

Impact of Casual Sexual Relationships and Relationship Attitudes on Commitment Level Among Indian Youth

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This research paper investigates the complex dynamics between casual sexual relationships, relationship attitudes, and commitment levels in a sample of 219 individuals aged 18 to 29. By utilizing an extensive range of statistical analyses, including regression, correlation, and moderation analysis, the key findings suggest a significant negative association between engagement in casual sexual relationships and levels of commitment among young adults. Secondly, significant correlations are identified between certain relationship attitudes and commitment levels among young adults. Thirdly, it is discovered that young adults' relationship attitudes do not moderate the association between their experiences in casual sexual relationships and subsequent commitment levels. The study has also taken influence of social desirability into account, adding valuable insights to the existing knowledge about the nature of relationships among today's youth and lays a solid foundation for future research.

Keywords - casual sexual relationships, commitment levels, moderation, relationship attitudes, social desirability

Exploring sexuality is integral for understanding psychological well-being and overall happiness of an individual (Mulhall et al, 2008). It plays a significant role in shaping one's mating strategies and the search for suitable partners (Buss, 1998) (Buss & Barnes, 1986). Sociosexuality, defined as person's attitude and willingness towards casual sexual interactions (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991, 1992), stands out as one of the most extensively studied aspects of human sexual behavior, reflecting individual differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Casual sexual relationships (CSR) can be defined as any sexual interactions between people who are not in a committed romantic relationship. The main emphasis of these encounters is usually on physical pleasure and fulfilment, with little regard for long-term commitment or emotional attachment. The prevalence of casual sexual relationships in modern culture can be attributed to the acceptance of non-traditional relationship

dynamics and the altering of societal standards. These kinds of relationships can be hookups, one-night stands, friendships with benefits, or booty calls, among many other variations.

As per the 2017 India Today Sex Survey, casual sex is more common than ever in India, with 29% of women and 41% of men being open to one-night stands. In total, 26% have slept with someone other than their partner. For many reasons, such as convenience, sexual attraction, moving on from an ex, curiosity, the need for immediate fulfilment, or just the need for companionship without the commitment of a love engagement, people explore casual partnerships. Some people may use casual sex as a coping technique for stress or loneliness, while others may use it as a means to explore their sexuality, meet specific wants, or experiment with different partners.

The age range of 18 to 29 is referred to as emerging adulthood and is crucial for the fruitful growth of romantic alliances (Arnett, 2004) (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). However, some studies suggest that people are now shifting towards getting married somewhat later in life due to a change in their dating and relationship patterns over the previous few decades (Bogle, 2008 and Garcia & Reiber, 2008). The median age of marriage has significantly increased in India over the last thirty years. For example, for women in the age range of 20–49, the median age of marriage increased from 16.2 years in 1992–1993 to 19.2 years in 2019–2021. (Singh et al, 2023). Carroll et al. (2007) suggested that developing adult sexual permissiveness has been associated with a lower value placed on marriage (marital importance) and a desire to put off marriage (marital time). Due to the delay in marriage, emerging adulthood is no longer, as romantic stage theories would have it, a period for people to settle down in a committed partnership for the long term.

In particular, emerging adults have to manage their own life responsibilities (such as college/ education, career, employment, building financial resources, etc.) and collaborate with their spouse on these choices. Working through these tasks has become challenging due to the very unstable social and economic conditions in today's society. As a result, emerging adults are choosing less restrictive short-term involvements over long-term commitments, which can be more restrictive (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Rather, a lot of emerging adults take advantage of their newfound independence to try out various romantic encounters and relationships (Cohen et al, 2003).

Therefore, having frequent casual relationships can foster permissive attitudes towards non-committal partnerships. For example, Sizemore & Olmstead (2017) found that the willingness to participate in

consensual non-monogamy correlated with sexual identity development, growing adult experimentation/ possibilities, and permissive attitudes towards casual sex. Thus, one's early experiences can shape their attitudes, particularly in terms of romantic relationships.

