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Emotional Investment, Commitment and Quality of Life in Pre-Marital Relationships among Young Adults in Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of the current research was to explore the relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life in pre-marital relationships in youth. The cross-sectional survey design was used. In total, 150 men and women participated in the research. Investment Model Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Quality-of-Life Scale, and Pre-marital Sexual Permissive Scale were used to assess the study variables. Findings revealed that men demand women to engage more in sexual relationships as a marital requisite which is why most male partners convince their female partner to have sex as a commitment to marriage. Furthermore, emotionally satisfying relationships promote positivity and vice versa impacting academic achievement whilst promoting anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among both men and women. Also, women have more negative mental health in their pre-marital relationships as compared to men. Researchers also found that care, happiness, and empathy in the relationship have positive effects on mental health of young adults. This research will enable young adults and marital counselors alike in dealing with the complexities of premarital relationships.

Keywords: commitment, emotional investment, pre-marital relationship, quality of life.

Introduction

In premarital romantic relationships, two humans of the opposite sex are attracted emotionally, physically, and sexually towards one another. A premarital relationship is also characterized as getting involved in sexual intercourse by persons who have not engaged in a marital vow or are culturally recognized as having been enrolled in a marriage institution. Mutual attraction ignites desires for interactions eventually leading to sexual relations. Dating is the primary cause of premarital sex (Kim et al., [2011](#)). Such relations can affect an individual's quality of life.

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Premarital sex is morally unacceptable in almost every human society that regards marriage as the legitimate requirement for sexual permissiveness (Ajiboye et al., [2014](#)). Not all premarital sexual relationships culminate in marriage. For this reason, it is important to understand one's real identity, expectations, and characteristics during their premarital relationship to wade of potential issues (Kalkan & Ersanli, [2009](#)).

Abdullahi and Umer ([2013](#)) explained that values are conceptions of what is right and what is wrong. Premarital relationships have some pros and cons. On the positive side, there is acceptance from your peers, hope for pleasure, and the fulfillment of one's sexual desires. The negative side of the scale carries the weight of guilt, morals, and fear of pregnancy or disease. Women tend to invest more in relationships. Emotional investment is a subject in which couples experience positive moments together such as leisure activities and spending time with each other which help them to build an emotional capital between them (Walsh et al., [2014](#)). The emotional investment includes being involved in loyalty and spending time and money on each other. Investment leads to a high level of emotions including delight, anger, and love and lower investment leads to neutral emotions and causes tensions but if a person invests more than a limit it will also cause problems. Some individuals think that they start investing emotionally into their relationships from the very first moments which causes attachment between them (Loaring et al., [2015](#)). Young adults in romantic relationships face emotional trauma when their affective investment goes to waste in the form of a breakup leading to a host of psychological issues which may affect their academic performance (Newman et al., [2007](#)). Young students invest more in their first relationships because they find it real and engaged in deep trust and love but become hurt when their relationships come to end because in the very first relationships they invest emotionally, physically as well as sexually due to more trust (Chambers et al., [2019](#)).

Commitment makes a premarital relationship more painful. Commitment and emotional investment go hand in hand. Commitment is a cornerstone in human social life which predict individual behaviors for their desires or interests for their long-term relationships. Their commitment also facilitates the planning and coordination of actions involving different subjects (Pancheri et al., [2002](#)). Pre-marital relationships are also termed as unofficial relationships and are described as the commitment between a man

and a woman supporting each other physically and emotionally without fulfilling any religious procedure or legal process defined under the law and owning the social define responsibilities. People who are insecure and lack attention from family and peers move towards dating sights or sometimes engaging in pre-marital relationships which have a great influence on their lives, especially how they perceive things, understand the meaning of life and act in accordance.

