

Navigating Cultural Boundaries: Perceptions of Open Relationships among Sri Lankan Millennials

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ABSTRACT

In a backdrop where consensual non-monogamy is perpetuated via social media and other media, and embraced by newer generations, there still seems to exist a sense of stigmatization towards the phenomenon. This is especially apparent within conventionally inclined cultures, which is of specific interest to this study. Many studies have delved into polyamorous, and non-monogamous relationships, and their intersections with gender, and individual perceptions and attitudes, however, few have focused on “open relationships” and their dynamics with culture. Thus, this study aimed to explore the perceptions of Sri Lankan millennials towards open relationships, aged 26-40, via an inductive thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 25 individuals were utilized to gather in-depth insights into experiences and viewpoints on open relationships. Thus, six overarching themes were identified: [1] alternative relationship structures; [2] setting boundaries; [3] communication and emotions as means of expression; [4] benefits of open relationships; [5] complications of open relationships; and [6] socio-cultural factors. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how cultural norms, conceptions on ethicality, expectations of romantic relationships, and values, notions on acceptance, influence personal relationship choices and the complexities faced by individuals who diverge from conventional monogamous practices.

Keywords: Consensual non-monogamy, Open Relationships, Sri Lankan Culture, Sri Lankan millennials, Perceptions and attitudes

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the landscape of intimate relationships is evolving rapidly, influenced significantly by digital communication and media platforms. One notable phenomenon gaining visibility is consensual non-monogamy, often portrayed and perpetuated through social media channels and seemingly embraced by newer generations. Despite increasing openness towards alternative relationship structures, stigma persists, particularly within cultures like Sri Lanka, that traditionally uphold conventional monogamous ideals. There is limited understanding of how open relationships are perceived in conservative yet rapidly modernizing societies such as Sri Lanka as much of the existing research primarily addresses traditional marriage norms, leaving a significant gap in examining the interplay between cultural expectations and the acceptance or rejection of alternative relationship structures within Sri Lanka. As such, the question arises; how ‘open’ is the contemporary Sri Lankan society towards open relationships? In order to probe into this problem, the present study focuses on exploring the perceptions of Sri Lankan millennials, aged 26-40, towards open relationships. As millennials are both tech-savvy and respectful towards authority, it was deemed apt to consider them as the target sample for this study aimed at exploring shifting attitudes towards open relationships, a facet of consensual non-monogamy that remains underexplored within the context of Sri Lankan culture.

Consensual non-monogamous relationships, hereafter referred to as CNMs, encompass a variety of practices where all involved parties agree to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with multiple partners. These relationships are built on principles of honesty, communication, and mutual consent, distinguishing them from infidelity or cheating (Conley et al., 2017). Acceptance of consensual non-monogamy varies widely across cultures. In some Western societies, there is a growing acceptance and visibility of such relationships, as evidenced by the increasing number of support groups, literature, and media representation (Moors et al.,

2014). However, in more traditionally inclined cultures, such as Sri Lanka, these relationships often face significant societal and cultural barriers, leading to stigmatization and concealment (Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

Research on polyamorous and non-monogamous relationships has primarily examined their intersections with gender dynamics, individual attitudes, and societal acceptance. However, scant attention has been paid specifically to "open relationships" and their intricate dynamics within cultural contexts. This gap underscores the significance of investigating how cultural norms, ethical considerations, and societal expectations influence the experiences and perceptions of individuals navigating open relationships within Sri Lankan society. Despite the global visibility and gradual acceptance of consensual non-monogamy (CNM) in certain cultures, there is limited understanding of how open relationships—a specific form of CNM—are perceived in conservative yet rapidly modernizing societies such as Sri Lanka. Existing research primarily addresses traditional marriage norms, leaving a significant gap in examining the interplay between cultural expectations and the acceptance or rejection of alternative relationship structures among Sri Lankan millennials.

To address this gap, this study employs an inductive thematic analysis methodology, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 25 Sri Lankan millennials. By delving into their lived experiences and perspectives, the study identifies seven overarching themes: [1] alternative relationship structures; [2] setting boundaries; [3] communication and emotions as means of expression; [4] benefits of open relationships; [5] complications of open relationships; and [6] socio-cultural factors.

Through these themes, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how cultural norms and values shape perceptions of ethicality and acceptance in romantic relationships. By shedding light on the complexities faced by individuals navigating non-conventional relationship structures, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to both academic discourse and societal understanding.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Cnms

In order to establish the parameters of this study, it is imperative that formal definitions of the types of CNMs are posited. Whilst all CNM relationship configurations involve a level of commitment from all parties involved, the degrees to which significant aspects of a relationship, such as trust, intimacy, affection and communication, apply vary (Wentland & Reissing, 2011).

In Open Relationships (henceforth, referred to as OR), both partners engage in extra-dyadic sex but usually maintain emotional or romantic monogamy (Adam, 2010, LaSala, 2004). Similar understandings exist in monogamish (Parson & Grov, 2012), threesome-only (Hoking, 2013) and swinging (Jenks, 1998), however, a key distinguishing factor from OR is that partners in such relationships would engage in sexual interactions only whilst together. Moreover, partners engaged in swinging would engage in sexual activities only within social settings.

Another type of CNM which clearly differentiates itself from the rest, is polyamory or polyamorous relationships. Such CNMs are explicitly grounded in emotional non-monogamy that may or may not also include sexual non-monogamy (Sheff, 2014). Individuals involved in polyamorous relationships would possess multiple romantic and/or sexual partners, with whom they would build commitment, share intimacy, and establish honesty.

Navigating Stigma: Attitudes and Perceptions of Cnms

Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) refers to a variety of relationship practices where all participants agree to engage in multiple romantic or sexual relationships simultaneously, with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved. These practices challenge the traditional monogamous framework, promoting a broader understanding of love and commitment (Conley et al., 2013). CNM encompasses various forms, including polyamory, open relationships, and swinging, each with its unique structures and dynamics, as discussed above.

One of the fundamental principles of CNM is the emphasis on transparency, communication, and mutual consent, distinguishing it from infidelity or cheating (Moors et al., 2017). Research indicates that individuals in CNM relationships often report high levels of relationship satisfaction and psychological well-being, attributing these outcomes to the open communication and negotiated boundaries inherent in these arrangements (Mitchell et al., 2014). Despite these positive aspects, CNM relationships are frequently subject to societal stigma and misconceptions, which can impact the individuals involved by creating external pressures and misunderstandings about their relational choices (Conley et al., 2013).

