



**RESULTS
AND
INTERPRETATIONS**

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter presents the results of the study under the following five sections, each section covering one or more objectives of the study.

Section 1 - Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Section 2 - Construal of romantic relationships and related terms

Section 3 - Romantic relationships, commitment and marriage in the Indian context

Section 4 - Societal factors shaping experiences and outcomes of romantic relationships

Section 5 - Romantic relationship processes and developmental outcomes

Section 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This section summarizes the socio-demographic information related to the study participants (Table 5).

Table 5

Socio-Demographic Information of the Study Participants

N=110

Participants	Education Levels		Post-Graduation	M. Phil/Ph.D.	No Response	Income groups			Occupation						
	Up to High School	Graduation				Middle	Upper Middle	No Response	Students	Home Maker	Service	Business/Profession	Retired	No Response	
EAF (25)	-	15	8	-	-	8	14	3	25	-	-	-	-	-	-
EAM (25)	-	11	13	-	1	5	19	1	25	-	-	-	-	-	-
MAF (25)	3	7	1	2	2	-	14	1	-	6	-	-	-	1	1
MAM (15)	1	7	4	-	4	-	12	3	-	-	-	5	6	1	3
RRF (15)	-	11	4	-	-	3	12	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
RRM (15)	-	8	6	-	-	9	6	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rp (RRF)	2	12	-	-	1	4	10	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rp (RRM)	1	8	1	-	4	3	6	5	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
RRF (Mother)	4	8	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-
RRF (Father)	1	7	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	3	2	1
RRM (Mother)	6	5	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	12	-	1	-	-	1
RRM (Father) ⁴	1	7	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	4	1

Fifty two percent of the emerging adults and their romantic partners were under graduates and the remaining were graduates, all currently pursuing education. Only 6% of the romantic partners of the girls were doing a part-time job along with studying. Middle adults were mostly graduates; and 17% were postgraduates, both men and women. Only two women had not been to college. All participants reported that they were either from middle or upper-middle income groups. Eighty seven percent of emerging adults' mothers were home makers.

⁴RR - Romantic Relationship

RP - Romantic Partner

RRF - Emerging Adult Female Currently Engaged in a RR

RRM - Emerging Adult Male Currently Engaged in a RR

RP (RRF) - Romantic Partner Of Emerging Adult Female Currently Engaged in a RR

RP (RRM) - Romantic Partner Of Emerging Adult Male Currently Engaged in a RR

EAF - Emerging Adult Female

EAM - Emerging Adult Male

MAF - Middle Adult Female

MAM - Middle Adult Male

Section 2

Construal of Romantic Relationships and Related Terms

Conceptualizing Romantic Relationships

This section presents the various conceptualizations of romantic relationships by both emerging adults and middle adults. The concept maps (see Figures 4, 5, 6 & 7) include definitions of romantic love, ideas about intimacy and also unique features that distinguish a romantic relationship from other close relationships. They also display various behaviors, thoughts and feelings which can be specially attributed to romantic relationships. These have been called symptomatic indicators because they serve as indicators to determine whether one is romantically involved or not. Figure 4 displays illustrative definitions of romantic love by the participants. It is interesting to note that while boys have viewed romantic love as a state, women and girls have talked about it as a process. Inter-linkages among figures 4, 5, 6 and 18 are presented as a concept map of romantic relationships and developmental outcomes.

(Appendix F).

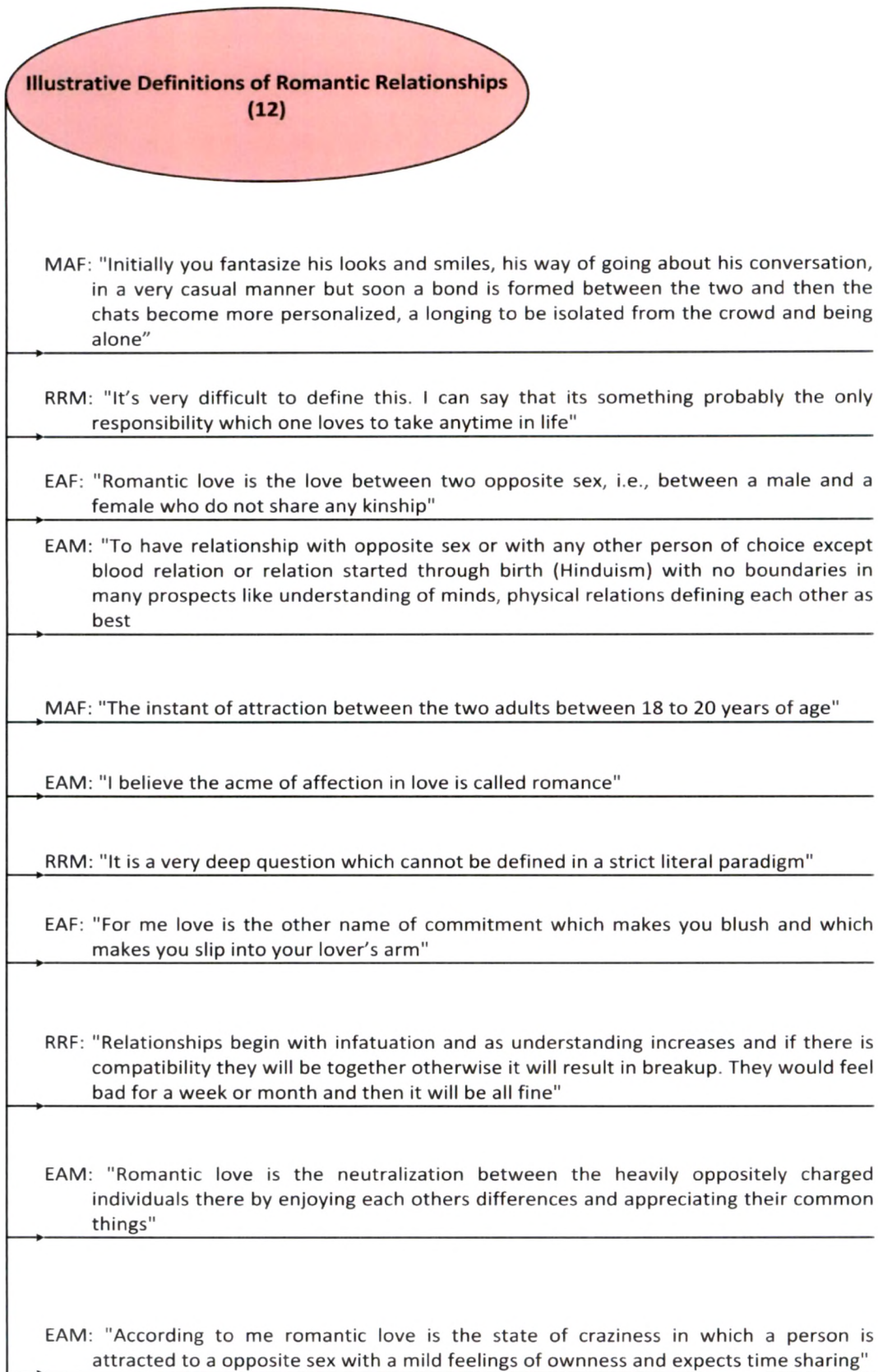


Figure 4. Illustrative definitions of romantic relationships.

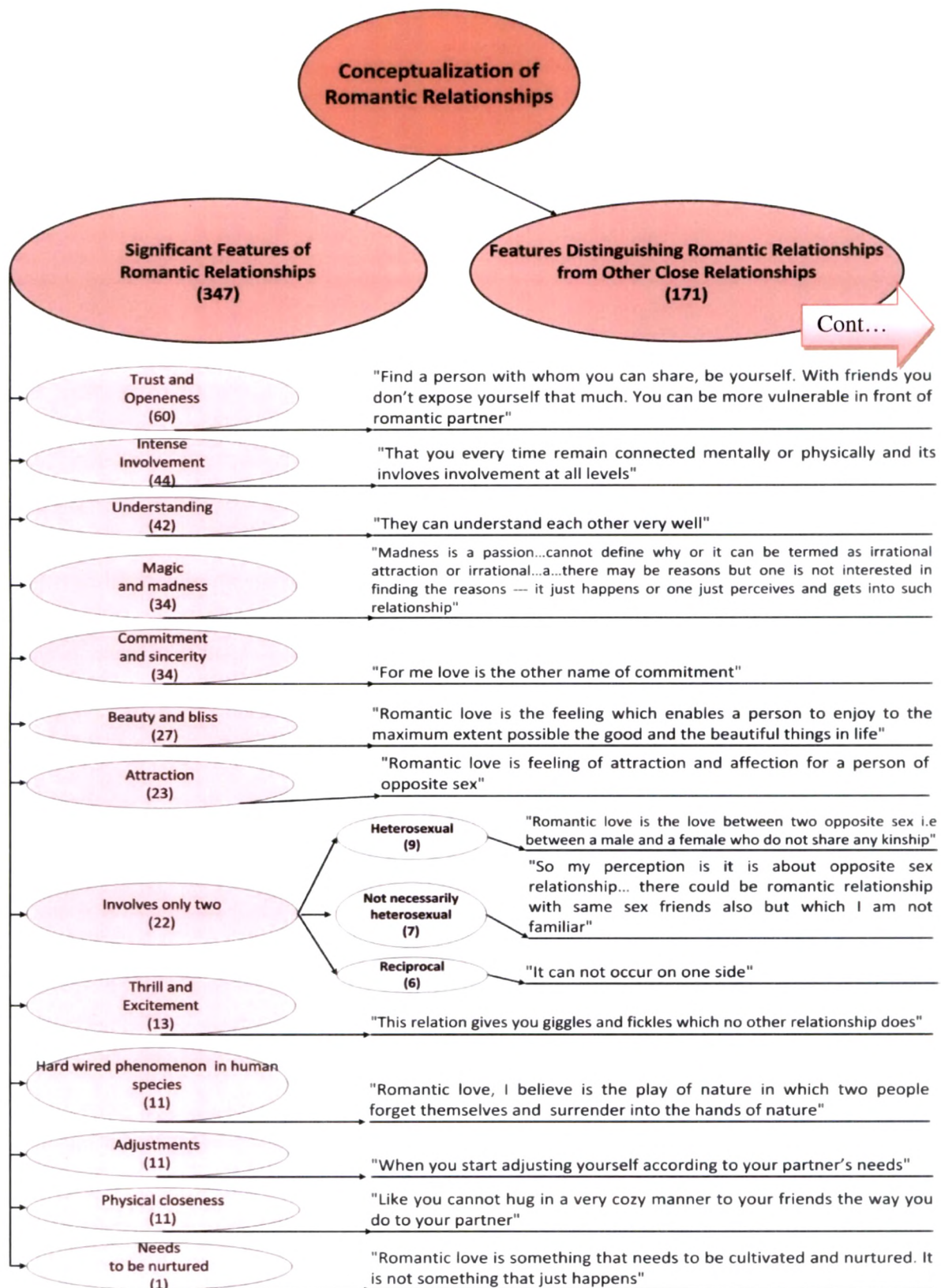


Figure 5. Conceptualizations of romantic relationships. (cont ...)

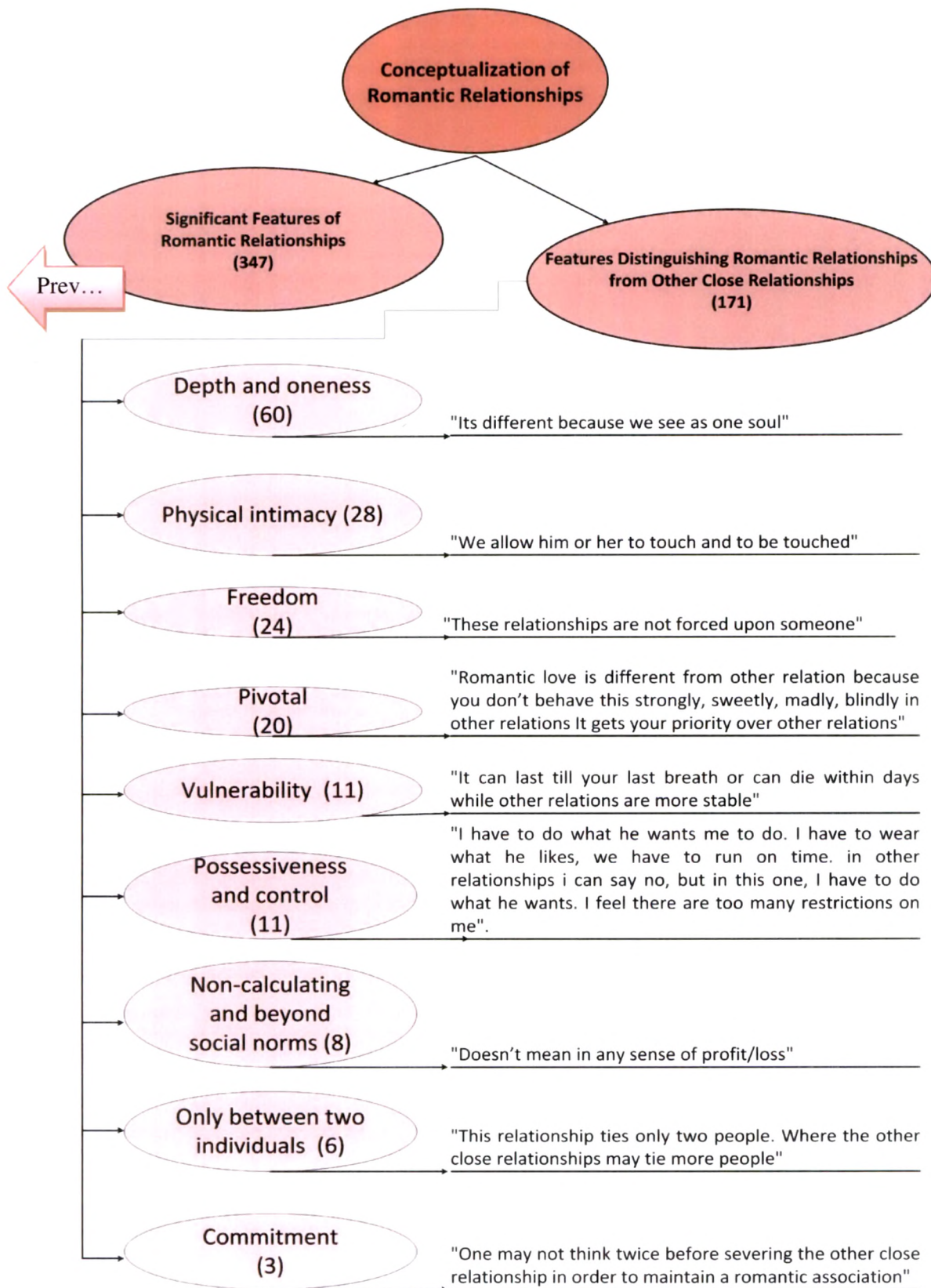


Figure 5. Conceptualizations of romantic relationships. (prev ...)

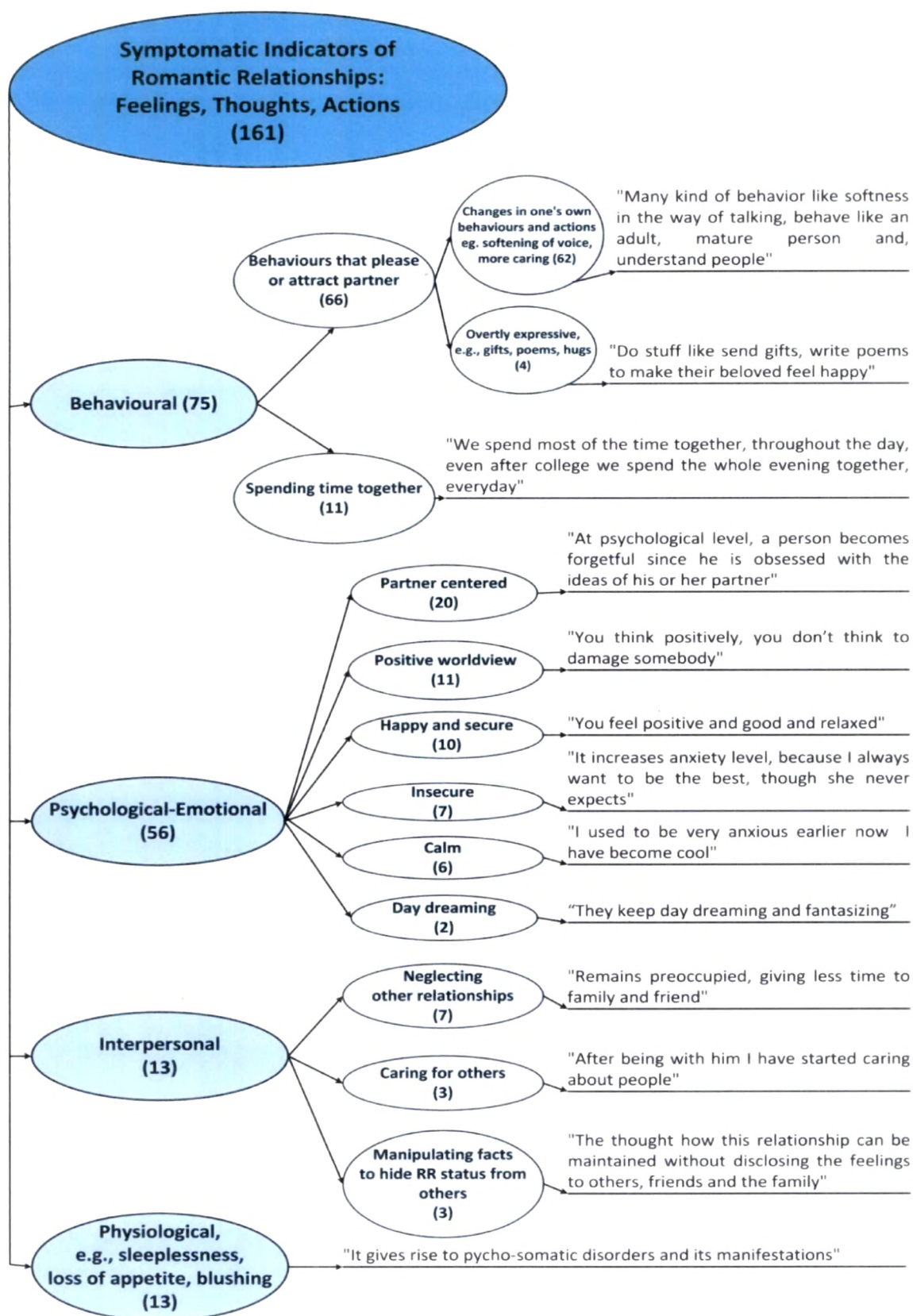


Figure 6. Symptomatic indicators of romantic relationships.

As Figure 5 displays, 66% of the responses indicate ‘trust’, ‘complete transparency’, total involvement and the freedom to be oneself as the most essential components of romantic relationships. When probed further, different aspects and levels of ‘trust’ were captured. Mostly people defined trust as the liberty to be as vulnerable and open to the partner as one is to oneself. This also indicates that the depth of the relationship is accounted by both, the intensity and the level of involvement, which is integrated and holistic. In the words of a middle adult man, *“It is holistic ... it is not like it is more emotional or intellectual and less sexual or vice versa because then it deteriorates ... To sustain such a relationship equal amount of interest in all these areas is necessary”*. Similar memes also shape the idea of intimacy as seen in Figure 7.

At the intensity level romantic love is almost to the heights of madness, because reason and societal norms cannot capture the heights and depths of its intensity. In the words of a boy, *“Romantic love is an impulse, urge, obsession or passion to merge into the other person entirely”*, or as another emerging adult says, *“It is surprising to what length one can go to just see a smile on her face”*. Further, because love is not looked upon as very rational, it always has a streak of mystery, magic and something higher than oneself. This also entails thrill and excitement. Therefore, for many, love included all paradoxes as depicted in the following responses:

Girl: *“Anything that excites your senses as well as calms you. It leads to surrender your ego and enhance your spirit to a higher level”*.

Girl: *“Sometimes love makes you laugh, sometimes cry. It’s very special feeling which comes in every one’s life”*.

Boy: *“ ... it can give you feeling of heaven and hell at the same time”*.

Girl: *“Like I feel secured and insecure at the same time, happy and sad, bright and dull almost all the feelings. I believe it’s up to us to feel in a specific manner. Life has both sides. Similarly, every relationship too”*.

Love is unreasonable also in a sense that, *“Romantic love is the celebration of ‘sweet nothings’”* and thus *“a celebration of ordinary moments”*. Therefore, *“The people who are in a romantic relationship feel happy and light inside”*. And this beauty, bliss and madness cannot occur unless one can be totally and completely open with the partner. No wonder while talking about romantic love, respondents have used words such as pure, genuine and from the heart.