Pre-marital relationships have deep impact on quality of life of young adults especially the university students. It has been thought that institutions these days are changing into dating hubs and students are getting involved with each other which is causing negative effect on their studies, time, financial condition, and mental health. Romantic relationships lead to a lower level of well-being because young individuals experience more sadness and anger in committed romantic relationships because they spent much of their time with each other and have commitments about marriage and fantasize about a joyful and loving life. Separation leads to increased psychological distress and decreased life Satisfaction (Simon & Barrett, 2010). To explain this phenomenon Jennings et al. (2014) studied pre-marital relationship attitudes and sexual experiences in Delhi youth. They found that social media played a major role in the formation of pre-marital, sexual, and romantic relationships. Male dominance also contributed to enhancing male sexual attitudes that they forcefully do intercourse by using the myth of male dominance and mental health.

Jennings et al. (2014) also wanted to know the reasons behind pre-marital relationships and sexual behaviors of youth. They assessed 583 men and 475 women participants from the age of 18-24. Results showed that 82% of men and 62% of women reported feeling good in heterosexual premarital relationships and 13% of men and 10% of women reported both negative and positive feelings in pre-marital relationships. Women reported that men approach them first to have a relationship and convince them for sexual activities. 63% of women reported that they feel good when a man approached them and 15% of women reported that they become physical after some meetings with their boyfriends and 40% of them said that they wanted to marry with their boyfriend but 69% of the men said that they like to have sex with women partners if they wanted to get marry because men think that showing love by doing intercourse help them to make a commitment to marry with each other. In some cases, boys force girls to

have sex to prove their love because boys indicate that having sex in a relationship is not so bad, but the results show that boys left that girl who become ready for intercourse with them and decided to not marry her.

Similarly, Czyżowska et al. (2019) studied the sense of intimacy in young adults and their relationships with their parents in childhood which helps to make a strong bond of intimacy in the future. In total, 227 individuals were selected for the research, of which 114 were women and 113 were men. 40% of them were married and 60% were engaged in informal relationships. Participants reported that intimacy is an important factor in interpersonal relationships which leads to the sexual bond, care, openness, closeness, and empathy. Couples also expose their inner world by revealing their secrets to each other after having trust in their relationship built up due to day to day interaction with each other.

Shrestha (2019) studied premarital sexual behaviors in youth and adolescents to identify the factors that affect premarital sexual behaviors and their impact on adolescent health. He identified that there are many risk factors caused by premarital sexual behaviors such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, pregnancy, and suicide. All of these have negative effect on mental health of adolescents. He identified peer relationships as a major factor for premarital sex. Good peer relationships lead toward care, affection, and happiness and rise the sexual desires between the opposite sexes due to more time spent with each other. Results of peer relationships showed that 57.1% of boys and 55.6% of girls have their first intercourse with their girlfriends and boyfriends, and they also reported that their best friends are their boyfriends and girlfriends at the same time (Shamu et al., 2016). Results also showed that 68% of women engaged in pre-marital sex which leads to unwanted pregnancy, 93% of respondents led to HIV and 68% of them reported depression due to guilt. All those factors badly affect the mental health of adolescents that consequently have negative effect on their future performances. Perilloux and Buss (2008) studied breakups in romantic relationships, the cost they pay for it, and what coping strategies they used to cope with their distress. One hundred ninety-three adults from America Participated in the study. Women were more in numbers ($n = 101$) as compared to men ($n = 98$). 80% of men face breakups and 71% of them face rejection and specifically they identify women how much of them lose their mating protection and harmed by their male sex-partners. Women bear

less amount of financial loss after a breakup as compared to men (Smock & Manning, [2005](#)).