Lee (1973) thought it was possible to evaluate and quantify our present loving relationship. He illustrated his typology of love using the analogy of a colour wheel. Three fundamental love types—Eros (which is passionate and romantic), Ludus (which is playful and uncommitted) and Storge (which is friendly) —are represented by the three “primary colours” in this model. Mixed imbalances of the three main types of love are known as secondary love types: Combining Eros and Ludus produces Mania (obsessive or addictive love), Agape (altruistic or selfless love) and Storge and Ludus produce pragma (practical, rational love). For example, Meskó et al, (2021) discovered that different sexes and relationship statuses had different love attitudes. With the exception of solitary men, all men had reasonably high Passionate-Love ratings; women in committed relationships also had the highest Passionate-Love scores. Both sexes favoured Game-Playing Love to short-term romantic objectives.

Thus, people's attitudes and expectations about future relationships might be influenced by situations in which commitment is not prioritised, which they may encounter frequently. This happens because physical intimacy is usually prioritised over emotional connection and commitment in casual interactions. They could grow used to avoiding emotional commitment or attachment, seeing relationships as fleeting and disposable. Because of their fear of being vulnerable and maybe damaged, individuals could find it difficult to truly invest in or commit to future relationships. It can be difficult to build and sustain meaningful, long-term relationships when this behavior

persists, as it can create a vicious cycle of noncommitment. Research has shown that singles exhibit greater sociosexual freedom than those in romantic relationships and that regardless of sociosexuality levels, commitment is negatively correlated with both physical and sexual attraction to an attractive person and that more dedicated people are more limited in their sociosexuality. Furthermore commitment, but not sociosexuality, can predict sexual infidelity in the current relationship. (Rodrigues & Lopes, 2017)

Moreover, individuals who had previously cheated on their partners report higher levels of unconstrained sociosexuality but lower levels of commitment. Consequently, unrestricted sociosexual desire and lower commitment are linked to more lenient views of infidelity among those who had previously committed sexual infidelity. Greater commitment is consistently linked to stricter views of adultery among those who did not report any past sexual infidelity. (Rodrigues et al, 2016). These findings highlight the critical need to better understand the complex interplay between people's past experiences, their attitudes towards commitment, and the implications for their future relationships.

Based on this reasoning, this study aims to explore the changing attitudes of Indian youth towards romantic relationships due to involvement in casual sexual relationships before marriage. Research in this area will explore these dynamics, that is, looking at how one's early experiences shape their attitudes, which, in turn, influence their relationship choices and commitments. Understanding these complexities is crucial in comprehending the multifaceted nature of human relationships. Repeated engagement in casual relationships might desensitize individuals to the significance of commitment, potentially impacting their willingness to invest deeply in relationships. There are

number of qualitative researches focusing on major themes of casual sexual relationship but there's a dearth of quantitative studies focusing on relationship between casual sexual relationships and other relevant variables in specific context of Indian societal landscape. Hence probing into this could provide valuable insights into the complexities of relationship dynamics among the younger generation in India.

Hypotheses

- H1: There will be a negative relation between experience of casual sexual relationships and commitment levels among young adults.
- H2: There will be a significant relationship between Relationship attitudes and commitment levels among young adults.
- H3: Relationship attitudes will have a significant moderating role in relation to engagement in casual sexual relationships and commitment levels among Indian youth.
- H4: Engagement in casual sexual relationships will significantly predict commitment levels among Indian youth.
- H5: Relationship attitudes will significantly predict commitment levels among Indian youth.

Method

Participants

The sample included 219 voluntary Indian participants (85 males and 134 females) aged 18 to 29 years. Given the sensitive nature of the topic being investigated snowball sampling and purposeful sampling were found to be suitable techniques for reaching the target audience. Every participant had to give an informed consent form stating that they understood the purpose and methodology of the study and that they wished to take part.

