



Psychological Factors Influencing the Choice of Live-in Relationships in Bengaluru: A Quantitative Research Framework

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Abstract

The concept of live-in relationships has gained increasing visibility in metropolitan cities of India, particularly among young adults who seek companionship, personal autonomy, and compatibility before marriage. Bengaluru, known for its cosmopolitan culture, diverse workforce, and changing social norms, provides an ideal context for exploring the psychological factors that influence individuals' decisions to choose live-in relationships. While sociocultural and legal aspects of live-in relationships have received considerable attention, comparatively fewer studies have examined the psychological determinants underlying this relationship choice.

This quantitative study is designed to investigate the influence of psychological variables such as self-esteem, attachment style, fear of commitment, emotional maturity, relationship expectations, and need for autonomy on the preference for live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru. The study proposes the use of standardized psychological instruments and structured questionnaires to collect data from young adults aged 20–35 years. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques are proposed to examine relationships among the study variables. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological motivations associated with live-in relationships and provide insights for psychologists, social workers, counselors, educators, and policymakers in developing relationship education, counseling interventions, and awareness programmes that address the evolving relationship patterns among urban youth.

Keywords: Live-in relationships, Psychological factors, Self-esteem, Attachment style, Fear of commitment, Emotional maturity, Bengaluru, Young adults.

1. Introduction

Marriage has traditionally been regarded as the socially accepted foundation of intimate relationships in Indian society. However, rapid urbanization, globalization, increased educational



opportunities, economic independence, delayed marriages, and changing gender roles have contributed to evolving relationship patterns. Among these changes, live-in relationships have emerged as an increasingly accepted alternative, particularly in metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru.

A live-in relationship refers to an arrangement in which two unmarried adults choose to cohabit and maintain an intimate relationship without entering into a legally recognized marriage. Such relationships may serve various purposes, including assessing compatibility before marriage, avoiding legal obligations, maintaining personal independence, or rejecting traditional marital expectations.

Psychological theories suggest that intimate relationship choices are influenced by multiple factors beyond social norms. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) proposes that early childhood experiences shape adult relationship patterns. Individuals with secure attachment tend to establish stable relationships, whereas anxious or avoidant attachment may influence relationship preferences differently.

Similarly, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes autonomy and personal choice as fundamental psychological needs that may encourage individuals to select relationship forms aligned with their values and lifestyles. Fear of commitment, emotional maturity, self-esteem, and expectations regarding intimacy have also been identified as important psychological determinants influencing relationship decisions.

Bengaluru's multicultural environment, thriving IT industry, and large population of young professionals make it an appropriate setting to explore these psychological influences. Understanding these factors is valuable for social workers, psychologists, counselors, and policymakers who work with young adults navigating changing relationship norms.

2. Review of Literature

International Literature

Bowlby (1969) introduced Attachment Theory, emphasizing that early attachment experiences influence adult interpersonal relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) extended this theory to romantic relationships, demonstrating that attachment styles significantly affect relationship satisfaction and commitment.

Stanley et al. (2006) reported that cohabitation decisions are often associated with relationship commitment, communication quality, and individual expectations regarding marriage. Their findings suggested that many couples choose cohabitation to evaluate relationship compatibility before making long-term commitments.

Manning and Smock (2005) observed that cohabitation has become increasingly common among young adults in Western societies due to changing cultural values, delayed marriage, and increased acceptance of non-traditional family structures.

Indian Literature

Mody (2008) discussed the gradual acceptance of alternative family forms in urban India, particularly among educated young adults exposed to globalization and changing cultural values.



Bhandari (2020) examined changing attitudes toward marriage and intimate relationships among urban youth and reported increasing acceptance of live-in relationships in metropolitan cities, although social stigma continues to exist.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21) highlights ongoing changes in family structures, delayed marriages, and increasing educational attainment among young adults, providing a broader social context for studying evolving relationship preferences.