Booth and Amato ([2001](#)) found that students who are more engaged in doing commitments, living in long-term relationships, plan for marriage and children are highly involved in life dissatisfaction and stress and when they made new relationships. They felt the same stress due to the past negative experience with their ex-partner. In the past 20 months, 37.5 % of participants faced more than one breakup and 19.5% faced one breakup which cause a decline in life satisfaction and an increase in distress. Studies also show that some of the individuals start communication again with ex-partners to give themselves internal satisfaction (Slotter et al., [2010](#)). Local researchers found that romantic relationships among university students impact their studies and mental health and their commitment to each other. They fulfil each other's emotional and physical desires by forgetting religious beliefs. It is suggested that this happens due to the educational institutes getting converting to dating hubs which affect the student's emotional, educational, and mental health (Ajmal et al., [2020](#)). Faisal et al. ([2022](#)) conducted a qualitative study to explore the reasons for premarital sex among young male adults in Pakistan that certain themes are more likely to explain the phenomenon. They found that the themes of early introduction to sex, sex-related factors, psychological needs, sex for social gains, personal norms towards premarital sex, and availability of opportunity for sex were major themes. On the other hand, Nadeem et al. ([2021](#)) opine that parents believe that sex education in educational institutions was a big reason for the rising number of pre-marital sex incidences. One reason could be that in such relationships women tend to suffer more, both emotionally and academically (Cheema et al., [2021](#)). Therefore, parents are against the idea of pre-marital relationships.

Folklore suggests that all of this happen due to the educational institutes being converted into dating hubs which affect the student's emotional, educational, and mental health. It is obvious that two opposite genders are attracted to each other, and it is a basic need to be in a relationship but is considered taboo in Pakistan. If we talk about South Asia there are many stories of love like Heer and Ranjha, they were love birds but were punished by cultural beliefs. When we heard the name of a relationship, we think about partners but it should not be forgotten that it is illegal before marriage. The current study aimed at studying the nature of pre-marital relationships,

emotional investment, and mental health among students studying in different colleges and universities who were involved in pre-marital relationships during their studies. If the relationship fails it causes stress and damages the quality of life. The current research has been specifically conducted to measure the limits to which the students have immersed into this adopted dating Culture, and this has become a trend in our today's culture and also the young generations are being motivated to these types of things. This research also explains how parents should establish friendly behavior with their children at younger age so that the parents can keep an eye on their every move because attachment in any relationship affects on youth's mental health and cause psychological problems but in some cases, premarital relationship positively impacts on couple's quality of life by showing care and trust.

Objective

The objective of the current research was find out the relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life in youth with premarital relationships.

Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life in young adults in pre-marital relationships.
2. Emotional investment significantly predicts commitment and quality of life in young adults in premarital relationships.

Method

Research Design

As the research question was geared towards the student population, and because the nature of the research hypothesis warranted one-time interaction only, and the fact that we aimed at understanding the relationship among psychological constructs of interest, correlational design was used to carry out the current study.

Sample

In this research convenience sampling strategy was used due to the difficulty of finding an adequate sample through random sampling. A sample of 150 men and women aged 18-25 years was included in this study. We screened out individuals who were not in a romantic relationship at the

beginning of the online survey. Only respondents reporting being in a premarital relationship were retained. The respondents were primarily from various colleges and universities of Lahore.

Assessment Measures

Premarital Sexual Permissive Scale (PSP)

Premarital sexual permissive scale given by Reiss (1964) was used in the study. The scales have been tested on national adult samples and also on student samples. It is a basic 12-item scale may be broken down into several subscales for particular research problems. These scales allow researchers to classify respondents into various potential sexual standards and to measure the level of sexual permissiveness. The scale is valid and has .95 inter-item reliability. Participants who have higher scores were found to have a more positive attitude towards premarital sex.

Relationship Assessment Scale

Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendricks, 1988) was used to assess the commitment between youth. The Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) is a relationship-based scale that gives us a brief measure of global relationship satisfaction. It consists of seven items, designed to measure general relationship satisfaction. Respondents answer each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*low satisfaction*) to 5 (*high satisfaction*). It shows moderate to high correlations with measures of marital satisfaction, good test-retest reliability, and consistent measurement properties across samples of ethnically diverse and age-diverse couples, as well as partners seeking marital and family therapy.

Investment Model Scale

Investment Model Scale (Rusbult & Agnew, 1998) was used to assess emotional investment among college and university students. It is a 29-item scale that measures four constructs of the investment model commitment level, relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size. The relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size components each have facet items that are initially asked, prior to more global items. Respondents answer each item on a 9-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 9 (*completely*).