Measures

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI-R): It is a self-report tool consisting of nine items that assess an individual's propensity for casual or non-committal sexual encounters. The 2008 revision is the most recent one. The SOI-R is available in 25 languages in two different variations: a 5-point response scale for most subjects and a 9-point response scale for integration with the original Gangestad and Simpson SOI.

Love Attitude Scale: Lee (1973,1976) proposed six fundamental love styles, which Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) measured with the Love Attitudes Scale. The questionnaire is intended to assess people's attitudes towards love. The original contains total of 42 items, divided into 6 subscales (each with 7 items) that correspond to 6 distinct love styles. These are - EROS (passionate love), LUDUS (game-playing love), STORGE (friendship love), PRAGMA (practical love), MANIA (possessive, dependent love) and AGAPE (altruistic love). The abbreviated form is an 18-item assessment of love attitudes. On a 5-point Likert scale, which goes from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), respondents mark their responses for each topic.

Commitment Level Subscale: The Investment Model Scale (IMS) is a widely used psychological assessment tool developed by Caryl E. Rusbult and her colleagues in 1998 to measure the dynamics of romantic relationships. One of the constructs measured by the IMS is the "Commitment Level," which is comprised of seven items designed to evaluate an individual's level of commitment within a romantic relationship. In the absence of global or aspect measures of the bases of reliance, the commitment subscale can be used on its own with full validity.

The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale: It is a widely used self-report measure

designed to assess the tendency of individuals to respond in a socially desirable manner. Developed by Douglas P. Crowne and David Marlowe in 1960, the short version of the MCSDS typically consists of around 13 items, which are presented in a true-false format. Responses to the MCSDS are scored such that higher scores indicate a greater tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner.

Results

Table I. indicates Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients.

Variables	Commitment Levels	P
CSR	-.202**	.003
Eros	.179**	.008
Ludus	-.453**	.000
Storge	-.239**	.000
Pragma	-.039	.568
Mania	-.131	.053
Agape	-.212**	.002

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is observed in Table I that there is significant correlation between casual sexual relationships and commitment levels at $p < 0.01$. This finding suggests a notable negative relationship between casual sexual relationships and commitment levels among young adults.

The table also shows that correlation coefficient of Eros, Ludus, Storge and Agape in Relationship attitudes and commitment levels is statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. There is a positive and significant relationship between Eros and Commitment levels while there is negative and significant relationship between Ludus, Storge, Agape and Commitment levels. However, there is no statistically significant correlation between Pragma and Mania with Commitment levels.

Table 2. Moderating role of Relationship Attitudes between Casual sexual relationships and Commitment levels.

Relationship Attitudes	B	Beta In	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Eros	.038	0.40	.063	.603	.547
Ludus	.078	.094	.052	1.490	.138
Storge	.015	.015	.064	.231	.817
Pragma	.018	0.019	.065	.276	.783
Mania	-.026	-.028	.062	-.418	.677
Agape	-.055	-.058	.062	-.897	.371

a. Dependent Variable - Zscore (COMMITMENT)

b. Predictors in the Model- (Constant), Zscore(Relationship Attitudes), Zscore(CSR)

Moderation analysis was conducted using regression techniques. The goal of the moderation analysis is to determine whether having any Love Attitude modifies the link between Casual Sexual Relationships and Commitment Levels. As depicted in Table II, there was no statistically significant interaction between either of the love attitudes and CSR. Based on these results, the theory that love attitude modifies the link between CSR and Commitment levels was disproved.

Table3. indicates Regression Analysis

Variables	B	Beta	Std. Error	t	Sig.
CSR	-.188	-.202	0.062	-3.042	.003
Eros	.714	.177	.258	2.771	.006
Ludus	-1.301	-.403	.235	-5.538	.000
Storge	-.694	-.239	.191	-3.633	.000
Pragma	-.128	-.039	.225	-.571	.568
Mania	-.441	-.131	.226	-1.948	.053
Agape	-.673	-.212	.211	-3.191	.002

Dependent Variable - Commitment level

As depicted in Table III, CSR has a regression coefficient (B) of -.188, t-statistic of -3.042 and a matching p value of 0.003. This shows that regression model is statistically significant and that commitment levels are negatively and statistically predicted by CSR alone.