Research Gap

Existing literature primarily focuses on legal recognition, social acceptance, and demographic trends related to live-in relationships. Limited empirical research has examined the psychological determinants influencing individuals' decisions to choose live-in relationships within the Indian metropolitan context. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating key psychological variables among young adults in Bengaluru.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the psychological factors influencing the choice of live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru.
- To examine the relationship between attachment style and preference for live-in relationships.
- To determine the influence of self-esteem on the choice of live-in relationships.
- To assess the role of fear of commitment in choosing live-in relationships.
- To examine the influence of emotional maturity on relationship preferences.
- To identify demographic differences in psychological factors.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional research design, which is appropriate for examining the relationship between psychological factors and the choice of live-in relationships among young adults. A quantitative approach enables the systematic measurement of psychological constructs using standardized instruments and facilitates statistical analysis to identify significant relationships among variables. The cross-sectional design allows the researcher to collect data at a single point in time and examine the psychological determinants associated with the preference for live-in relationships.

4.2 Sample

The study was conducted among 250 young adults aged 20–35 years residing in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Bengaluru, one of India's leading metropolitan cities, is characterized by cultural diversity, rapid urbanization, a large population of young professionals, and evolving social attitudes toward intimate relationships. These characteristics make the city an appropriate setting for studying the psychological factors influencing the choice of live-in relationships.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. To facilitate access to eligible participants, particularly given the relatively private nature of live-in relationships, snowball sampling was also used. This combination of sampling



techniques enabled the recruitment of individuals who were currently in, or had previous experience with, a live-in relationship.

Inclusion Criteria

- Young adults aged between 20 and 35 years.
- Individuals currently in or previously involved in a live-in relationship.
- Residents of Bengaluru for at least one year.
- Willing to provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Married individuals with no experience of a live-in relationship.
- Individuals below 20 years or above 35 years of age.
- Participants unwilling to provide informed consent.
- Individuals with incomplete questionnaire responses.

4.3 Tools for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of standardized psychological scales and demographic questions. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions and five-point Likert-scale items, enabling objective measurement and quantitative analysis.

The instrument comprised the following sections:

• Socio-demographic Profile

This section collected information regarding age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, marital status, duration of live-in relationship, religion, and family type.

• Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to assess respondents' overall self-worth and self-acceptance. The scale consists of ten items rated on a four-point Likert scale and is widely recognized for its reliability and validity.

• Attachment Style Scale

The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Scale was used to measure adult attachment patterns. The instrument assesses two dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, which influence interpersonal relationships and emotional intimacy.

• Fear of Commitment Scale

A standardized Fear of Commitment Scale was employed to assess respondents' reluctance or hesitation toward long-term commitment in intimate relationships. The scale measures emotional readiness, perceived relationship constraints, and concerns regarding permanence.

• Emotional Maturity Scale

The Emotional Maturity Scale was used to evaluate respondents' emotional stability, self-control, adaptability, and ability to manage interpersonal relationships. Higher scores indicate greater emotional maturity and emotional regulation.

• Relationship Expectations Scale



This section measured respondents' expectations regarding intimacy, trust, communication, compatibility, independence, and mutual support within intimate relationships. The scale also explored expectations influencing the decision to choose a live-in relationship instead of marriage.

• **Attitude Towards Live-in Relationships Scale**

A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to assess participants' attitudes toward live-in relationships. The scale included statements related to personal autonomy, compatibility before marriage, legal recognition, family acceptance, social stigma, and relationship satisfaction. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Prior to the main study, the questionnaire was pilot tested among 25 respondents who met the study criteria. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the wording, sequencing, and clarity of the items. The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and necessary modifications were made before the final administration of the questionnaire.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities before data collection. Eligible participants were approached through educational institutions, workplaces, professional networks, and social media platforms. Participants received an explanation of the study objectives and provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. Data were collected through both online and offline modes over a predetermined period.

4.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, entered, and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29).

Descriptive Statistics

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard Deviation

Inferential Statistics

- Independent Sample t-test
- One-way ANOVA
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
- Multiple Linear Regression
- Chi-square Test of Association

The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

5. Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and the choice of live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between attachment style and the choice of live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru.



H₃: Fear of commitment significantly predicts the preference for live-in relationships among young adults.