In an online survey conducted on general perceptions of Americans on CMN's (Matsick et al., 2014), consisting of a sample of over 1000, monogamous relationships rated high in all aspects of a relationship including trust, honesty, intimacy and closeness. However, CMNs such as swinging relationships were described as 'less responsible and moral', and 'dirtier' than polyamorous relationships. Another study examined associations between personal characteristics and attitudes towards polyamory (Johnson et al., 2015) found that several conventional or more conservative sociocultural factors aligned with negative attitudes towards CMNs. This is interesting to this study, as the Sri Lankan mainstream culture adopts a more conformist and conservative point of view, especially on aspects such as marital relationships. The Sri Lankan culture can be described as a collectivist culture in which individuals are expected to adjust their behaviour, attitudes, and even emotions, according to the norms and values practiced and endorsed by the social group to which they belong. Expression of emotions, personal preferences and needs come second to maintaining harmony in society, or at the very least, within social in-groups. (Dissanayake, et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that even among conservatives, those who had previously experienced polyamory reported more favourable opinions than those who had never experienced it (Hutzler et al., 2015). Consequently, these results imply that although supporting traditional values appears to be consistently linked to negative attitudes regarding polyamory, these attitudes may be susceptible to modification upon exposure to polyamorous relationships and individuals. Thus, it becomes interesting to observe if such attitudes exist within the conservative, yet modern setting of Sri Lanka.

Moreover, there seem to be a lack of studies directly pertaining to Sri Lankan culture and open relationships, however, there exists studies on Sri Lankan culture and marriage/intimate relationships. For instance, Malhotra and Tsui (1996) examine how family, cultural factors, and modern norms affect marriage timing, while De Munck (1996) reevaluates arranged versus love marriages in Muslim communities, emphasizing the holistic nature of cultural practices. Abeyasekera (2021) highlights the societal pressure surrounding marriage, particularly among the Sinhalese, and Philips (2003) explores the importance of marriage among Tamil tea plantation workers, associating it with prosperity and status. Other studies, such as those by Ubesekera and Luo (2008), discuss the lack of research on marriage and family life satisfaction in Sri Lanka, while Caldwell (2005) contrasts the age at marriage in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, showing how arranged marriages are culturally supported. Vithanage (2015) investigates the role of patriarchy in marriage, and Good (1982) delves into rituals surrounding marriage and puberty. Abeyasekera (2017) also critiques how marriage is seen as a source of fulfilment for women, especially in the context of failed marriages. While these studies provide valuable insights into marriage and intimate relationships within traditional cultural frameworks, there is a notable gap in research on open relationships in the Sri Lankan context, which remains unexplored.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted based on a qualitative analysis. Accordingly, the researchers decided to gather data via semi-structured interviews. There were 20 participants that ranged from the age of 18 to 40. Consent for recording the interviews taken prior to the interviews and the collected data was analysed using thematic analysis criteria (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the use of NVIVO 14 software. Participants (N=20) were chosen via convenience sampling method. The participants were chosen considering their age range (18 years to 40) and engaged in a minimum of one committed relationship. Provided the age range of the participants, the researchers strived to choose participants that represent all the demography in fair proportions.

12 interviews were taken in a physical setting and 8 were conducted online. The recordings of the interviews began along with the verbal consent of the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured, consisted 12

primary questions and they were between 25 to 40 minutes in duration. Participants were notified that the transcriptions of the interviews will be provided for them to refer prior to proceeding with data analysis in order to ensure the transcripts are error free and that there is no misinterpretation. However, there were no requests from the participants to change the transcriptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six key themes emerged to reflect the participants' perceptions of open relationships: alternative relationship structures; setting boundaries; communication and emotions as means of expression; benefits of open relationships; complications of open relationships; and socio-cultural factors. Each theme is explored and examined in relation to existing literature on modern relationship paradigms, emotional dynamics, and social attitudes and its intersections with Sri Lankan culture. The themes are presented according to their prominence within the interview responses, starting with the most frequently mentioned and moving to the less prevalent ones.

Theme 01: OR as Alternative Relationship Structures

The concept of alternative relationship structures, encompassing non-monogamous arrangements like open relationships, challenges deeply rooted cultural and traditional values. In Sri Lanka, where strong ties to conventional monogamy and family-oriented values prevail, open relationships are viewed through a lens of scepticism. Many interview participants acknowledged exposure to non-traditional relationship models through global media and social platforms. However, their attitudes were often nuanced, reflecting both curiosity and discomfort.

Social Media Influence Versus Cultural Tradition

Social media and global pop culture have amplified discussions around non-monogamy, presenting it as a progressive and liberating lifestyle choice (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2019). This visibility has influenced younger generations worldwide, including in Sri Lanka, where access to international media is widespread. Nonetheless, the responses during interviews indicated that despite this exposure, traditional values remain predominant (Perera, 2023). For many Sri Lankans, the notion of family honour and adherence to societal expectations supersedes individual desires for exploring alternative partnerships.

This sentiment is further perpetuated by one of the participants (Participant 08):

As the living together concept has been normalized this also should be normalized in our country. It's not necessary to reveal if someone is engaged in an open relationship because it's too confidential. The problem is Sri Lankans still don't have an open mind to accept the fact that these types of relationships exist.

Hesitancy and Social Perceptions

Several participants admitted that while the idea of open relationships could theoretically align with personal freedom, revealing support for such relationships often carried social repercussions.

Here is an example of one such participant (Participant 03) clearly expressing the above in the following manner:

I think there are several factors that could contribute to this choice [CMN]. It could stem from personal preferences, individual desires, cultural influences, and a curiosity to explore alternative avenues for fulfilment.

A common thread was the potential judgment from extended family and community members. However, one participant (Participant 12) discusses how it is also imperative to resist the judgement of others, by changing one's own attitude towards societal views:

Society should not make a problem out of it because it's actually none of their business. But as we know our culture has gotten into our minds, so we tend to make judgements based on that, so not everyone here is ready to accept it.

