

Comparing Relationship Quality and Perceived Partner Commitment among Monogamous and Polyamorous Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Commitment in Polyamorous Relationships or having several loving, sexual relationships concurrently without deception or betrayal, has had little scholarly attention. In the current study, polyamorous partnerships were compared for relationship quality and reported partner commitment. It was hypothesised that there was no discernible difference between polyamorous and monogamous couples in terms of relationship quality and perceived partner commitment. 29 participants in polyamorous relationships and 30 participants in monogamous partnerships made up the 59-person sample used for the study. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and The Investment Model Scale were the tools used to measure perceived partner commitment and relationship quality, respectively. The data was gathered and put through the proper statistical processes. The findings revealed a considerable difference between polyamorous and monogamous couples in terms of the quality of their relationships.

Keywords: *Polyamorous relationships, monogamous relationships, relationship quality, perceived partner commitment*

The practise of having several intimate, emotionally committed relationships which may or may not be sexual is known as polyamory. How interactions between partners in polyamorous setups may differ is still being studied in polyamory. However, non-hierarchical configurations do exist and can involve having several primary partners or having solely non-primary partners. Primary-secondary configurations have received the majority of attention in research analysing perceptions of polyamorous couples. We were taught that love is a wonderful emotion that keeps two people bonded and committed to each other through poems, songs, and movies. It is based on trust, understanding, and a blend of spiritual, emotional, and physical bonds. Different people, however, have different perspectives on love and the types of love they want, want to give, and want to receive. We live in a society where monogamy is a social construct that is usually transparent and unnoticed because of mononormativity (Leehee Rothschild, 2018). But what if this is not the case? What if there are other ways to love besides romantic love? Polyamory is a type of relationship in which people have multiple romantic partners at the same time with

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everyone's knowledge and consent. Polyamory has been around for centuries and is becoming more popular in modern society. The Indian society has always been conservative when it comes to monogamy and polyamory. The two are not seen as compatible with each other because they are entirely different approaches to love and relationships. Polyamory in India has always been frowned upon because it was believed that people who engage in this practice were not able to commit or maintain a relationship for long periods of time. It could be argued that monogamy is an evolutionary strategy to increase the probability of passing on genes and create a stable society (Schuiling G. A, 2003), a society built on social norms and religious beliefs, both of which influence perceptions and attitudes toward polyamorous relationships. The concept of compatibility and stability in relationships has evolved over time and is clearly subjective, as it means different things to different people. The general belief in society is that monogamous relationships are stable, meaningful, and have long-term attributes, whereas polyamorous relationships are frequently misinterpreted and associated with hookup culture and purely sexual intentions, rather than focusing on the core beliefs and values of a relationship. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of and compare relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among different romantic partners in monogamous and polygamous relationships.

Variables

The pleasant or bad feelings that people have regarding their relationships are referred to as relationship quality (Morry, Reich, & Keito, 2010). It is the assessment of a person's connection, which includes relationship awareness as well as relational foci of attention. It entails paying attention to one's connection or interaction patterns, comparisons, and contrasts between persons in a relationship, as well as the relationship as a whole. Internal representations and cognitive reflections regarding a certain relationship are also included (Acitelli, 2008). Relationships with good relationship quality are thought to foster well-being (Clark & Grote, 2003). Subjective feelings such as tenderness, intimacy, and nurturing are associated with high relationship quality, whereas conflict, aggravation, and hostility are associated with low relationship quality (Dush & Amato, 2005). According to Goleman (2006), caring and gratifying relationships are beneficial to our health and well-being, but stressful and contentious relationships are harmful to our health and well-being. Trust, security, and contentment are all factors in the quality of a relationship. It also entails comprehension, validation, and care (Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986), emotional expression (Feeney, 1995, 1999; Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001), and forgiveness (Feeney, 1995, 1999; Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001). (McCullough, 2000). As a result, relationship quality encompasses a wide variety of positive emotions and feelings that can have a significant impact on the relationship.

