

Research Paper

Love and Home: Exploring Gender Differences in Romantic and Family Life Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the association between family satisfaction and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults. Children with discontentment in family leads to the fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, and difficulty trusting others. These children may become overly emotional or anxious when separated and exhibit attention-seeking behaviours. The study involved 96 young adults (50 females, 46 males) from Kolkata; the Family Satisfaction by Adjective Scale (F.S.A.S.) and the Relationship Satisfaction Assessment Scale (RAS) were administered, scored and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mann-Whitney U tests indicated a significant gender difference in family satisfaction, with females reporting higher satisfaction than males. However, no significant gender difference was found in romantic relationship satisfaction. Findings highlight the potential independence of family and romantic domains in young adults lives and underscore the role of gender in family-related perceptions.

Keywords: *family satisfaction, romantic relationship satisfaction, young adults, gender*

The study explored the link between family satisfaction and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults. It found that individuals who experienced discontentment, low self esteem and trust issues. These individuals may also display heightened emotional sensitivity, separation anxiety and attention seeking behaviours. Past research suggests:

Simpson et al. (2007) studied 78 individuals from infancy to their mid-20s to test an attachment-based developmental hypothesis. Using teacher reports, friend evaluations, and adult romantic assessments, they found that secure attachment at 12 months predicted social competence in elementary school, leading to secure adolescent friendships and better emotional experiences in adult romantic relationships (Simpson, J. A., Collins, W. A., Tran, S., & Haydon, K. C., 2007). Barnes et al. (2007) conducted two longitudinal studies examining mindfulness and romantic satisfaction. Using trait mindfulness scales and conflict discussion paradigms, they found that higher mindfulness predicted better relationship satisfaction, lower emotional reactivity, and improved communication during conflict (Barnes, S., Brown, K. W., Krusemark, E., Campbell, W. K., & Rogge, R. D., 2007). Valle

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& Tillman (2014) analysed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to assess childhood family structure's effect on adolescent and adult romantic relationships. Findings indicated that family structure influenced adult cohabitation and marriage patterns but not serious relationship conflict (Valle, G., & Tillman, K. H., 2014). Delalibera et al. (2015) reviewed 15 studies (from 389) on how family dynamics affect coping with grief. Tools included literature reviews and qualitative analysis. Results showed that open communication and cohesion help families grieve, while dysfunction correlated with complex grief and mental health issues (Delalibera, M., Presa, J., Coelho, A., Barbosa, A., & Franco, M. H. P., 2015). Fallis et al. (2016) studied 113 heterosexual couples over two years to examine sexual and relationship satisfaction. Surveys revealed that sexual satisfaction predicted later relationship satisfaction more than vice versa, with stronger effects for men (Fallis, E. E., Rehman, U. S., Woody, E. Z., & Purdon, C., 2016). Luo et al. (2016) tested 5-HTTLPR gene variation in relation to romantic satisfaction using fMRI and Cyberball tasks on socially excluded individuals. They found that l/l carriers reported higher relationship satisfaction and showed brain patterns related to better emotion regulation (Luo, S., Yu, D., & Han, S., 2016). South et al. (2016) used adult twin data to assess gene × environment interactions in personality and romantic satisfaction. Quantitative G×E models showed relationship satisfaction moderated the genetic expression of several personality traits like well-being and aggression (South, S. C., Krueger, R. F., Elkins, I. J., Iacono, W. G., & McGue, M., 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Family and romantic relationships are central domains of human social experience, influencing well-being and emotional development. Understanding the intricate relationship between **family dynamics** and **romantic relationship satisfaction** requires drawing from several interrelated psychological and sociological theories. **Family dynamics** refer to the patterns of interactions, roles, communication styles, and relational functioning within a family unit. These dynamics are shaped by factors such as parenting styles, family structure, culture, socioeconomic status, and communication patterns. One key component of family dynamics is the role each member adopts — such as caretaker, leader, or mediator — which often shifts based on life circumstances and developmental changes. Communication, another central aspect, plays a vital role in promoting trust, understanding, and emotional security. Families that resolve conflict effectively tend to promote emotional resilience, while unresolved tension can lead to dysfunctional relational patterns that extend into adulthood. A crucial theoretical lens through which to understand family influence is **Attachment Theory** by John Bowlby. Bowlby have put forward that early bonds formed with primary caregivers lay the foundation.

