Beyond Tradition: A study of relationship evolution in Millennials and Gen Z

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Love Relationship, Millennials, Gen Z and Non-traditional Relationship.	This paper examines the generational gaps that are observed in the pair bonding patterns of Gen Z and Millennials and how two of these younger generations are getting ahead of their parental generation in redefining their romantic and intimate relationships. As the socio-cultural environment has transformed radically over the last few decades, it has weakened the assumptions that existed about traditional interpersonal interactions, and the two generations have more inclination towards technological mediated fluid relationships. To collect the insights from both generations, a survey was conducted in Jaipur by using a quantitative research design. The results that we have obtained indicate that technology, shifting career priorities and changes in social behaviour have led these generations to build a more flexible lifestyle that transcends the traditional notions of relationships. From the data of our survey, we concluded that Millennials mostly prefer traditional relationships as compared to Generation Z, who are more open to non-traditional relationships like open relationships.

1. Introduction and Background

The way people establish and sustain social and intimate relationships has changed significantly during the last few decades. It is evident that millennials have a very limited concept of relationships while discussing their ideas and viewpoints. Ethics played an important role in the lives of people. They were concerned about the opinions of the society and 'what will they say?'(log kya kahenge)This is one of the major reasons why the majority of millennials chose to make peace with their significant other half, and continued their journey together. Divorce rates were low, and people were portrayed as happy and united in joint families. They had some rigid standard boundations, which allowed the couples to maintain the required dignity in relationships. Infidelity was perceived more oftenly as 'a sin', rather than an act.

In contrast to this, as Generation Z are more technologically driven, they have a more casual and flexible approach towards relationships. (Dabija & Lung, 2019) They tend to try out various relationship experiments with different partner dynamics, so as to complement their vibe, and are not as concerned about societal judgments as their predecessors were. (Dwidienawati et al., 2021). Infatuation is often misinterpreted as love, and there is not much emotional understanding among individuals, which results in fragile relationships. Nowadays, young people prefer to pick their compatible partners on their own, and the idea of an arranged marriage has all but disappeared. Once pair bonding was regarded as a holy union and god's purpose, but today it has become a transient relationship, which can have ended at any point of time (Seemiller & Clayton, 2019) (McKnight, 2018). Social media has somewhat negatively influenced the mind-set and perspective of this generation and has set some standards of what a perfect companion should be like

Although, "living in" before marriage was previously viewed as a morally ill practice, but now it is a widely accepted norm (Darak et al., 2022). Individuals are more vocal about their thoughts and beliefs; thus the concept of non-traditional relationships is coming to the fore. Often personal space is prioritised over mutual discussions, and compromises are rarely made, which ultimately leads to misunderstandings and weakened bonding. They are fascinated with the ideas of hook-up culture, casual or no strings attached relationships, meaning no risk of responsibility. While on the brighter side, they also prioritise financial independence, building a career and owning a home before committing to marriage (Millennials vs. Gen Z Relationships: How Each Falls in Love, 2020). Individuals representing LGBTQs are more accepted nowadays, as they were back then. The recognition of gender fluidity and non-binary identities has grown since then. These sexual identities have existed in our society for decades, but people did not admit at that time, and the younger generation is now more outspoken

about their feelings.

We have observed a significant change in the mind-set of people regarding culture throughout the last several decades, by the advent of the world wide web and beyond. Millennials (born roughly between 1981–1996) and Generation Z (born around 1997–2012) have lived in two different worlds, so to speak, which has shaped how they see modern relationships, intimacy and commitment. Polyamory, open relationships and other non-traditional practices are widely accepted among the youth, which has made their pair bonding process a very interesting subject to look into for many psychologists and relationship counsellors. This study contrasts millennials with Gen Z to answer how and why they are different in their pair bonding behaviour.

A study reveals that millennial and Gen Z respondents are increasingly accepting non-traditional partnerships, with many couples planning to throw a celebration to mark their partnership without signing the marriage certificate. However, the majority of Gen Z and millennials still prioritise finding a lifelong partner, and for them personality is the most important factor. A recent study has found that young people are having less sex as compared to their parental generation in past decades, because these people are influenced by factors such as self-care and mental well-being. Physical attractiveness is not as important as intelligence and personality, which play a major role in initial meeting. In 2023, there was an emphasis that getting married and staying married was harmonious, as breaking up is much stressful. Couples are also aware of what to look for in a partner, such as understanding capability, communication, and listening skills.

(Giarla, 2019) demonstrates the impact of technological advancement on gen z's interpersonal relationships and their adeptness in navigating digital platforms as compared to older generation, However, this digital proficiency comes at a cost; it has been observed that Generation Z lacks many traditional social skills, which has led to increased social anxieties and feelings of isolation among individuals. Their reliability on social media for emotional expression has resulted in a paradox where only virtual connections seem to flourish while in-person interactions are minimised. This suggests a critical shift in how relationships are formed and maintained.

