



Original Research Article

The Love - Breakup study: Defining love and exploring reasons for the breakup of romantic relationships

Ankit Chandra¹, Pragyan Paramita Parija²

¹Pahadi Jan Swasth Sanstha, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India

²Independent researcher, Odisha, India

Date of Submission :

30 August 2021

Date of Acceptance :

21 November 2021

Abstract

Background: Romantic relationships are quite common among young adults, and it has various outcomes, especially on psychosocial well-being. Currently, there is no data available from India. This study aimed to define love from the perspective of young adults and their beliefs associated with it and enumerate the reasons for the breakup of romantic relationships.

Methodology: We conducted an online survey using 'Google Form', targeting young adults through social media. The self-administered questionnaire had questions related to defining love, beliefs related to love, and the reasons for the first five breakups of the romantic relationship. We did thematic analysis for the qualitative data and descriptive data analysis for the quantitative data using 'R' software. Common words to describe love was analysed using 'Word Counter'.

Results: Among the 156 responses, 130 participants (83.3%) had any romantic relationship ever. The mean age of the participants was 24.7 (SD-5). Most of the participants were females (50%), having the highest educational qualification as graduation (36.6%), and with the current relationship as a single/post-breakup (50%). The top five common words used to describe love were - feeling (n = 26), person (n = 23), care (n=17), someone (n=17), feel (n=15). We were able to derive three definitions of love from the respondents' perspectives. The majority of the participants (86.5%,

n=135) believed that romantic love happens only once and reported that true love exists (68.6%). A total of 106 participants ever had a breakup of romantic relationships. The top five reasons for breakup were incompatibility, no feelings left (bored), cheating, long-distance relationship, and family did not approve.

Conclusion: Love was mainly described as a positive feeling, with most of the participants had belief that it happens only once. The common reasons for breakup were incompatibility and no feelings left (bored).

Keywords:

Love, Define, Beliefs, Breakup, Reasons

Corresponding author: Ankit Chandra

Email: suniyal3151@gmail.com

How to cite article: Chandra, A., Parija, P.P., (2021).

The Love - Breakup study: Defining love and exploring reasons for the breakup of romantic relationships. Indian Journal of Health Sexuality and Culture 7 (2), 41-48.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6062843>

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 License which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Introduction

Falling in love and having romantic relationships is quite common among adolescents and young adults. Various outcomes (especially psychosocial well-being) are related to romantic relationships (Gómez-López et al., 2019; Shulman and Connolly, 2013). The breakup of a romantic relationship is a life event as it can change an individual's behavior and self-concept and induce emotional distress. It makes a person vulnerable to poor mental health (Slotter et al., 2010). A study has demonstrated that individuals with a recent breakup of romantic relationships have higher severity of depression (-like state) than subjects with romantic relationships (Verhallen et al., 2019). Various other studies have reported several negative effects of the breakup of romantic relationships like stress, anxiety, substance abuse, low self-esteem and confidence, poor physical health (Chung et al., 2002; Fleming et al., 2010; Lewandowski Jr et al., 2006; Rhoades et al., 2011). However, another group of studies has reported few positive effects after bouncing back from such traumatic experiences like a higher level of functioning, interpersonal growth, make them stronger, self-cultivated, and wiser (Hebert and Popadiuk, 2008; Kansky and Allen, 2018; Marshall et al., 2013; Tashiro and Frazier, 2003). There are various studies on the effects of the breakup of romantic relationships, but there is a dearth of literature on reasons for the breakups of romantic relationships. Therefore to generate the evidence from India, we conducted this study. For many years love has been a cynosure for scholars, poets, philosophers, and artists. Several scientists have attempted various methods to understand love better and have tried to define it (Bode and Kushnick, 2021; Langeslag and van Strien, 2016; Seshadri, 2016; Tobore, 2020). However, it has not

been defined from the perspective of the people. We conducted this study to define love from the respondent's perspective and understand their beliefs related to love.

Methodology

This was a cross-sectional study conducted on the digital platform. A semi-structured questionnaire in the English language was created in Google forms. The questionnaire was self-administered and circulated through social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook). We focused on enrolling the young adult (≥ 18 yr) participants in the social circle of the authors. The questionnaire contained details of the participants like gender, age, and education. It contained questions about defining love, beliefs related to love, past and current romantic relationship details, reasons for the first five breakups, learnings from break up, dealing with a breakup, overcoming a breakup. This survey was conducted from 29th April 2021 to 18th May 2021. The consent was taken from all the participants (digital mode), and the participants filled the questionnaire anonymously. Responses from the Google form were exported to MS Excel. For the quantitative data, descriptive analysis was done using R software (R core team, 2004). The variables were presented in the form of numbers and proportions. For the qualitative data, open coding was done by the two authors. Codes were further categorised as domains and themes. We did a thematic analysis. The authors had several discussion sessions to compile and derive a standard definition of love from the responses. Any disagreement was resolved through consensus. For the formation of the word cloud, we used the 'word counter' for the analysis (DataBasic.io, 2016).