Perceived partner commitment refers to the perception of the individual's partner's commitment to the relationship. In the pursuit and maintenance of close relationships, individuals are motivated to solve dependency challenges, but in the course of doing so, they are also motivated to accomplish their commitment goals. Strategically, a person with a high level of commitment desirability is more likely to concentrate their efforts on potential partners who are similarly regarded to be committed (Murray et al., 2006). Indeed, the amount to which people sustain and implement their wants for committed relationships is influenced at least in part by their partners' assessments of their own goals (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Since a result, when seeking a committed relationship, a person should pay close attention to their partner's commitment (or a possible partner's desire for commitment), as this will assist establish whether their own desire for commitment will be realized. In the

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effort to acquire one's desired level of commitment, perceived partner commitment (or a possible partner's desire for commitment) might help to dispel worries about a partner's ability to give what is sought (Arriaga, Reed, Goodfriend, & Agnew, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

A persistent association between two people is defined as a "relationship." A stable pattern of interaction between at least two people characterizes a relationship. If two people have an impact on one other and are interdependent in the sense that one person's change affects the other and vice versa, they are said to be in a relationship. Relationships, according to the Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, are the essence of personality. Personality, according to the view, is a generally long-lasting pattern of recurring interpersonal experiences that characterizes a person's life. Significant psychosocial dangers to an individual's well-being, according to Sullivan's thesis, are intrinsically social in origin. Loneliness, isolation, and rejection are the most common threats. Interpersonal loss or failure to create intimate, supportive relationships adds to clinical symptomatology; as a result, Sullivan locates healthy or unhealthy psychological growth in one's interpersonal reactions. Relationships, according to Neyer and Lenhart (2006), create the social backdrop of personality development, and personality and relationships have a constant interplay, which may initiate or support personality change. Continuous reciprocal connections have significant long-term effects on health in the broadest sense, including wellbeing, life satisfaction, and lifespan (Neyer & Lenhart, 2006). This feature of relationships, as stated by the interpersonal theory of psychiatry (1953) and Neyer and Lenhart (2006), makes it interesting to investigate people's perceptions of their relationships, also known as "relationship quality." Relationship quality is a broad phrase that can refer to both objective and subjective aspects of a relationship.

A dedicated individual, according to Harold H. Kelley, one of the developers of the interdependence theory for organisations (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978), is someone who is "inclined to persist with it and see it through to the conclusion" (Kelley, 1983, p. 287). Other scholars characterised marriage commitment as a psychological attachment to a relationship (Adam & Jones, 1994; Lund, 1985) and an intention to maintain a relationship (Adam & Jones, 1994). (Rusbult & Martz, 1985). Love (Sternberg, 1986), fidelity (Fehr, 1988; Marston, Hecht, Manke, McDaniel, & Reeder, 1998), loyalty (Fehr), verbalization of connectedness (Marston et al.), satisfaction, trust, passion, intimacy, and relationship quality are all perceived as important independent components in relationship stability (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). Relationship receptivity theory is based on the idea that one's perception of personal timing affects one's relationship cognitions, conduct, and stability (Agnew, 2014; Agnew, Hadden, & Tan, 2019a, 2019b; Hadden, Agnew, & Tan, 2018). A person may be more or less responsive to relationship participation at any given time or over the course of their life. People have a sense of whether or not they desire to be in a close connection with another person at any particular time. These thoughts might be short-term (for example, "I really want to be close to someone tonight") or long-term (for example, "I want to be in a serious romantic relationship"). The subjective desire to be involved in a committed love relationship at a specific period is known as commitment desirability. Commitment desirability, according to this viewpoint, refers to a desire to enter into and maintain a committed love relationship. To yet, neither theoretical nor empirical research has focused on the topic of commitment desirability. Building on work looking at normative desires for partnerships is an excellent beginning point for understanding commitment desirability. Desiring romantic partners and, as a result, having sex and