The table also shows that Eros positively and significantly predicts Commitment levels, with a coefficient (B) of 0.714. Ludus, on the other hand, negatively and significantly predicts Commitment levels, with a coefficient (B) of -1.301. Both Storge and Agape also demonstrate a negative and significant impact on Commitment levels, as shown by their coefficients (B) of -0.694, which is highly statistically significant (p = 0.000) and (B) of -0.673, which is statistically significant (p= 0.002), respectively. However, Pragma and Mania did not show significant impact on Commitment levels, as indicated by their coefficients and matching t-values.

Table 4. indicates Partial correlational Analysis

Variables	Zero-order correlation	Sig.	Controlling for Social Desirability	Sig.
CSR	-.202**	.003	-.201	.003
Eros	.179**	.008	.177	.009
Ludus	-.453**	.000	-.455	.000
Storge	-.239**	.000	-.241	.000
Pragma	-.039	.568	-.041	.546
Mania	-.131	.053	-.136	.045
Agape	-.212**	.002	-.211	.002

Studies on sexual behaviour are especially vulnerable to social desirability bias because participants may purposefully provide false information by overreporting normative behaviours or underreporting stigmatised ones, if their true behaviour would be viewed as socially unacceptable (Kelly et al, 2013). To reduce this common method bias, participants in our study

completed the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale and Partial correlation was then used to assess the relationship between CSR, Relationship Attitudes and Commitment Levels while controlling for the effect of Social Desirability.

As depicted in Table IV, the partial correlations show that the relationship between CSR, Eros, Ludus, Storge, Agape and Commitment levels is statistically significant in both scenarios, suggesting that social desirability does impact the relationship. Nevertheless, despite this influence, there is significance regardless. Therefore, it can be affirmed that a strong relationship still exists between CSR, Eros, Ludus, Storge, Agape and Commitment levels even when controlling for social desirability.

However, the partial correlation between Mania and Commitment level while controlling for Social Desirability becomes slightly stronger and statistically significant which was earlier statistically insignificant. This suggests that the relationship between Mania and Commitment levels becomes more apparent when the influence of social desirability is taken into account. For Pragma, partial correlation is insignificant in both the scenarios, implying that even after accounting for social desirability, it has still an insignificant relationship with commitment levels.

Discussion

This study focusing on Indian youth, explored how engagement in casual sexual relationships and attitudes towards romantic relationships impact levels of commitment. It was posited that specifically individuals with a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation may encounter greater challenges in maintaining committed relationships.

To test this, the study's *1st hypothesis (H1)* postulated there will be a negative relation between experience of casual sexual

relationships and commitment levels among young adults. According to the correlation coefficient analysis, there is a significant negative relationship between casual sexual relationships (CSR) and commitment levels among young adults, with a correlation coefficient of $-.202^{**}$, which is significant at 0.01 level. The negative correlation coefficient suggests that as young adults engage more frequently in casual sexual relationships, their commitment levels tend to decrease. This finding aligns with existing literature which highlights that in comparison to traditional romantic relationships, casual sexual relationships—such as one-night stands, friends with benefits, and fuck buddies—are characterised by a lower level of commitment, temporality, profundity, and authenticity (Ben-Ze'ev, 2023).

The *2nd hypothesis (H2)* postulated that there will be a significant relationship between Relationship attitudes and commitment levels among young adults. The findings from the analysis reveal several noteworthy associations between relationship attitudes and commitment levels among young adults. Firstly, the correlation analysis demonstrated that relationship attitudes of Eros, Ludus, Storge, and Agape only exhibited statistically significant relationships with commitment levels at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. Interestingly, the analysis did not reveal any statistically significant correlation between Pragma and Mania attitudes with commitment levels. This indicates that pragmatic and possessive aspects of love, as well as manic and obsessive tendencies, do not exert a significant influence on commitment levels among the studied population.