Quality of Life Scale

Quality-of-Life Scale (Burckhardt & Anderson, [2003](#)) was used to measure the quality of life among college and university students. The Quality-of-Life Scale (QOLS) originated from John Flanagan, who was an American psychologist (Burckhardt & Anderson, [2003](#)). The Quality-of-Life Scale measures five conceptual domains which are material and physical well-being, relationships with other people, social, community, and civic activities, personal development and fulfillment, and recreation. The QOLS is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring the quality of life from the perspective of the patient.

Demographic Information Sheet

It included gender, marital status, educational level, and level of education.

Characteristics	<i>f (%)</i>
Gender	
Men	72(48)
Women	78(52)
Education	
SSC/HSSC	126(84)
Bachelor	24(16)
Relationship Status	
Single/Unmarried	150(100)

Procedure

The data was taken from universities and college students for determining the range of pre-marital relationship among them and their emotional investment, commitments with each other during their relationships. Ethical considerations were followed by the researchers. The data was collected from young adults studying in different colleges and universities using Google docs because of the current pandemic. Approximately 10 minutes were required for completing a questionnaire.

Results

Pre-marital relationships become common day by day as men and women become engaged in pre-marital relationships and build emotional attachments by sharing their feelings, love, concerns and making

commitments. The research was taken out to investigate the relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life.

Initially, descriptive analyses were calculated to find out reliability.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Calculated for Emotional Investment, Commitment and Quality of Life (N=150)

Variables	k	M(SD)	Ranges		α
			Potential	Actual	
Emotional Investment	12	42.5(13.1)	6-72	12-72	.94
Commitment	7	22.9(6.79)	7-35	7-31	.78
Quality of Life	37	158.9(41.4)	37-296	37-229	.94

The above table showed the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha and inter consistent reliability for emotional investment, commitment and quality of life in pre-marital relationships. The table shows the potential and actual ranges. The reliability evaluation exhibited the excellent Cronbach's Coefficient ranging from .78 to .94.

To test the first hypothesis i.e. there is a relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life in youth with pre-marital relationships. Correlation analysis was executed with the following results.

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Between Emotional Investment, Commitment, and Quality of Life in youth with premarital relationships (N=150)

Variables	1	2	3
Emotional Investment	-	.11	.11
Commitment		-	.61**
Quality of Life			-

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Results indicated that emotional investment is non-significantly correlated with commitment and with quality of life whereas, commitment is positively correlated with quality of life in youth.

The second hypothesis stated that emotional investment predicts the relationship between commitment and quality of life in young adults in premarital relationships. Regression analysis was executed for hypothesis testing.

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Emotional Investment, Commitment and Quality of Life in Youth with premarital relationships (N=150)

Variables	β	SE
(Constant)		4.47
Commitment	.07	.19
Quality of life	.06	.03
R^2	.01	
F	1.24	

Regression analysis was carried out. Results showed that commitment and quality of life were non-significant predictors of emotional investment. The overall model accounted for 1% of the variance in emotional investment.

Discussion

The present study examined emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life among people involved in pre-marital relationships. It further examines the manner in which emotional investment and commitments may affect the individual's quality of life. Moreover, how individuals engage in pre-marital relationships and which factors have been involved that let them engage in positive relationships that help them to enhance their well-being. So, pre-marital relationships are interactive relationships with the arousal of physical and sexual desires, but it is also considered unethical attempts by individuals (Abraham et al., 2009). Partners' commitment in pre-marital relationships promotes the promises of a long-term relationship with the commitment of spending time together and exchanging basic life needs such as happiness, love, joy, and emotional and physical support (Kline et al.,

2004). Commitment promotes positive and negative mental health in youth (Muniruzzaman, 2017).

The first hypothesis was that there is likely to be a relationship between emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between commitment and quality of life. There was non-significant relationship between emotional investment and commitment. Similar studies also support the results of the hypothesis as Basel (2013) studied that pre-marital relationships lead towards sexual activities in heterosexual relationships and identified that men demands to engage in sexual relationships from their women partners if they want to marry each other that's why most of the men convince their women partner to have sex as a commitment of marriage. The present study shows that pre-marital relationships also have a negative impact on mental health. Aron and Henkemeyer (1995) stated that students in romantic relationships suffer more from anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and alcohol abuse; even in high school, which in turn hampers their academic achievement and negatively impacts their mental health.