For some respondents, however, being trusted implied that no explanations and justifications are needed in a relationship. Both partners take it for granted that their partner is incapable of doing something seriously wrong (which they do not expect their partner to do) no matter what ‘others’ have to say about it. In words of a romantically involved girl, *“Trust means that if someone says anything about us, he should know that this person can’t do such a thing – ‘this can’t happen’”*. At the same time, certain lying behaviors were permissible, *“Lies about trivial things are ok, but not the kind that would hurt others, like, if I am with my friends and I am not able to call then I lie to him, I say ‘I am busy’, all the more because he doesn’t like my friends”*, commented a girl. Sometimes lies are permissible when it is not the right time to divulge the truth *“ ... no, not at all for hiding, later, some other time you can say, it is a kind of life management. Everything must be handled patiently”*. In this context one respondent, a middle adult woman has talked about romantic love as an art, which is required to be cultivated and nurtured. At the same time, a romantic relationship is also looked upon as a basic need and respondents narrated that it is a natural phenomenon, something that is hard-wired in our species.

Distinguishing features of romantic relationships.

As a romantic bond entails involvement of the individual as a whole, physical relationship is one of the most significant aspects that characterize romantic relationships. For example, a girl says, "*We allow him or her to touch and to be touched,*" or as another emerging adult puts it, "*... you can also explore the sexual aspect of being*". Being in a romantic relationship also means that the relationship is volitional in terms of choice of partner and also the activities that one can engage in together. A boy illustrates this, "*It is of your choice, by yourself and the limitations that should be maintained with parents or other relatives disappear here*" or as a romantically involved girl puts it, "*Romantic love for me is freedom of thought, speech and action and much beyond that too, you always get to discover more dimensions of it as time passes by, it is freshness, innovation and an opportunity for a life time*".

The degree of closeness, openness, depth and oneness that one experiences in romantic relationships are incomparable with other relationships. For example, a boy declared, "*The extent to which one may go to maintain, sustain or forward such a relationship far exceeds in limit of the extent we would go to in other close relationships*" or as a romantically involved girl puts it, "*Understanding is so much that half of the things need not be said*". The relationships are reported to be central to one's life around which everything else revolves.

Ironically, because of the very depth and importance attached to romantic relationships possessiveness, control, insecurity and vulnerability are also special features attributed to it. As a romantically involved girl complains, "*I have to do what he wants, I have to wear this-that. We have to run on time. In other relationships you can say no, in this, you have to do what he wants*". Along with factors such as jealousy, possessiveness, arguments on petty matters, questions on trust, pain and sorrow are accepted or expected to be a part of these

relationships. The fact that these relationships are based on individual's choice and freedom, also makes them the most unstable and vulnerable of close relationships (see Figure 5).

As mentioned earlier, these relationships are beyond conventional norms and, therefore, non-calculative in economic or even social terms. For instance a middle adult man says, "*In a romantic relationship we learn to keep socially acquired values aside*". These relationships also teach the individual to think of the other before considering one's own self. Therefore, caring behaviors are central to a romantic bond.

Apart from the aforementioned unique features, these romantic relationships are also defined based on the impact they have on an individual's mind, body and social interactions as depicted in the Figure 6. Further details on desirable and undesirable developmental outcomes are discussed in Section 4.

Intimacy Constructs

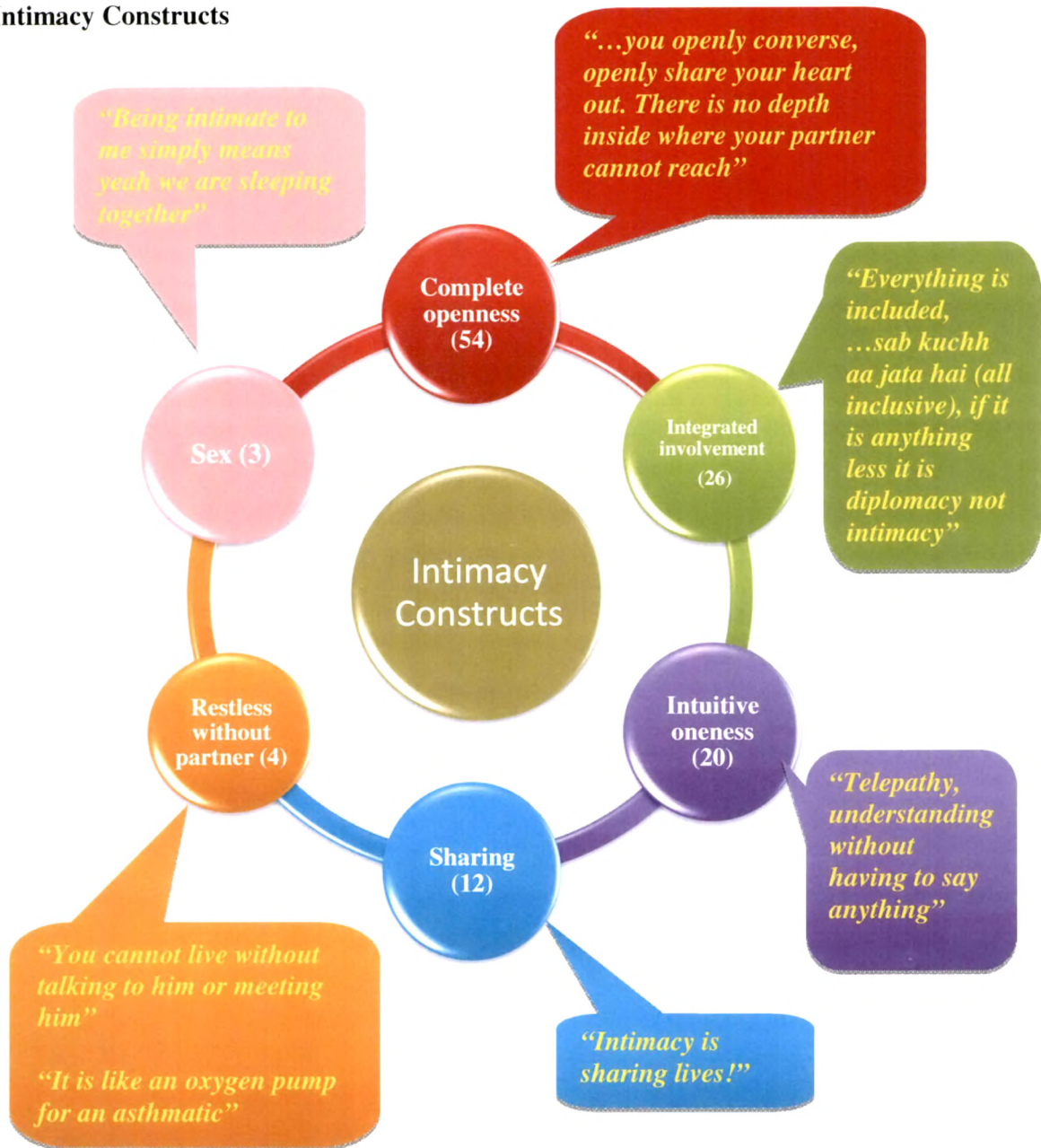


Figure 7. Summary of ideas pertaining to the meaning of intimacy.

Figure 7 reveals the meanings of intimacy. Intimacy is defined as total openness to one's partner. Openness is understood in terms of sharing all the secrets, happy and festive moments, problems and familial issues and also in terms of sharing the body and mind. Therefore, intimacy means integrated involvement of an individual at every level. Lying

behavior is considered lethal to a relationship. As reported by a romantically involved girl, *“Any relationship which cannot bear the brunt of truth, I do not think such relationships should exist”*.

Being involved with totality would give a feeling of oneness with the partner which is also a unique feature of intimacy. According to a middle adult woman, *“The person becomes a single identity”* or as a boy puts it *“Being able to see yourself in your partner”*. This oneness would engender mutual understanding. Emotional attachment and restlessness in the absence of a partner also indicates a desire for oneness with the romantic partner. Only three emerging adults, of which two were girls, solely emphasized sexual intercourse as an indicator of intimacy. Words such as oneness indicated that they felt at peace even during the physical absence of their partners, as they always felt their partner’s ‘presence’ and, therefore, were more content and at peace. On the other hand, words such as attachment indicated feeling hopeless and restless when deprived of physical contact with their partners. It also included a shade of possessiveness because of the intense compulsion to claim all the time and attention of the partner. This was true for both boys and girls.

Again, just as was the case with the construction of trust, the total openness in intimacy focused on problem sharing more often than the fearless vulnerability that the word ‘openness’ denotes and connotes.

Is there a Definite Age or Phase to have a Romantic Relationship?

Sixty eight percent participants feel that romantic relationship is an ageless phenomenon.

Only 32% feel that romantic relationships are bound to a specific age or phase in life, with more emerging adult girls sharing this sentiment. There were no major intergenerational and gender differences in the responses. The subsequent chart (See Figure 8) displays the reasons for their opinions.

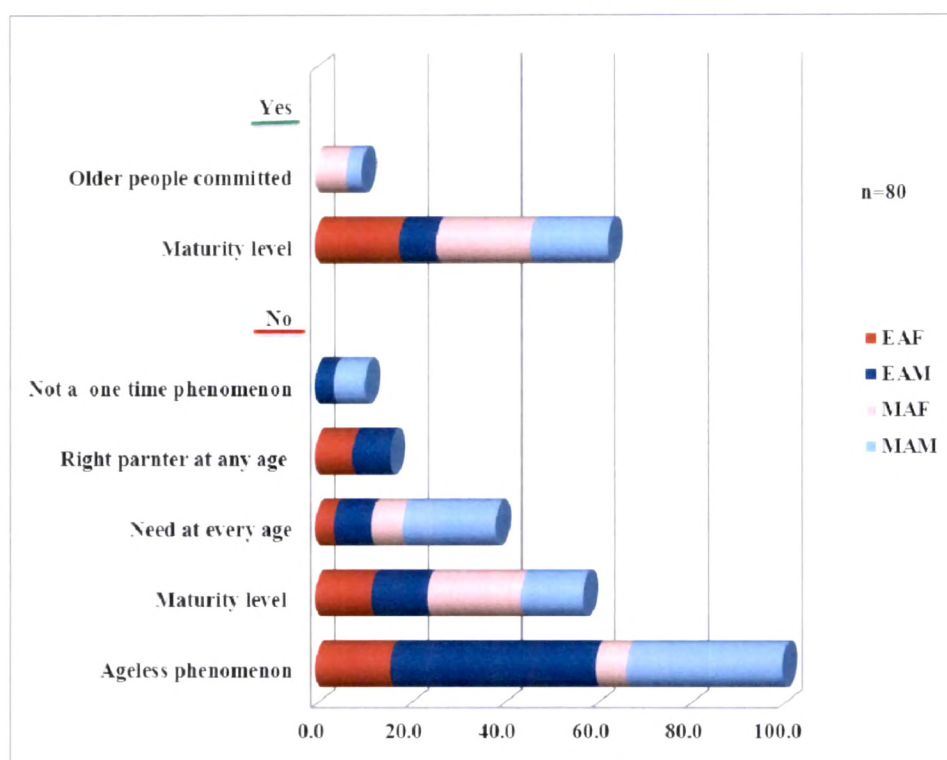


Figure 8. Summary of reasons of yes/no responses to the question: Is there a definite age or phase to have a romantic relationship?

Respondents who have said yes to the importance of specific age or phase for having a romantic relationship, believe that more than a specific age/phase, it is the maturity level which is a prerequisite before engaging in the relationship. Therefore, generally we can say

that age/phase factor is not an important criterion that determines readiness to engage in a relationship. As defined by a boy, *“Romantic relations can happen anywhere, anytime, anyplace in spite of their differences like age, cast, religion, races etcetera, it’s the bond between two welcoming and needy hearts and these hearts never consider their differences”*.

Most men including middle adults and emerging adults believe that romantic relationship is an ageless phenomenon. Although many women have reported the same, they feel that maturity is very important. *“But they should be emotionally mature and be able to take care of their partners financially, emotionally, in every way and channelize their emotions constructively”*. In reference to maturity, they have laid more emphasis on the psychological readiness to develop understanding and compassionate relationships with opposite-sex partners. Some have also included the ability to commit as a component of maturity. For example, as explained by a girl, *“Because, until you get that maturity you usually don’t take such relationships seriously, and such sorts of time-pass I don’t entertain”*. Maturity also implied the ability to take long term perspective and not deviate from career and other goals. As a concerned father expressed, *“Yes, definite age should be there ... just today we read in paper that a 15 year old in Britain has become a father ... this hurts us, this is the time to study, sports, reading, extra-curricular ... At least they should wait till college. They would mature by then I think ... whether they actually mature or not ... can’t say”*.

Physiological maturity was treated as a prerequisite but not a sufficient condition to form mature relationships. In fact, many of the respondents including emerging adults felt that one needs to wait for the raging hormones of the teens to settle down a bit, *“Besides becoming more mature, you also learn to value the other person, have a better understanding of the responsibilities attached to sustaining a steady relationship (assuming you want one) and the ramifications if you decide to take your relation to the next level. These unfortunately, are*

issues that a teenager's mind is unable to process. I believe the feeling that you develop for the opposite-sex is simply attraction due to hormones, though you might feel differently at that time" (girl).

Only middle adults have reported that because most of the older people are already committed to their spouses and family responsibility, romantic relationship is a domain of the youth. In the voice of a middle adult woman, *"There is a certain age to be romantically involved because in the older phase you have to be faithful in your existing relationship"*. However, emerging adults especially reported that one can find a right partner at any age and so it is an ageless phenomenon. Both these responses indicate that romantic involvement is not necessarily related to marriage.

Interestingly, only men reported that having a romantic relationship is not a one-time phenomenon. Yet, a contrast is observed (refer section 6) when the emerging adults engaged in romantic relationships were asked whether it is alright to have had more than one romantic experience before marriage. Surprisingly, more girls compared to boys said yes. Interestingly, more boys in contrast to girls had had at least one relationship in the past, before engaging in their current romantic bond. This is one instance where responses of emerging adults who are not involved in a relationship contrasted with the ones who were currently in a relationship.

Do Emerging Adults Desire to have a Romantic Relationship?

Among the randomly selected emerging adults, 80% were not involved in a romantic relationship currently. Among these 80 %, more than 50% responses suggested that emerging adults, mostly girls, did not want to get involved in a romantic relationship. This is interesting and surprising given the fact that romantic experiences were associated with heightened positive states as presented in this section. This was also pointed out by a boy who said,

“Although most of my responses in the preceding question focus on the good aspects of a romantic relationship I would say I am better off being single”.

The most common reason for girls was that they did not want to get cheated in the name of love and that they were happy being single. In the words of a girl, *“I can never trust boys. One experience is enough for the whole life. I don’t want to make my life hell again. I destroyed my career after him. Now, I don’t want to take any chance. Life is very smooth now-a-days and I love to live like this. So I can never wish to be in love again”.* Therefore, on one hand, while any intense experience has the potential to shower immense bliss, the very intensity can induce fear. The fear of intimacy, the fear of being vulnerable, and also the fear of making one’s own choices and accepting responsibility for the consequences.

Opposition from parents was also cited as a reason by two girls. Obedience to parents has been expressed by a girl as, *“Because I know that my parents will not accept such a relationship, although I know it is natural”.* Most boys wished to have a romantic partner; however, one reported that he did not wish to get involved because he would not like to limit his experience exclusively to one partner. He says, *“I prefer to have small bits of good moments every day with many members of people so, my goodness is not blocked in one pool”.* Interestingly, another boy said that he would not like to engage in a romantic relationship before marriage because he expects loyalty from his future spouse and so would like to offer the same to his spouse. Among the emerging adults who wished to have a romantic relationship, girls sought them for emotional support while boys reported the need to share their life with someone. However, boys felt that romantic relationship is something that can neither be demanded from self nor from another person and so they would wish it happened on its own accord. He says, *“But it has to happen on its own. I see no point in waking up in the morning with a wish that I had a romantic relationship. That way, I would*

be romantically attracted to every second girl". Figure 9 that depicts the experiences of attraction and rejection in love of emerging adults.

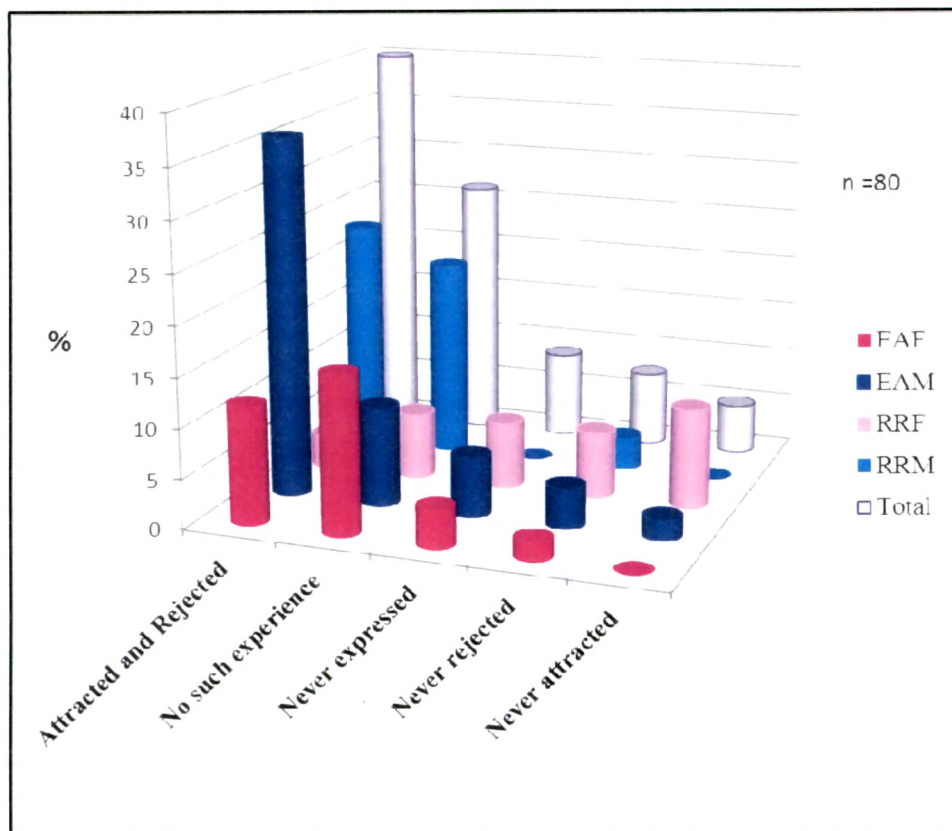


Figure 9. Summary of emerging adults' experiences of attraction and rejection in love.

Figure 9 summarizes the experiences of being attracted to the opposite-sex and at times being rejected. Fifty percent of the emerging adults have reported experiencing both attraction and rejection. Thirty percent reported that it was not easy for them to cope with the experience of being rejected. An emerging adult before being accepted by his current romantic partner was turned away recounts the experience as follows, "It took me two days to get out of it, I had not talked to her for those days, although I did attend college". A few of them were hurt. A boy says "While waiting I was hurt. I just used to share my feelings with my friends. She always pretended that she doesn't know anything". Yet, with

with support from friends and with time they could deal with the break-up. Fortunately, for the remaining 50% these experiences were viewed as a part of life which taught them to respect individual choices and rights. *"It's ok because there isn't any assurance to love and to be loved back"* declared a boy who is currently single. In the words of a girl currently in a relationship, *"I took that situation very positively because I keep having crushes and I didn't take it seriously"*. In fact, a few of emerging adults expressed that they simply enjoyed the process of wooing and so they continued to woo the desired partner, while another boy revealed that, *"I look for another attraction"*. One boy said, *"I was just happy to tell her, express my first love, I did not expect anything"*. Such responses were more common to boys than girls.

However, a good number of emerging adults could not gather the courage to express their attraction to the person concerned. A boy reveals, *"It has happened so many times, but I have never chased a girl and gathered courage enough to ask, so I don't know"*. This was more true for boys whereas girls reported that they were just happy being attracted and never intended to establish a relationship as they felt they were too young when it happened to them. A girl shares that, *"I was just happy to get that feeling for someone and also I did not think it was the right time for me. I did not know whether in future I would tell him or not but that was not the right time"*.

Whether romantic relationships are linked to marriage or not is a critical question in the Indian context. The next section presents views about linkages between romantic relationships and commitment to marry the romantic partner.

Section 3

Romantic Relationships, Commitment and Marriage in the Indian Context

This section examines the significance of long term commitment to marry in a romantic relationship as displayed in Table 6. It also reveals the significance of romantic love for entering and maintaining a marriage in the Indian context (Table 7).