According to Wijesinghe (2021), the cultural emphasis on maintaining a respectable image limit open conversations about non-traditional relationship models. It can be assumed that some interviewees might not have fully disclosed their true thoughts during the interview due to the fear of negative perceptions. This notion is supported by cultural research that highlights reluctance in expressing personal views contrary to societal norms, especially in face-to-face interactions (Fernando & Silva, 2020).

Expanding further on the complexities of alternative relationship structures in the Sri Lankan context, the discourse around non-monogamy reflects an intersection between global influences and deeply embedded cultural norms. While global media and pop culture increasingly normalize non-traditional relationships, the alignment of these narratives with Sri Lankan values presents a complex and sometimes conflicting dynamic. Another of our participants (Participant 16) agrees that it is indeed complex within our SL context, however, emphasises on the importance of acceptance at certain junctures in life:

In the Sri Lankan context, people might not like the concept. But globally, I think they don't mind. My personal opinion is that it's good if open relationships could be generalized in the Sri Lankan context. I have seen on a lot of occasions that in Sri Lanka, people are so reluctant to get divorced. There are couples who live in the same house who are afraid of social stigma or because of kids, even though they do not have any emotional attachment. There, I think that it's better if they have other relationships so they might find love and happiness again. There are both pros and cons, but this is what I think.

The Clash of Modernity and Tradition

The proliferation of social media and exposure to international lifestyles have undeniably impacted Sri Lankan youth, fostering curiosity about alternative relationship structures. These platforms often portray open relationships as symbols of personal liberation, autonomy, and emotional honesty (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2019). However, despite this influence, traditional values—grounded in religious teachings and cultural expectations—remain powerful in shaping individual beliefs and behaviours (Jayaweera, 2018). The majority of interviewees noted that while they were aware of the discourse surrounding non-monogamy, embracing or even openly discussing such relationships posed significant social risks. In the quote below, one of our participants (Participant 16) attributes the choice to personal freedom:

At the end of the day, it's about personal freedom. What you can do freely in a state.

In Sri Lankan society, monogamy is not merely a personal preference, but a cultural cornerstone intertwined with the notion of family unity and moral conduct. Religious institutions, particularly those rooted in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, reinforce these ideals by emphasizing fidelity and the sanctity of marriage (Karunaratne & De Silva, 2022). This religious and cultural reinforcement leads to a pervasive scepticism of practices that deviate from the norm, branding them as 'Westernized' or morally questionable.

Generational Divides and Changing Attitudes

Interview findings indicated a generational split in attitudes toward open relationships. Younger millennial interviewees, particularly those with access to global education and media, displayed more openness to discussing non-monogamous structures. They viewed such models as potential solutions to relationship dissatisfaction and an opportunity for personal growth. However, even among these individuals, there was a palpable hesitation to challenge the cultural status quo. Older participants, in contrast, were more likely to associate open relationships with moral decay and disruption to familial harmony (Perera, 2023).

The push and pull between curiosity and caution highlight a unique cultural dichotomy. On one hand, the global narrative praises openness and adaptability in relationships; on the other, Sri Lanka's collectivist culture values conformity and community approval (Fernando & Silva, 2020). This tension can lead to what scholars

refer to as “cognitive dissonance,” where individuals experience conflicting beliefs and behaviours due to contrasting social expectations and personal experiences.

This idea is further highlighted by Participant 07 in the following manner:

So, I like open relationships it's like a new concept in Sri Lanka and it's not that popular among the older generations but it's like people from the new generation are exploring it right now and maybe since it's like a foreign concept here, it's just normal thing in other countries. So, people are very sceptical about it, but I think it has a positive impact on it.

Social Repercussions and 'Saving Face'

The concept of 'saving face' - maintaining dignity and respect in the eyes of others - plays a significant role in shaping how Sri Lankans discuss and approach relationships (Wijesinghe, 2021). Interviewees expressed that admitting to involvement or even interest in an open relationship could severely impact their social standing and that of their family. This fear of social ostracism can lead to individuals masking their true beliefs or remaining silent on controversial topics. As participant 12 stipulates:

...sometimes even if people don't publicly say it, they would like if people validated this.

The influence of extended family in Sri Lankan culture further complicates the acceptance of non-monogamous structures. Unlike in more individualistic societies where personal choices are respected as a matter of autonomy, Sri Lankan family units often extend beyond the nuclear family, encompassing grandparents, aunts, uncles, and even close community members. This collective structure enforces the expectation that personal choices should align with shared values to avoid communal shame (Jayasekara & Niles, 2020).

Ambivalence and Unspoken Beliefs

While some participants hinted at potential interest in exploring non-monogamy, their statements often carried a cautious tone. This ambivalence reflects a broader uncertainty in how the community would perceive such relationships. According to Fernando and Silva (2020), expressing ideas that contradict social norms is often avoided due to the potential backlash and emotional discomfort it may cause. The ambiguity in responses also points to the concept of "perceived social desirability," where participants tailor their answers to align with what they believe is socially acceptable, particularly in face-to-face settings (Fernando, 2019). This behaviour can skew the understanding of true public sentiment, especially on sensitive topics like open relationships, where private beliefs may significantly differ from public declarations. One of our participants (Participant 07) expressed this ambivalence in the following manner:

Some like to find open relationships more fulfilling than their primary than the normal relationships they used to go. Or like they might feel very satisfied in open relationships.

The Impact of Globalization

The dual influence of globalization and local cultural ethos creates a paradox for many young Sri Lankans. While they are exposed to international ideals that promote non-traditional relationship structures as modern and adaptable, these ideas often clash with ingrained beliefs about loyalty, marital duty, and societal roles. Interview participants reflected on the ease with which these ideas are consumed through media, contrasted with the difficulty of reconciling them with lived experiences.

Globalization has introduced a more diverse vocabulary around relationships, making terms like “open relationship,” “polyamory,” and “ethical non-monogamy” more familiar, yet not necessarily more accepted. Participants reported a heightened awareness of these concepts but noted that acceptance remains largely performative rather than genuine. For example, being aware of non-monogamy might lead to a conversation or intellectual discussion, but practicing or advocating for it could jeopardize one's social reputation (Wijesundara, 2023).

