



## A Comparative Study of Live-in Relationships and the Traditional Marriage System (With Reference to Banaskantha District)

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**Abstract:** *The primary objective of this research paper is to conduct a comparative study between the emerging form of relationship, namely live-in relationships, and the traditional institution of marriage in contemporary society. In the Indian context, marriage has historically been regarded as a sacred, stable, and socially sanctioned institution that not only unites two individuals but also integrates two families. However, with the processes of modernization, globalization, urbanization, and the expansion of higher education, greater emphasis is being placed on individual autonomy, personal freedom, and the right to choose among the youth.*

*In this changing scenario, live-in relationships have emerged as an alternative form of intimate partnership, wherein two individuals choose to cohabit without entering into a formal marital bond. This arrangement is increasingly visible, particularly among educated youth and in urban settings. The present study employs a descriptive and comparative research methodology to analyze the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of young individuals within the age group of 18 to 35 years.*

*The findings of the study indicate that awareness and acceptance of live-in relationships are gradually increasing, especially among educated and urban populations. Nevertheless, due to deeply rooted socio-cultural traditions, family values, and social pressures, the traditional institution of marriage continues to remain more dominant, stable, and widely accepted. The societal response towards live-in relationships appears to be mixed—while some perceive it as a symbol of freedom, equality, and modernity, others view it as a challenge to cultural norms and social stability.*

*This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the changing dynamics of relationships in modern Indian society, highlighting the evolving perspectives of youth and the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity. The findings are expected to be useful for policymakers, educators, and sociologists, particularly in understanding the future trajectory of family and marriage institutions.*

**Keywords:** *live-in relationships. traditional institution of marriage*



## 1. Introduction

In human society, the institution of marriage is recognized as a primary and fundamental social institution. It is not limited merely to reproduction and the regulation of sexual behavior, but also plays a crucial role in maintaining social order, structuring family life, and preserving cultural values. In traditional Indian society, marriage has been regarded as a sacred, enduring, and lifelong bond, wherein the interests of the family and society are given greater priority over individual choice.

However, processes such as modernization, globalization, urbanization, and the expansion of education have brought about significant transformations in social institutions. From a sociological perspective, these changes can be understood as a tension between tradition and modernity. Particularly among the youth, increasing emphasis on individual autonomy, personal freedom, and the right to choose has led to the emergence of alternative forms of relationships to the traditional institution of marriage.

In this context, live-in relationships have emerged as an important modern social phenomenon, wherein two consenting adults choose to cohabit without entering into a legally recognized marital union. Although this practice has its origins in Western societies, its influence is increasingly visible among the educated and urban segments of Indian society. Live-in relationships promote values such as individual freedom, gender equality, and flexibility in relationships; however, they simultaneously challenge traditional family values, social norms, and cultural expectations.

From a sociological standpoint, this transformation can be analyzed through frameworks such as modernization theory, individualism, and the changing nature of the family. In contemporary society, the boundaries between marriage and cohabitation are gradually becoming blurred, indicating the emergence of a new value system.

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of live-in relationships and the traditional marriage system, in order to understand the changing dynamics of relationships, the attitudes of youth, and patterns of social acceptance in modern society. This study seeks to critically examine the interaction and tension between tradition and modernity.

## 2. Objectives

- To understand the concept of live-in relationships
- To analyze the characteristics of the traditional marriage system
- To conduct a comparative study between the two forms of relationships
- To examine the attitudes of youth towards these relationship patterns
- To identify the level of social acceptance and the challenges associated with them



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### 3. Hypotheses

- **H1:** Acceptance of live-in relationships is increasing among youth
- **H2:** Educated individuals and those residing in urban areas are more likely to accept live-in relationships
- **H3:** The traditional marriage system remains more stable and socially accepted

### 4. Research Methodology

#### Type of Study:

Descriptive and comparative research design

#### Methods of Data Collection:

- **Primary Data:** Questionnaire and personal interviews
- **Secondary Data:** Books, academic journals, and research reports

#### Sample:

- Total respondents: 100
- Age group: 18 to 35 years
- Study area: aaseda, khardosan, dhanera, bhoyan Deesa and Palanpur (Urban and Semi-urban and rural areas)

### 5. Conceptual Framework (Banaskantha Context – Sociological Perspective)

This study is based on a comparative analysis of live-in relationships and the traditional institution of marriage within the socio-cultural context of Banaskantha District. The region is predominantly characterized by semi-urban and rural features, where traditional values, caste-based marriage practices (caste endogamy), and a family-centered social structure continue to function strongly.

Traditionally, marriage in this region is not merely an individual relationship but an institution closely associated with social status, family honor, and cultural norms. However, in recent years, the influence of education, urbanization, and media exposure has introduced new ideas and lifestyles among the youth.

#### 1. Modernization and Local Transformation

In Banaskantha District, increasing levels of education, growing interaction with urban centers such as Deesa and Palanpur, and the influence of digital media have gradually led to changes in traditional values. In this context, awareness regarding concepts like live-in relationships is increasing; however, their practical acceptance remains limited.