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reproducing are adaptive for survival in evolutionary terms when compared to remaining single (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). As a result, there is now a distinction between long-term and short-term sexual mating, especially in terms of sociosexual orientation and propensity to participate in uncommitted sex (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Although they are linked, sociosexual orientation and commitment desirability are not the same thing. Someone who is uncomfortable with one-night stands (a short-term mating technique) yet has no desire for a long-term relationship can be imagined (a long-term strategy). An individual may, on the other hand, be open to short-term relationships while desiring a long-term partnership. As a result, evolutionary perspectives on long- and short-term mating strategies don't fully represent changes in commitment desires. This is backed up by research on the urge to belong, which claims that meaningful relationships between people are crucial for physical and mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Lack of meaningful social relationships is linked to a slew of bad outcomes, including decreased self-control (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005) and poor health outcomes (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). We propose that commitment desirability encompasses more than just basic social wants like sex, social connection, and intimacy.

Significance of the study

Polyamory was frequently studied in the LGBTQ+ populations, according to the review of literature. Polyamory is particularly prevalent in the bisexual community. The majority of the research on Polygamous relationships has been found to be just as stable and satisfying as monogamous ones. When measured in terms of marriage satisfaction, relationship longevity, depth of intimacy, and frequency of sex, polyamorous relationships were found to be comparable to monogamous relationships. Standardized psychological evaluations revealed no statistically significant differences between polyamorous samples and population norms (Justin K. Mogilski et al., 2020). It is also established that polyamorous relationships exhibit significant interactions in relationship structure such as commitment and relationship satisfaction, implying well-established factors of relationship foundations. Historically, research has concentrated on qualitative studies or self-perceptions of people who identify as polyamorous. Cook's thesis implies that research on polyamory goes unpublished and unsupported because it exposes institutions to public scrutiny (Elaine Cook, 2005). As a result, those who conduct research in this area do so solely for the sake of benefiting from it or because of their own lifestyle choices. As a result, the research results in bias, qualitative exploration, and the discovery of unpublished work. The concept of consensual polyamory receives very little attention in mainstream psychology, whether in training or practice. Therapists are undereducated about the needs of a polyamorous client and are forced to navigate treatment in the absence of evidence-based research. As a result, the client is required to educate their therapist or to forgo disclosing their status entirely (D. J. Williams & Emily E. Prior, 2015)

Though most studies have compared relationship quality and other related constructs and found no significant difference between polygamous and monogamous relationships, the current study is conducted in the same manner but in the Indian context. Many studies have been conducted in the West, so a study of this nature would be beneficial. The purpose of this study is to compare relationship quality and perceived partner commitment in monogamous and polygamous relationships. This study would de-stigmatize polyamory, raise awareness about polyamory as a normal social construct, and serve as a guide for therapists to better understand their polyamorous clients. Many researchers have compared monogamy and polyamorous relationships with jealousy, desire, and sexual satisfaction

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while ignoring perceived partner commitment. As a result, the current study compares relationship quality and perceived partner commitment in monogamous and polyamorous couples.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current study sought to determine whether people who engage in consensual non-monogamy (CNM) internalized stigma toward their relationship style, and if internalized CNM negativity is associated with poorer relationship quality and functioning. These findings support the idea that prevalent mono normativity (the idealization of monogamy in society) can be applied to the self and have a negative impact on relationship quality. Understanding the processes by which societal stigma against CNM can become internalized and affect well-being opens up new avenues for research at the intersection of public health, psychology, and sexuality (Moors, 2021).

The current study sought to investigate the relationships between heterosexual consensually non-monogamous (CNM) and monogamous relationships, as well as variables related to relationship functioning and individual well-being. People who participated in CNM reported higher levels of satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, passion, and love when compared to those who participated in monogamous relationships. Finally, CNM participants reported greater psychological well-being (Brooks, T. R., 2021).

The current study was designed to compare the mental well-being of polygamous and monogamous couples. People in polyamorous relationships have been shown to have higher levels of mental well-being than people in monogamous relationships (Bali, M. K., 2020).

The Maximization Paradox (Dar-Nimrod, Rawn, Lehman, & Schwartz, 2009) was used in this study to investigate whether individual differences in choice orientation impact relationship quality differently in CNM and monogamous relationships. The findings found no evidence to suggest that maximizing predicted a lower relationship (T., & Ellen, M., 2020).