The responses from interviews reveal that while alternative relationship structures are becoming more visible due to media influence, their integration into Sri Lankan society faces significant hurdles. The intersection of tradition, collective cultural values, and the influence of global narratives creates a complex space where individuals may feel conflicted. The hesitancy and ambivalence expressed in the interviews underscore that while the world is evolving, Sri Lankan society holds fast to its cultural fabric, maintaining scepticism toward non-traditional relationship practices.

Theme 02: Setting Boundaries with OR

The establishment of boundaries emerged as a significant theme when participants discussed what they perceived as essential to maintaining any semblance of order within open relationships. In Sri Lankan culture, boundaries within relationships are generally defined by traditional roles and religious teachings (Jayaweera, 2018). Open relationships, by contrast, require a more flexible and negotiated approach to setting boundaries, which can be perceived as subversive or morally ambiguous.

Defining Boundaries in a Non-Monogamous Context

Interview participants highlighted that while they intellectually grasped the importance of clear boundary-setting in open relationships, this practice diverged from their lived experiences of monogamy. In traditional Sri Lankan partnerships, boundaries are often assumed rather than verbally established. These unwritten rules are rooted in trust and respect, both shaped by religious and cultural doctrines (Karunaratne & De Silva, 2022). Open relationships, however, require ongoing and explicit conversations to outline what behaviours are acceptable, which can seem alien or even unsettling to those accustomed to a culture that values silent conformity.

The discomfort surrounding the concept of negotiated boundaries reflects a broader societal reluctance to openly discuss relationship expectations. This reluctance is intertwined with cultural beliefs that equate discretion with virtue. The notion of having to articulate rules that govern romantic and emotional interactions appears at odds with the implicit trust associated with monogamy. This idea was echoed by interviewees who shared that while they recognized the rationale behind boundary-setting, such practices felt out of place in a society where relationship roles are considered clear and pre-defined. Here is one such example (Participant 06):

So, here's my take on hierarchy. The imbalance in open relationships. So, when it comes to open relationships, I think it's ideally balanced. In a perfect world open relationship is ideal with both partners having equal freedom, emotion, and investment. Who will feel from the outside correction that there are good ways and bad ways at the same time in open relationships? Reality is more complex; however, real life can be messy.

The Role of Cultural Norms

Cultural norms in Sri Lanka often shape the boundaries within relationships to maintain a sense of security and familial stability. These norms emphasize preservation over exploration, underlining monogamy as a pillar of societal and moral order (Fernando, 2019). Within this framework, boundaries are less about explicit negotiations and more about maintaining societal expectations and adhering to traditional values.

Participants pointed out that the implicit understanding within monogamous relationships centres on trust and loyalty, with fidelity being a non-negotiable component. Introducing open relationships, where boundaries must be consciously discussed and agreed upon, challenges this notion and can be perceived as undermining the foundational trust that monogamy assumes. For many interviewees, the act of setting boundaries in an open relationship signified an admission of inherent risks and complications, which ran counter to their perception of a harmonious and sacrifice-driven relationship.

Religious teachings in Sri Lanka further amplify these norms. Whether influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, or Islam, these beliefs promote fidelity and unity as virtues that strengthen familial bonds. The concept of negotiating boundaries, especially those involving romantic or sexual openness, may thus appear

not only unconventional but morally dubious (Jayasekara & Niles, 2020). The hesitation to accept boundary-setting in non-monogamous contexts reflects a broader fear of disrupting the social fabric that prioritizes collective harmony over individual autonomy. The significance of boundary setting is further accentuated by Participant 07's response:

I feel like the partners in open relationships should establish boundaries because it helps them to feel very respected, secure and protected. Because then you can mainly safeguard your primary relationship.

Communication as a Boundary Tool

Setting boundaries is crucial in any relationship, but especially in open relationships where there are more parties involved. It's important for all parties to communicate openly and establish clear boundaries to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and respected. (Participant 03)

Despite the cultural challenges, the necessity of communication was frequently noted by participants as an essential tool for setting boundaries in non-monogamous relationships. Those who entertained the idea of open relationships acknowledged that continuous and transparent dialogue is critical for preventing misunderstandings and fostering trust. Existing literature supports this, emphasizing that effective communication is a cornerstone of relationship satisfaction and stability (Mark & Jozkowski, 2020). In the context of open relationships, these conversations are even more crucial as they help establish a clear understanding of each partner's needs, limits, and expectations.

However, participants also shared their reservations about the overt nature of communication required in non-monogamous partnerships. In Sri Lanka, open and direct discussions about romantic or sexual preferences may be viewed as inappropriate or even indecent, reflecting a cultural preference for discretion and modesty (Wijesinghe, 2021). This can create a paradox where the very tool needed to maintain trust and transparency in an open relationship—communication—becomes a source of discomfort and cultural dissonance.

The Challenge of Boundary Transparency

The concept of boundary transparency, where all partners openly discuss and consent to certain practices, is particularly foreign in a Sri Lankan context that values restraint in personal matters. Participants indicated that even when they understood the theoretical benefits of such practices, applying them was another matter altogether. The stigma associated with breaking traditional relationship norms acts as a deterrent to fully embracing boundary transparency.

The emotional toll that creates issues in the setting of transparent boundaries that is an inevitable component of OR is expressed in no indefinite terms by one of our participants (Participant 08) here:

Open relationships include a lot of emotional investment from all the parties. Therefore no one can presume the conditions that come with it.

Moreover, the influence of the extended family often looms large over relationship dynamics. In many cases, decisions about boundaries and relationship practices are not made solely by the couple but are influenced by expectations from the broader family circle (Perera, 2023). This communal involvement reinforces the idea that personal choices should align with accepted social values, further complicating the notion of negotiated boundaries within open relationships.

The theme of setting boundaries within open relationships illustrates a significant cultural and practical challenge for Sri Lankans. While global narratives promote open communication and boundary-setting as progressive and essential, these practices often conflict with a cultural ethos that emphasizes implicit trust, conformity, and familial expectations. Interview findings suggest that while some participants recognized the importance of boundaries, they were uncomfortable with the transparency and negotiation required to establish them. The tension between these global practices and local values highlights the complexity of integrating non-monogamous structures into a culture where relationship norms are steeped in tradition. In our participant's (Participant 16) words:

Tension can arise from keeping secrets from partners and not being honest with them. Again, not respecting the boundaries they set earlier.