Results

We received a total of 159 responses. There were three frivolous responses. Therefore,

they were not considered for the analysis. Data were analysed for 156 participants. The mean age of the participants was 24.7 (SD-5). The majority of the participants were females (50%), having the highest

educational qualification as graduates (36.6%) and with the current relationship status (at the time of the study) as a single/post-breakup (50%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Gender, education, and relationship status of the participants

Variables		Frequency (percentage)
Gender	Female	78 (50%)
	Male	75 (48.1%)
	Third Gender	3 (1.9%)
Highest educational qualification	Higher secondary	41 (26.3%)
	Graduation	57 (36.6%)
	Postgraduation	54 (34.6%)
	Higher than post-graduation	4 (2.6%)
Relationship status at the time of study	Married or officially engaged to love of your life (love marriage)	16 (10.3%)
	Married or officially engaged (arranged marriage)	15 (9.6%)
	Single/post-breakup	78 (50%)
	In romantic relationship / complicated	47 (30.1%)

Among the 156 participants, 130 participants (83.3%) had any romantic relationship ever. The mean age of the first romantic relationship was 19.1yrs (SD-4.9), and the mean number of romantic relationships (including current and past, n=130) was 2.4 (SD-2.3). Among the participants, 107

(68.6%) participants had a belief that true love exists, 24 (15.4%) participants had a belief that true love does not exist, and 25 (16%) participants stated maybe or do not know. A majority of the participants (86.5%, n=135) had a belief that romantic love happens only one time and to look for a partner at school or college (59.6%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Where a person should look for a romantic partner? (Multiple options, n=156)

Variables	Frequency (percentage)
School / College	93 (59.6%)
Work place	58 (37.2%)
Meet through common friends	59 (37.8%)
Don't look out	37 (23.3%)
Matrimony	20 (22.8%)
Dating app	28 (17.9%)
Neighbourhood	21 (13.5%)
Library	1 (0.6%)
Anywhere	1 (0.6%)

A total of 106 participants ever had a breakup of romantic relationships. The mean age of the participant at the time of the first breakup of a romantic relationship was 20.1yrs (SD-5.1), and the mean number of breakups (n=106) was 2.2 (SD-2.4). The mean duration of the shortest romantic relationship was 1.1 years (SD-1.5), and it ranged from 8 hours to 8 years. The mean duration of the longest romantic relationship (current and past) was 4 years (SD-3.6), and it ranged from 3 months to 17 years. The most common learnings from the breakups were - 'do not trust anyone' and 'accept the reality and move on'. The other mentioned learnings were - nothing is permanent, understand what you want and your worth, do not rush into decisions, do not drag it, express yourself, do not cheat, do not get attached, love is eternal (never dies), maturity, love is not easy, love destroys you, stay single, do not let people take advantage of you, do not compromise, maturity. One of the participants (male, 19yrs old) stated, "Love is an ideal situation, relationship is a fact. In the practical world, it is very difficult to find a 'true love'. So, one should rather focus on finding a partner who stands at the same level in terms of family & educational background, so that the relationship will be compatible & long-lasting. While the hypothetical true love is eternal & everlasting. And finally, the biggest lesson I learnt is that nothing is permanent".

The most common answer to 'How to deal with a breakup?' was the distraction of mind by keeping oneself busy through music, sports/ gym, socializing, spending time with friends and family, focusing on hobby or studies, go for shopping, food, outing (vacation). Another standard answer was - 'give yourself time to heal'. Few participants mentioned looking for a better relationship partner than a previous partner (rebound relationship). One of the participants (male, 27yrs old) stated - "Chocolates, ice cream,

movies, novel, writing, painting, singing. Basically, doing things that make you happy and bring you a part of the joy you felt being in the company of the other person. And learning to let go in the meanwhile. Habits die hard, but time heals everything". The popular answer to 'How breakup can be done with less emotional damage' was honest and clear communication. Participants also mentioned having a good closure with genuine reason, mutual understanding, and respecting each other.

