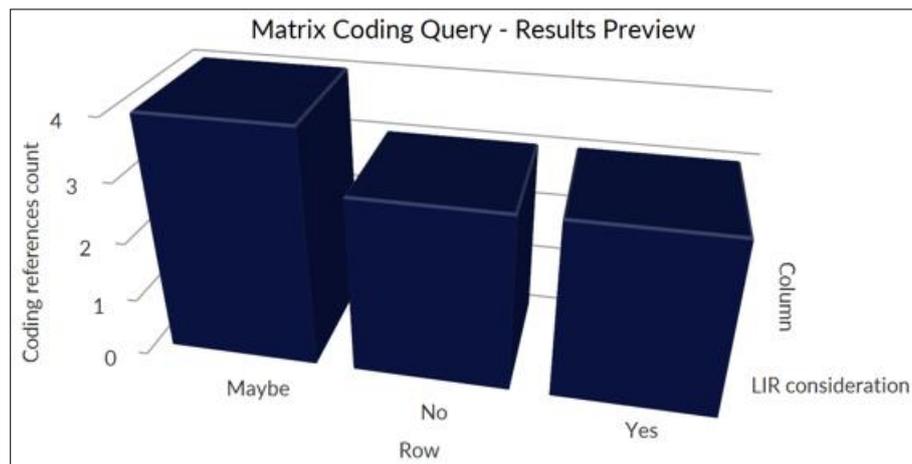


Fig 4: Respondents reply on if they'll ever consider being in live-in relationship

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, there has been a drastic increase in the number of couples in live-in relationship, which demonstrates that people are now starting to maintain a positive mindset about it. This study was to understand the attitude and perceptions 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 rather than being positive. 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.

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