Theme 03: OR as a Means of Expression: Communication and Emotions

The theme of communication and emotions in open relationships presented a significant challenge when viewed through a Sri Lankan cultural lens. While open relationships globally are often associated with the need for honest communication and emotional expression to maintain harmony among multiple partners, the cultural context in Sri Lanka introduces complexities that affect how such principles are received and practiced.

Communication Patterns and Emotional Restraint

The way Sri Lankans communicate, especially about sensitive or taboo topics, is often characterized by indirectness and subtlety. This communication style, deeply rooted in societal and familial traditions, contrasts sharply with the overt and transparent dialogues commonly required in non-monogamous relationships (Perera, 2021). Interviewees expressed that conversations about romantic or sexual relationships, even within monogamous settings, tend to be shrouded in discretion. The notion of openly discussing multiple partnerships or establishing rules for emotional transparency was seen as a significant departure from the norm.

Participants noted that in Sri Lankan society, much of the communication around relationships is implied rather than explicitly stated. This tacit understanding often ensures harmony and avoids conflict. However, in an open relationship, where clear communication is paramount to avoid misunderstandings, this cultural inclination for subtlety can become a source of friction. Literature suggests that this cultural practice stems from broader social norms that equate restraint with maturity and wisdom (Ruwanpathirana, 2022). Openly voicing emotional needs or conflicts, especially related to jealousy or discomfort, may thus feel unnatural or even inappropriate to those accustomed to a more reserved manner of interaction.

Managing Emotions: Jealousy and Compersion

Jealousy is a significant challenge in open relationships. It's a normal human emotion that can intensify when your partner has seemingly better circumstances. This could be a higher income, a more stable family background, greater social acceptance, or a stronger sense of purpose. (Participant 19)

Jealousy emerged as a particularly significant emotional response among participants, who often viewed it as a weakness rather than a normal aspect of human relationships. This perception aligns with cultural teachings that encourage emotional stoicism, where expressing jealousy can be seen as an inability to control one's feelings or maintain dignity. Consequently, interviewees conveyed that discussing jealousy openly, or confronting it within a partnership, would be difficult in an open relationship scenario. This reluctance to express such emotions openly can create barriers to the transparency required for non-monogamous relationships to function effectively.

The concept of compersion—the experience of feeling joy when a partner finds pleasure with another—was almost foreign to participants. Many expressed scepticism that this emotion could realistically fit within a Sri Lankan relationship dynamic, where exclusivity is both expected and revered (Wijesundara, 2023). While compersion is often championed in Western discussions as a marker of emotional maturity in non-monogamous arrangements, participants found it challenging to dissociate from the idea that happiness in a relationship should be tied to mutual exclusivity. The cultural emphasis on emotional fidelity and loyalty made the idea of celebrating a partner's connection with someone else seem idealistic at best, if not entirely inconceivable.

The Influence of Socio-Cultural Stigma

A recurring theme in the interviews was the pervasive socio-cultural stigma that surrounds the discussion and practice of open relationships. This stigma shapes how emotions are expressed and communicated, creating a backdrop where even considering non-monogamous arrangements can be met with apprehension. Participants frequently noted that their responses in the interviews might not fully represent their true sentiments, as

admitting to openness towards such relationship structures could lead to judgment not only from peers but from extended family and community members as well (Jayasekara & Niles, 2020).

The reluctance to express opinions or emotions that deviate from accepted norms is amplified by the influence of religious teachings, which emphasize monogamy and fidelity as fundamental virtues. This religious and cultural framework reinforces the idea that any deviation from the traditional path could disrupt not just personal reputations but the perceived honour of one's family (Karunaratne & De Silva, 2022). Therefore, even if individuals are exposed to or curious about non-traditional relationship models through global media, the potential repercussions for expressing interest or participation are significant.

One of our participants (Participant 18) echoes the societal view of OR being 'uncivilised':

I don't think the civilized Sri Lankan society is still accepting the open relationships. Many countries are getting used to the concept of same-gender relationships and different sexual relationships, but the open relationship concept is still not okay. It's not in there yet. And if I say, okay, I have a few partners, I don't think many people will understand that and accept it to be okay.

Navigating Emotional Openness

For those participants who acknowledged the importance of communication in open relationships, there was still a sense of hesitation about how emotional openness would be perceived. The ability to share vulnerabilities, such as feelings of inadequacy or fear related to non-monogamous dynamics, was seen as potentially problematic. The preference for maintaining a composed exterior, coupled with the social expectation of emotional resilience, means that discussing such topics openly goes against the grain of cultural practice.

Additionally, the intersection of gender norms plays a significant role in shaping emotional expression. In Sri Lanka, men and women are often socialized differently when it comes to discussing emotions. While women may find some avenues to express their feelings within close, trusted circles, men are typically expected to display stoicism. This disparity further complicates the dynamics of emotional transparency in open relationships, as open and consistent communication is essential for their success (Fernando, 2019).

Global narratives about open relationships often emphasize the benefits of emotional freedom and candid communication as tools for deepening trust and connection among partners. However, these ideas conflict with local values that prioritize a more subdued approach to emotional expression. Participants noted that while the appeal of such open dialogues might resonate on a theoretical level—due to exposure from international media—the practical application within a Sri Lankan context remains daunting. The clash between these differing narratives highlights the broader cultural challenges faced when integrating non-monogamous concepts into traditional societies. Further, emphasising this complex idea, one of our participants (Participant 20) explains:

Honestly, whether open relationships are frowned upon or celebrated depends on who you ask. In our social circle, there's definitely more openness to exploring different relationship structures. But yeah, traditional Sri Lankan society might not be as cool with it yet. The most important thing is finding a dynamic that works for you and your partner, as long as there's respect, trust, and clear communication involved.

Ultimately, while participants recognized the theoretical benefits of consistent communication and emotional openness in maintaining healthy non-monogamous relationships, applying these practices within the constraints of Sri Lankan cultural expectations posed significant difficulties. The ingrained preference for discretion and emotional restraint continues to shape the way individuals' approach, discuss, and experience relationships, reinforcing the broader cultural resistance to alternative partnership models.