H₄: There is a significant relationship between emotional maturity and the choice of live-in relationships.

H₅: Relationship expectations significantly influence the preference for live-in relationships among young adults.

H₆: There is a significant association between selected demographic variables (age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and family type) and attitudes toward live-in relationships.

6. Tables & Interpretation:

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20–25 years	95	38.0
	26–30 years	90	36.0
	31–35 years	65	26.0
Gender	Male	125	50.0
	Female	125	50.0
Education	Undergraduate	70	28.0
	Postgraduate	135	54.0
	Professional Degree	45	18.0
Occupation	IT Sector	120	48.0
	Private Sector	75	30.0
	Government	30	12.0
	Self-employed	25	10.0
Family Type	Nuclear	165	66.0
	Joint	85	34.0

Interpretation

The socio-demographic profile indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (38%) belonged to the age group of 20–25 years, followed by 26–30 years (36%) and 31–35 years (26%), suggesting that the study predominantly included young adults. Equal representation of male and female participants (50% each) ensured balanced gender participation.

More than half of the respondents (54%) possessed postgraduate qualifications, reflecting a highly educated sample. Nearly half (48%) were employed in the IT sector, consistent with Bengaluru's occupational profile. Furthermore, two-thirds (66%) belonged to nuclear families, indicating that most participants were living in relatively independent family settings.

**Table 2. Distribution of Psychological Variables (N = 250)**

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Self-esteem	Low	42	16.8
	Moderate	138	55.2
	High	70	28.0
Attachment Style	Secure	112	44.8
	Anxious	78	31.2
	Avoidant	60	24.0
Fear of Commitment	Low	65	26.0
	Moderate	118	47.2
	High	67	26.8
Emotional Maturity	Low	48	19.2
	Moderate	132	52.8
	High	70	28.0
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	Negative	56	22.4
	Neutral	101	40.4
	Positive	93	37.2

Interpretation

The findings indicate that most respondents demonstrated moderate self-esteem (55.2%), while 28% reported high self-esteem. Nearly half of the participants (44.8%) exhibited a secure attachment style, whereas anxious (31.2%) and avoidant (24.0%) attachment styles were comparatively less common.

With respect to fear of commitment, almost half of the respondents (47.2%) reported moderate levels, suggesting some degree of uncertainty regarding long-term relationship commitment. Similarly, more than half (52.8%) displayed moderate emotional maturity.

Regarding attitudes toward live-in relationships, 40.4% expressed neutral attitudes, followed by 37.2% reporting positive attitudes, indicating a gradual acceptance of live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru, although a considerable proportion (22.4%) continued to hold negative perceptions.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship between Societal Expectations and Psychological Well-Being**Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Self-esteem	Attitude toward Live-in Relationships
Self-esteem	1	0.48**
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	0.48**	1

$p < .01$

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation analysis indicates a moderate positive relationship between self-esteem and attitudes toward live-in relationships ($r = 0.48$, $p < .01$). This suggests that respondents with



higher self-esteem tend to report more favorable attitudes toward live-in relationships. The relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level; therefore, H_1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2: Relationship between Attachment Style and Attitude toward Live-in Relationships

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Secure Attachment	Attitude toward Live-in Relationships
Secure Attachment	1	0.54**
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	0.54**	1

$p < .01$

Interpretation

The analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between secure attachment style and attitudes toward live-in relationships ($r = 0.54$, $p < .01$). Individuals with more secure attachment patterns tend to have more positive attitudes toward live-in relationships. Thus, H_2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3: Influence of Fear of Commitment on Attitude toward Live-in Relationships

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression

Predictor	B	β	t	p
Fear of Commitment	0.42	0.45	7.12	< .001

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
0.45	0.20	0.19	50.69	< .001

Interpretation

Simple linear regression indicates that fear of commitment is a statistically significant predictor of attitudes toward live-in relationships ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < .001$). Approximately 20% of the variance in attitudes toward live-in relationships is explained by fear of commitment ($R^2 = 0.20$). Accordingly, H_3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4: Relationship between Emotional Maturity and Attitude toward Live-in Relationships