## 2. Individualism vs Collectivism

The region largely reflects a collectivist social structure, where individual decisions are significantly influenced by family and societal expectations. Live-in relationships promote individualism, emphasizing personal choice and autonomy, which often comes into conflict with the prevailing collective values of the society.

## 3. Structural–Functional Perspective

From a structural–functional standpoint, traditional marriage plays a vital role in maintaining social stability, reproduction, and family organization. The extent to which live-in relationships fulfill these social functions remains questionable, particularly in rural and semi-urban contexts.

## 4. Gender Relations and Power Structure

In Banaskantha District, a patriarchal social structure continues to dominate. Within traditional marriage, women’s roles are often defined by customary expectations, whereas live-in relationships emphasize equality and autonomy. This shift creates challenges in achieving social acceptance within the existing cultural frameworks

## 5. Symbolic Interpretation

In this region, marriage is commonly perceived as a “sacrament” and a “social obligation,” whereas live-in relationships are often interpreted as “non-traditional” or “socially unacceptable.” These differing symbolic meanings lead to clear variations in individual attitudes and perceptions.

## 6. Data Analysis and Interpretation (Banaskantha reference)

**Table 1: Awareness of Live-in Relationships**

Area	Total Respondents	Aware of Live-in Relationship	Percentage
Rural Area	100	5	5%
Urban Area (Deesa, Palanpur, Tharad)	100	20	20%

### Interpretation

The above data indicate that awareness of live-in relationships is significantly low in rural areas (only 5%), whereas it is comparatively higher in urban areas (20%). This variation can be attributed to factors such as higher levels of education, greater media exposure, and urban lifestyle influences.

### Table 2: Acceptance Level of Live-in Relationships



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Area	Accept (%)	Reject (%)	Uncertain (%)
Rural Area	2%	90%	8%
Urban Area	10%	70%	20%

- **Interpretation**

The data reveal that rural populations show a predominantly negative attitude towards live-in relationships, largely due to the strong influence of traditional values and social control mechanisms. In contrast, urban areas exhibit relatively higher levels of acceptance; however, complete social acceptance is still limited.

**Table 3: Impact of Migration and Exposure**

Category	Awareness (%)	Acceptance (%)
Local Residents (Banaskantha)	10%	5%
Individuals with Mega City Exposure	40%	25%

- **Interpretation**

The data clearly demonstrate that individuals who have exposure to metropolitan cities show significantly higher levels of awareness (40%) and acceptance (25%) of live-in relationships compared to local residents. This suggests that migration, urban exposure, and interaction with diverse cultural environments play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward non-traditional relationship patterns.

Individuals who travel to or reside in metropolitan cities such as Ahmedabad and Mumbai exhibit higher levels of both awareness and acceptance of live-in relationships. This indicates that urban exposure and the influence of global culture play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward such relationship patterns.

## 7. Findings

This study is based on a comparative analysis of live-in relationships and the traditional marriage system in the context of Banaskantha District. The major findings of the study are as follows:

- Awareness of live-in relationships is very low (approximately 5%) in rural areas, reflecting the strong influence of traditional values and social control.
- In urban areas such as Deesa, Palanpur, and Tharad, awareness is relatively higher (around 20%), indicating the impact of urbanization and education.



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- Acceptance of live-in relationships remains limited in both rural and urban areas; however, a gradual increase in acceptance is observed in urban settings.
  - Individuals with exposure to metropolitan cities exhibit higher levels of both awareness and acceptance, highlighting the influence of global culture and modern lifestyles.
  - The traditional marriage system continues to function as a more stable, dominant, and socially accepted institution.
  - Society reflects a mixed attitude toward live-in relationships—while youth show increasing interest and acceptance, the older generation tends to be less accepting.

## 8. Conclusion

The study clearly indicates that in regions like Banaskantha District, which are characterized by semi-urban and rural features, the traditional institution of marriage continues to be dominant and influential. Marriage is perceived not merely as a personal relationship but as a social obligation closely linked with culture, family honor, and social norms.

However, due to the processes of modernization, education, media influence, and urban exposure, new perspectives regarding relationships are emerging among the youth. Awareness of concepts such as live-in relationships is increasing, particularly among individuals residing in urban areas or those exposed to metropolitan environments.

Thus, it can be concluded that live-in relationships in Banaskantha are still at an early stage of acceptance and remain limited in practice. Nevertheless, in the future, due to ongoing social change and the influence of globalization, a co-existence of both systems—traditional marriage and live-in relationships—may emerge.

This study highlights the dynamic interplay and tension between tradition and modernity, which is of significant importance in contemporary sociological analysis.

## 9. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

- Educational and social programs should be organized to promote awareness and provide proper guidance to youth regarding relationships.
- Open dialogue should be encouraged in society to better understand changing relationship patterns.
- Communication between family and society should be strengthened to reduce the generation gap.
- Gender equality and responsible relationship practices should be promoted.
- Policymakers should enhance awareness regarding legal and social protections in the context of changing social conditions.



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- Efforts should be made to improve awareness of modern concepts in rural areas through education and information dissemination.

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