1.1. Background and Rationale of the Study

Millennials have been the first generation to experience the emergence of the digital culture of social media and online dating. While Gen Z had smartphones in their hands from the moment they developed opposable thumbs, media and alternative kinds of relationships, and the normalisation of non-monogamy. The behavioural dissonance from an avalanche of mismatched media exposure; financial instability is causing a distrust around instability. These unavoidable plagues of the millennial age — fear of being trapped in a marriage, the need for more commitment togetherness — are giving birth to the unconventional sex types which shatter the very definition of marriage. To Appreciate these patterns, it is very useful to emphasise exactly how generational variations in digital media together with altering worth's can change partnership selections.

1.2. Hypothesis

• Hypothesis 1

Null hypothesis: Millennials and Generation Z both prefer long-term, traditional relationships.

Alternative Hypothesis: Millennials prefer long-term, traditional relationships more than Generation Z, who are more open to non-traditional relationships like open relationships.

• Hypothesis 2:

Null hypothesis: Generation Z is neutral on personal independence and self-growth in relationships.

Alternative Hypothesis: Generation Z gives importance to personal independence and self-growth in relationships.

• Hypothesis 3:

Null Hypothesis: Generation Z relationships are not influenced by social media trends more than Millennials' relationships.

Alternative hypothesis: Generation Z relationships are influenced by social media trends more than Millennials' relationships.

1.3. Significance of the Study

To understand the generational shifts in pair bonding and what are its implications on multiple fields such as sociology, psychology and other media studies, we took insights from this research, which informs us that practices such as family counselling and relationship education programs can improve family structures. Furthermore, it also offers us some important data regarding the need to understand how emerging relationship norms can impact social-cohesion, individual well-being and demographic patterns, for social scientists and policy makers. This study also acts as a future reference for any research regarding the implications of evolving relationship trends.

2. Literature Review

The opposing and contrasting opinions of millennials and gen z on commitments and relationships show us a reflection of larger cultural and socio-economic changes. Apart from comparing the conventional and modern relationship types, this literature study looks at the idea of pair bonding and all the components that affect the relationship of these two generations.

2.1. Definition and Evolution of Pair Bonding

The enduring social and emotional connection that forms between two people is called pair bonding, and it acts as a foundation for long term committed partnerships, marriage and families. According to Fisher (1992), the process of traditional pair bonding was generally linked to heterosexual marriage and monogamy, and had strong social and religious support for long-term partnerships. Nonetheless, this concept has changed with societal shifts, and we can observe that there is an increased tolerance for same-sex couples, cohabitation without marriage, and various other non-monogamous relationship types. Some research indicates that as younger generations have become more tolerant of different types of relationships, their perspective of pair bonding have changed with time, and it includes social and emotional closeness without necessarily emphasising permanency or exclusivity (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005; Diamond, 2013)

The evolution of pair bonding is closely related to changes in gender roles and socio-economic situations. With gender equality and increased female employment, there has been an impact on the formation and maintenance of relationships (Risman & Schwartz, 2002). Personal accomplishments and emotional support are often prioritised by people in today's society. Millennials and Gen Z perceive relationships as flexible and dynamic rather than static and unchangeable (Regan, 2003).

2.2. Traditional vs. Non-Traditional Relationships

According to Cherlin (2004), traditional relationships were usually characterised by monogamous, legally or religiously approved unions, like marriage, and would focus on shared economic duties, child rearing, and long-term commitment. On the other hand, cohabitation, polyamory and the trend of open relationships among the young generation are all included in the broader category of non-traditional relationships (Moors, 2017). Non-traditional relationships have become more popular among Millennials and Generation Z, mainly because of cultural trends moving towards individualism and more freedom for oneself (Twenge, 2017).

We know that Digital media allows people to interact with each other, who have similar relationship goals, and it also contributes to the increasing acceptability of modern relationships (Bauman, 2003). The availability of various forms of relationships has more or less normalised the non-traditional unions, and has lowered the prejudice and instead empowered people to seek compatible relationships (Conley et al., 2013).

2.3. Factors Influencing Relationship Dynamics in Millennials and Generation Z

The behaviours and preferences of gen z and millennials are influenced by a number of issues such as social media, financial pressure and changing perspectives on marriage and family. Both of these generations have been affected by financial instability at some point of their lives, which resulted in delayed marriages and homeownership that are often considered as a milestone in one's life (Carroll, 2007). Many youngsters prioritise job and personal growth over long-term commitment because of their financial uncertainty (Arnett, 2004).

Technology and digital media have also played an important role, because today's online dating platforms have made it much easier to find possible potential partners. Both of these generations can also try out and explore other types of relationships that were previously less accessible or socially acceptable (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). No wonder modern relationships are highly influenced by social media, which creates a pressure as to how an

ideal relationship should look like and other comparisons to depict particular standards (Toma and Choi, 2021)

Finally, the cultural perspectives were changing with time, to prioritise one's emotional well-being over what society expects. Millennials and Generation Z gave much more importance to compatibility and self-expression in relationships, as they were frequently questioning the conventional ideas of responsibility or the question of morality in relationships (Schwartz, 2014; Moors et al., 2015).