for an individual's internal working model, which influences how they perceive themselves and others in relationships. Secure attachments, typically formed when caregivers are responsive and consistent, promote confidence, emotional regulation, and trust in future relationships. In contrast, insecure attachment styles — such as ambivalent, avoidant, or disorganized — are often the result of inconsistent, neglectful, or fear-inducing caregiving, and may lead to relational anxiety, fear of intimacy, or emotional withdrawal in romantic contexts. These attachment styles shape adult relationships by influencing how individuals navigate closeness, dependency, and conflict. Further expanding on relational processes, **Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love** offers a multi-dimensional understanding of romantic satisfaction. This theory identifies three essential component — intimacy, passion, and commitment — that combines in various ways to create different types of love, from romantic and companionate love to consummate love. The quality of one's early relational

experiences, particularly with family, can shape how these components develop and are expressed in adult relationships. For instance, those with a secure family background may find it easier to foster intimacy and commitment, while individuals from dysfunctional families may struggle with emotional vulnerability and trust. The **Equity Theory** also contributes by emphasizing fairness and balance in relationships. According to this theory, individuals strive for equitable exchanges in relationships and feel most satisfied when their contributions and rewards are balanced. Family environments where fairness, support, and mutual respect are emphasized may teach individuals to expect and provide equity in romantic relationships; those raised in inequitable family settings may replicate similar patterns, leading to dissatisfaction or conflict. **Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development** further supports this framework by outlining key stages of identity and relationship development. In adolescence (Identity vs. Role Confusion), individuals begin to explore personal values and relational expectations, often influenced by their family. In young adulthood (Intimacy vs. Isolation), the ability to form meaningful romantic connections is heavily dependent on whether a secure sense of self has been established earlier. Erikson suggests that unresolved issues in earlier stages may create problems in one's ability to develop healthy intimacy, potentially leading to emotional isolation or unstable romantic bonds. Collectively, all these theories illustrate how early familial relationships play a critical role in shaping individual behaviours, emotional expectations, and relational strategies in adult romantic life. The presence of secure attachments, effective communication, and equitable family dynamics provides a strong foundation for healthy romantic relationships. Dysfunctions in family settings — such as conflict, neglect, or inconsistent caregiving — can lead to insecure attachment styles and maladaptive relational patterns, ultimately impacting romantic satisfaction. Therefore, by applying Attachment Theory, Equity Theory, Erikson's developmental stages, and Sternberg's love theory, we can better understand how foundational family experiences influence adult romantic relationship outcomes. This highlights the importance of early relational environments in developing the emotional and interpersonal skills required for fulfilling romantic partnerships.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is concerned with the family satisfaction, romantic relationship satisfaction, attachment with the family and how that is interrelated with the satisfaction in romantic relationship of others. The purpose of this study is to explore the intercorrelation between the family satisfaction and family dynamics satisfaction in adults.

Objectives -

1. To find out if there is any difference between male and female young adult with respect to family satisfaction.
2. To find out if there is any difference between male and female young adult with respect to romantic relationship.
3. To find out if there is any relationship between family satisfaction and romantic relationship among young adult individuals.