Table 6

Importance of Commitment to Marry in a Romantic Relationship

n=80

Commitment is very important (65)

Establish long-term relationship

"If this quest culminated into a long term relationship on its own and not out of force then that is the goal of finding such a companionship rather than jumping relationships and going through same kind of rut and trauma"

Avoid 'heart breaks'

"If one cannot live up to one's commitments, the betrayed one may mentally suffer, emotionally it is a big loss and may drive to extreme steps"

Inherent component of love

"Commitment is the only thing on which the whole love life is based ... For me everything is commitment, love without commitment stands nowhere"

"If no commitment is there then you are just using someone"

Commitment is not important (15)

Life is uncertain

"Life in its weird way throws up situations where parting of ways may be inevitable. To break all relationships for the sake of one at such a situation would be a stupid idea. Commitment starts only after marriage"

Present fulfillment is important

"As long as their needs are being fulfilled by the other and both are happy, let the relationship be"

Love is beyond commitments

" ... true love is beyond any bindings. It is an enduring experience"

According to Table 6, 76% respondents have attributed great significance to commitment in a romantic relationship. Most of the time, commitment is regarded as important because the respondents believe that the romantic partners know each other in and out, and therefore, they

could make great spouses. As a boy believes, *“They begin to know each other so well that their likes and dislikes etcetera, even without feeling the need to tell each other, so they should get married or else it is like as if one soul is divided into two”*. There also emerged a belief that breaking up with someone whom one has cherished can cause serious mental and emotional strain on individuals. *“If a relation breaks then both partners tend to be in a different situation and at times take steps which one should never take”* (middle adult man). Very rarely societal reasons were cited for recommending commitment. Most of them believed commitment should come on its own and it is up to the two partners to decide. For example a girl says, *“For me commitment is quite important because I think when you enter into such a relationship after certain maturity commitment comes on its own. But I don’t disrespect people who are not committed because everybody have their own requirements from this relationship”*. For some, marriage seemed the only way to be with the romantic partner as other alternative arrangements are uncommon in India, *“Live-in relationships are not so common in India so marriage is the only option if two people want to stay together”*, articulated a boy.

Interestingly, only girls and women reported that commitment is a defining feature of love and only boys and men said that love is beyond commitment. Those for whom commitment is irrelevant, talked about being in the present, knowing each other well and that love is the be all and end all and does not require a legal guarantee. For example, a middle adult man reported, *“If you are mature enough then the existence of commitment is not needed. The feeling is so supreme that it is on the top and you don’t need anything on the top of top”*. At the same time, they also said that one cannot keep jumping from one relationship to another, *“How many relationships can you have, it should be a long term relationship, maximum two, otherwise, it becomes a habit, it’s no good”* (middle adult man). No marked gender or generational differences were observed in the responses.

Thus, commitment to marry is important for majority of the respondents and others believe that sincerity of intent is more important and commitment may come later. After viewing the importance of commitment in love relations, we now turn to Table 7 that captures the importance of love in a committed relationship like marriage. It views the importance of love for entering as well as for sustaining a marriage.

Table 7

Love-Marriage Connection

N=110

“If a man / woman had all other qualities I desired, I would marry this person even though I was not in love with him/her”

Agree (45)

“I am a firm believer that if your partner is good and has good qualities you are bound to respect him and eventually love will happen”

“On the condition that he loves me. It’s important to marry a person who loves you”

Disagree (44)

“In a broader perspective or long term perspective, love is more important not qualities”

Undecided (21)

“Because one has to be practical at times as well as one has to be emotional. I am confused about this aspect”

“If love has completely disappeared from a marriage, I think it is probably best for the couple to make a clean break and start new lives.”

Agree (43)

“If there is marriage but not love, is there anything left? So might as well disappear from each other’s life”

“When both the spouses can independently pull their lives alone and have the support of families, relatives and society”

Disagree (42)

One should make proper efforts and solve the problems and difference. Give proper time to their partner to understand each other. At last if it is not working then they should get apart”

“If children are there then it’s better to stay together as parting will have negative effect on them”

“I am not for breaking up because you spend so much part of your life with someone then again to restart is not easy for a single life ... ”

“Because this is not in our culture”

“For me family is important. I may be having in laws whom I may adore I may be having kids. I’ll try to revive the passion, love”

Undecided (25)

“Break-up, provided no one depends on us or is affected by our breakup”

Table 7 shows the value and significance of love for entering into a marriage and for maintaining a marriage. The respondents were asked whether they would marry a person who had all the qualities they desire even though they did not love that person. While the answers appear to be favoring love only about 40% of the times, the actual picture is slightly different. Even when people choose the option of entering into a marriage without falling in love first, they do so because they firmly believe that love is a response to the qualities embodied in an individual and so the desired qualities will lead to love or at least the person is a good candidate for a perfect partner. One girl felt that she would marry a boy if he loves her even though she may not love him, because feeling loved is beautiful and love is so attractive that it will make her fall in love with him later. Few respondents also reported that love happens as one stays with a partner for some time. In words of a middle adult woman, *“Love is guarded by time. As time passes one falls in love”*. This is also echoed by some of the emerging adults. For example, a boy reports *“Falling in love is just a matter of time if all the qualities are present”* and a girl says *“According to me, love grows with time, so I will understand and one day will be in love like any other love relationships”*.

Fourteen percent responses focused on the potential a person with desired qualities had to prove to be a good partner. Some said the quality they desire most is the understanding between the two and that is more important than love. Also, some felt it is an indication from destiny. A boy explains, *“Because I would believe that she is made for me and because God’s wish, her meeting with me happened”*. In addition, some respondents said that good opportunities knock only once and so they will treat this as a match as in arranged marriages, whereas a few said that it is a compromise, *“There are so many things on earth except love and compromise is one of those things. If I don’t get love in obvious way so I will try to get it by compromise”* (boy). Interestingly mostly boys focused on the match being acceptable to

their family, while girls talked about expecting their potential partner to respect her family members.

Nevertheless, majority felt that love is necessary before one decides to get married as otherwise in a long run the relationship will not last. As echoed by a romantically involved girl that *“Hazaar qualities ho [even if there are 1000 qualities] but if you don’t love the person or if you are not comfortable with that person you cannot spend your life. If there is no understanding and if that feeling is not there, then there is nothing”*.

In this sense, there is not much difference whether a person agreed or disagreed to marry someone possessing all desired qualities but was not in love with the person, because the responses vary based on the memes of love and desired qualities. If the desired qualities are the ones which are based on the value system of the individual and on mutual compatibility, and not just on physical appearance, individuals felt that love will happen sooner or later so one can marry the person. On the other hand, love was looked upon as the most desired value, because if one was in love with a person then everything becomes desirable and it is possible to live together. A romantically involved girl explains, *“Love makes you forget the qualities that you actually desire, loving the person is more important because there are some qualities which are not nice in a broader perspective or long term perspective so love is more important not qualities”*. And, perhaps, owing to this, 23 % emerging adults were undecided and shared that spending more time to understand each other could be a better option.

Most of the emerging adults also believe that love is very important to maintain a marriage. Despite that, deciding to dissolve a marriage because love seems to have disappeared is just not easy. Many of them felt that love cannot just disappear and a relationship needs to be worked out and sustained as far as possible. As expressed by a girl *“ ... because love never disappears, it is we who start ignoring the love. And one can always have a new beginning”*

or as expressed by a woman, “*We can generate love, better not to break a marriage. Because marriage is something you have to think before getting into, if you break-up a marriage it changes everything, there is no life after that. Because then you will not get a better partner*”. Unless it gets to the point when it becomes impossible to live together, most of them were not impulsively in support of a divorce. They felt it would create more issues and problems than making life better. Moreover, responsibility towards children and other societal and financial aspects need to be considered before deciding to dissolve a marriage. This was echoed across gender and across generation.

The following Figure 10 displays emerging adults’ choice between having a love marriage or an arranged marriage.

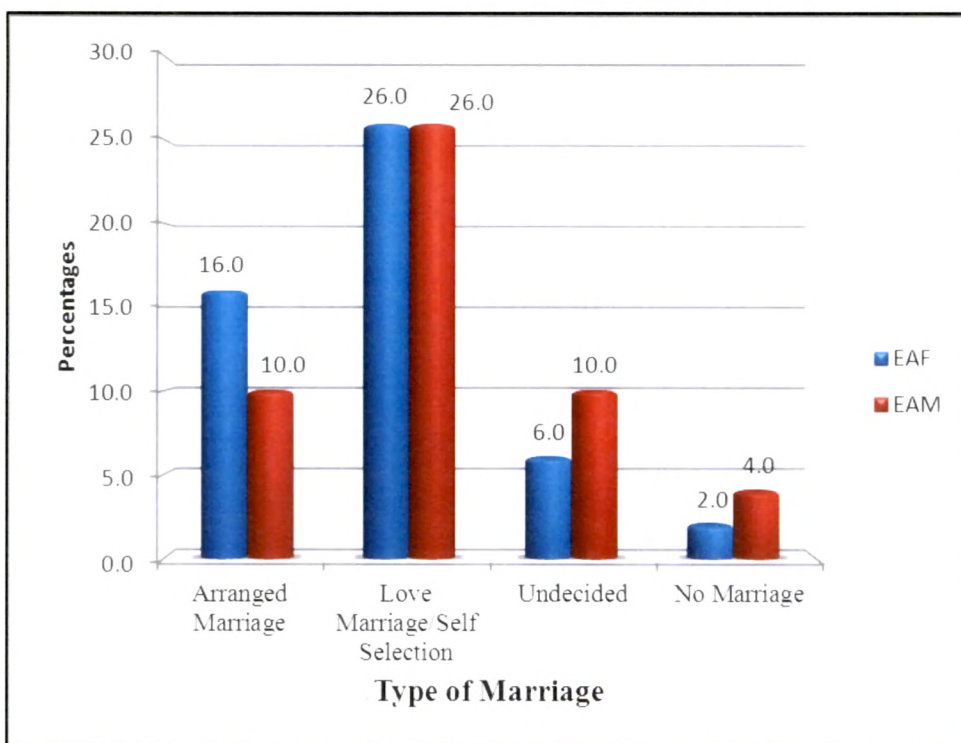


Figure 10. Emerging adults’ preference for type of marriage.

As depicted in Figure 10 more emerging adults have opted for a love marriage. Girls more often preferred the term marriage by self-selection rather than love marriage. However, it does not imply that those who have liked the term ‘love marriage’ would not take parents’

opinion into consideration and vice-versa for the respondents who have chosen the term self-section. More boys than girls appear to be undecided on the marriage issue; and a few emerging adults have reported that they would not prefer to marry at all.

A different trend is noted in the type of marriage that the middle adults had as displayed in the subsequent chart (Figure 11).

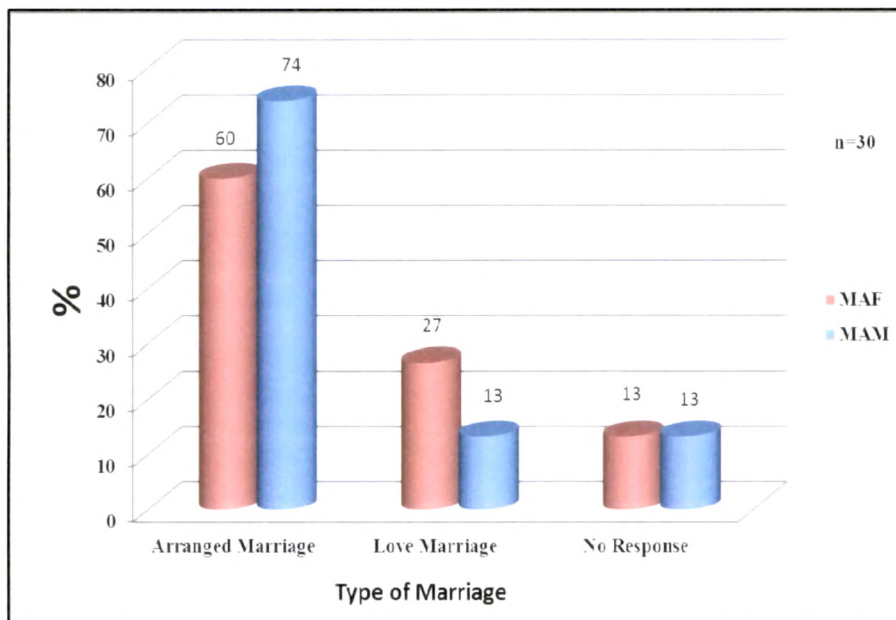


Figure 11. Middle adults' marriage: Arranged or love?

Not surprisingly, most middle adults reported that they had an arranged marriage. But, many middle adult women compared to men opted for a love marriage. It is interesting to note an opinion on arranged marriages as expressed by a middle adult man who had an arranged marriage. He says, *"Romantic relationships do happen whether it is socially arranged or individually arranged, it does happen, it has nothing to do with love marriages or arranged marriages; we feel that when people meet at parties and they fall in love it is love, but that's nonsense ... even that is arranged by that kind of social engineers, same with dating ... you*

meet people then you shortlist them as friends and explore further if it works ok or they remain in the friendship group ... ”.

Another set of data displayed in Figure 12 shows that more middle adult men had experienced at least one romantic relationship before having an arranged marriage. This reiterates that love and marriage need not go together in the Indian context. One explanation for this could be that while gender stereotypes are stronger for girls, the gender roles for boys are more stringent as their choice of partner will change the structure of his family while the girl goes away to another household. The gender analysis framework in Section 5 reveals the discrimination in parental attitudes toward romantic relationships of their emerging adults.

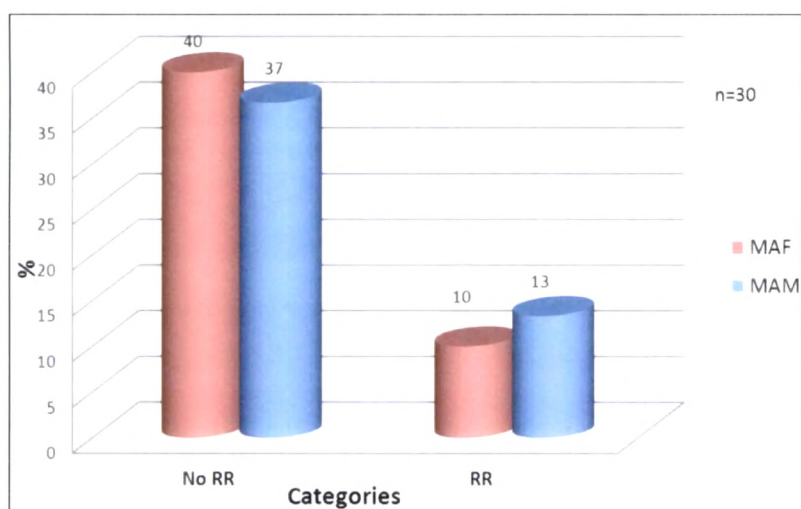


Figure 12. Percentage of middle adults who had a romantic relationship before marriage.

Figure 13, in the next section shows contextual factors responsible for the rise in visibility of romantic relationships in the contemporary context.

Section 4

Societal Factors Shaping Experiences and Outcomes of Romantic Relationships

In this section, societal factors such as perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, concerns, suggestions and experiences pertaining to the phenomenon of romantic relationships are presented. Emerging adults and middle adults respond as members of a society as well as individuals playing a social role, namely son, daughter, mother or father.

The participants were asked about the magnitude of the phenomenon in the contemporary context. Eighty seven percent responses support the rise in the number and visibility of romantic relationships in the contemporary society. The factors that account for such rise are shown in Figure 13.

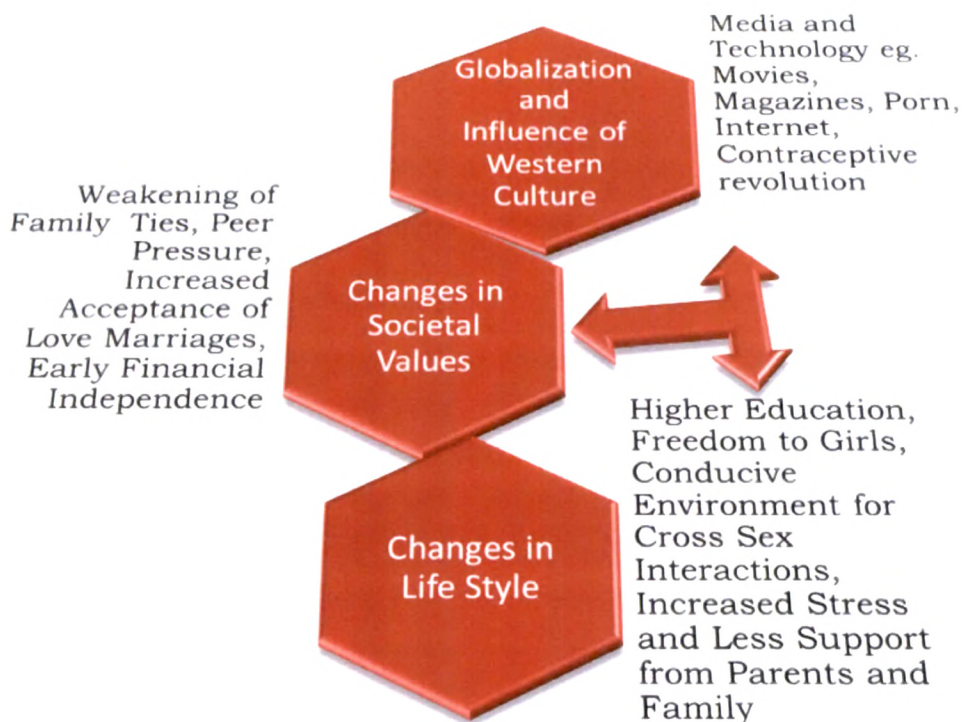


Figure 13. Reasons for rise of romantic relationships in the contemporary context.

The small percentage (6%) of respondents who feel that romantic relationships are not a current phenomenon, also report an increase in the social visibility of the ‘hard-wired’ or innate phenomenon. A middle adult man says, “*The manifestations may be different but they are as primordial as human beings*”. Their major contention is that the quantitative increase in heterosexual pairing does not fall under the category of romantic relationship, because, nowadays people lack the sincerity, integral to a romantic bond. As a girl says, “*Nowadays it is more attraction and infatuation among the youth rather than romantic love. Today love means ‘to sleep’ with someone*”. Similarly, a middle adult man echoes “*Aajkal romantic romantic kehtein hain ... but romance kahan hai? (Nowadays, people just talk about romance, but where is the romance?) It’s all about sex – cheap sex. No understanding, no*

intelligence, all materialistic". Some have reported that increased responsibility towards achieving career goals also prevents the young individuals from devoting time for initiating a romantic bond. In the voice of a middle adult woman, *"Today's generation is advanced and level-headed. They understand and try to be self-dependent instead of whiling away their time"*.

As depicted in Figure 13, many reasons have been reported for the rise in romantic relationships in the contemporary context. Sixty percent girls and 40% middle adults believe that changes in the value systems and life style are significant factors. Many feel that egalitarian values and individual freedom to make choices are valued currently. As explained by a girl, *"This is because of the change in the way of thinking of the people. They are now quite straight forward and they believe that there must be a very special friend in their lives"*. On the other hand, others feel that the materialistic and sensual curiosity is valued these days over commitment and sincerity and relationships are used as means for *"pomp and show"*. As voiced by a college going girl, *"People, especially college students, fall in love just to say being 'in', just to flaunt of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend"* or as middle adult man feels, *"I think what they are doing is 'dekhadekhi' "*, meaning wanting to be like the Jones as is said in the American context.

More emerging adults than middle adults felt that the modern 'stressors' and the media make it imperative to seek comfort in a romantic relationship. Modern day stressors include the change in the family structure from joint to nuclear and also a change in parent-child relationship where parents spend less time with their children and hence having someone special becomes very important. This has been summarized by a boy as, *"Modernization, more influence of Western culture, exploring and adventurous kind of nature, more exposure to vulgarity through media, magazines, sex education, lack of communication with family*

members (generation gap), increased level of stress and also sometimes peer pressure accounts for this change". A girl expressed the need felt in this way, "Today we all have such fast paced, full of tension life that such relations act like calm breeze, everyone has the need to get accepted by someone specially loved by someone in this life full of complex emotional problems".

More boys compared to middle adults and girls reported that increased opportunities to interact with opposite-sex partners and increased freedom to girls make it more conducive to develop romantic relationships. For example, *"Nowadays there is more opportunity for meeting the opposite-sex at a single place and girls are getting more freedom for education and jobs"* or as another boy elaborated, *"Better economic growth, influence of mass-media, cinema etcetera. Home imbibed values, of boldness and adventure 'ness' ... such atmosphere and also liberation in terms of intellectual freedom, has led our youth to experiment and explore the world of relationships. Social-networking sites also help people to connect with each other though physically they may be much far from one another"*. Two participants mentioned the rise in romantic relationships outside marriage. For example, *"Middle-aged people engage in romantic relationships as they are burdened under social responsibilities and their professional life. Thus having romantic relationships infuses a breath of life in them. Some of them are married but they're looking for change so they simply indulge in extra-marital affairs"*. Also, emerging adults and middle adult women reported that in today's times emerging adults prefer to choose their own partners. For instance, a middle adult woman says that romantic relationships are increasing because emerging adults want *"... to have a self-blessed life and companion"*.

Largely, the respondents believe that the visibility of 'romantic' relationships in the Indian society has increased remarkably. However, many of them, especially the middle adults, feel

that the current relationships lack the 'romantic' element - the depth and beauty which was present in earlier times. And yet, majority of the participants perceive that due to globalization and related factors this innate phenomenon can be more freely expressed in the present times.

Emphasizing the impact of westernization on Indian youth, Figure 14 documents the views of emerging adults and middle adults regarding contextual differences in the manifestation of this phenomenon which has ethological roots.