Theme 04: Benefits of Open Relationships

In exploring the benefits of ORs, participants reflected on potential advantages, particularly as they apply to personal, emotional, and practical aspects within the relatively constrictive collectivist culture in which they

are practised. This theme highlights how open relationships may serve as a means of self-enhancement and problem-solving if approached open-mindedly, even though cultural limitations often render these benefits challenging to achieve in practice.

Self-discovery, Resilience, and Adaptability

Several participants noted that open relationships have the potential to foster personal growth by allowing individuals to explore new aspects of themselves both emotionally and romantically. Aligning with the popular belief that ORs cultivate personal independence and the opportunity to cultivate one's individuality, conversely considered impossible in a marriage (Kozak, 2020), ORs do seem to offer an opportunity for young Sri Lankans, who are increasingly exposed to global perspectives on relationships through social media and popular culture, to explore individuality, personal values, relationship goals, needs and expectations (Moors et al., 2017). Participant 08 suggested that this openness exhibited by the youth in Sri Lanka "could stem from personal preferences, individual desires, cultural influences, and a curiosity to explore alternative avenues for fulfilment."

Although ORs poses a significant challenge towards maintaining traditionally accepted notions of family, marriage, and commitment, they in turn provide a facet for exploration, and building emotional fortitude (Conley, et al., 2017). Managing undesirable emotions such as jealousy and vulnerability, is a known challenge within ORs, and some participants felt that dealing with these complex emotions, particularly within a framework of honesty and mutual consent, may develop empathy and emotional resilience in the long run. Furthermore, for those familiar with the concept of compersion, ORs offer an alternative to jealousy, encouraging empathy and shared happiness, even in romantic contexts. Although compersion is uncommon in Sri Lankan narratives on romantic relationships, participants saw it as an intriguing idea that could help shift cultural expectations over time.

As outlined by some of the participants, the openness to experience complex emotions (instead of avoidance), and willingness to develop the capacity to manage and understand them through unorthodox methods, may indeed positively impact relationships through building greater empathy and adaptability. In fact, a study conducted by Conley, et al. (2017), confirms the plausibility of emotional flexibility and supportive dynamics through its finding that feelings of jealousy were lower, and trust was higher among those engaged in CNM.

Positive Communicative and Psychological Impacts

According to previous literature, CNMs, arguably, require more open and honest communication among partners than monogamous relationships (Conley et al., 2017; Moors et al., 2017). In fact, research implies that polyamorous individuals are more likely to utilize effective communication strategies in hopes of setting clear expectations, boundaries, and emotional connections with their partners (Conley & Moors, 2014; Conley et al., 2017). Several interviewees of the current study too acknowledged that the honest dialogue essential for maintaining non-monogamous relationships could be invaluable in any relationship format, thereby signifying a needed shift from the implicit understanding and lack of overt interactions that traditionally govern Sri Lankan monogamous partnerships (Wijesinghe, 2021). It is noted that, building comfort with discussing needs, boundaries and intimacy could normalize conversations that are typically unspoken or implied, creating stronger, more resilient relationships leading to overall relationship satisfaction.

From a broader psychosocial perspective, ORs may encourage individuals to question traditional gender roles and expectations. A few participants noted that exploring non-monogamous partnerships could help certain people better understand their personal values and relationship preferences if practiced ethically and consensually. The following responses of Participant 06 and 07 respectively, can be cited as examples:

As humans, we cannot set boundaries regarding feelings. This concept is based on understanding, and this is good for the people who are interested in it. Therefore, we cannot identify this as an unethical concept, but it should be done accurately.

It differs from person to person because some people prefer open relationships but it's not for everyone. So, for some people, it works. I like it, it's based on individual choices and relationship satisfaction.

Although participants exhibit careful language use in the above instances, their acceptance of ORs as an alternative relationship style indicates that they value self-discovery and freedom, allowing individuals to build relationships that align more closely with their emotional needs and life goals (Moors et al., 2017). Indeed, such introspective benefits, though subtle, contribute to a greater societal understanding of diverse relational structures, thereby facilitating awareness and acceptance of individual choice and agency in relationships irrespective of gender and sexual orientations.

Practical and Financial Benefits

Beyond personal growth, open relationships may offer practical advantages in collectivist cultures, where financial stability is often intertwined with family and societal roles/standing. Although few in number, the studies that deal with the family in the context of CNM indicate that polyamorous parents tend to share financial and material resources, cooperate in caring for offspring and managing household chores (Sheff, 2014). However, as the scant literature on the correlations between the social institution of family and CNMs revolve around Western cultures, the practical applicability within the traditional Sri Lankan environment where ORs are still viewed as divergent lifestyles, is indeed questionable and worthy of further investigation. It is important to note at this juncture, that two interviewees briefly touched on the topic of financial benefits reaped in ORs, sans the complicated variables of family, offspring, and shared responsibility; Participant 12 noted that OR “acts as a support system” in contexts of financial destabilization and increased inflation while Participant 15 mentioned that “Economic crises can impact relationships. Financial stress might lead some couples to consider open relationships as a way to cope or find additional support”.

The above responses suggests that shared finances, in isolation, could be beneficial for younger individuals facing economic pressures, as the collaborative structure of ORs contributes in alleviating individual financial burdens and challenges, it also showcased the respondent’s personal dissatisfaction.

An Escape, an Alternative

In collectivist societies, where marriage is often viewed as a bond that unites two families rather than merely two individuals, divorce can carry significant social, economic, psychological, and familial repercussions (Amaratunga & Wickramaarachchi, 2018). Since reputation, communal harmony, social appearances, and adherence to traditional norms frequently take precedence over personal satisfaction in such cultures, some individuals choose to remain in marriages they find unfulfilling or difficult. In such situations, ORs may offer a way to reconcile these competing pressures by providing an ethical and mutually agreed-upon approach for partners to seek emotional, romantic, and/or sexual fulfilment outside the marriage without its formal dissolution. Sri Lankan participants echoed this sentiment, albeit hypothetically, noting that open relationships could potentially provide a culturally viable escape route or alternative for individuals who might otherwise feel “trapped” in restrictive/unfulfilling marriages all while avoiding the personal, economic, and social costs of divorce. As some research suggest that CNMs might also prevent abusive relationships and intimate terrorism (Conley et al., 2017; Perel, 2006), it is inferred that ORs could have unique protective benefits, which contradict prevailing traditional views of these relationships as damaging and hurtful. The above sentiment is highlighted where Participant 13 considers ORs as a viable respite to unfulfilling marriages due to issues such as, “less satisfaction from the current partner, trust issues, commitment issues, maybe an abusive partner and [or] the other is searching for a more loving partner.”