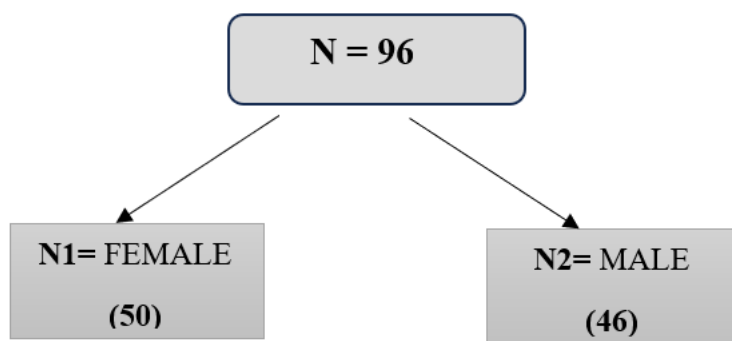
Hypothesis -

- **H1:** There is a significant difference between male and female young adult with respect to family satisfaction.
- **H2:** There is a significant difference between male and female young adult with respect to romantic relationship.

METHODS

Sample:

The purposive sampling technique was used for the present study. A total no of 96 participants were approached among which all participants signed a consent form and filled up the questionnaire booklet. The total sample was divided based on male and female.



The participants were selected on the basis of the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria:

- Subjects must be young adults
- Subjects must be in a romantic relationship
- Subjects must be living with their family members
- Unmarried
- Male & Female (both genders)
- Family Type: nuclear / joint
- Socioeconomic Status: low to high
- No history or presence of psychological/mental illness

Exclusion criteria:

- Age below 17 years or above 30 years
- Not in any type of romantic relationship
- Not living with their family
- Married
- Family type other than nuclear / joint
- Socioeconomic status not falling within low to high range
- History or presence of any psychological / mental illness

Procedure:

All the participants were contacted personally and rapport were established. The tools used for this study are Family Satisfaction by Adjective Scale by Jorge Barraca, Luis López Yarto, and Julio Olea and Relationship Assessment Scale by Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E., 2000. Consent forms were signed. They were given a briefing about the aim of present study. Instructions were given according to the used questionnaire. They were assured that their information would be kept confidential and used for research purpose only. Therefore, they were requested to be open and honest in their responding. After that the scales were administered and data were collected.

Statistical Analysis:

For the data analysis purpose of the present study, Jamovi, version 2.4.66 was used, in which normality, descriptive, inferential and correlation analysis were made according to the decision rules for testing the hypothesis.

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In the **first phase** skewness, std. error skewness, kurtosis, std. error kurtosis, Shapiro - Wilk W and Shapiro - Wilk P were calculated.

In the **second phase** mean, median, mode and SD were calculated.

In the **third phase** the data was subjected to MANN WHITNEY U to find out the mean difference between male and female young adult with respect to family satisfaction and mean difference between male and female young adult with respect to relationship satisfaction.

Lastly, Spearman's correlation was done so as to find out the relationship between family satisfaction and romantic relationship among adult individuals.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Results of Normality of the distribution

	Gender	Family Life Satisfaction	Romantic Relationship Satisfaction
N	F	50	50
	M	46	46
Skewness	F	-0.842	-1.38
	M	0.358	-0.260
Std. error skewness	F	0.337	0.337
	M	0.350	0.350
Kurtosis	F	0.932	1.50
	M	-0.207	-0.824
Std. error kurtosis	F	0.662	0.662
	M	0.688	0.688
Shapiro-Wilk W	F	0.951	0.862
	M	0.978	0.941
Shapiro-Wilk p	F	0.038	<.001
	M	0.526	0.022

Table No. 1 indicates Shapiro-Wilk p value is significant at 0.01 level. The distribution deviates significantly from the normal distribution.

Fig.1: Density plot of the distribution (family life satisfaction)