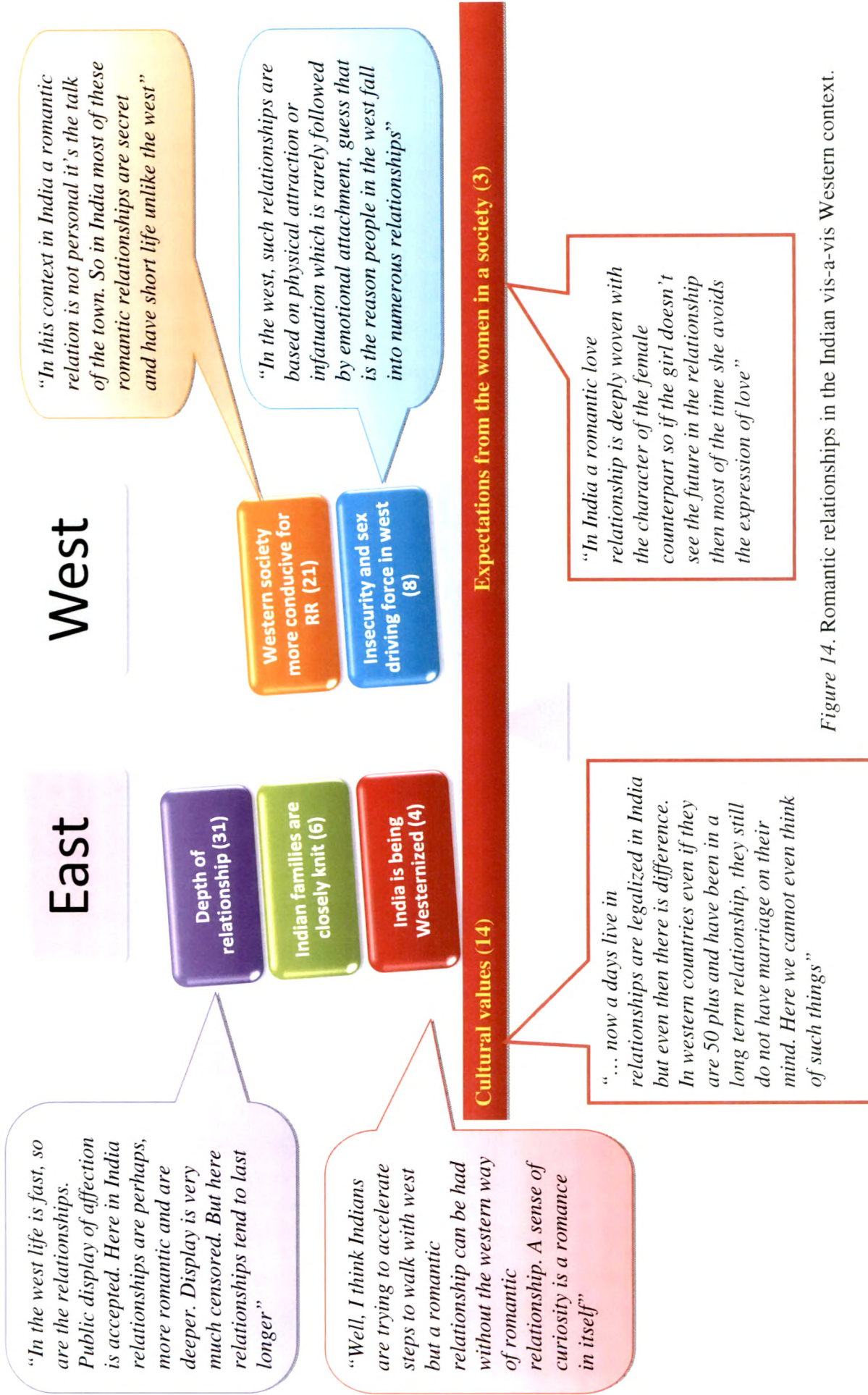


Figure 14. Romantic relationships in the Indian vis-a-vis Western context.

Eighty eight percent of respondents reported that the experiences of romantic relationships would vary across contexts. Majority who reported the significance of context, have stressed that in India the quality of relationships are much better in terms of security, depth and commitment. Also, one takes family into account while choosing a partner, especially in a committed relationship. Yet, many of them have appreciated the individual freedom available in the West and criticized Indian society for its hypocrisy. As expressed by a middle adult man, *“What is happening in the West, they call it dating and it is a lovely word but we have a socially bad word for the same thing ‘lafda’ (the term implies ‘dubious affair’) ... so they hide it here and we are heading towards a hypocritical society”*. At the same time the respondents feel that Western societies too have several problems because of the reckless freedom *“Even in West the incidents reported are not good [teenage pregnancy] ... any extreme is not good. Not too strict or too liberal”*. Emancipation of women plays an important role in the development of romantic relationships acknowledges an emerging adult and yet there is one response from a boy that criticizes Western women on the account that they lack the *‘lajja’* (shyness) that Indian women gracefully possess. While a middle adult woman retorts, *“Yes, ours is a male dominating culture and probably women are not allowed to do things and are unsafe all alone. However, the Western culture involves the equal respect and equal freedom and equal practice when limits break”*.

The context sensitive nature of the relationships is evident in the responses. Even though there is a small percentage (6%) who believed that context will not affect the experience of the phenomenon, this argument pertains to the universal nature of romantic relationships, not considering the specifics of different cultures. They believe that the details may vary but human societies are the same. On one hand, there

is an argument for the homogeneity due to the existence of global culture and on the other hand others argue about the universality of human emotions and experiences. Such as *“Human beings have same emotions, perceptions, expressions, mind everything is same. Context, culture nothing matters. It has nothing to do with East and West. Everything is very similar wherever you go if you see it more in detail and not just superficially”*. Therefore, romantic relationships are universal but their manifestations and expressions vary across cultures.

After having described the scenario in general, emerging adults and middle adults were asked to share their personal opinions regarding individuals engaged in a romantic bond. Sixty eight out of eighty respondents, both emerging adults and middle adults shared their personal opinions. The other 12 respondents said that they had no opinion, for example, a middle adult man reported, *“Nobody should opine as every person has his/her own thoughts, feelings and every adult is a matures person and can distinguish between good and bad”*.

Opinions were related to positive socio-emotional states, behavior in public, cognitive state of preoccupation and also suggestion for nurturing such a special relationship. For example, a middle adult woman opined, *“I think they are in a complicated, but a very good relationship. So, they must take extra care to keep their relationship strong”*.

Forty two percent emerging adults and 20% middle adults reported that being in a love relationship is a very desirable and blissful experience. *“Such people are merry-go-lucky. They are enthusiastic, fun loving and live longer and healthy”*, shares a middle adult woman. Nineteen percent of the participants, however, were hesitant to just focus on the positivity. They also opined that romantic relationships are good, but

potentially so. They reported that public display of emotions, sexual involvement, absence of commitment and turbulent break-ups are problematic. For example, *“If a certain level of decency is maintained, then people who are in such a relationship are the happiest and the luckiest in the world. Public display of emotions and negligence of all other duties, however, are frustrating”* (boy). Surprisingly, such responses were more common among the emerging adult boys. Also, certain behaviors of the lovers were deemed as silly, for instance *“From what I have seen and experienced, certain couples tend to get really silly around each other and call each other stupid names like baby, jaanu, which personally I do not like”*. Too much preoccupation and the sense of being lost in one’s own world were also reported mostly by boys, for example, *“One may observe that such people, who are involved, become (for some time) as if they do not require the world any more. They are happy themselves”*.

Very few emerging adults and even fewer middle adults indicate unfavorable opinions towards individuals engaged in romantic relationships. Of these unfavorable opinions, most of them are concerns (see Table 11) for the well-being of the emerging adults, because all were aware of the powerful impact of these relationships on young minds. Although, majority of the respondents felt that Indian society is not favorable for having a romantic relationship, interestingly the participants of the study expressed favorable views towards the phenomenon and the individuals engaged in the same. Thus, while describing the ‘scenario’ they said that societal attitudes were negative, but their own responses and experiences indicated neutral to positive attitudes.

One boy said that, *“I don’t know why, but I feel like teasing them [his romantically involved friends], maybe my attitude would change when I mature”*. Interestingly,

although he teased his friends engaged in a romantic bond, he genuinely feels that it is his attitude which needs the change and it is he who needs to grow up.

Figure 15 presents the experiences of romantically involved emerging adults pertaining to societal attitudes towards them.

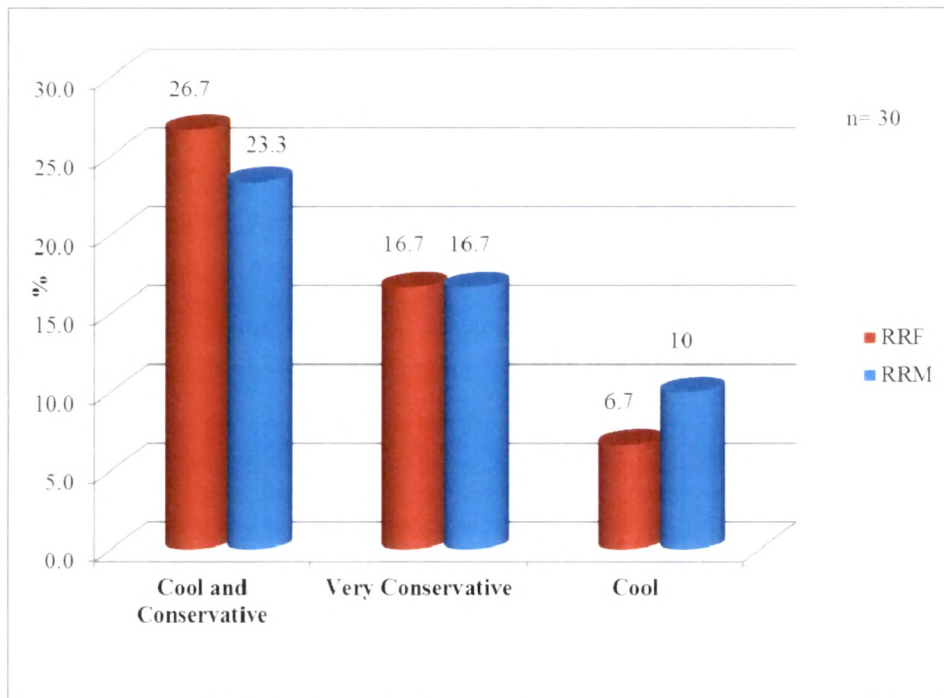


Figure 15. Societal attitudes towards emerging adults' engaged in a romantic relationship.

As shown in Figure 15, there are only few responses suggesting extreme attitudes of the society. Although both boys and girls have equally reported society to be very conservative, more boys felt that the society is quite “cool” and accepting and that not everybody is conservative. A boy expressed *“I think the society is pretty cool about these relationships. I have not come across any problem”*.

Most of the emerging adults experienced a good dose of both positive and negative attitude from the society as a girl declares, *“Somebody understands, somebody doesn’t. I live my life the way I want. I don’t get bothered by them”*. In this response, it is seen that even when there are members in the society who do not support romantic relationships, she, as an individual, can afford to ignore them. In fact, most of the emerging adults said they do not get bothered by what the people in the society think. As expressed by a romantically involved girl, *“Not at all ... it does not bother. I care for the opinion of those only who matter to me. The world would say so many things, but only my parents, his parents and he matter to me”*.

However, some respondents expressed their distaste for the society and viewed it as hypocritical. A girl expressed in antipathy, *“In some parts it is accepted and considered as normal, in some it isn’t. Overall I find people a bit of hypocrites. They wish to have it themselves but won’t let the world have it. So in the end you will see that most of the people are against the idea of having romantic relationships before marriage, whereas, in their own hearts they will badly want to have it”*.

Notwithstanding their disapproval about certain societal attitudes, all respondents reported that friends and colleagues were supportive. For example, a romantically involved girl tells, *“Everyone in our college knows about our relationship, even our peon. They say you are a perfect couple, made for each other”*. For a few it also included siblings, cousins, parents and even other relatives. Therefore, although the general perception about the society was not so favorable, when it came to specific relationships all respondents currently involved had support of friends, siblings and also members of the extended family such as a sister-in-law. However, the case may be different with regard to parents (see Figure 16 and Table 8).

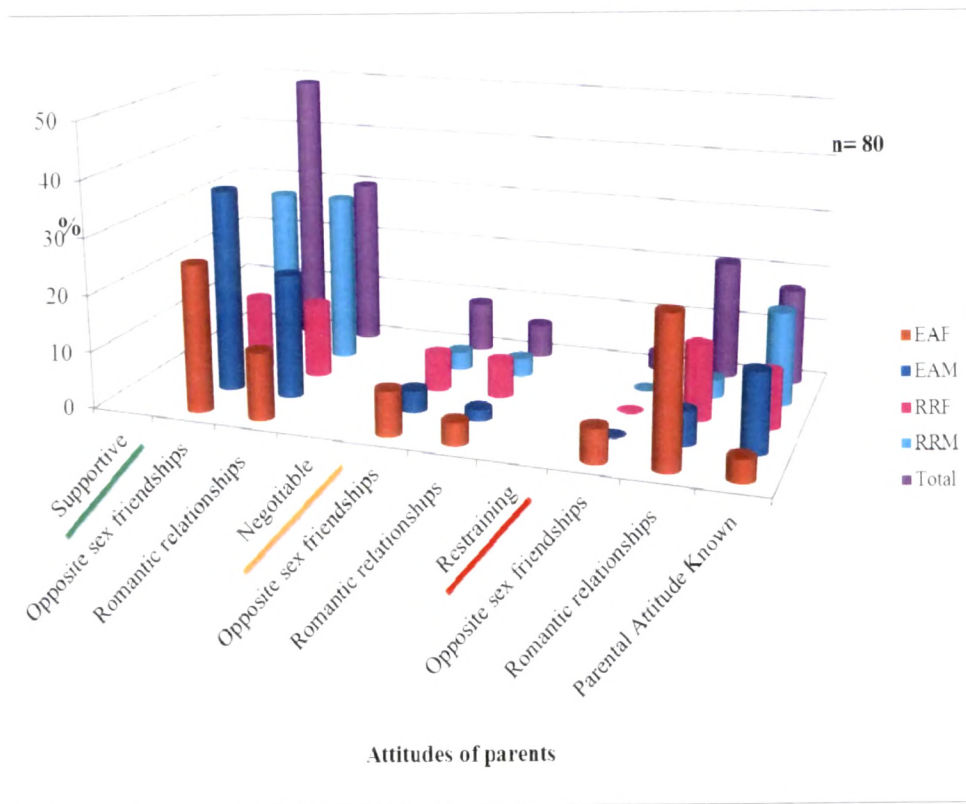


Figure 16. Emerging adults' perceptions of parental attitude towards opposite-sex friendships and romantic relationships.

Table 8

Illustrative Verbatim Comments Depicting Emerging Adults' Perceptions about Parental Attitude towards Opposite-Sex Friendships and Romantic Relationships

n=80

Categories with Illustrative Verbatim Comments

Positive or supportive (25)

"Mom dad are cool, supportive"

"He is Punjabi- Sikh and I am a Hindu ... and I am also six months older than him ... no problems ... "

"Parents will be told later after we will finish our studies and when we tell them they would agree"

"They don't have any problem with it. But they make sure that I don't cross the boundaries of a decent relationship"

Negotiable (6)

"Regarding marriage they prefer arranged marriage. If I have a reason it's not hard for me to convince them with my point of view"

Restraining (11)

"They totally, strongly, violently oppose romantic relationships"

"They told me that they will not see the caste, for them caste was not a problem but yes she should be a Hindu"

" ... maybe they think that I am not mature enough to choose my own life partner"

"The reason is that our culture and discipline do not permit us to do such action"

Parental attitude not explicitly known (17)

I don't know. My mother keeps teasing me, it [opposite-sex friendships] is fine with them but about romantic relationship I do not have a clear idea.

Parents' attitude towards emerging adults' opposite-sex friendships and romantic relationships was perceived to be more positive than negative as depicted in Figure 16, especially for the boys. However, the positive attitude was subject to certain conditions as reported by a boy, *"According to them, only if a romantic relationship is helpful for my future otherwise not"*. The romantic relationships were likely to receive

approval, if they focused on other aspects of life and behaved in a responsible manner. For example a boy said *"They think studies should be the priority after that you may choose your partner"*. This is in line with the responses of middle adults when asked about their concerns for emerging adults engaging in romantic relationships. Mostly girls currently involved in a romantic bond expressed factors pertaining to religion, caste, socio economic status and even horoscope.

As for the currently involved emerging adults, many of them were confident that their parents would approve of their choices if they disclosed it to them at a right time and in a right manner. As a romantically involved girl said *"I don't think it's the right time, because we have 3 years more to go for studies. I don't think my parents will create a problem"*. Yet, a few of them felt that their parents would never approve. A romantically involved boy shared, *"If my parents came to know, then maybe I will have to leave the city or even education ... they are a bit rigid. My brother had a relationship so they made him change his college, and now he is married [arranged]. He is 10 years older than me. So I feel such a thing can happen with me also"*.

It is not surprising that emerging adults who perceived positive parental attitudes were feeling good about their relationship with their parents. Interestingly, even when adolescents perceived 'not so positive' or even 'negative attitudes', many of them felt empathy and said that, as parents, their concerns were right in their way. Yet, they wished that parents would not underestimate their capacity to take decisions.

Sixty four percent of emerging adults reported that even though they are committed to their romantic partners, they may not marry their partner unless they get parental approval. A girl expressed, *"I would not go for this relationship because for twenty years I have been with my family not with him. Maybe it is attachment, respect or*

whatever; I will not go against my family. He will also not". However, in case of extremely restrictive parents the emerging adults were in total disagreement with the parental views. As expressed by a girl, "*Sometimes I feel very devastated with their this kind of attitude. At times, I argue with them a lot on such topics but on thinking calmly and from their point of view, in this modern world with all kinds of people surrounding me, their restriction at times may prove worthy but not always. They sometimes over-react on silly issues and that irritates me a lot*". It is worth noting that even when emerging adults totally disagree with the view of their parents, they reveal a lot of empathy for their parents' thinking. A finding unique to Indian context.

After having looked at the emerging adults' perceptions about their parents' attitudes towards their romantic relationships, the following Figure 17 depicts middle adults' (parental figures') attitudes towards their childrens' (emerging adults') romantic relationships.

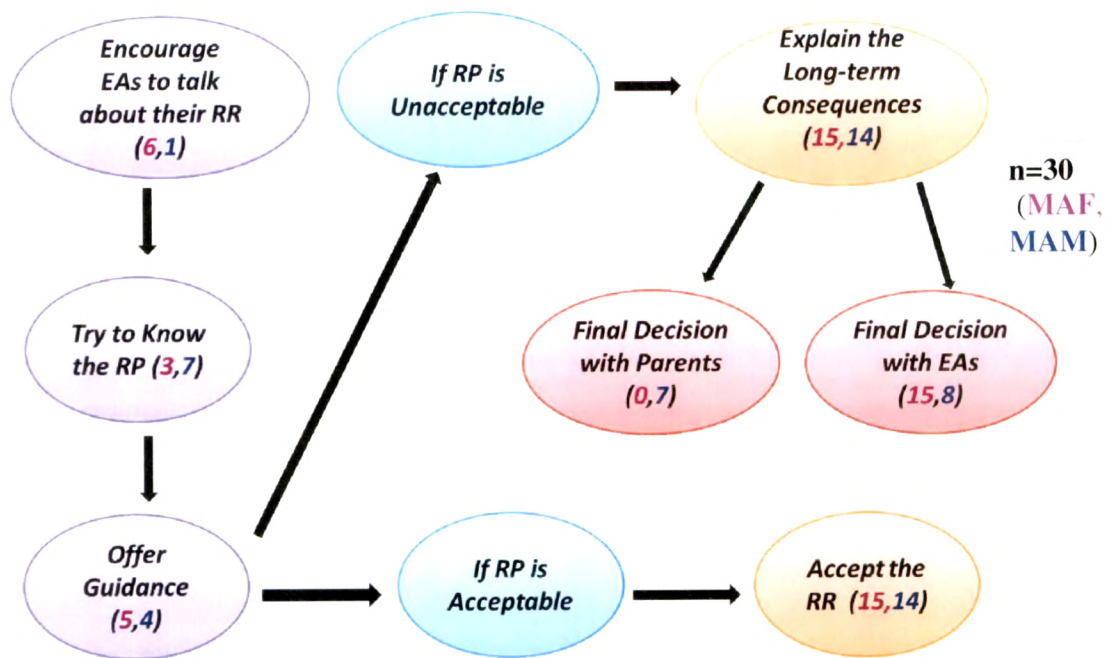


Figure 17. Middle adults' (Parents') response to their emerging adults' relationship.