3. Methodology

This section gives an overview of the research design, data collection methods, and sampling strategy that were used to understand the pair bonding preferences and relationship dynamics of Millennials and Generation Z participants in Jaipur.

3.1. Research Design and Approach

The study has measured the millennial and gen z participants' opinions on non-traditional relationships, by using a quantitative research design in Jaipur. The main purpose of this study is to describe the generational variations that have been observed in the last few decades in people's relationships and how their tastes differ, by using a descriptive and comparative approach. In order to collect objective data that fits best for statistical analysis, a survey was created to analyse the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are related with pair bonding between different age groups.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected with the help of an organised survey of 245 respondents in Jaipur. The questionnaire included a variety of questions that captured the participants' opinions regarding traditional and non-traditional relationships, including demographic information. This format was chosen because it is simple and easy to access and allowed the participants to respond straightforwardly, which helped us to improve the data consistency. The identities of all contestants was kept anonymous to encourage their honesty and to minimise any prejudice and biases.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

To ensure a good amount of participation from millennials and gen z in Jaipur, a targeted sample strategy was used. Of the 245 respondents, 215 were gen z and remaining 30 were millennials. This sample distribution shows the age composition and provides enough data to perform comparative analysis for these age group people.

4. Result and Findings

By Applying the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and Mann-Whitney Test for the categorical data we get the following Results:

Parameters	P value	Conclusion
Comparison between Millennials and Generation Z for prefer long-term, traditional relationships.	0.0004	Hypothesis Rejected
Generation Z is neutral on personal independence and self-growth in relationships.	0.00	Hypothesis Rejected
Generation Z relationships are not influenced by social media trends more than Millennials' relationships.	0.00 (With the opinion of GZ) 0.00 ((With the opinion of Millennials)	Hypothesis Rejected
Impact of social media on relationships	0.00 (With the opinion of GZ) 0.025 ((With the opinion of Millennials)	Hypothesis Rejected
Influence of technology on maintaining relationships	0.00 (With the opinion of GZ) 0.119 ((With the opinion of Millennials)	Hypothesis Rejected Hypothesis Accepted.

5. Conclusion

This study provides us with some important information regarding the ways that gen z and millennials differ in perceiving the relationships, be it traditional or modern, especially with regard to their personal freedom and the

effects of social media on their personal lives. By using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and Mann-Whitney Test, we analysed the generational attitudes of people with some of these conclusions-

Preference for long term commitments- This study's findings show us that millennials opt for long term relationships over gen z', which are more inclined towards casual or open relationships. As the p-value is less than 0.05 (0.0004), we reject the null hypothesis and come to the conclusion that there is a significant statistical difference between the relationship preferences between these two generations.

Focus on personal growth and freedom- The findings reveal that gen z give great importance to personal independence and self-growth in their relationships. The p-value for this parameter is 0.00, so we may reject the null hypothesis and draw the conclusion that GFen z prioritises self-growth, which indicates individual autonomy in romantic relationships.

Social media's impact on relationships- As Compared to Millennials, Generation Z are more vulnerable to social media trends which influence their relationships. Because the p-value for the opinions of both these generations was 0.00, the null hypothesis was rejected. This supports the other hypothesis that social media has a significant influence on the way Gen Z perceive relationships, and it may potentially contribute to their non-traditional and unorthodox relationship forms.

Is the relationship quality affected by social media? - Yes, with p-values of 0.00 and 0.025, respectively, our results show that social media has negative impacts on relationships for both Millennials and Generation Z. So we can say that excessive social media use might lead to relationship problems like insecurity, and pressure to fit into romantically idealised depictions.

Technology's impact on relationship maintenance- The p-value for Generation Z here was less than 0.05, which indicates that technology has a positive impact on their ability to maintain relationships. But it was seen that the impact of technology on Millennials' relationships was insignificant, with a p-value of 0. 119.This informs us that Millennials are not much dependent on digital technologies for relationship advice and maintenance, but Gen Z on the other hand, actively use technology to create and maintain their relationships.

From the data of our survey and other findings, we conclude that Millennials prefer long-term, traditional relationships as compared to Generation Z, who are more open to non-traditional relationships like open relationships, as they value (Seemiller & Clayton, 2019) independence, social consciousness, personalised experiences and self-growth more than financial rewards. It has been pretty much clear that their relationships are much more influenced by social media trends as compared to Millennials' relationships, but the negative impact of social media on both of these generations seems inevitable. It has also appeared that there is a positive effect of technology on maintaining relationships in Gen Z but the same cannot be said for Millennials.

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