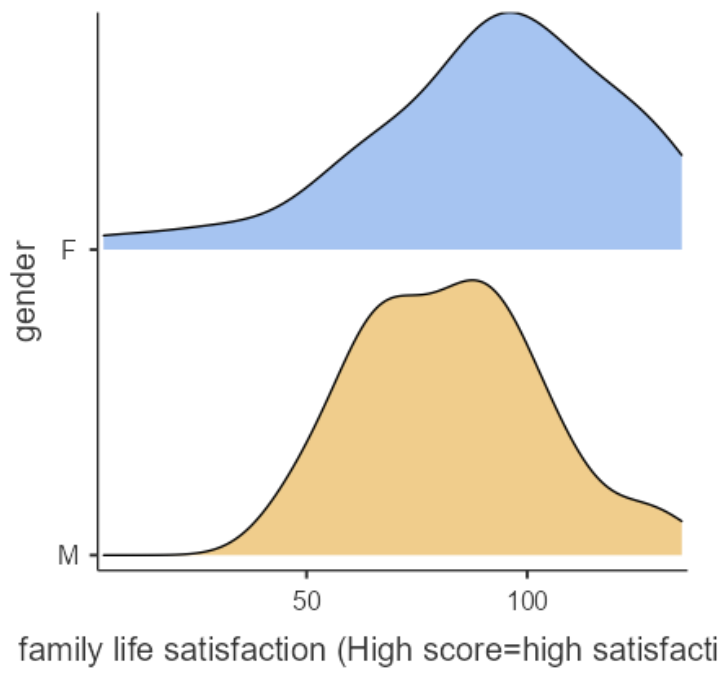
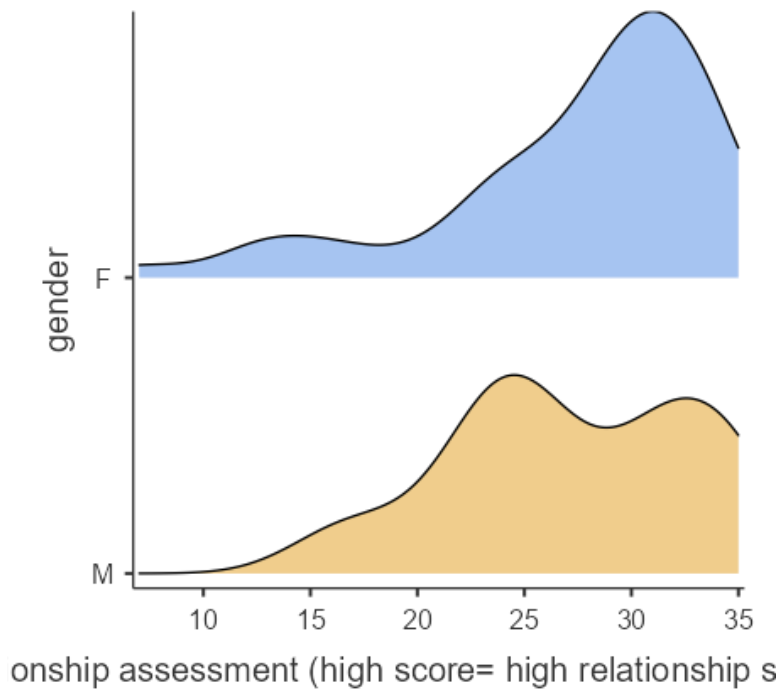


Fig.2: Density plot of the distribution (relationship satisfaction)



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Table No. 2 Results of Descriptive statistics

	Gender	Family Life Satisfaction	Romantic Relationship Satisfaction
N	F	50	50
	M	46	46
Mean	F	91.9	27.5
	M	82.7	27.2
Median	F	95.0	29.0
	M	82.5	26.0
Mode	F	70.0	32.0
	M	66.0	35.0
Standard deviation	F	28.6	6.50
	M	20.7	5.63

Table No. 2 represents descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode and standard deviation) of family life satisfaction and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Fig.3: Graphical representation of mean value of family and relationship satisfaction.