Most of the parents felt they would first try to find out about the person with whom their son or daughter is involved. Mothers focused on encouraging their son or daughter to share with them, *"I will be friendly to my daughter and encourage her to share her feelings"*. After that the mothers would try to give their advice or suggestions to the best of their ability. Almost 50 % of the fathers reported that if they did not find the partner appropriate for their children they would first try to help the emerging adults to understand and have a long term perspective. Some of them added that they would even threaten or punish their son or daughter, if need arises, and that the final decision is to be taken by fathers themselves. A father said, *"If it's not good I will tell her to stop it immediately. If she does not listen I shall be more harsh, threaten her, better you stop or we shall boycott you, logic is to make her discontinue a unsuitable relationship"*. This was true for both daughters and sons. Another father

added, *"If found not ok, we will try to make him or her understand and the final decision will be ours"*. Also fathers showed more concern about their status in the community. To illustrate, a father said, *"[I would] take an overall view of scene and survey horoscope, caste, creed, rituals, tradition, race, color, beliefs, then do the analysis and planning and then take action because marriage is a union of two communities and societies"*.

Seventy five percent parents were of the opinion that even if they did not agree with their children's choice of romantic partners, the final decision would be left on the emerging adult. On the other hand, there were a few fathers who felt that it was an occasion to celebrate. *"I will celebrate it. So that she understands that it is something to be celebrated. But I do not think that she will need to tell me. It would be seen whatever is happening to her"* or *"I would be happy that my daughter has started seeing someone"*. But, even then he added, *"I would be a worried father also, because of so many things I said earlier and because I and my family in the whole arena of social system, worried is not the right word ... I would be alert, because there is a lot of flare in such a relationship, how to help if needed, and also to be away to avoid getting into unnecessary nitty-gritty, it would be completely mixed feeling but as time passes it would teach me"*. One father of an emerging adult girl openly mentioned he would advise her to use contraceptives, *"Je badha vaparta hoi te vaapre (use what everyone else uses)"*, accepting the fact that physical relationships can ensue in a close romantic bond. Mothers of boys were concerned for the girl involved with their son. They said they would like to check how sincere their son was and would advise him to be caring towards the girl. Only one parent reported that he would reject such relationships absolutely, no matter what. He said, *"I would*

not agree to such relationship and I would be very unhappy and try to close such circumstances”.

Twenty six percent have reported difference in the parental attitude towards their children based on gender. Gender differences in parental attitudes as mentioned by the middle adults as parents and in the perceptions of the emerging adults are analyzed using a gender analysis framework (Parker, 1993). The framework examines the information about the attitude of society towards girls and boys pertaining to their romantic relationships and categorizes the reasons for these differences as presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Gender Analysis Framework for Differences in Attitudes of Parents and Society towards Emerging Adults' Romantic Relationships n=80

GENDER	Men		Women	
	Middle Adults Men (5)	Emerging Adults Boys Engaged in Romantic Relationship (3)	Middle Adults Women (10)	Emerging Adults Girls Engaged in Romantic Relationship (3)
REASONS FOR DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS GIRLS AND BOYS	Girls are more vulnerable to negative impacts physically and mentally (6)	"Actually they may be more conservative with the girl, know more about the person with who she is. They are more worried as 90% adjustments have to be done by the girl" (3)	3	
	Societal norms more stringent for girls (3)			"Completely different, because mother feels that if boys get into a relationship and gets out of it nobody is concerned for a girl all will be speaking about her" (3)
	Boys tend to be insincere in relationships (2)		"I would like to check if he is really involved ... he must be committed" (2)	1
ROLES	Boys bring an additional member to the family (5)	"All the more concerned about boys relationship because it will change the structure of the family" (4)		
	Financial independence of the son (3)	"Will also see his own financial stability" (1)	2	

All except the emerging adult girls have reported that girls are more vulnerable physically, mentally and socially and, hence, parents are more worried and concerned about their daughters. On the other hand, only girls have reported that the societal norms are harsher for them. Girls also reported that because of society's negative judgmental attitudes towards girls, parents are more stringent with them.

Nevertheless, all the categories indicate the existence of gender disparity in the societal norms. Interestingly, only the older generation has talked about differential treatment of boys because they are required to be economically independent to support a committed relationship and also they bring an additional member into the family. Also, more mothers than fathers have reported differential treatment of sons and daughters, because they feel daughters need to be protected and sons need to be taught to take care of their partners.

Although majority of the respondents feel that having a romantic relationship is a very positive experience, however, this attitude was not free of reservations. Clearly, the emerging adults as well as middle adults have several concerns and apprehensions regarding the same. These concerns stem from their ideas about the potential impact of romantic relationships on individuals.

The next segment displays the potential developmental outcomes as reported by emerging adults (not romantically involved at the time of the study) and romantically involved emerging adults as well as middle adults (see Figure 18). Table 11 communicates these concerns and forewarnings.

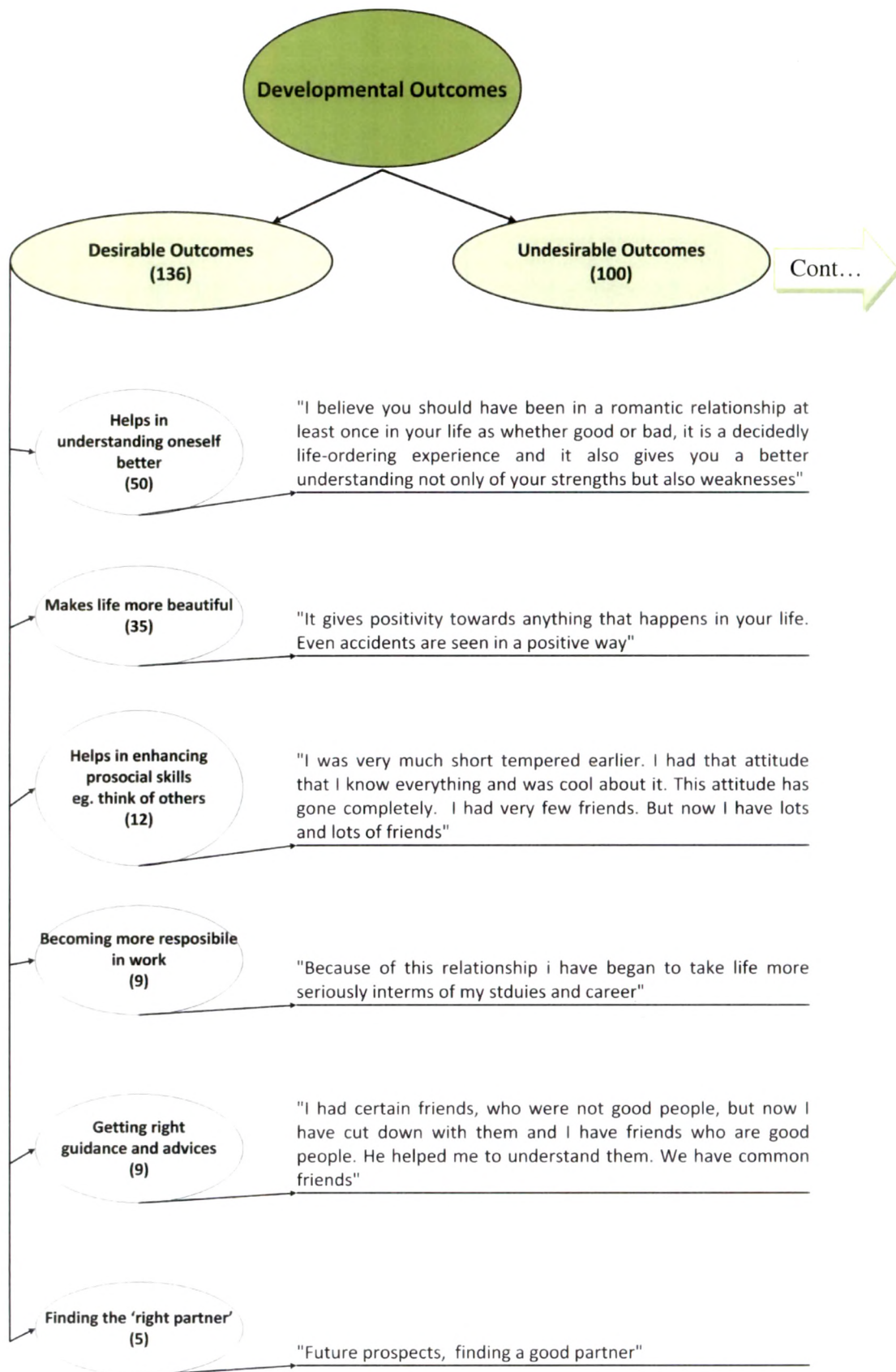


Figure 18. Developmental outcomes of romantic relationships. (cont ...)

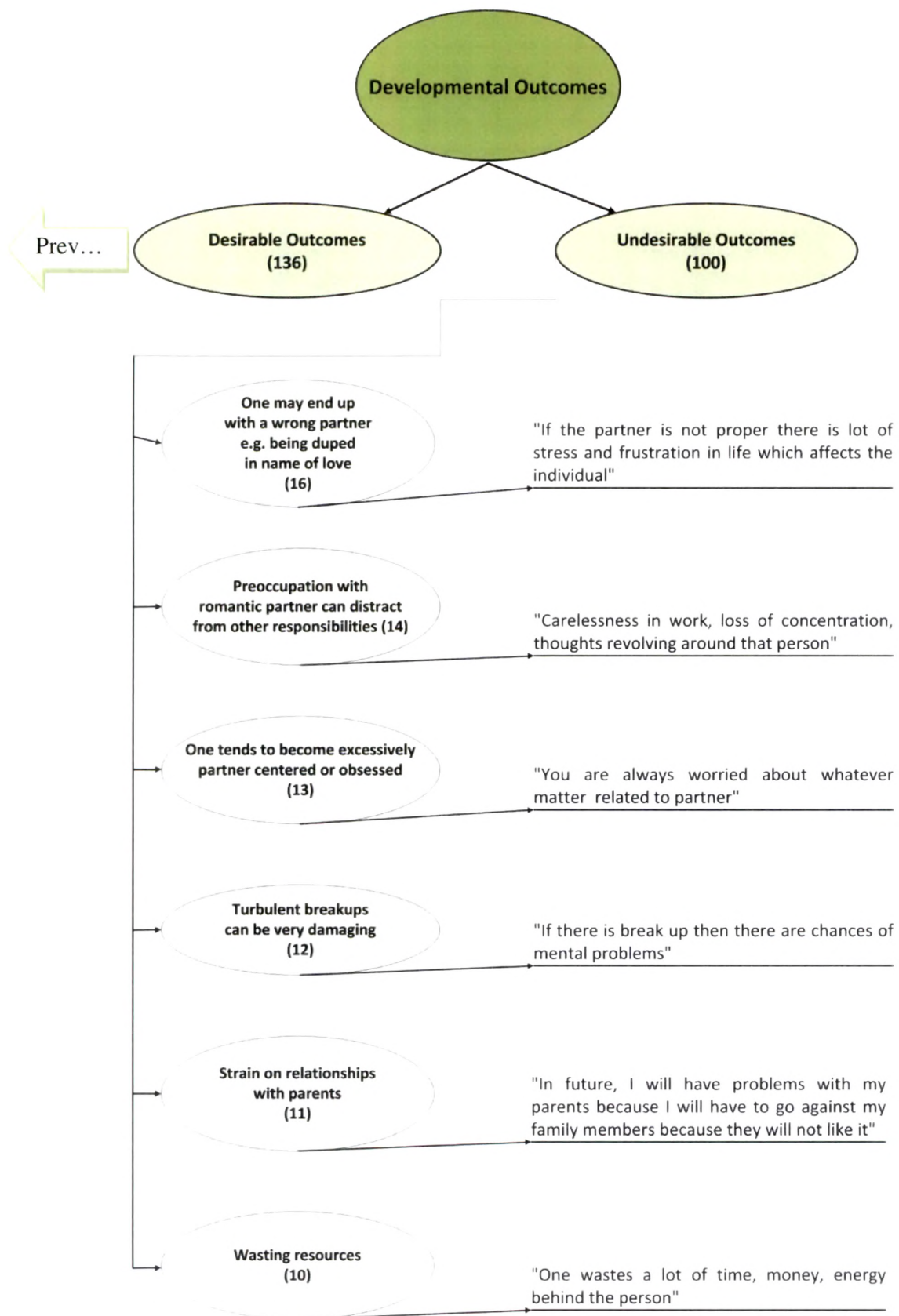


Figure 18. Developmental outcomes of romantic relationships. (prev ...)

Ninety eight percent of the participants believe that engaging in a romantic relationship has significant developmental impact on individuals. Their responses denote that engaging in a romantic relationship can have potentially positive or negative outcome for the individual depending on factors such as choice of the romantic partner and the nature and quality of the relationship. As one, middle adult woman voices, *"If you are involved with a person who brings out your good qualities then it is best for you but being involved with a wrong person destroy not only you but all your close ones"*. However, a small percentage of responses indicate that there is no negative impact at all and very few feel that romantic relationship does not have any impact on development.

Positive impacts of romantic relationships overlap with the definitions of romantic love. Most of the emerging adults believe that one understands oneself better through the partner and also reflects on one's own strengths and weaknesses. Also, because one would like to deserve the love and acceptance that they receive from their partners it automatically urges them to become better persons. Further, there is a lot of positivity all around because of which everything else falls in place including other relationships. In the words of a girl, *"Steady relationships cause an individual to bloom literally. There is a quantum jump in the self-confidence, the sun looks brighter and all that jazz. The support of a loved one gives you courage to try new things and not be afraid of making a fool of yourself, you are happier; you feel like you are full of love, over flowing actually and extend their love to others. In short, you just feel like a better person all around"*. Moreover, some young girls have reported that a romantic relationship can help an individual to find a 'right' partner and both boys and girls mentioned that, in their partners, they find someone who can guide them

appropriately when in need. As a romantically involved boy puts it, *“You learn the ways of the world from each other”*.

At the same time, the intensity of involvement can lead to preoccupation and other relationships and responsibilities may be ignored. Wasting resources such as time and money has also been reported as an important negative impact. A boy speaks, *“These relationships change a person’s life in many ways such as his mind will deviate from studies, one will tell lies at home”*. There is a perceived strain on relationships with parents because one does not feel open about the romantic relationship with parents. This is expressed as the only dissatisfaction by a romantically involved girl, *“I am just not satisfied with one thing is that I cannot share that I am having this kind of relationship”*. This undefined discomfort and guilt would be typical of contexts where emerging adults feel that parents and other adults would not understand and approve their relationships.

Romantic relationships also provide an occasion to experience a range of negative emotions such as anxiety, aggression and sadness, and breakups may be very disturbing. This has figured as a significant issue of concern among middle adults (Table 11). Many emerging adults too have resonated similar concerns. For instance, *“Thus getting mentally upset, may boycott (means withdraw) socially, fail to clear their exams with flying colors or may lead to extreme steps like suicide or killing the partner”*, perceives an emerging adult boy.

Interestingly, emerging adults who are not currently engaged in a romantic bond have reported positive and negative outcomes while positive outcomes have been equally reported by all emerging adults. Responses of middle adults are equally distributed across categories and they have focused more on the potential of developmental

outcomes depending on factors such as individual characteristics, partner characteristics, relationship quality, and intensity of involvement, commitment, sincerity and context. Gender does not feature as an important factor for differential developmental outcomes of romantic relationship, if both partners are sincerely involved in the relationship (See Figure 19). However, few of them have reported that women are generally more intensely involved and also because women's brains are differently wired, the impact of romantic relationships, whether positive or negative is more pronounced for a woman. Adding to the biological reasons, many believe that harsh societal norms for women also makes her more vulnerable to the negative impact of romantic relationship (Table 10).

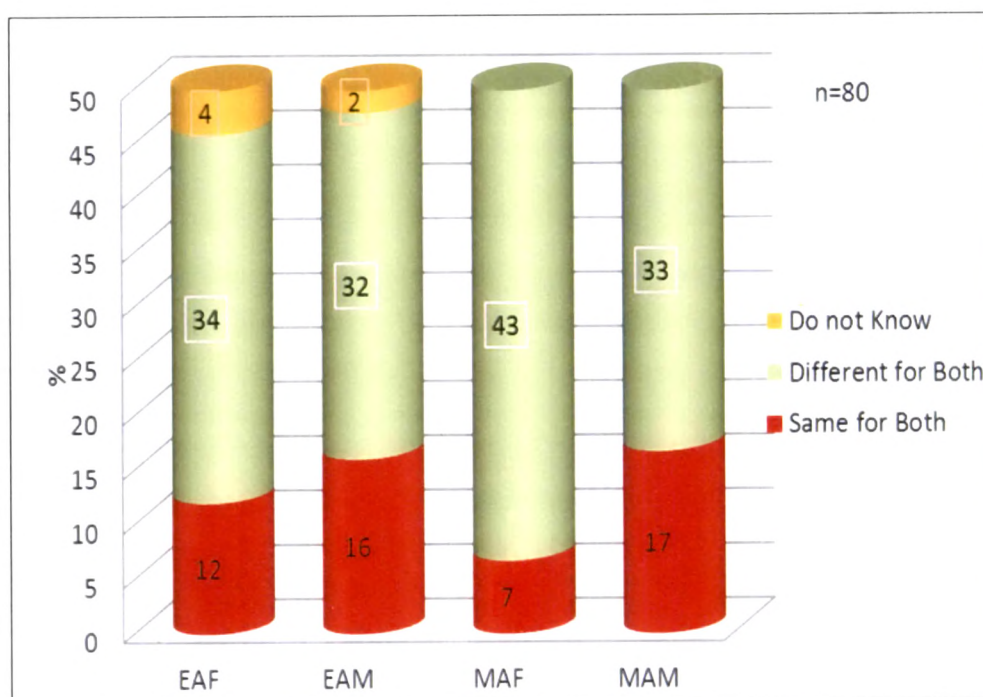


Figure 19. Percentage of emerging adults and middle adults who think that the impact of romantic relationships would vary across gender.

Table 10

Illustrative Verbatim Comments Explaining Gender Differences or Absence of it in Developmental Impacts

n=80

Categories	Illustrative Verbatim Comments
Same	<p data-bbox="498 694 1361 831">“If they are true, genuine and honest it will be same for both. I don’t think women are more emotional but if you are in a relationship it will be same for both of you. People think men are strong emotionally than women, but I think if its true love and respect then its same”</p> <p data-bbox="498 890 1361 955">“It depends on the intelligence of an individual and there are so many other attributes like freedom and mental growth”</p>
Different	<p data-bbox="498 1087 1350 1152">“Girls would be more involved in relationship, so the positive impact will also be more for her”</p> <p data-bbox="498 1210 1365 1310">“The impact of these relations on women would be adverse in the male dominating families or communities where weaker sex is left with no support and freedom”</p> <p data-bbox="498 1368 1342 1433">“Men and women are programmed differently so certainly impact on them are different”</p> <p data-bbox="498 1492 1313 1566">“Yes, it differs in men and women. Men are basically innocent and women apply intelligence”</p>

Table 11

Society's Concerns for Emerging Adults involved in Romantic Relationships

n=80

Categories	EA (50)	MA (30)	Illustrative Verbatim Comments
No concerns (6)	3	3	<i>"Not much concerns. Youngsters can potentially manage on their own"</i>
Concerns (74)	47	27	
Unsafe physical relationship (26)	14	12	<i>"Sometimes they commit unsafe sexual relationship. I think this a big worry for me to them"</i>
Insincere partner (21)	15	6	<i>"Just for fun or peer pressure etcetera they should not do something they really don't understand. They should be careful"</i>
Neglecting career and other responsibilities (17)	11	6	<i>"My concern is that youngsters getting involved in romantic relationships lose focus in life. They should realize that career is the most important factor in life now a days"</i>
Turbulent breakups (6)	5	1	<i>"It takes a lot of time to heal the wounds and yet they might not heal completely and a scar would remain for life, afraid of getting into another relationship, ... So I am only concerned about the heart break"</i>
Societal disapproval (4)		4	<i>"Because some people are very attacking, then it is difficult, till it is acceptable in the society"</i>
Respecting individual rights (2)	2		<i>"Wait for the other or allow to come into the relationship and understand that other can say no"</i>
Pornography and wrong information (1)		1	<i>"One major concern is the availability of blue films in the market, when immature people watch wrong information, then it is a danger, danger and very dangerous"</i>

Similar concerns emerge across both generations and genders. Getting involved in unsafe sexual practices and contracting Venereal Diseases (VDs), Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and even unwanted pregnancy are the major areas of concern. In the words of a middle adult woman, *"Due to overflow of feelings, one must not go for sex relationship unless one is confident of the relationship. It might prove dangerous for*

both of their lives". Another significant concern is that people use the terms love and relationship very loosely and are not sincere about it as voiced by a girl, *"Ninety percent are actually doing a time-pass. I think they should actually give some time to think over before actually getting into a relationship"*.

Preoccupation with the relationship leading to neglecting career and other responsibilities is also a major concern. For example, a boy comments *"Sometimes, it may deviate a person from his main goals due to his madness of romantic love which may affect his studies or career in negative way if not handled properly"*. Pairing with insensitive partners can also be devastating. For example, a girl says *"... blind belief on their partners especially by girls. Young boys don't understand all this. They use girls and then leave them in bad conditions. These girls are broken emotionally and may finish their lives"*. Turbulent breakups can even lead to suicide in extreme cases, which is an issue of concern, as voiced by a middle adult woman, *"Firstly, by some reason if the relation is broken the result must not be suicide or any harm to each other"*. Interestingly, only one boy said that though these experiences are painful, they help them to grow as individuals.