This study looked at eroticism and nurturance in polygamous and monogamous relationships. Polyamorous participants, as expected, experienced less eroticism but more nurturance in their relationships with their primary partners compared to their secondary partners. Furthermore, people in polyamorous relationships reported higher levels of nurturance with primary partners and eroticism with secondary partners than those in monogamous relationships. These findings suggest that polyamory may offer individuals a unique opportunity to experience both eroticism and nurturance at the same time (Balzarini, R. N., 2019).

Typically, research has found that unrestricted sociosexuality is negatively associated with relationship quality, while relationship quality is positively associated with quality of life (QoL). These findings, however, may be limited to individuals in monogamous relationships, particularly those with prior extradyadic interactions (i.e., non-consensual non-monogamous; NCM). The results revealed differences in the hypothesized model based on relationship agreement (Rodrigues, D. L., 2019).

A convenience sample of 284 self-identified polyamorous and monogamous men and women were compared on various psychometrically sound indices of relationship well-being

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(for example, intimacy and trust) as well as sociosexuality. In comparison to their monogamous counterparts, both polyamorous men and women demonstrated higher levels of intimacy, according to the findings (Morrison, T. G.,2013).

The goal of this study was to look into the link between sexual risk behaviors and relationship style (i.e., non-monogamous versus monogamous individuals). Consistent with the hypothesis, non-monogamous individuals reported more frequent STI screenings and more frequent condom use when having sex with their non-primary partners than monogamous individuals (Hinton-Dampf, A,2010).

Aim: to compare the relationship quality and perceived partner commitment of couples in a monogamous and polyamorous relationship.

Objective:

- To measure the relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among monogamous couples.
- To measure the relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among polyamorous couples.
- To compare relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among them.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

R1: Is there a significant difference in relationship quality and perceived partner commitment between monogamous and polyamorous couples?

H0: there is no significant difference in the relationship quality and among monogamous and polyamorous couples.

H1: there is no significant difference in the perceived partner commitment among monogamous and polyamorous couples.

- **Independent variable:** Type of relationship
- **Dependent variable:** Relationship quality, perceived partner commitment

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative study with a quasi-experimental ex post facto research design was used to provide more insight and examine if there is a significant difference between relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among polyamorous relationship and monogamous groups.

Operational Definition

In this study, relationship quality is defined as the nature of a relationship in which the persons involved are satisfied, trusting, and committed to one another and perceived partner commitment is defined as how an individual in a relationship perceives their relationship.

Sampling

Convenience sampling will be implemented in this study.

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Sample

The study sample consists of 59 individuals adults from India who practice polyamory and monogamy relationships, with an age range of 20 and above. Participants in the monogamous relationship group were students and working professionals, whereas polyamorous society groups were contacted through Facebook and Tinder. Polyamory couples are required to have a primary partner and are currently practicing it. All participants will be asked to provide informed consent.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Participants of 20 years of age and above
- Polyamory participants who are currently with their primary
- partner in India

Exclusion Criteria:

- Participants with mental illness
- Engaged in secret sexual relations (i.e cheating, extramarital affair)
- Participants outside India

Tools

The relationship assessment scale (RAS) and The investment model scale will be used in this study. The relationship assessment will be used to assess an individual's satisfaction with their relationship. It has seven items, each of which is assessed on a five-point likert scale. It is appropriate for usage with married couples, cohabiting couples, engaged couples, or dating couples who are in an intimate relationship. The scores for items 4 and 7 are reversed. The scoring is done continuously. The higher the score, the happier the respondent is with his or her partner. The seven items will be submitted to an internal consistency analysis to determine the scale reliability index for which Cronbach's Alpha coefficient will be used.