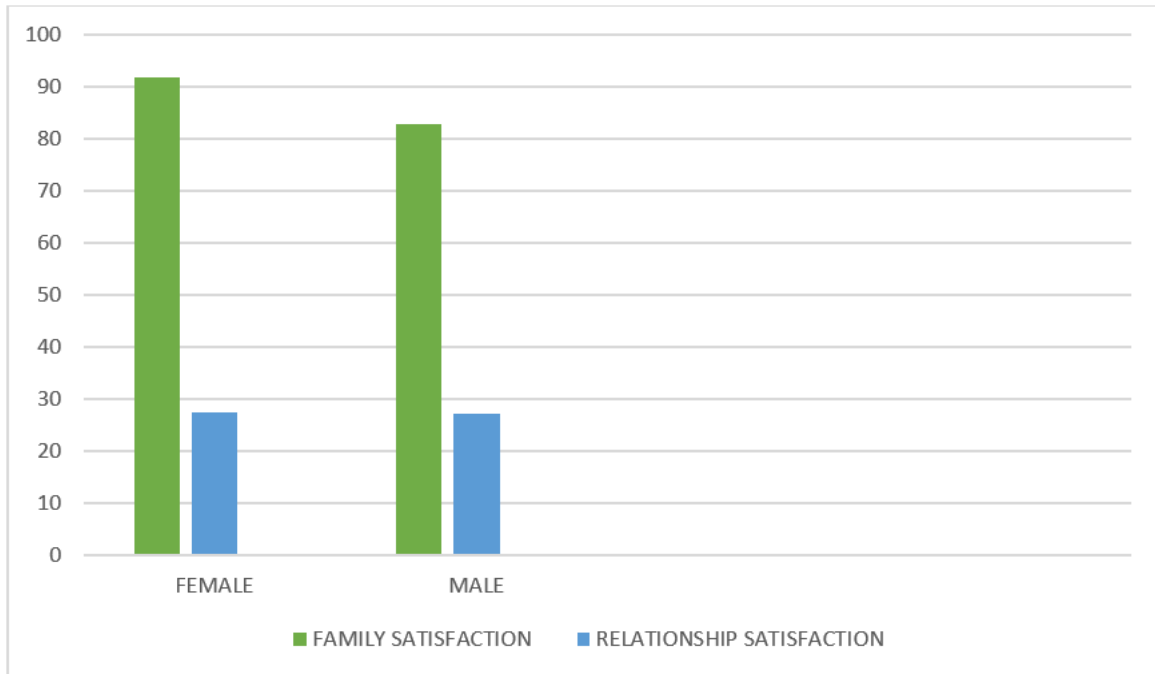


Table No. 3 Results of Inferential statistics			
MANN WHITNEY U			
		Statistics	p-value
family life satisfaction	Mann-Whitney U	831	0.019
romantic relationship satisfaction	Mann-Whitney U	1076	0.586

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table No. 3 indicates p value is significant at 0.05 level for family satisfaction. So, H1 is accepted at 0.05 level. There is a significant mean difference between male and female young adult with respect to family satisfaction.

P value for relationship satisfaction is not significant at 0.05 level. So, H2 is rejected at 0.05 level. There is no significant mean difference between male and female young adult with respect to relationship satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Table No 1 assumes that the data is normally distributed. Therefore, a significant result (e.g., $p < 0.01$) indicates that the data deviates significantly from a normal distribution. It means that the responses or scores collected on these topics do not follow the typical bell-shaped curve of a normal distribution. Instead of most people reporting average levels of satisfaction with fewer people at the high and low ends (as seen in a normal distribution), the data may be skewed, clustered, or unevenly spread. This could suggest that people have very different experiences — many might report very high or very low satisfaction, with fewer in the middle. It could also indicate that certain groups (like different age ranges, genders or cultural backgrounds) experience satisfaction in family or romantic relationships in different ways.

According to the data represented in Table No 2, females reported a higher average score in terms of family life satisfaction, compared to the male individuals. This suggests that, on average, women perceive greater satisfaction in their family lives than men. In terms of relationship satisfaction, the difference between the two genders is much smaller. Females had a slightly higher mean score. Though the variation here is minimal, it still indicates a marginally higher sense of relationship satisfaction among women. These findings imply a potential gender-based difference in how young adults experience and evaluate their family and romantic relationships. The more pronounced gap in family life satisfaction could be influenced by social, emotional, or cultural factors that shape women’s attachment to and expectations from family structures. Meanwhile, the nearly equal levels of relationship satisfaction suggest that both genders may have similar experiences in their romantic lives. These descriptive insights help set the stage for further inferential analysis to determine the statistical significance of the differences observed.