Societal disapproval as a cause of concern was reported only by middle adults, especially by men. This was expressed more as a concern as divulged by a man, *"I am not giving in any value judgment of what is good and what is bad, because that will not work for them. I am concerned with the traumatic part. Their awareness about the society will guard them; their relationship would be less traumatic ... Knowing social norms can make relationship fulfilling and not create unnecessary trauma where they are avoidable. Unfortunately, neither society nor individual can exercise the*

wisdom". Figure 20 addresses the issue of desired societal norms that could support healthy romantic relationships.

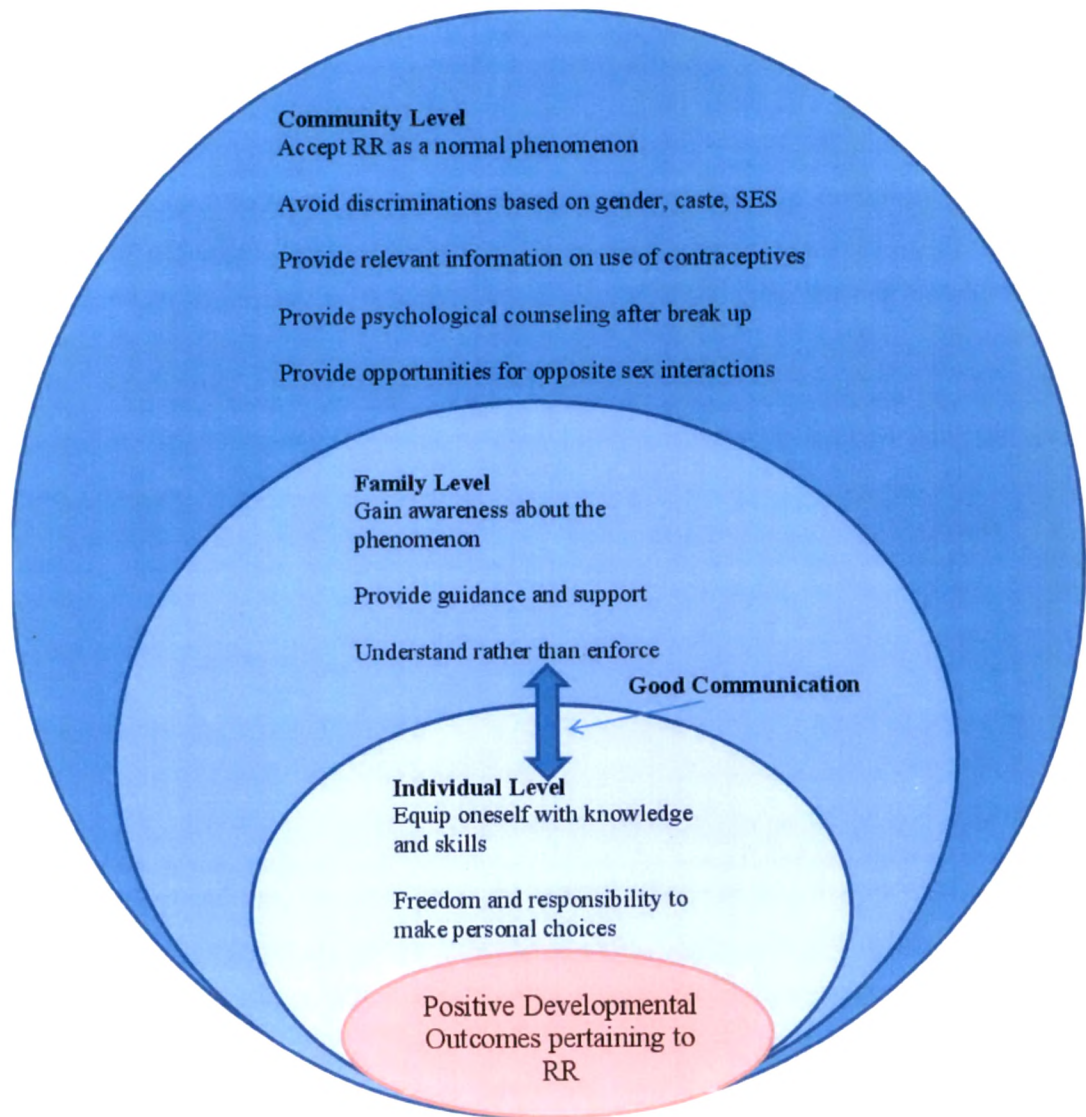


Figure 20. Factors that support development of healthy romantic relationships in a society.

Most of respondents believe that a society which helps in developing “right attitudes” is very important. For this purpose, along with sex education in schools, parent education has also been emphasized. While the middle adults are concerned about proper access to information and healthy attitudes towards opposite-sex partners, emerging adults feel that each individual should be given the freedom to have a personal life. As expressed by a boy, *“The society should start respecting human emotions. It should give a person freedom to live his personal life in his or her own way. At the same time, the lovers should also know the responsibilities that come with the relationship”*. The girls feel that discriminations based on gender, caste, SES should be minimized, while most boys feel the society should afford more opportunities for opposite-sex interactions. Also, gender equity has been emphasized by some respondents. A middle adult man says, *“ ... virginity is directed towards women ... but both loose virginity, then remove all these tags”*.

Many middle adults felt that having a healthy society requires focus on appropriate child rearing practices. It is also important to understand certain traditional practices and the ideas that our ancestors had behind those practices, critique them if they are not appropriate to our present context and also be vigilant if we are corrupting the spirit behind the practices by our own set of biases. Some middle adult men are concerned about increased materialism and decreased sensitivity among young individuals. They feel that emerging adults are not in touch with themselves and everything just happens mechanically so a society which can *“Let them flow with nature and if they are doing anything against nature then nature will give them a good lesson and they can understand. If this kind of attitude is prevailing it would help cultivate more and more sensible people. Sensible towards their own life, their own being”*. At the same time, parents and community can support emerging adults by

helping them develop interpersonal skills. Psychological counseling to help individuals to cope with a turbulent break-up can be useful.

Although most respondents expressed that parents can undoubtedly provide support and facilitate understanding of romantic relationships, a small percentage (8%) feel that parents themselves are unaware of what it means to be in a close, intimate bond. This is true for the masculine gender across both the generations. One father supported this view, *“Nobody should interfere that would be the best thing. Because nobody knows what they are doing, then how would they support or guide? They would create a mess. I think it is best to let people be themselves. Your [parent’s] advices may be good in some context and bad in others, the contradictions will create more pain ... just let them[emerging adults] be their natural self”*. More boys compared to girls felt that they are better off without parental support. However, the rest of them felt that it would be a great help if parents create a space where children can openly share about their romantic relationships with parents. Also, they require parents to be more understanding rather than judgmental and restrictive. Many respondents felt that, *“Help is required from parents who should not impose so many restrictions that their children do not mingle with the opposite-sex, as I have usually seen this creates a ‘spring back ‘ effect and the guy/girl who is severely restricted gets into a relationship at the first chance without thinking about it”*. They feel that parents need to guide them in a right way to help them to discriminate between what is right or wrong for them.

So far, we have covered the cultural memes of romantic love and relationships, intimacy, commitment and its linkages with marriage. We also looked at the plausible developmental outcomes, the prevalent societal and parental attitudes and suggested

norms that facilitate development of healthy romantic relationships. The next section displays the data about the processes of romantic relationships as experienced by emerging adults presently involved in it.

Section 5

Romantic Relationship Processes and Developmental Outcomes of Romantically Involved Emerging Adults

This section presents the data exclusively from the open-ended interview guideline for the emerging adults currently engaged in a romantic relationship. It includes a series of relationship processes beginning with the first meeting place, attraction and criteria for selecting the romantic partner, initiation of the relationship, expectations from the partner, relationship satisfactions and dissatisfactions, conflict issues and making up thereafter, as well as some ideas about break-ups and relationship dissolution. The last part of this section includes quantitative data from the rating scales related to relationship quality and subjective happiness.

Figure 21 displays the place where the romantic partners first met.

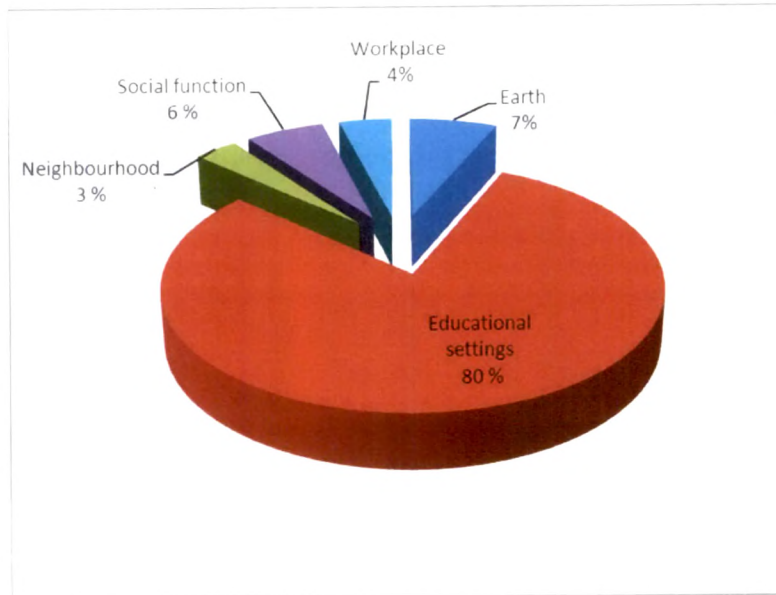


Figure 21. Where they first met their romantic partner?

As the Figure 21 shows educational settings such as schools, colleges and tuition classes were the places where highest number of respondents met their partners for the first time. Social functions such as a birthday party or work places such as Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (AIESEC, a student driven organization) where some emerging adults work as volunteers were also reported by few emerging adults. Some philosophically said, “*We met somewhere on earth, obviously*”. They said this because they could not recollect where they had first met and also thought that it was not important.

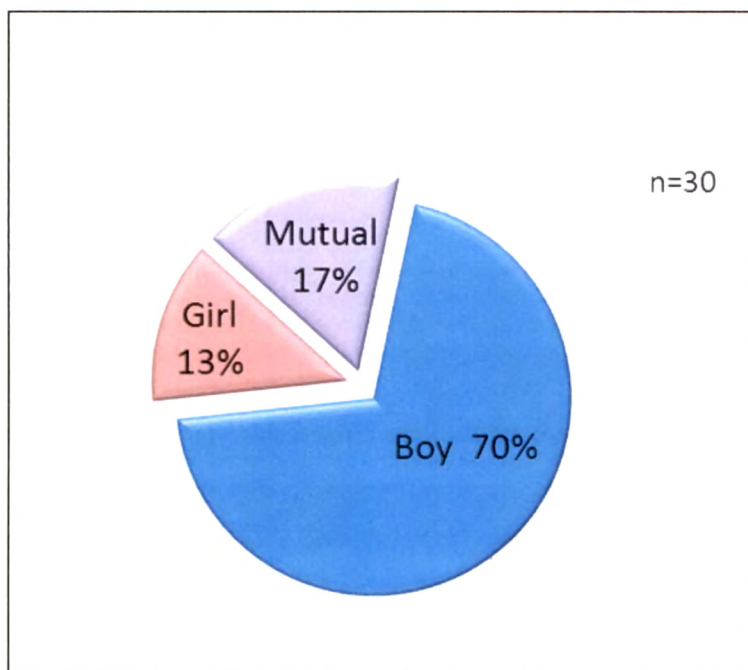


Figure 22. Percentage showing who initiated the romantic relationship.

Even though Figure 22 depicts that mostly boys initiated the relationship, that is, they first said those three magical words. In reality, many girls revealed that they actually used a certain behaviors so that the boy could pick up the cues and approach them. For example, one girl revealed *“I left my purse containing my mobile, credit card [pretending to have forgotten it] in the cafeteria [where he works] just to have a chance to talk to him. I wanted to know what he thinks about me”*. This also exemplifies the power of mixed methods for research, because statistics alone may mislead us into thinking that boys always initiate a romantic relationship. The girls said that it was not because they were shy to initiate, but when they realized it was mutual, they preferred to ‘help’ the boys to make the first move.

Nevertheless, most of the times it was the boys who initiated the relationship on their own. They also had to persistently woo the girls and finally she would say ‘yes’ after a couple of days and at times even months. As revealed by a girl, *“In college, love*

was at first sight for him. He proposed me at first year's freshers. I replied him after one year", also echoed in a boy's voice "I always kept waiting. I have a lot of patience".

Presented in the Figures 23 and 24 are some of the 'special' and 'unique' feelings and thoughts that occupied the emerging adults' mind, around the 'special day' or 'moment'.

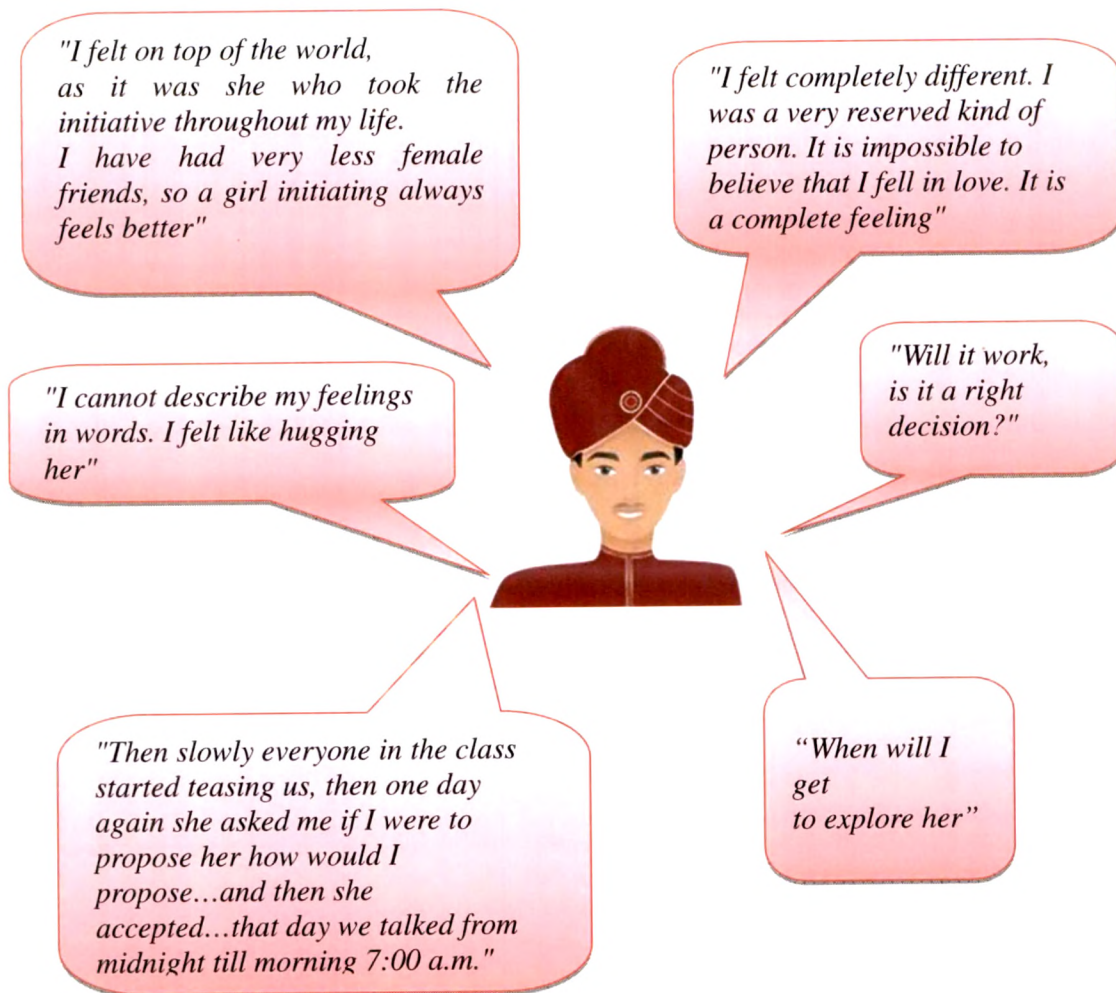


Figure 23. Illustrative verbatim comments of boys depicting thoughts, feelings and actions at the time of initiating the relationship.



Figure 24. Illustrative verbatim comments of girls depicting thoughts, feelings and actions at the time of initiating the relationship.

Figures 23 and 24 capture a range of emotions that emerging adults experience when they initially enter into a relationship. Happiness, excitement, anxiety, disappointment, contentment and jumble of emotions are apparent from these verbatim comments. Also, similarities as well as differences in the expressions of boys and girls are very evident. Both girls and boys referred to how they felt and what they did or felt like doing, but as it is apparent, girls were more verbose and expressive and focused more on feelings. Figure 25 shows what made the partners 'click' in the first place.

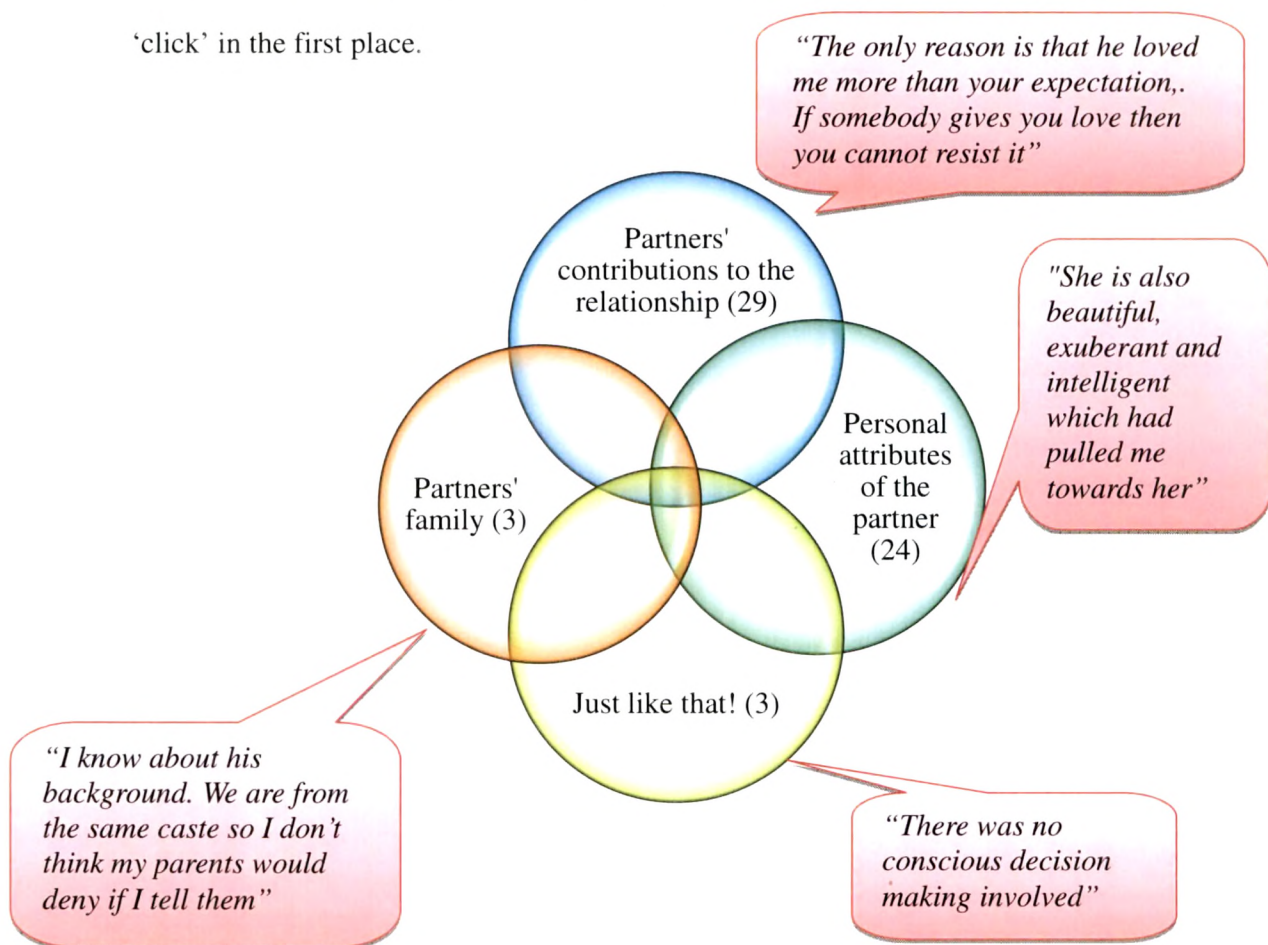
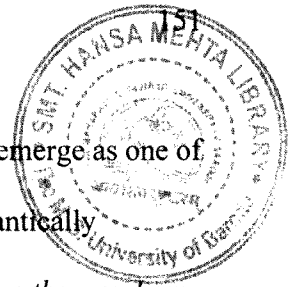


Figure 25. Summary of responses depicting criteria for choosing the romantic partner.