The former scales, which were used to evaluate the relationship status in the investment model, were re-evaluated by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998). This scale is a valid and trustworthy tool for assessing the four primary components of the investment model: (1) commitment, (2) satisfaction, (3) alternative options, and (4) investment. The investment model calculates the level of commitment required to stay in a relationship, which is based on satisfaction, investment rate, and the quality of other options. For this study, only the commitment subscale will be used to measure perceived partner commitment. All of the items had sentences in them, and responders had to rate how much they agreed with them. A four-degree Likert scale was used for one-dimensional items, with one representing "disagreement" and four representing "absolute agreement," whereas a nine-degree Likert scale was used for general items, with eight representing "absolute agreement" and zero representing "disagreement." Seven general measures were included in the "commitment" subscale. This instrument has high reliability and to determine the scale reliability index, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient will be used.

Data collection process

Survey data collection will be used to collect data. An online survey would be cost effective and easily obtainable. A questionnaire would be prepared and the links to the survey would be posted via Instagram, Facebook, Tinder and Bumble.

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Data Analysis

In this study, Jamovi software will be used for data analysis. To compare the relationship between the variables, an independent t-test will be used.

Ethical Consideration

To ensure that the study's ethical validity was maintained, the researcher scrupulously followed the following principles while collecting data. Before collecting data, the participants gave their consent. The information gathered was kept private. The participants' confidentiality would not be violated at any stage during the study or later for any reason. Participants in the study were given the option of withdrawing their involvement at any time if they so desired. All of the sample's inclusion and exclusion criteria for the next study were ensured and followed. The subjects' privacy and confidentiality were preserved throughout the study.

RESULTS

In these results, there are 59 observations. The symmetric distribution of mean in commitment for monogamous couples (1) is 44.3 and the median is 44.0 with an SD of 3.85. The mean for commitment scores for Polyamorous couples (2) is 43.8 and the median is 44.0 with a SD of 7.12. An independent t-test was used to test the hypothesis, that is, there is no significant difference in the relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among monogamous and polyamorous couples. The scores obtained using Mann Whitney's test to tell the null hypothesis for commitment score was 0.439 $p < .05$, which suggests that in terms of perceived partner commitment, there showed no significant difference between monogamous and polyamorous couples. This satisfies the hypothesis.

The scores obtained using Mann Whitney's test show the null hypothesis for the Relationship quality score was 2.923 $p < .05$, which suggests that in terms of relationship quality, showed slight difference exists between monogamous and polyamorous couples at 0.1 level. The difference between the two groups in terms of relationship quality is more valid and less of a chance occurrence than the difference in commitment scores between the two groups.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of comparing relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among polyamorous and monogamous relationships

	Group	n	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Commitment	1	30	44.3	44.0	3.85	0.703
Scores	2	29	43.8	44.0	7.12	1.322
Relationship	1	30	29.2	30.5	4.99	0.911
Quality scores	2	29	26.3	27.0	4.61	0.855

Table 2 Independent Samples T-Test to find the difference between relationship quality and perceived partner commitment among polyamorous and monogamous relationships.

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Commitment	Student's t	0.296 ^a	57.0	0.768	0.439	1.48
Scores	Mann-Whitney U	422		0.843	1.06e-5	
Relationship	Student's t	2.336	57.0	0.023	2.923	1.25
Quality scores	Mann-Whitney U	247		0.004	3.00	

^aLevene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

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Table 3 Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	W	p
Commitment Scores	0.983	0.573
Relationship Quality Scores	0.894	<.001

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

Table 4 Homogeneity of Variances Test (Levene's)

	F	Df	Df2	p
Commitment Scores	15.303	1	57	<.001
Relationship Quality Scores	0.629	1	57	0.431

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Table 5 Scale reliability statistics for Investment Model Scale