Overall, the potential benefits of open relationships as noted by the research participants, extend beyond individual growth and freedom, to emotional resilience, financial advantages, communicative benefits, psychosocial benefits and solutions to marital dissatisfaction especially in cases where divorce might lead to economic hardship or social isolation. While these benefits remain challenging to achieve within a traditional Sri Lankan framework, their appeal to the interviewees highlights the growing awareness of diverse relationship models and the evolving views on relationship fulfilment among young Sri Lankans.

Theme 05: Challenges and Complications of ORs

Alongside the potential benefits of ORs, participants also expressed significant concerns about the challenges such relationships pose within the Sri Lankan context. Much of these issues are associated with emotional, practical, and health-related concerns.

Concerns on Sexual Health

The physical/sexual health of individuals practising open relationships was identified as a notable concern, with many participants emphasizing the potential for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as a critical risk factor in ORs. While safe sexual practices can mitigate the transmission of STDs and associated risks, there seems to be general consensus on the added complexity of maintaining sexual health when engaged with multiple partners. The social stigma surrounding ORs and the limited discussion of sexual health in Sri Lanka can be noted as factors that add to such commonly seen beliefs and anxieties specifically seen in the latter few responses gathered.

Sexual hygiene definitely plays a big role because being sexually active with multiple people can increase the risk of being diagnosed with more sexually transmitted diseases and will risk the person's health and their partners as well. (Participant 11)

If you are going to have physical relationships with many people, you know there's a high possibility of getting stuck. It's better to know about the sexual health of you and your partner(s) to be on the safe side. (Participant 17)

Well, you should all probably get tested before coming to an agreement. Again, it's different for each setting. If there's one person going around sleeping with others, they should probably be very careful and get tested regularly. It's just a matter of how concerned you are about it and how much risk you are willing to take. I personally think it's very dangerous and am disgusted by it. (Participant 2)

I don't like open relationships and if it is if I go to an open relationship, it will be a big mess. And the first thing is sexual health, of course. You need to have sexual health when you are in an open relationship. You can't be unsafe. You will get problems when you are unsafe. (Participant 9)

It is definitely very risky, and personally I think it would be uncomfortable and very unhygienic. (Participant 13)

Risks and concerns regarding sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are, at times, further exacerbated due to the barriers faced by women, youth, unmarried individuals, and certain minority groups in terms of both awareness and access within the country as well (Periyasamy, 2018; Rajapaksa et al., 2021; Suranga, 2019). Apart from awareness and access, it is also important that societal acceptance and normalization of sensitive topics around sexual health be established within the broader community framework in order to promote healthy sexual practices, irrespective of relationship formats.

Emotional Strain and Vulnerabilities

Interviewees frequently acknowledged that while open relationships theoretically encourage emotional growth as mentioned above, the actual experience often entails considerable emotional strain. While jealousy remains a common challenge in both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships, participants seemed to associate an increase in such negative emotions with the addition of partners to the socially accepted equation of two. These sentiments can be understood further through a thorough examination of deeply rooted cultural expectations around loyalty and exclusivity in the Sri Lankan culture.

Within the context of ORs, the potential for constant comparison with other involved partners could also lead to feelings of inferiority or inadequacy. At the absence of comparison, this adds to the emotional strain experienced by contorting individual conceptualisations of self-esteem, self-worth, and adequacy. Individuals in ORs may be subjected to added insecurities and anxieties when their primary partner engages with others sexually and/or romantically. This vulnerability to emotional strain is exacerbated when the stability of the primary relationship is subjected to question with long-standing ORs in which comparisons are inevitable. Without adequate support systems to address these vulnerabilities, individuals may struggle to reconcile personal insecurities with the demands of maintaining multiple emotional connections. The response quoted below serves as an example to the emotional strains involved in ORs.

So imagine open relationships. Because it involves many partners those partners might compare each other based on beauty, wealth, their job or social status of other partners. So even competition can arise to get more attraction towards themselves. It'll definitely have somewhat of jealousy. Or another thing can be if your primary partner is more attracted to another partner than you, you will feel jealous with time. Because you will start feeling like you've been forgotten. Umm, so yeah I think jealousy is a very natural factor. (Participant 12)

Boundaries, Commitments, and Complexities

As noted by several participants, establishing and maintaining boundaries that work in an OR right at the onset is crucial to partners' satisfaction levels. Unlike traditional monogamous relationships, CNMs require considerably more time, investment, and energy to maintain healthy communication system that establishes and maintains boundaries with multiple partners. This is seen as especially challenging in a culture that encourages implicit understanding between romantic partners (Wijesinghe, 2021). In fact, dividing time between multiple relationships could create conflicts with partners' relationship expectations, leading to added stress and exhaustion, contrary to initial expectations. In the worst-case scenario, the miscommunication of boundaries and consequent complexities and conflicts present a possibility of destroying or significantly damaging the primary relationship of the partners involved (Wdowiak, 2024).

Some participants were also concerned about the perceived lack of commitment and stability within ORs. Although research suggests that individuals "can have fulfilling, satisfying, and committed relationships with multiple partners without those relationships having a notable negative influence on one another" (Mitchell et al., 2014), interviewees worried that engaging in ORs could create uncertainty regarding long-term relationship security and stability, especially in a society where relationships are often viewed through the lens of marriage and family formation. While literature also suggests that commitment concerns are not uncommon in non-monogamous relationships (Mitchell et al., 2014), for Sri Lankan individuals, this sense of insecurity is amplified by cultural expectations of fidelity, and requirement for long-term relationship/marriage stability.

Further to this, research suggests that ORs can cause challenges in leading a 'typical family life' especially in relation to having and raising children as parent's ORs may affect a child's psyche and lead to stigmatization/ostracization among peers (Wdowiak, 2024). Although none of the participants discussed the legal and practical complexities in childbearing and rearing within ORs, it is assumed that such concerns may arise within a culture that places high value on familial obligations and 'responsible' parenting. Hence the researchers propose conducting further studies on the effects of ORs on the offspring of involved partners, in order to improve understanding on the subject.