In Figure 25, understanding between partners and mutual acceptance emerge as one of the significant factors for choosing the partner. In the words of a romantically involved girl, *"We are very different from each other but he accepts me the way I am. He knows my hobbies and even if he is not interested he is very understanding. Even physical relationship is not of the only importance, if we meet and get a place to just sit quietly then also it is very good."* This is in line with the construal of romantic love where 'mutual understanding' (see Figure 5) emerges as a salient feature. Other qualities revolve around overall personality of the partner such as, *"He walks like a king and even though he walks like a king there is a lot of tenderness into it, he is not that harsh or egoistic in whatever he is doing, there is a lot of tenderness, so that is the best thing I like about him"*. Physical attractiveness was important for both boys and girls; however, more boys have talked about physical beauty in particular. Only one girl made reference to film stars, *"I used to like Sunny Deol ... I wanted my guy to be tough like him, healthy ... I never felt that he should fulfill this wish of mine or that ... I am not so demanding ... and, yes, my boyfriend is tough ... muscles and everything ... (laughs) ... he looks like Abhishek Bachchan"*.

More boys mentioned the girl's family background and family values as important criteria, because these would assure that everything else will fall in place. Some of them also believed that it would be she who would be making all the adjustments. Girls have emphasized characteristics such as simplicity, honesty, broadmindedness, and respect for women and also reported being put off by boastfulness.

When asked about whether they are committed to marry their current romantic partner, the answer was an emphatic, *"Of course"* 77% of times. Of the 23% who said no, 15% were boys. The girls who said they were not committed did not believe in

marriage or said that love is beyond all commitments. Boys did not cite any reason; they said they have not yet considered it. A few also said that commitment was subject to parental approval, *“Yes, but we know we cannot marry, because I don’t think that my parents can accept my relationship and I do not want to hurt them ... and that’s okay with her [his girlfriend], as she too will not go against her parent’s wishes”*. Nevertheless, of the 77%, only 13% believed that they would get married to their romantic partner even in the face of adversity. For example, a girl declared, *“Whatever happens I will try to convince my parents. But, even if they do not get convinced, I would marry him. As the time goes they would agree. My parents will not object on caste or religion. I am a Hindu and he is a Christian. My parents do not think that religion matters if the person is good. And, even the fact that he is not earning much, will not matter because what is important is whether he has the potential to rise high. Ultimately, I have to convince my father because he is the one who is going to raise all the objections”*.

Yet, when they were asked whether it is alright to have more than one romantic experience before marriage, majority of the emerging adults answered in affirmation, as depicted in Figure 26, and more girls believed so. Figure 27 presents no marked difference in the number of girls and boys who have reported that the current relationship is not their first romantic experience. In fact, the number is slightly more for boys. At the same time, emerging adults are not in favor of having simultaneous relationships. They feel it is okay to enter into another relationship after finishing with the first. They also added that it should not become a habit, but should happen only if it helps one to learn from their mistakes, understand why their relationships are breaking and also to make a better choice for a life partner. As put forth by a girl, *“Yes, because you come to know where you are going wrong, why all these relations*

are not lasting. There might be some problem with you. So you get to introspect. So you can have a more successful marriage”. Or, as a boy says “Yes, but you should never betray anyone. If you don’t like someone then you can leave, but not betray”. The rest of the emerging adults felt that, “It is better to think hundred times before entering into a relationship rather than breaking up later”. However, they clarified that they are not against people who have break-ups and enter into new relationships.

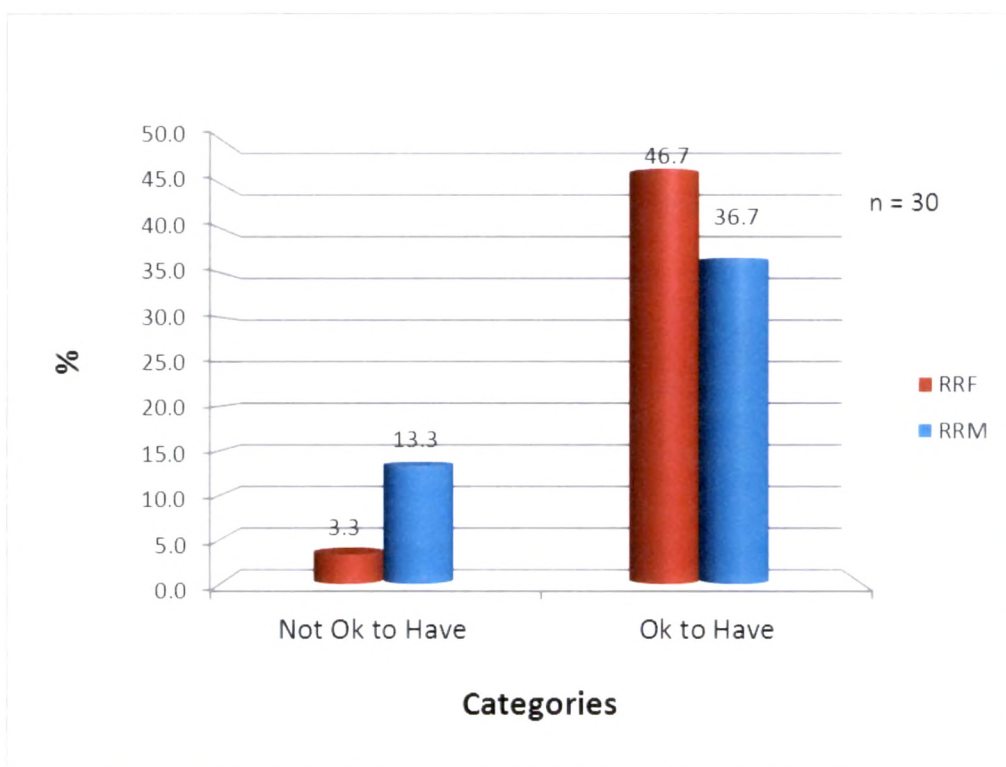


Figure 26. Attitude regarding experiencing more than one romantic relationship before marriage.

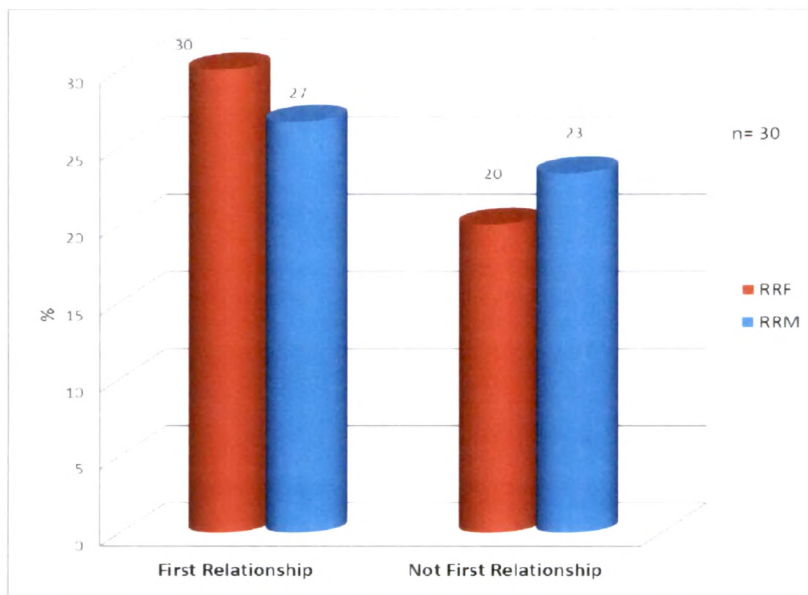


Figure 27. Percentage of emerging adults for whom the current romantic relationship is the first experience.

Table 12 presents the nature of expectations emerging adults have from their romantic partner and whether these expectations will change after marriage, as an when the romantic partner becomes the husband or the wife.

Table 12

*Illustrative Verbatim Comments Depicting Expectations from Romantic Partner**Before and After Marriage*

n=30

Categories (RRF,RRM)**No expectations (1)****Expectations from romantic partner before marriage (30)****Understanding (5,3)**

“He respects my feelings, my thoughts. If there is an issue and I have a different opinion and if he has a different opinion, then he will understand that I must have thoughts something, why I am saying this, why I am doing this, why I am having this kind of opinion ... ek beech ka rasta nikal lenge”

Commitment (4,2)

“He should be able to go to any limit to get me. It may sound filmy but that is how it should be”

Respect each other’s space (1,4)

“To live and let live. It will not change after marriage”

Take responsibility (4,1)

“That he would study well, get settled and then take care of his family”

More time together (1,0)

“All what I need from him is that he gives me more time. Because we both are so busy with our lives, we hardly get time for each other”

Be Expressive (4,2)

Means, praising beauty, or talk romantically like I have a handsome guy with me ... talks about future, babies ... if I say one he says two and such sort of ... ”

Expectation from partner after marriage (9)**Family cohesiveness (2,2)**

“Should get along with (mixing) my family or relatives”

Care and loyalty (2,0)

“Should be caring, trustworthy, loyal husband”

Physical relationship (1,0)

“After marriage, obviously a physical relationship”

All but one individual has reported some expectations from their partners. Most often they have reiterated the appealing characteristics which form the basis of a romantic

relationship and that these caring qualities would continue even after marriage. For example, *“Being with the partner always, in the highs and lows of life, no matter what they do, listening, talking, understanding the partner’s needs, trusting the person, what outsiders say does not matter anymore, what you say is enough for convincing them”*. Interestingly, girls have added sexual intimacy and fulfilling parenting roles as expectations after marriage. Girls also said that they expect their partners to respect their freedom even after marriage, for example *“Expectations would increase when I stay with him and his parents. So things will happen his way. I expect freedom. I am not sure about it (freedom) right now”*. Ironically, boys have expressed that *“What I don’t like, she should not do. I don’t like her being very frank, open with boys. She will change after marriage, like not acting pricey unconsciously”*. Notwithstanding the contradicting views, more boys have expressed a desire to respect each other’s personal space. The wish that the spouse would get along with family members has been reported equally by both. The paradox of accepting possessiveness as a legitimate feature of a romantic bond and the desire for individual freedom is seen here. Even though acceptance featured as a distinct feature of a romantic bond, it gets subdued when respondents focus on their expectations. Table 13 documents the satisfactions and dissatisfactions emerging from these relationships.

Table 13

Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions of Individuals Involved in a Romantic Relationship

n=80			
Categories	RRF	RRM	Illustrative Verbatim Comments
Satisfaction (35)			
Having someone to share with (13)	8	5	<i>"First I got a friend, whom I can trust, share my personal life my problems ... I am happy ... I am happy"</i>
Security (7)	5	2	<i>"She makes me secure mental and physical, she makes me secure that she is there for me"</i>
Can be myself (6)	3	3	<i>"I have come back to my original self ... I feel like myself, I like it"</i>
Self-Improvement (5)	5		<i>"I feel I am a better person now. I feel connected to others"</i>
No commitment (1)		1	<i>There is no pressure of commitment</i>
Dissatisfaction (25)			
Restrictions (4)	1	3	<i>"I can't talk to other girls"</i>
Habits and behaviors of partner (3)	2	1	<i>"Her normal voice is so loud. Initially I found it funny but then in restaurant all will look at us"</i>
Less time with each other (2)	2		<i>"We have to wait too long to meet each other"</i>
Poor communication (1)		1	<i>"She always tells me that I do not understand her, I do not understand her ... I am not saying that that is wrong but at least she should talk to me"</i>
Indefinite future prospects (1)	1		<i>"I am dissatisfied when I see his blurred future. When he is not tensed about the coming days in life"</i>
No Dissatisfaction (13)	5	8	<i>"I have many other important things to do in my life than hunting for my dissatisfactionso I really can't tell you what are they and how they affect me and my life that I share with him and everyone else"</i>

Most responses depict satisfactions as shown in Table 13. Girls have revealed more clearly satisfactions and dissatisfactions, while more boys have been neutral.

Partnership, involvement, openness, security and acceptance are the major

satisfactions for all. Even though it appears that more girls discerningly articulated both satisfactions and dissatisfactions, the researcher observed that it appears so because boys found it both difficult and even amusing to verbalize such experiences. Nevertheless, they were quite sure that there were no dissatisfactions. Dissatisfactions for girls centered on smoking and drinking habits of partners, for example, a girl was disappointed about, “ ... *that he smokes and he does not call me nor does he pick up my calls*”. The dissatisfaction about the amount of time the partners spent together also led to another factor of controlling or restricting interactions with other friends, especially opposite-sex friends, for example “*Nothing serious. Issues like not I don’t like her talking to boys, as she did not like me talking to my best friend because she is a girl*”. It is interesting to note that words such as “*nothing serious*” almost sanction such mutual restrictions. For girls, the restrictions would also include the way they could dress. Nevertheless, as Table 13 displays, such responses were not many. Boys too reported changes in their dressing and hair styles, but on a positive note. According to a boy, “*I am more conscious of what I wear now; I have become more stylish in terms of my hair and clothes*”.

Generally, in every relationship all expectations are not met and contradictory desires may remain unfulfilled, thus, conflicts are a natural part of relationships. The subsequent map (Figure 28) displays some of the conflict issues, and their impact on romantic relationships.

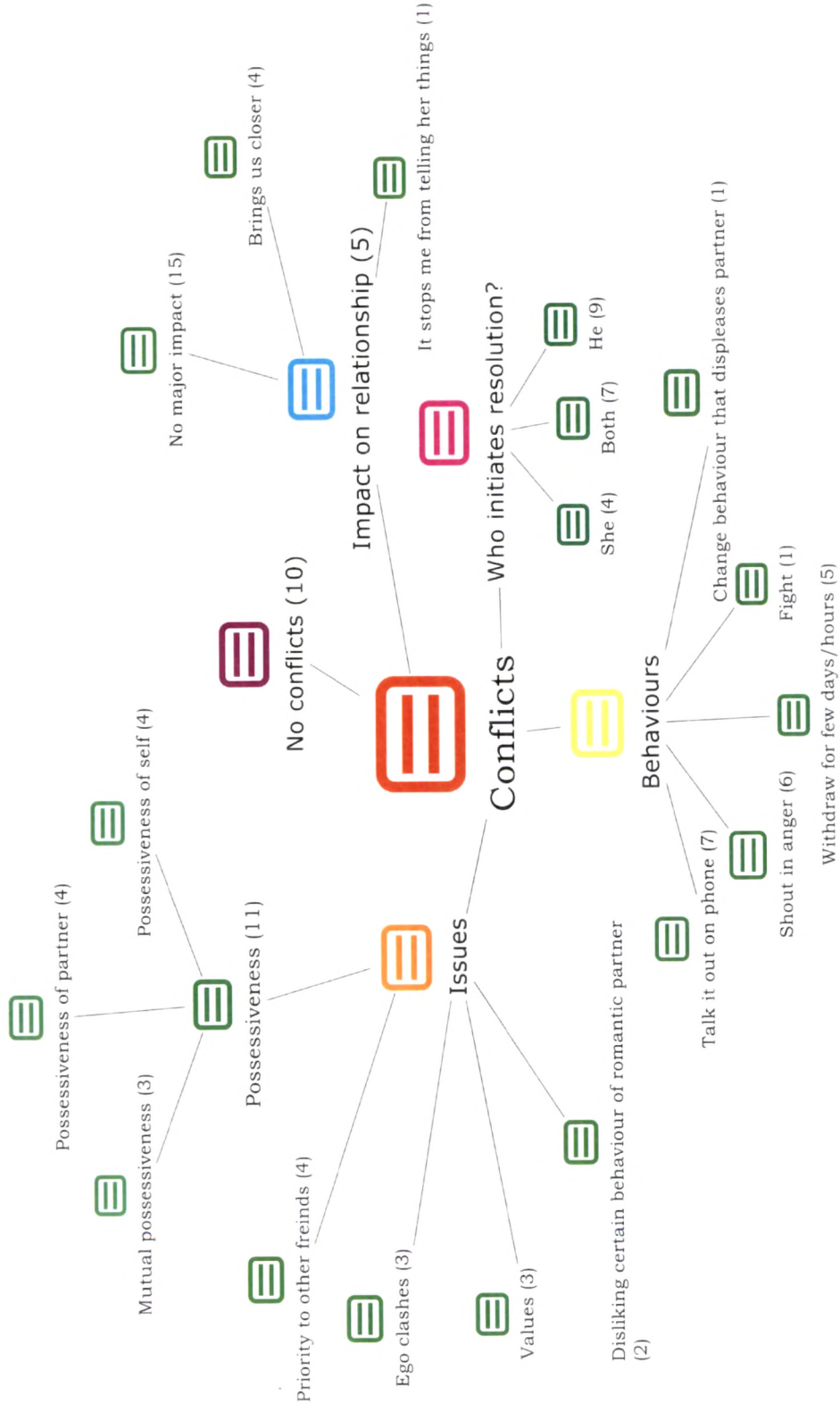


Figure 28. Map of conflicts.

Conflicts

Most of the respondents reported having conflicts, but the issues were not perceived to be serious or negatively impacting their relationships. Possessiveness was the major issue in dispute. A girl recounts, *"Sometimes ... not many times I get a little possessive about him and that results in today Jada (little fights) but again he is a very big social animal and my possessiveness comes in between"* or as another girl talks about her partner, *"He is sometime very possessive and obsessive which create problems. When I meet friends he feels why I am not spending more time with him only, though we are in the same class and sit next to each other. He is too much demanding in terms of time and expectations"*. Most participants could sort it out by talking, whereas screaming and fighting were reported by a few respondents, *"He shouts, he does not harm, but he talks to me in such high volume that scares me and he would smoke more"*. Most respondents felt that generally after small tiffs they came to understand each other better. Surprisingly, both boys and girls reported that more boys initiate conflict resolution even when they had not initiated the conflict. As reported by a girl, *"He always pacifies 'mania near' even if it is my fault. Generally it is only I who takes out my anger on him"*.

At times, even if it is momentary, couples experience a desire to dissolve the relationship. But, the respondents reported that just after few hours of withdrawing from each other, they 'realize' that they *"cannot live without each other"*. At times they brush aside such thoughts as being silly. However, some of the respondents currently involved in a relationship have experienced a break-up in their past.

About 43% of the respondents had experienced at least one break-up in the past. Of them a few perceived the break-up to be very painful, especially the girls. A girl

expressed, *"I did lot of stupidity ... Bahut rona dhona kiya tha (crying and sobbing) ... devadasini bangayee thi (had become a devdasini) ... did not talk to anyone, withdrawn, always thinking that he did this to me and I was so true to him"*. Boys' descriptions of break-ups were less graphic, for example, *"yes ... she did not respond to me so after this I would not respond to her"*. Even when a boy talked about his painful break-ups he said that break-ups were painful only when he was in 'serious' relationships. A boy said, *"I had two serious relationships and both break-ups were sour and we don't even talk to each other ... Both the times I was dumped ... Yes I felt anger, sadness, hatred. But with time it goes off"*. Boys also reported more insecurity post break-ups and mentioned having a series of 'casual' relationships as a way of coping.

Although more girls have reported deferred and painful break-ups, they also reported feeling happier post break-ups, for example, *"Yes ... so I felt so free ... like a bird the moment he said yes to break-up"*. Also, only girls have reported harassment by former romantic partners, for example, *"In fact, later I used to get angry with him because he used to do phaltu (meaningless) sms, emotionally black mailing types, ... he would sms 'I would never marry anyone' I use to think what non-sense and now he also has a girlfriend. Bahut pakata tha (he used to bore a lot)"*. For the girls the reasons for leaving their previous romantic partners were either lying behavior of the former partner, excessive possessiveness or two-timing. Also more girls reported a break-up with mutual consent while boys felt either 'dumped' or 'decided to break off'. However, with reference to their current relationships majority of emerging adults felt that they cannot even think of breaking up.

The last part of this section presents the quantitative data from the rating scales that assessed domains related to relationship quality and subjective happiness as one of the major developmental outcome. Figure 29 depicts the descriptive statistics graphically and Table 14 presents the means and SDs along with the t-value.