Amato (2000) studied that individuals become committed in their relationships when they are satisfied i.e., they have a relationship in which they have a sexual bond, care, happiness, and empathy for each other. So, it suggests that commitments lead toward positive mental health and positive quality of life in which couples have a great sense of intimacy which helps individuals to make satisfied heterosexual relationships in the future. The present study results also show that commitment and emotional investment have no relationship with each other. Seager (2013) studied pre-marital relationship commitments have a negative impact on adolescents' physical and cognitive health. He said that peer relationship positively influences pre-marital relationships which lead to happiness, care, and sexual desires but their desires lead them towards unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, stress, and depression and all these factors negatively impact an individual's quality of life by lowering their self-esteem and lack of trust on other individuals. Results of the present study also show that commitment has a positive relationship with quality of life. Walsh et al. (2017) studied that there are also positive moments in pre-marital relationships that couples experience such as laughing together, spending leisure time with each other, sharing secrets, and exchanging gifts. Those moments help them to understand each other and have the commitment to spending life together.

The result of the present study also shows that women have more negative mental health in their relationships. Alemu et al. (2006) studied that men rely on sexual relationships to have commitments in their relationships, but women rely on attachment, and for this reason, women face more negative mental health when they suffered from breakups because women reported that they become more open in their relationships and start relying on it.

The second hypothesis was that emotional investment significantly predicts commitment and quality of life that more investment leads to more committed relationships and improved quality of life. Findings of the current study revealed that emotional investment did not predict commitment and quality of life. Finding are contradicted with the results of Brakier and Kelley (1979) who studied that sexual investment shows satisfaction and stability in relationships. They used a cross-sectional study and examined that romantic couples prefer sexual investment in their relationships for a long-term relationship and show that men and women who are actually satisfied with relationships are more committed and have long-term relationship. The present research also supports the finding that sharing emotional experiences and commitment to physical interaction highly leads to long-term relationships, so it is important to have sexual activities before marriage (Bragozzi et al., 1984).

The results of the study are supported by the findings of Hook et al. (2003) which explained that romantic relationships negatively impact student's mental health and well-being because their expectations in their pre-marital relationships become high and when they face relation termination, they suffer with low psychological well-being (Ventegodt, 1996). Perllioux (2008) studied that breakup in a romantic relationship cause more emotional loss of women investment because they are more committed to have a parental relationship, as well as, they invest more in a relationship by celebrating their men partner's birthday, have care of them, shares more personal secrets and men are more committed for short-term mating relationships and when their commitments change into breakups then woman face more depression, sadness, regret and anger as compared to men.

Conclusion

The present study wanted to evaluate how emotional investment, commitment, and quality of life work in pre-marital relationships with its positive and negative factors. So, on the basis of the findings, it is concluded that pre-marital relationships lead towards both negative and positive quality of life, but an excessive amount of emotional attachment causes more negative mental health and quality of life because of relationship termination. This relationship termination leads to low performance on individuals in their both academic and social activities as well as on daily performances. Commitments in pre-marital relationships have a negative impact on quality of life as correlation analysis shows because termination of commitments to stay in the relationship and promises to get married affect the trust of partners and lower the self-esteem.

Implications

This research will help the students of the society to be careful with pre-marital relationships containing emotional investment, and commitment and improve quality of life. This research will help to show that how those pre-marital relationships affect mental health development as well as it also affects physical health. The main thing is couples are not much aware of the diseases that they may get in romantic relationships. So, the present study helps to make youth aware of the fact that pre-marital relationships lead to both mental and physical health. It also helps youth to become aware that how positive relationships are built and how stress and negative factors of relationships should be managed to build commitment in the relationships.

Limitation and Suggestion

The study sample were limited due to which it is still being a taboo subject in local discourse.

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