	Cronbach's α
Scale	0.828

Table 6 Scale Reliability Statistics of Relationship Assessment Scale

	Cronbach's α
Scale	0.843

DISCUSSION

Table 2 demonstrates that there is no discernible difference between polyamorous and monogamous couples in terms of perceived partner commitment. With 57 degrees of freedom, a significance level of 0.001, a significant result ($p < 0.05$), and a mean difference of 0.439, the t-test result for commitment scores was 0.296. As a result, the null hypothesis is satisfied, proving that there is no discernible difference between relationships that are polyamorous and those that are monogamous in terms of perceived partner commitment. 2.336 was the t-test value for relationship quality scores, with 57 degrees of freedom, 0.431 being the significant threshold, and 2.923 being the mean difference. This rules out the null hypothesis and proves that polyamorous and monogamous couples have quite different types of relationships. These findings cast doubt on the state of the art in relationship quality studies. There was no difference in relationship satisfaction between groups that were polyamorous and monogamous. (Piemonte, D. R. Gusakova, Conley, & 2018). Consensual non-monogamy is frequently stigmatized and seen negatively by society. Similarly, those who are in consensual non-monogamy describe a variety of stigmatising incidents related to their relationship (such as being rejected by family and friends or having to deal with child custody concerns), and frequently hide their relationship status (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010; Sheff, 2015; Kimberly and Hans, 2017). These assumptions about consensual non-monogamy that are negative seem to be false stereotypes. People in both consensual non-monogamy and monogamy report similar levels of relationship quality and psychological well-being, according to research that has looked at relationship qualities among these groups of people (e.g., trust, commitment, love, depression; Rubel and Bogaert, 2015; Conley et al., 2017; Mogilski et al., 2017; Moors et al., 2017; Balzarini et al., 2019b). Some persons in consensually non-monogamous relationships claim better quality (less jealousy, more sexual satisfaction, etc.) and special advantages, such as personal development and a variety of needs being met (Conley et al., 2017, 2018; Moors et al., 2017). In comparison to monogamous relationships, polyamorous relationships offer greater knowledge and hands-on experience in understanding more people, and they thrive in various relationship domains and are likely to have deeper significance and implications for their lives, including how the

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individual thinks and manages emotional wellness (Peterson, 2018). People who are polyamorous experiment with new things, and if a relationship doesn't work out, they try something else, which implies they change their expectations and let go of old habits. These people are highly resilient, quickly adjust to new routines, accommodate various partners, and have a never-say-die mindset. For them, the most important aspect of a relationship is being truthful to oneself and others (Peterson, 2018).

Furthermore, polyamory is now being adopted by people who may have previously been monogamous, in part because the internet has made it simpler than ever for those who are interested in polyamory to learn more about it and connect with others who share their views. People begin to believe that being monogamous is not necessary to happiness and health. Young people today believe that they no longer need to define themselves by their sexual preferences or interpersonal interactions. They surrender to the whorls and eddies that alter all romantic relationships over time, letting their relationships flow whither the stream takes them. The co-author of the polyamory textbook *The Ethical Slut*, Janet Hardy, referred to

CONCLUSION

Instead of viewing sex or intimacy with numerous people as problematic since it is only another way of being in a relationship, our study's purpose was to synthesise data in light of the distinctive and shared benefits of polyamory. We also wanted to propose potential research directions. For some people, polyamory opens them to more relationship options than the monogamous norms provide. Others, however, find that monogamy perfectly aligns with their beliefs, preferences, and objectives. It would be good to understand better how implementing the concepts and techniques of one type of relationship could improve the other since both relationship styles have their "pros" and "cons."

Limitations

1. The sample size of 59 does not adequately represent the entire population.
2. Because the study was limited to literate individuals, it cannot be generalized to the general public.
3. A number of variables, including religion, upbringing and role models from parents, teachers, and relatives, notable character strengths, prior experiences, culture, and self-imposed high standards, etc., weren't taken into account.

Recommendation

India is a diversified country with a huge population, making it possible to duplicate this survey with more thorough coverage of the country's views on polyamory. Researching polyamory opens up fresh and intriguing avenues while also presenting numerous difficulties. The major objective of research should not be to find the best kind of relationship, which is an impossible issue to answer. Instead, we ought to use theories and methodologies to comprehend the peculiarities of polyamorous relationships for what they are. Future study can take into account the family roles of polyamorous and monogamous relationships. The media's message that being polyamorous is healthy may also have an impact on how they perceive an open relationship. The mental health of the people can be learned more about by taking these elements into account.

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Conflict of Interest

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