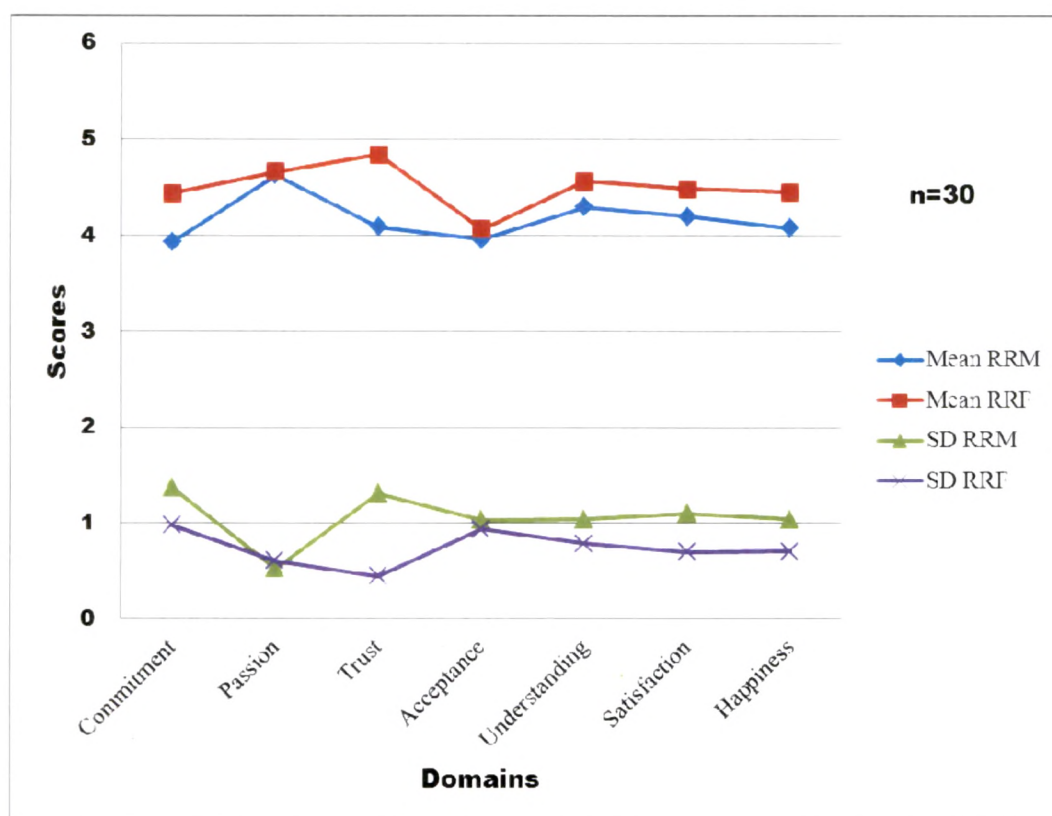


Figure 29. Means and standard deviations of scores from rating scale of romantically involved emerging adults.

The mean scores for the girls were higher indicating better quality of relationship across domains. The variance for boys was larger, especially in the domain of trust and commitment indicating that among the boys there were more variations in responses in these particular domains.

Table 14

Mean, Standard Deviation, Variance and t-test Value of Scores from Rating Scale of Romantically involved Emerging Adults

Domains	Mean		SD		Variance		t- test value
	RRM	RRF	RRM	RRF	RRM	RRF	
	Commitment	3.93	4.44	1.37	0.98	1.91	
Passion	4.63	4.67	0.53	0.61	0.29	0.38	0.157*
Trust	4.09	4.84	1.31	0.44	1.83	0.27	1.99
Acceptance	3.96	4.07	1.03	0.93	1.16	0.96	0.248*
Understanding	4.30	4.57	1.04	0.79	1.12	0.62	0.79
Satisfaction	4.20	4.49	1.11	0.70	1.30	0.58	0.77

Degrees of freedom =28

* p <0.05

In general, the t-values reveal no significant gender difference in the experiences of relationship quality in the domains of commitment, trust, understanding, satisfaction and levels of subjective happiness. However, domains related to passion and acceptance show significant differences at $p < .05$ levels. Pearson's coefficient for determining the association of each domain for relationship quality with happiness and also all domains combined with happiness were computed (see Table 15).

Table 15

Correlation between Happiness and Various Domains of Relationship Quality

n=30

Pearson's Coefficient	Boys	Girls
Commitment-Happiness	0.49*	0.29
Passion-Happiness	0.86*	0.61*
Trust-Happiness	0.72*	0.28
Acceptance-Happiness	0.65*	0.67*
Understanding-Happiness	0.29	0.48*
Satisfaction-Happiness	0.81*	0.56*
All Domains-Happiness	0.75*	0.61*

* $p > 0.005$

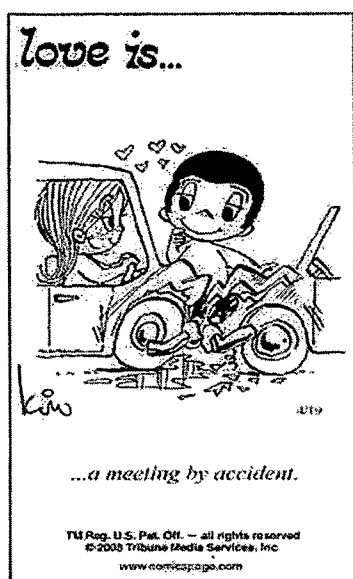
Predominantly, the correlation values show significant positive correlation between each domain and happiness, hence, complementing the findings from the qualitative information. It is surprising to see that there is a significant correlation between for trust and happiness for boys. Though passion is highly correlated with happiness for boys, for girls it shows the second strongest correlation after acceptance. Even though the t-test for the domain of commitment in the rating scale scores of romantically involved emerging adults showed no significant gender difference, $t(28) = 1.17, p < .05$, Pearson's correlation showed significant positive correlation between commitment and happiness. The two variables were strongly correlated for boys, $r(28) = .49, p < .005$, as compared to the girls, $r(28) = .29, p < .005$. For most part, except for the domains of acceptance and understanding, boys show a stronger correlation between relationship quality and happiness. Contrary to what is intuitively reported by many emerging adults, these results also indicate that the developmental impact of romantic relationships is significant for the boys as well.

The next segment summarizes the 'pairing process' through illustrative love tales

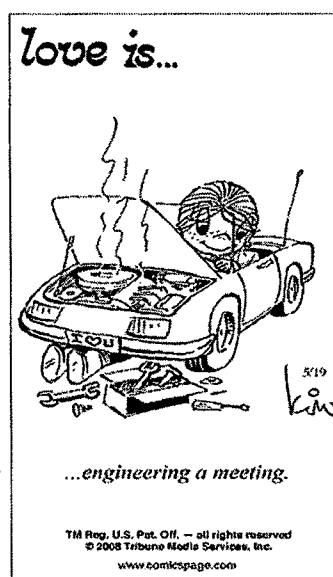
(Love is, n.d.) by Kim Casali.

Love Tales

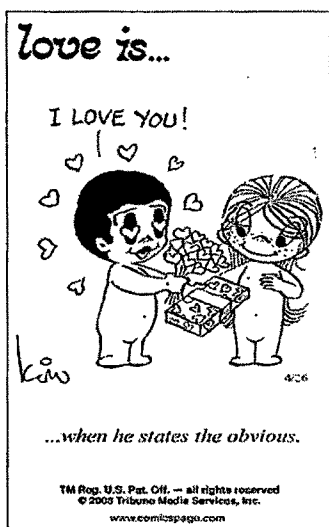
When a boy and girl meet



Or



Scene 1 ... here it begins ...



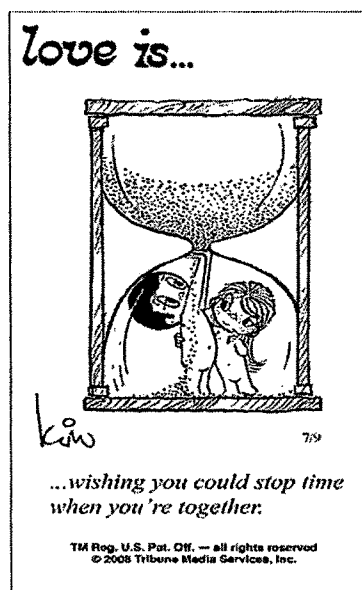
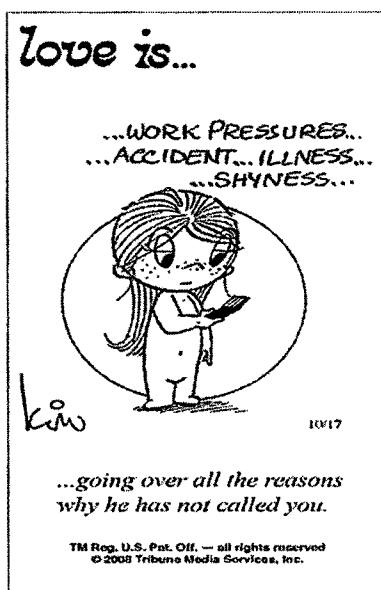
Or



Scene 2



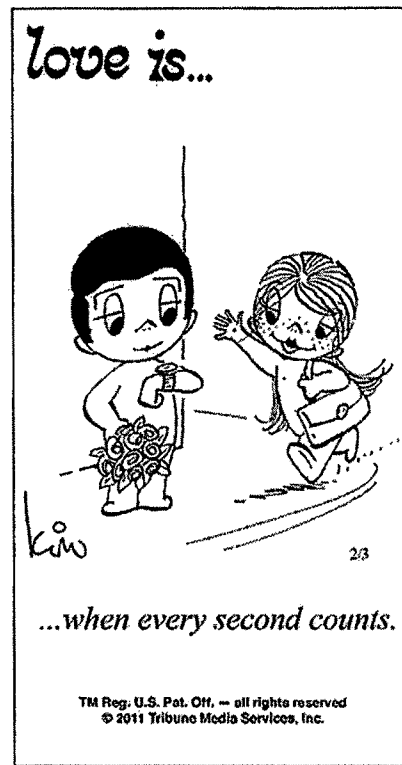
Scene 3



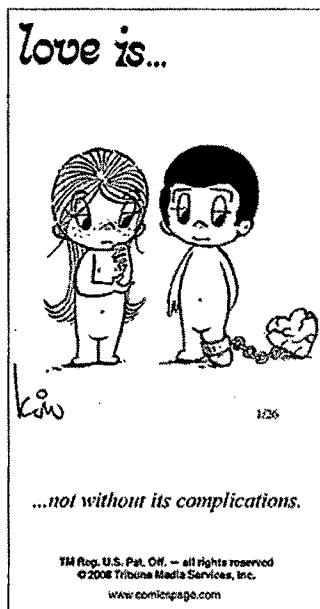
At the same time ...



and yet

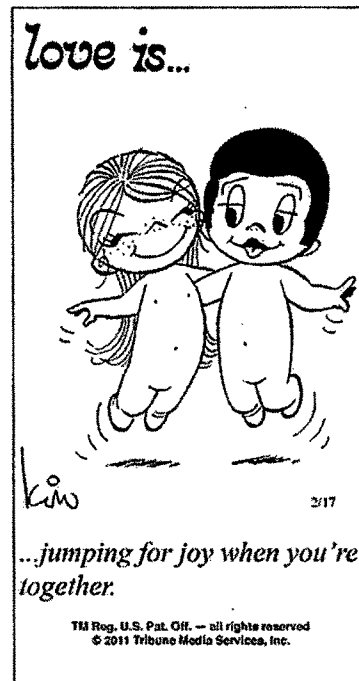


Therefore,



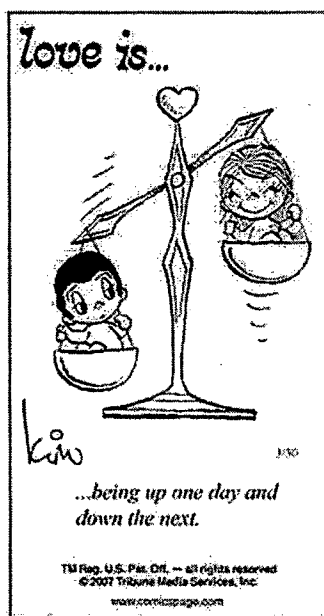
Scene 5

Nevertheless ...



Scene 6

Feeling mixed up ...



Scene 7 Trying to work through problems ...



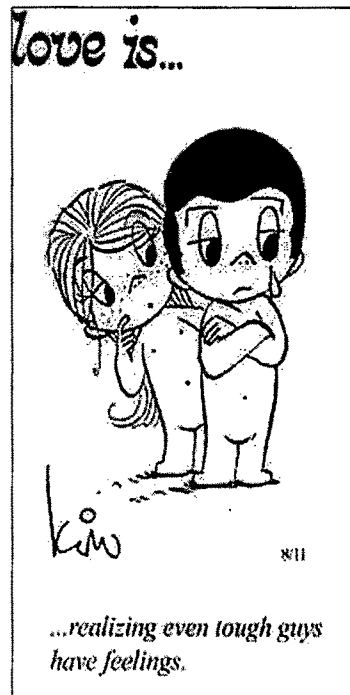
or

...

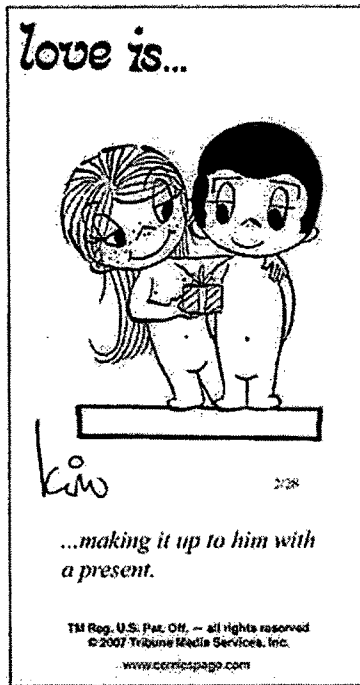
Or giving in to impulses and taking relationships for granted



and then reflecting

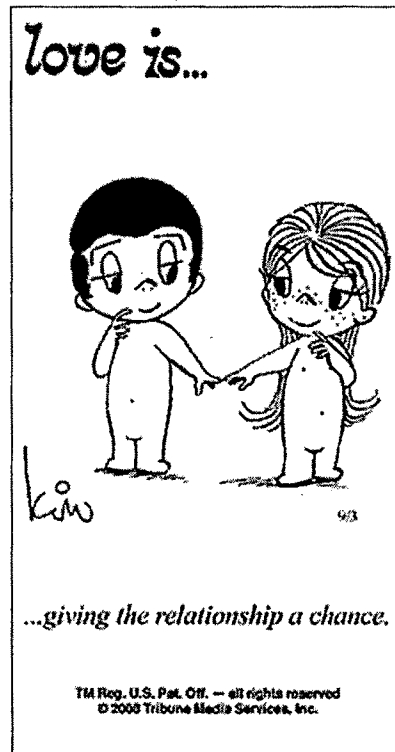
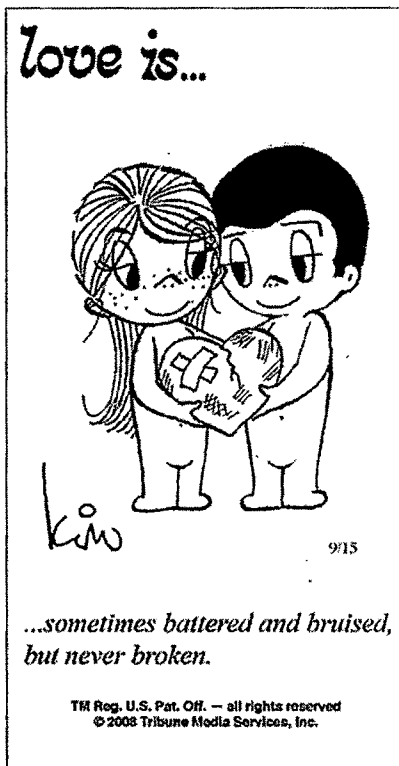
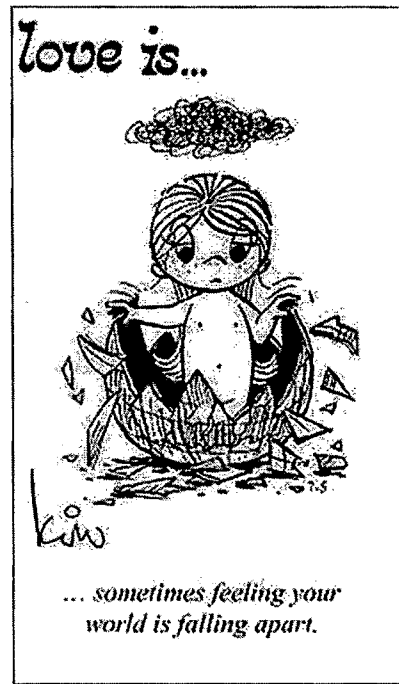
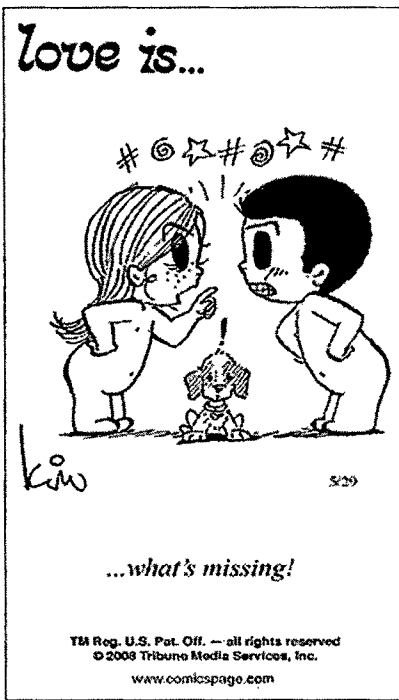


Scene 8



Scene 8 going through similar patterns again and again ...





Or trying to emerge out of it playfully and simply ...

love is...

3/18

...realizing you sometimes have to let go.

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Or

love is...

1/28

...taking everything into account.

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love is...

3/29

...the difference.

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love is...

10/23

...playful.

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love is...

8/26

...uncomplicated.

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And so it goes on ... & ... on

Summary of the Main Findings

Romantic memes and experiences.

Romantic love is conceptualized as a developmental phenomenon, hard-wired in the human species, and influenced by contextual factors such as beliefs and attitudes pertaining to romantic love and related phenomena like sexual intimacy, commitment, marriage, expectations in parent-child relationships, and gender roles to name a few. Ultimate bliss and beauty is associated with it and it is viewed as a phenomenon which goes beyond the self as well as the society. Also, the phenomenon is not bound to any particular age. Intimacy was defined in terms of complete transparency and involvement at all levels including physical, emotional and mental. However, the ideals did not match with their current relationship behaviors and experiences.

Possessiveness of partners has emerged as a major issue leading to conflicts. Contradictory as it may appear, the emerging adults wished for personal space, without being ready to offer the same to their partners. Memes that sounded like 'my partner is my priority' would change to 'I should be my partner's priority' over a period of time.

Love-marriage connection.

Love is considered to be important both for entering into marriage as well as for sustaining marriage. Likeable qualities in a person would lead to love automatically is the assumption here. At the same time experiments within the context of premarital romantic relationships were acceptable as a means to understand oneself. Severing a relationship, a romantic bond or a marriage should be a well-considered decision and, if possible, best avoided.

More than 50 % of emerging adults have expressed the desire to opt for either love marriage or marriage by self-selection. Yet, a substantial number of emerging adults still prefer arranged marriage, many a times fearing the intensity of romantic relationship or at times also 'knowing' that their parents would not accept a love marriage.

Developmental outcomes.

Contradicting the beliefs of middle adults and emerging adults (phase 1 respondents), romantically involved emerging adults showed preference for partners who were simple rather than boastful, aspired for finding a life-partner in the romantic partner and also reported positive influence on many aspects of their life including studies and career.

Mostly, emerging adults found these relationships more satisfying than dissatisfying and have reported that they cannot even think of breaking up. Data from both qualitative and quantitative methods revealed that romantic relationships have significant and lasting impact of an individual's development. The nature of impact depends on several factors such as the individuals involved, their romantic partners, the attitudes of the parents and community, the availability of support and personal space, and the cultural ideas about love and relationships. Both boys and girls reported a positive change in the quality of life, which included positive feelings of happiness and reducing negative states such as anger and sadness. They felt that the relationships helped them grow, they learnt about themselves and the changes that came about were natural and a part of the process within the relationships, rather than imposed or deliberate.

The impacts of these relationships were perceived to be more intense for girls, and the gender differences in parental and societal attitudes towards romantic relationships were attributed to this. However, the correlation values from the quantitative data reveal stronger correlations between relationship quality dimensions, especially for domains related to passion and satisfaction and happiness for boys. Girls showed markedly higher correlation only between the domain of understanding and happiness.

Society, parents and gender.

The societal norms are perceived to be stringent for girls compared to boys as girls are considered more vulnerable physically, emotionally as well as socially. Most often, the Indian society is perceived to have an ambivalent attitude towards individuals involved in a romantic relationship before marriage ranging from extreme negative to supportive and positive. Yet, opinions of middle adults and emerging adults are largely positive, considering the individuals engaged in such a bond as 'blessed', 'lucky'; they also feel that they must value and nurture such a significant and beautiful relationship.

Parents reported democratic modes of decision making regarding their emerging adults' choice of romantic (future spouse) partner. While, parents demonstrated a desire to understand their children, emerging adults too showed empathy in their responses towards parental concerns for them, even when they felt that their parents were 'over protective' at times.

The concerns voiced by the community regarding dangerous consequences of unprotected sex, turbulent break-ups and moving away from other essential

dimensions of life, were voiced for both boys and girls. Public display of affection (PDA) was also found to be disturbing for many middle adults as well as emerging adults.

It was identified that a society can facilitate the formation of healthy romantic relationships, if in that it allows the emerging adults to communicate freely about their relationships, to seek advice and support from parents, to have access to proper information and skills, and, to have personal space. Further, these factors were considered indispensable to create a facilitative environment for the emerging adults and providing such an environment was recognized as a need in the society.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the study.