The top five reasons for breakup were - incompatibility, no feelings left (bored), cheating, long-distance relationship, and family did not approve (Table 3). Around one-fifth of the participants were not aware of the reasons. As the breakup number increased, the proportion for the reason as no feelings left (bored), cheating, and bad sex life increased. There was a decrease in proportion for incompatibility and inter-religion issues, increasing the breakup. Though the proportion for the reasons like finding someone better, abusive relationship, inter caste issues, and do not know the reason remained high.

Discussion

We were able to derive three definitions of love based on the responses. Participants had negative and positive perceptions of love. Therefore, we derived the definitions from both perspectives. Most of the participants described love as a feeling, and our derived definitions of love resonate with the previous few studies (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986; Tobore, 2020). None of the participants had defined love in terms of neurochemicals or scientific terminology as defined in the previous studies (Seshadri, 2016; Young, 2009). Studies in the past have defined love after classifying it into various categories/types (Hendrick and Hendrick,

Table 3: Reasons for breakup(Multiple options)

Reasons for breakup	First break up (n=106)	Second break up (n=51)	Third break up (n=33)	Fourth break up (n=15)	Fifth break up (n=13)
Incompatibility / Fighting frequently	32(30.2%)	7 (13.7%)	10 (30.3%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)
Long distance relationship	31(29.2%)	9 (17.6%)	5 (15.2%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (15.4%)
Cheating	22(20.8%)	10 (19.6%)	5 (15.2%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (38.5%)
No feelings left /Bored	28(26.4%)	4 (7.8%)	4 (12.1%)	5 (33.3%)	4 (30.7%)
Don't know the reason	21(19.8%)	6 (11.8%)	7 (21.2%)	3 (20%)	3 (23.1%)
Inter religion issue	9 (8.5%)	7 (13.7%)	0	0	0
Inter-caste issue	11(10.4%)	0	2 (6.1%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)
Age difference	0	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	0	0
Economic differences	3 (2.8%)	0	1 (3%)	0	0
Family didn't approve	14(13.2%)	1 (2%)	3 (9.1%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)
Found someone better	9 (8.5%)	2 (4%)	2 (6.1%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)
Abusive relationship	11(10.4%)	9 (17.6%)	1 (3%)	1 (6.7%)	0
Bad sex life	3 (2.8%)	2 (4%)	0	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)
Lack of time	1 (1.9%)	7 (13.7%)	8 (24.2%)	0	0
Studies	1 (1.9%)	0	0	0	0
Realised it was not love	4 (3.8%)	0	0	0	0
Trust issues	1 (0.9%)	0	0	0	0
Didn't receive the equal response (efforts) in return	0	0	1 (3%)	0	0
Couldn't move on from previous relationship	0	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)

1986; Lopez-Cantero, 2018; Tobore, 2020). In our study, love was not subdivided into types as a majority of the participants defined it in terms of romantic love. The beliefs related to love were mainly related to the positive perspective about love as the proportion of participants having a positive perspective about love was higher. A nationwide survey conducted in Britain found the most familiar reasons for divorce and co habitations were reasons related to communication, relationship quality issues, and followed by cheating (Gravningen et al., 2017). We found additional reasons like inter-religion, inter-caste, and family disagreement. This difference could be due to the differences in the cultural backgrounds and beliefs of the participants. Most participants mentioned distraction of mind as a solution to deal with the breakup of romantic relationships, and few mentioned dating a better partner (rebound relationship). This was similar to the findings of Marshall and others (Marshall et al., 2013).

In this study, we defined love from the respondents' perspective and studied their beliefs related to it. These findings are vital to understanding the current beliefs and behaviour of young adults related to romantic love. To our knowledge, this was the first study from India on love and romantic relationships. In the future, further studies can be conducted in India to study the outcome of romantic relationships in terms of the psychosocial well-being of young adults. The anonymous online mode of this study might have reduced the social desirability bias towards the sensitive/personal questions. However, complete anonymity also resulted in few frivolous responses. In our study, the questionnaire was self-administered, which may have its limitation of variations in interpretation of the questionnaire. The authors have a medical background and have limited experience in social sciences. It might have affected the

interpretation of the results. The addition of in-depth interviews with participants and a study of their personality traits could have better understood the topic. Due to the limitations of the online surveys, we could not report the response rate, characteristics of non-respondents, and sampling methodology (Ameen and Praharaj, 2020; Andrade, 2020; Singh and Sagar, 2021). Therefore findings from this study cannot be generalised as the participants may not be true representatives of the general population.