These perceived challenges of ORs highlight both the personal and social complications identified by participants, showcasing how deeply intertwined individual experiences are with broader cultural values.

Theme 06: Socio-cultural Factors Impacting ORs

This theme identifies and examines the societal norms, cultural values, and broader social frameworks that influence perceptions and practices regarding open relationships in Sri Lanka. Despite increasing global awareness of non-monogamous arrangements, Sri Lanka's socio-cultural dynamics present unique influences towards perceptions on ORs.

Cultural Norms and Social Stigma

In a context where what is considered to be "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" (Penal code of Sri Lanka, Section 365) is decided by social, religious, and cultural norms, community perspectives on ORs can be cited as a main influence on the overall acceptance of the practice. As collectivist societies place significant emphasis on community harmony and familial bonds (Dissanayake et al., 2020; Fernando & Silva, 2020; Wijesinghe, 2021), individuals engaging in ORs may be perceived to be disrupting/destabilising societal norms. Participants noted the lack of social acceptance and heightened stigma surrounding ORs as significant barriers to discussing and/or exploring ORs within the country. The aversion towards open discussions on the subject

can be caused as the repercussions of engaging in ORs and non-conformity to cultural norms extend beyond the individual, thereby affecting their family's reputation within the community, especially within collectivist cultures. Societal disapproval can also be noted as a major deterrent, especially among those who, despite a theoretical openness to ORs, felt uneasy about potential backlash from both peers and extended family on having multiple partners.

It is interesting to note, however, that there are historic records of the practice of polygamy in South Asian countries like ancient India and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, both polyandry and polygyny, or sometimes only the latter, is accepted in certain laws of Sri Lanka introduced before the colonial period such as the Kandyan Law (Silva, 2016), and religious legal practices such as the Sharia Law. Despite the existence of such legal acceptance within certain communities, polygamy is rarely practiced in today's age and nearly all traditional forms of cohabitation have disappeared over time due to the impacts of colonialism, modernization, urbanization, and subsequent legal reforms (Silva, 2016).

Globalisation

Following the 'policing' of culture introduced/imposed by colonisers (De Alwis, 1999), post-colonial Sri Lanka witnessed a new cultural era, which acknowledged relationships through institutionalised marriage systems and the monogamous union of partners. At present, monogamy is largely accepted as the socially sanctioned form of relationship in Sri Lanka. While the historical evolution of socially accepted relationship formats in post-colonial countries prove to be an interesting premise for a separate sociological study, the current Sri Lankan society generally views monogamy as the cornerstone of successful family life.

Interestingly, the responses gathered from Sri Lankan millennials within the present research showcased an openness towards the discussion on ORs. In fact, participants identified ORs as a "new concept... popular among the young generation" (Participant 5) possibly due to the pervasive effects of globalisation and modernisation. Majority of the participants, who came from an exceedingly urban and affluent backgrounds, emulated a desire for personal freedom in terms relationship status sans the excessive cultural surveillance. This exemplifies the impact of globalization and digital connectivity in the rising awareness of alternative relationship structures among young Sri Lankans. However, despite the ongoing normalisation of ORs through social media, streaming platforms, and international literature, a stark gap is acknowledged between the image portrayed in media and the reality in Sri Lanka.

Resisting, Accepting, and Practising

Alongside the observation that the youth is more accepting of ORs, interviewees also commented on the lack of understanding seen amongst older generations in Sri Lanka. An interviewee (Participant 7) noted that OR remains "a very foreign concept to Sri Lanka especially with people in the older generation" possibly due to differences in established social norms. Another participant added that most married couples would not engage in ORs due to the lack of acceptance especially by "older people due to societal values" (Participant 14) further highlighting resistance towards the concept that attracts criticism from extended family and community members within the Sri Lankan context.

While mentioning of the deep-rooted beliefs held by elders on fidelity, hierarchical family structures, and sexual/emotional exclusivity endorsed by 'tradition', majority of the participants also stressed on the importance of exercising autonomy and individual agency in romantic relationships. The millennial participants' acceptance of ORs was, at many instances, associated with being openminded, forward-thinking, and simply "minding their own business". A significant level of acceptance towards ORs and individuals practising ORs was showcased by the interviewees in the current study, although none of the participants openly accepted to practicing the same. While this may have simply been a nondisclosure of private information, the researchers find the absence of open claims to have practiced ORs intriguing as it may be indicative of deeply ingrained thoughts on social conformity among openminded individuals. Although one participant noted that "not everyone seeks social validation" (Participant 8), the pervasive social stigma attached to ORs which could lead to ostracization, gossip, or loss of social standing, may affect the open

practice of ORs in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, these cultural constraints may discourage experimentation with ORs, even among those curious about their potential benefits.

To sum up in the words of one participant, “whether open relationships are frowned upon or celebrated depends on who you ask... but traditional Sri Lankan society (in general) might not be as cool with it yet” (Participant 20) as are certain social groups who are considered to be influenced by modernity and progressive thought more so than others.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the nuanced perceptions of open relationships (ORs) among Sri Lankan millennials, highlighting the tension between global influences and deeply rooted cultural traditions. While younger generations demonstrate curiosity and a theoretical openness to alternative relationship structures, societal stigma, religious values, and the collectivist emphasis on family and social conformity create significant barriers to acceptance. The findings reveal that ORs challenge established norms by requiring explicit communication, boundary-setting, and emotional transparency, which contrast with traditional values of implicit trust, emotional restraint, and discretion. Participants recognized the potential benefits of ORs, such as personal growth and resilience, but also acknowledged the emotional, social, and cultural challenges they pose. Ultimately, this study underscores the complexities of navigating cultural boundaries in a rapidly globalizing world, where traditional values and modern relationship ideals continue to coexist and conflict, shaping the evolving perceptions of intimacy and commitment among Sri Lankan millennials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend that it is important to conduct future studies with larger and more diverse populations in Sri Lanka, in order to grasp a more holistic understanding of prevalent perceptual differences amongst Sri Lankans belonging to different caste, class, social, religious, and ethnic communities residing in both urban and rural areas, regarding the acceptance and practice of ORs. Moreover, looking at the newest generation that has entered the workforce – Generation Z – would certainly be interesting, and add another dimension to such a study, especially since they are digital natives.

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