Table No 3, shows the inferential statistical results, specifically focusing on the significance of differences in satisfaction levels between male and female young adults. The p-value for family satisfaction is found to be significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that the observed difference in mean scores between males and females is statistically meaningful. Males and females differ significantly in how satisfied they are with their family lives. Conversely, the p-value for relationship satisfaction does not reach the 0.05 threshold for

statistical significance. This means that the slight difference in mean scores between male and female participants is not strong enough to rule out the possibility that it occurred by chance. These findings highlight an important distinction: while men and women may experience family life differently, leading to noticeable differences in satisfaction, their romantic relationship satisfaction appears to be more similar. This insight can be valuable for researchers and practitioners aiming to understand gender dynamics in interpersonal relationships, especially when designing interventions or educational programs for young adults. An investigation was made on how various factors, including dyadic coping, love, sexual motivation, and having children, differently predict relationship satisfaction for men and women.

Practical Implications

The study area on which the investigation has been conducted has its importance because understanding the intercorrelation between family and romantic relationship satisfaction can have significant theoretical, practical, and societal implications. This study sheds light on how dynamics within one's family of origin or current family environment influence satisfaction in romantic relationships, and vice versa. These insights can contribute to the broader field of relationship psychology by expanding existing models of interpersonal functioning to include the interconnectedness of different types of close relationships. The study could guide the development of more effective therapeutic interventions. For example, relationship counsellors and family therapists could use these findings to identify patterns where unresolved family issues may be negatively impacting romantic satisfaction, or where strong romantic partnerships may buffer against any type of family stress. Understanding these patterns allows practitioners to take a more holistic approach to relationship therapy, considering both family and romantic contexts in treatment plans. On a societal level, the findings could inform educational and preventative programs aimed at fostering healthy relationships. As the study reveals strong links between positive family functioning and romantic satisfaction, it highlights the importance of early family-based interventions in promoting long-term relational well-being. Additionally, this research might have policy implications for supporting family systems and relationship education. By examining the mutual influence of family and romantic relationships, this study has the potential to advance psychological theory, improve clinical practice, and inform broader social interventions. It underscores the complexity of human relationships and highlights the importance of a systemic approach to understanding emotional and relational satisfaction.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Research rarely concludes definitively; rather, it often opens the door to further inquiry. Limitations are an inherent part of any study, typically stemming from the research design, methodology, and data collection processes. These limitations can affect the accuracy, generalizability, or depth of the findings and must be acknowledged to provide context for interpreting the results and guiding future research. In this particular study, several limitations were identified. First, time constraints led to a smaller sample size, which may reduce the statistical power and limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample primarily consisted of college students, making it less representative of the broader young adult population. Moreover, the study relied solely on quantitative methods, which restricted a deeper exploration of the emotional, personal, and contextual nuances that shape relationship satisfaction. Another limitation was the exclusion of participants with psychological or mental health conditions—an omission that may have overlooked important variations in relationship satisfaction among this group. Finally, the study's use of a binary gender classification excluded non-binary, transgender, and gender-diverse

individuals, whose experiences with family and romantic relationships might differ significantly from those of cisgender participants.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the intercorrelation between family and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults, involving 96 participants (50 females and 46 males) from Kolkata and surrounding areas. Findings initially suggested a positive correlation, indicating that individuals with higher family satisfaction also tend to report greater satisfaction in romantic relationships — likely due to the influence of family dynamics on interpersonal and emotional development. However, statistical analysis revealed a significant gender difference in family satisfaction, with males and females differing in their experiences, while no significant gender difference was found in romantic relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, contrary to the initial assumption, the study found no significant overall relationship between family satisfaction and romantic relationship satisfaction. These mixed results highlight the complexity of close relationships.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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