Specifically, a positive and significant relationship was observed between the Eros attitude and commitment levels. The positive correlation between Eros and commitment levels implies that individuals who prioritize passionate and romantic aspects in their relationships tend to demonstrate higher

levels of commitment. Conversely, negative and significant relationship was identified between Ludus, Storge, Agape attitudes, and commitment levels. This suggests that higher levels of Ludus, Storge, and Agape attitudes are associated with decreased commitment levels among young adults. This means attitudes characterized by game-playing, friendship-based love, and selfless love are associated with lower levels of commitment among young adults. In contrast to our findings, Frey and Hojjat (1998) found that all love attitudes—except Ludus—positively correlated with a desire for commitment. Only a portion of the literature supports our findings, that is, our study's results on Ludus attitude and commitment level did uncover a negative correlation. In contrast to their research, it was discovered that Storge and Agape also had a negative correlation with levels of commitment.

When partial correlations were utilized to control the impact of social desirability in participants' responses, minimal alterations were noticed in the strength and significance of only Mania. Specifically, the partial correlation between Mania and Commitment levels, while controlling for Social Desirability, exhibited a slight increase in strength and achieved statistical significance, contrary to its previous state of statistical insignificance. This indicates that the relationship between Mania and Commitment levels becomes more discernible the influence of social desirability is considered. However, for all other variables the relationships with Commitment levels remained largely stable even after the influence of social desirability.

The *3rd hypothesis (H3)* postulated that Relationship attitudes will have a significant moderating role in relation to engagement in casual sexual relationships and commitment levels among Indian youth. The interaction, according to the findings, was not significant for either of the love attitudes. This implies that neither Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma,

Mania nor Agape materially changes how casual sexual relationships and commitment levels of young adults are related. This finding has important implications for understanding the dynamics of romantic relationships among young adults. The results do not align with our prediction that the experiences individuals have in casual sexual relationships may shape their attitudes and behaviors towards commitment in subsequent romantic relationships. Future studies should consider additional factors that could potentially modify this link. Factors such as individual personality traits, attachment styles, cultural norms, or relationship dynamics could potentially play a role in modifying this relationship.

The study's *4th hypothesis (H4)* looked into whether the young adults' engagement in casual sexual relationships will significantly predict commitment levels. The findings suggests that engagement in casual sexual relationships is indeed a significant predictor of commitment levels among young adults. Specifically, the regression coefficient associated with casual sexual relationships was found to be negative and statistically significant ($B = -.188, p < 0.003$). This suggests that as young adults engage more frequently in casual sexual relationships, their levels of commitment to romantic partners tend to decrease. This finding aligns with existing literature which highlights that individuals who engaged in casual sexual relationships were more likely to report lower levels of commitment and satisfaction in their romantic relationships compared to those who did not engage in such relationships (Manning et al, 2006).

Finally, the *5th hypothesis (H5)* of the study examined whether the young adults' attitudes towards romantic relationships will significantly predict commitment levels. The results of the regression model showed that apart from just two attitudes—Pragma and Mania— all other attitudes significantly

predict participants' levels of commitment in romantic relationships. The results show a significant negative relationship between attitudes of Ludus, Storge, Agape and levels of commitment, indicating that those who have game-playing (are less serious in their romantic relationships), or have friendship based or selfless attitudes towards love, typically have lower levels of commitment. On the other hand, there is a strong positive correlation between Eros attitude and levels of commitment, suggesting that people who place a higher value on romantic and passionate aspects of their relationships also tend to be more committed.