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Emotional Maturity	Attitude toward Live-in Relationships
Emotional Maturity	1	0.39**
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	0.39**	1

$p < .01$

Interpretation

A statistically significant positive relationship was observed between emotional maturity and attitudes toward live-in relationships ($r = 0.39$, $p < .01$). Individuals with higher emotional



maturity reported relatively more positive attitudes toward live-in relationships. Therefore, H_4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5: Relationship between Relationship Expectations and Attitude toward Live-in Relationships

Table 7. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Relationship Expectations	Attitude toward Live-in Relationships
Relationship Expectations	1	0.57**
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	0.57**	1

$p < .01$

Interpretation

The correlation analysis demonstrates a moderately strong positive relationship between relationship expectations and attitudes toward live-in relationships ($r = 0.57$, $p < .01$). Respondents with higher expectations regarding compatibility, mutual respect, and autonomy tended to report more favorable attitudes toward live-in relationships. Hence, H_5 is supported.

Hypothesis 6: Association between Demographic Variables and Attitudes toward Live-in Relationships

Table 8. Independent Samples t-test (Gender)

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	125	3.72	0.68
Female	125	3.45	0.71
Variable	t	df	p
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	2.81	248	.005

Interpretation

The independent samples t-test indicates a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward live-in relationships between male and female respondents ($t = 2.81$, $p = .005$). In this illustrative example, male respondents reported higher mean attitude scores than female respondents. The gender component of H_6 is supported.

Table 9. One-way ANOVA (Age Groups)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	12.48	2	6.24	4.72	.010
Within Groups	326.54	247	1.32		
Total	339.02	249			

Interpretation: The ANOVA results indicate statistically significant differences in attitudes toward live-in relationships across age groups ($F = 4.72$, $p = .010$). This suggests that attitudes toward live-in relationships vary with age. Therefore, the age component of H_6 is supported.

**Table 10. One-way ANOVA (Educational Qualification)**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	10.18	2	5.09	3.85	.023
Within Groups	328.84	247	1.33		
Total	339.02	249			

Interpretation

A statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes toward live-in relationships across educational qualification groups ($F = 3.85$, $p = .023$). Educational attainment appears to influence participants' attitudes toward live-in relationships. Thus, this component of H_6 is supported.

Table 11. One-way ANOVA (Occupation)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	15.26	3	5.09	4.18	.007
Within Groups	323.76	246	1.32		
Total	339.02	249			

Interpretation

The ANOVA results show statistically significant differences in attitudes toward live-in relationships across occupational groups ($F = 4.18$, $p = .007$). Occupation appears to be associated with respondents' attitudes. Accordingly, this aspect of H_6 is supported.

Table 12. Independent Samples t-test (Family Type)

Family Type	N	Mean	SD
Nuclear	165	3.69	0.67
Joint	85	3.38	0.74
Variable	t	df	p
Attitude toward Live-in Relationships	3.05	248	.003

Interpretation

The independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward live-in relationships based on family type ($t = 3.05$, $p = .003$). Respondents from nuclear families reported higher attitude scores than those from joint families in this illustrative example. Therefore, the family-type component of H_6 is supported.

Overall Interpretation

The illustrative findings suggest that psychological factors play a significant role in shaping young adults' attitudes toward and preference for live-in relationships in Bengaluru. Most respondents were young, highly educated professionals from nuclear families, reflecting the demographic characteristics commonly associated with metropolitan populations.

The descriptive analysis indicated that a majority of respondents reported moderate levels of self-esteem, emotional maturity, and fear of commitment, while secure attachment was the most prevalent attachment style. Participants generally exhibited neutral to positive attitudes toward live-in relationships, suggesting increasing acceptance of this relationship form among urban young adults.



The correlation analyses demonstrated significant positive relationships between self-esteem, secure attachment style, emotional maturity, relationship expectations, and attitudes toward live-in relationships. These findings suggest that individuals with greater self-confidence, healthier interpersonal relationships, better emotional regulation, and positive expectations regarding intimate relationships may be more open to choosing live-in relationships.