Conclusion

Most of the participants described love as a positive feeling. More than two-thirds had a belief that it happens only once, and true love exists. Few participants had a negative perspective about love. The common reasons for breakup were incompatibility and no feelings left (bored).

Acknowledgements : None

Conflict of interest : None

References

- Ameen, S., Praharaj, S.K., (2020). Problems in using WhatsApp groups for survey research. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 62, 327.
- Andrade, C., (2020). The limitations of online surveys. *Indian journal of psychological medicine*, 42, 575–576.
- Bode, A., Kushnick, G., (2021). Proximate and Ultimate Perspectives on Romantic Love. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 1088.
- Chung, M.C., Farmer, S., Grant, K., Newton, R., Payne, S., Perry, M., Saunders, J., Smith, C., Stone, N., (2002). Self - esteem, personality and post traumatic stress symptoms following the dissolution of a dating relationship. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, 18, 83–90.
- DataBasic.io, (2016). WordCounter [WWW

- Document]. URL <https://www.databasic.io/en/wordcounter/#paste> (accessed 7.23.21).
- Fleming, C.B., White, H.R., Oesterle, S., Haggerty, K.P., Catalano, R.F., (2010). Romantic relationship status changes and substance use among 18-to 20-year-olds. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 71, 847–856.
- Gómez-López, M., Viejo, C., Ortega-Ruiz, R., (2019). Well-being and romantic relationships: A systematic review in adolescence and emerging adulthood. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16, 2415.
- Gravningen, K., Mitchell, K.R., Wellings, K., Johnson, A.M., Geary, R., Jones, K.G., Clifton, S., Erens, B., Lu, M., Chayachinda, C., (2017). Reported reasons for breakdown of marriage and cohabitation in Britain: Findings from the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3). *Plos one*, 12, e0174129.
- Hebert, S., Popadiuk, N., (2008). University students' experiences of non marital breakups: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49, 1–14.
- Hendrick, C., Hendrick, S., (1986). A theory and method of love. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50, 392.
- Kansky, J., Allen, J.P., (2018). Making sense and moving on: The potential for individual and interpersonal growth following emerging adult breakups. *Emerging Adulthood*, 6, 172–190.
- Langeslag, S.J., van Strien, J.W., (2016). Regulation of romantic love feelings: Preconceptions, strategies, and feasibility. *PLoS one*, 11, e0161087.
- Lewandowski Jr, G.W., Aron, A., Bassis, S., Kunak, J., (2006). Losing a self - expanding relationship: Implications for the self - concept. *Personal Relationships*, 13, 317–331.
- Lopez-Cantero, P., (2018). The break-up check: Exploring romantic love through relationship terminations. *Philosophia*, 46, 689–703.
- Marshall, T.C., Bejanyan, K., Ferenczi, N., (2013). Attachment styles and personal growth following romantic breakups: The mediating roles of distress, rumination, and tendency to rebound. *PloS one*, 8, e75161.
- R core team, (2004). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. The R Foundation for Statistical Computing. Vienna, Austria.
- Rhoades, G.K., Kamp Dush, C.M., Atkins, D.C., Stanley, S.M., Markman, H.J., (2011). Breaking up is hard to do: the impact of unmarried relationship dissolution on mental health and life satisfaction. *Journal of family psychology*, 25, 366.
- Seshadri, K.G., (2016). The neuroendocrinology of love. *Indian journal of endocrinology and metabolism*, 20, 558.
- Shulman, S., Connolly, J., (2013). The challenge of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood: Reconceptualization of the field. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1, 27–39.
- Singh, S., Sagar, R., (2021). A critical look at online survey or questionnaire-based research studies during COVID-19. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 65, 102850.
- Slotter, E.B., Gardner, W.L., Finkel, E.J., (2010). Who am I without you? The influence of romantic breakup on the self-concept. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 36, 147–160.
- Tashiro, T.Y., Frazier, P., (2003). “I'll never be in a relationship like that again”: Personal growth following romantic relationship breakups. *Personal Relationships*, 10, 113–128.
- Tobore, T.O., (2020). Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Love: The Quadruple Theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 862.
- Verhallen, A.M., Renken, R.J., Marsman, J.-B.C., Ter Horst, G.J., (2019). Romantic relationship breakup: An experimental model to study effects of stress on depression (-like) symptoms. *PLoS One*, 14, e0217320.
- Young, L., (2009). Being Human: Love: Neuroscience reveals all: Poetry it is not. Nor is it particularly romantic. But reducing love to its component parts helps us to understand human sexuality, and may lead to drugs that enhance or diminish our love for another, says Larry J. Young. *Nature*, 457.