Surprisingly, Pragma and Mania did not significantly affect the regression model's ability to predict commitment levels. This suggests that the attitudes that stand for practical love and obsessive love, respectively, have no bearing on the participants' degrees of commitment. This discovery presents a challenge to our prediction that distinct types of love attitudes are directly linked to commitment levels in relationships. It suggests that factors beyond these particular love attitudes may exert a more significant influence on determining individuals' levels of commitment in romantic relationships.

Overall, this study provides a useful foundation for future research into the factors that influence casual sexual relationships, relationship attitudes and commitment levels among Indian Youth.

Conclusion

The study investigated the complex interrelationships between casual sexual relationships, relationship attitudes and commitment levels among Indian youth. It was hypothesized that the experiences individuals have in casual sexual relationships may shape their attitudes and behaviors towards relationships in general, which in turn affects their commitment in subsequent romantic

relationships. To test this, a comprehensive array of statistical analysis, including correlation, regression and moderation analysis was used.

Despite the observation of statistically significant correlations and regression analyses between involvement in casual sexual relationships and levels of commitment, as well as between some of the relationship attitudes and levels of commitment, an interesting conclusion surfaced. It was discovered that adults' relationship attitudes did not moderate the association between their experience of casual sexual relationships and subsequent commitment levels. In simpler terms, this means that the attitudes that are formed as a result of an individual's experiences with relationships in general, including casual sexual relationships doesn't seem to change their commitment in other romantic relationships afterward.

According to theory, one might expect that at least a playful attitude (Ludus) could influence the connection between casual relationships and commitment levels, but even this attitude didn't have an effect. Therefore, it seems that regardless of which type of attitudes they hold towards relationships as a result of casual sexual experiences, their attitudes didn't seem to have a different impact on how committed they were in future romantic relationships.

This finding contradicts early predictions and raises the possibility that variables other than people's attitudes towards relationships may be more important in determining the association between casual sexual participation and degrees of commitment. It makes one think about other factors that could influence or change the association between infrequent sex and degree of commitment. This may include factors such as individual personality traits, attachment patterns, cultural norms, or social

circumstances that may interact with involvement in casual sexual encounters to determine commitment levels and thus are all possible areas of investigation.

Another significant discovery emerged from the analysis, that is, initially, attitudes associated with Mania showed no significant correlation with commitment levels. However, upon further examination of common method bias using partial correlation, a noteworthy shift was observed. The partial correlation between Mania and Commitment levels, with Social Desirability controlled for, displayed a subtle increase in strength and achieved statistical significance.

The absence of statistical significance among some associations in the study could potentially be attributed to limitations such as sample size or other confounding variables. This outcome underscores the necessity for more extensive and comprehensive research to fully grasp whether experiences in casual sexual relationships truly influence individuals' attitudes towards relationships and impacts their subsequent level of commitment. Future studies should prioritize larger and more diverse samples, as well as incorporate a broader range of variables to thoroughly investigate this complex relationship.

Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design hinders our ability to determine the causal association between degrees of commitment and participation in casual sexual encounters. Prospective investigations ought to endeavour to overcome these constraints by implementing longitudinal frameworks and leveraging increasingly objective metrics for casual sexual relationship involvement and commitment levels.

In conclusion, while previous research has explored these variables independently, our study integrates them into a comprehensive analysis, offering a more nuanced understanding of how they intersect and

influence one another. These results bring up new avenues for investigation and offer insightful new information. It is obvious that a holistic approach is required to continue to unravel the complex web of human behaviour, considering not only individual traits but also the larger context within which these dynamics occur. Future research might build on this work by taking a larger range of influencing factors into account, and diving further into analysing commitment levels.

Overall, our research offers significant new perspectives on the intricate dynamics of romantic relationship and commitment in young Indian adults. By investigating these relationships within the context of Indian youth, the study provides valuable insights into a demographic that is often understudied in this area. It emphasizes the necessity of more study to clarify the complex influences on the creation of commitment in an era where casual sexual relationships are becoming more and more prevalent and to gain a better knowledge of the elements influencing people's attitudes and actions regarding commitment in romantic relationships.

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