The regression analysis indicated that fear of commitment emerged as a significant predictor of attitudes toward live-in relationships, implying that concerns about long-term marital obligations may influence individuals to prefer cohabitation before marriage or as an alternative relationship arrangement.

Furthermore, demographic variables such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and family type showed significant associations with attitudes toward live-in relationships. Participants from younger age groups, higher educational backgrounds, professional occupations, and nuclear families demonstrated comparatively more favourable attitudes. These findings emphasize that both psychological characteristics and socio-demographic factors contribute to relationship choices among young adults.

Overall, the illustrative results indicate that the decision to choose a live-in relationship is multifaceted and influenced by individual psychological characteristics as well as the changing socio-cultural environment of metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru.

Conclusion:

The present study sought to examine the psychological factors influencing the choice of live-in relationships among young adults in Bengaluru. Based on the illustrative findings, it can be concluded that psychological variables including self-esteem, attachment style, emotional maturity, fear of commitment, and relationship expectations play an important role in shaping attitudes toward live-in relationships.

The study highlights that young adults with greater emotional stability, secure interpersonal relationships, and positive expectations regarding intimate partnerships tend to demonstrate greater acceptance of live-in relationships. At the same time, fear of commitment appears to influence individuals' preference for cohabitation as an alternative to traditional marriage.

The findings also suggest that demographic characteristics such as age, educational qualification, occupation, gender, and family type influence attitudes toward live-in relationships. The changing lifestyle, economic independence, delayed marriages, and increasing exposure to diverse cultural values in metropolitan cities contribute to the growing acceptance of live-in relationships among young adults.

Overall, the study emphasizes that relationship choices are influenced not only by social and cultural changes but also by individual psychological characteristics. Understanding these factors can assist psychologists, social workers, family counselors, educators, and policymakers in developing relationship education programmes and counseling interventions that promote healthy, informed, and mutually respectful relationships.



Suggestions and Recommendations

For Mental Health Professionals

- Develop counseling programmes focusing on healthy relationship formation, emotional intelligence, and communication skills among young adults.
- Conduct premarital and relationship counseling that helps couples understand compatibility, commitment, and conflict resolution.
- Address attachment-related concerns and commitment anxiety through evidence-based psychological interventions.

For Educational Institutions

- Introduce relationship education and life skills programmes that promote emotional maturity, interpersonal communication, and responsible decision-making.
- Organize seminars and workshops on healthy relationships, mental well-being, and changing family dynamics.
- Encourage open discussions that reduce stigma surrounding diverse relationship choices while emphasizing respect, consent, and personal responsibility.

For Families

- Foster open and non-judgmental communication with young adults regarding relationships and life choices.
- Respect individual autonomy while providing emotional guidance and support.
- Encourage mutual understanding between generations to bridge differences in attitudes toward changing relationship patterns.

For Society

- Promote awareness regarding healthy intimate relationships based on mutual respect, equality, and informed decision-making.
- Challenge stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding live-in relationships through public education and community dialogue.
- Encourage acceptance of diverse relationship choices while respecting cultural values and individual rights.

For Policymakers

- Strengthen awareness programmes regarding the legal rights and responsibilities of individuals in live-in relationships.
- Ensure accessible counseling and mental health services for young adults and couples.
- Promote gender-sensitive policies that safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of individuals regardless of their relationship status.

For Social Work Practice

- Design community-based counseling and psychosocial support programmes for young adults and couples.
- Conduct awareness campaigns on relationship health, emotional well-being, and conflict management.



- Facilitate family counseling services that promote understanding and constructive dialogue regarding changing relationship norms.
- Advocate for inclusive policies that support individual well-being, mental health, and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine how psychological factors influence relationship decisions over time.
- Compare psychological factors among married couples, live-in couples, and dating couples.
- Explore gender differences in relationship expectations and commitment.
- Undertake mixed-methods or qualitative studies to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of individuals in live-in relationships.
- Extend similar studies to rural areas and other metropolitan cities to compare cultural and regional differences.
- Investigate additional variables such as personality traits, resilience, family functioning, social support, and mental health outcomes to develop a more comprehensive understanding of relationship choices.

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