

Navigating Marital Paradigms: Exploring Attitudes towards Monogamy and Polygamy in Colombo, Sri Lanka

KI Malalgoda¹, KMS Weerasinghe², RPCK Jayasinghe³

University of Sri Jayewardenepura

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400195>

Received: 15 March 2025; Accepted: 19 March 2025; Published: 06 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the perspectives on monogamous and polygamous relationships among individuals in Colombo, Sri Lanka, taking into account the impact of personal experiences, cultural norms, and societal expectations. The study conducts in-depth interviews with 60 participants from various cultural backgrounds, spanning ages 18 to 40 and 40 and above, to explore how individuals navigate the interplay between traditional values and contemporary influences in their intimate relationships. The results indicate a nuanced relationship among personal background, cultural influences, and social expectations, which collectively inform individuals' views and decisions about marriage ideals. The narratives of participants reveal differing viewpoints, showcasing the vibrant cultural landscape of Colombo. While some maintain conventional principles of loyalty and dedication, others champion personal freedom and self-actualization. Furthermore, the study investigates how beliefs about monogamy and polygamy are passed down through generations within families and communities, highlighting the lasting impact of cultural heritage on relationship dynamics. The findings culminate in recommendations aimed at enhancing cultural sensitivity, fostering individual autonomy, and tackling systemic barriers to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable society. Further research is recommended to deepen understanding and inform targeted interventions for fostering healthy and respectful relationships within the community.

Keywords: Monogamy, Polygamy, Cultural Norms, Societal Expectations, Relationship Dynamics

INTRODUCTION

The complex web of societal norms and cultural values is shaped by a wide range of factors that converge in the dynamic urban scene of Colombo, Sri Lanka. The institution of marriage plays a crucial role in preserving social order, fostering family unity, and shaping individual identity in our dynamic society. The concepts of monogamy and polygamy, each embodying distinct values, beliefs, and traditions that have evolved through the ages, are deeply embedded within the structure of marriage.

The vibrant city of Colombo serves as a confluence where historical traditions and contemporary influences intersect, forming a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives on the essence of a successful marriage. Individuals in this vibrant urban environment engage in a delicate interplay of cultural heritage, societal norms, and personal ambitions as they traverse the intricate landscape of intimate connections.

The principles associated with polygamy and monogamy, significant to this vibrant city, offer a foundation for understanding the complexities of Colombo's marital structures. The concept of a lifelong partnership characterized by love and mutual respect is epitomized by monogamy, which is rooted in the principles of exclusivity, commitment, and fidelity.

In contrast to monogamy, polygamy permits individuals to engage in multiple relationships concurrently, challenging conventional norms surrounding romantic partnerships. Polygamy is a complex topic that deeply embedded in diverse historical and cultural structures, serving as a manifestation of various behaviours that span from modern-day interpretations shaped by Western societal norms to longstanding traditional practices.

Polygamy is a complex topic that has been interpreted in various ways throughout history and culture. These

interpretations range from modern ones that are affected by Western norms to long-lasting traditional practices.

The goal of this qualitative study is to look into the complicated feelings and thoughts of people in Colombo about monogamy and polygamy while taking into account the many cultural and social factors at play.

Against this backdrop of cultural diversity and social change, this qualitative research seeks to embark on a journey of exploration, shedding light on the nuanced attitudes and beliefs surrounding monogamy and polygamy among the residents of Colombo. By delving into the cherished values that underpin these marital ideals, we aim to unravel the complexities of contemporary relationships and illuminate the ways in which individuals navigate the evolving landscape of marriage in this dynamic city.

Objectives

1. To explore the lived experiences and personal perceptions of individuals in Colombo regarding their attitudes towards and experiences with monogamous and polygamous relationships, with a focus on understanding the factors influencing their perspectives.
2. To examine the role of cultural norms and societal expectations in shaping the negotiation and decision-making processes surrounding marital arrangements in Colombo, aiming to uncover the complexities of how individuals reconcile traditional values with modern influences.
3. To investigate the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values related to monogamy and polygamy within families and communities in Colombo, seeking to understand how cultural heritage and family dynamics influence individuals' perceptions and choices regarding intimate relationships.

Research questions

1. What are the individual lived experiences and perceptions of residents in Colombo regarding monogamous and polygamous relationships, and how do personal factors such as upbringing, life experiences, and cultural background influence their attitudes towards these marital paradigms?
2. How do cultural norms and societal expectations in Colombo shape the negotiation and decision-making processes surrounding marital arrangements, and what strategies do individuals employ to navigate between traditional values and modern influences in their approach to monogamy and polygamy?
3. How are beliefs and values related to monogamy and polygamy transmitted across generations within families and communities in Colombo, and what role do family dynamics, cultural heritage, and societal changes play in shaping individuals' perceptions and choices regarding intimate relationships?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Navigating marital paradigms involves exploring attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy, which are influenced by various factors. Research by Willoughby et al. (2013) proposes six interconnected dimensions of marital paradigms, including marital salience, timing, context, processes, permanence, and centrality. These dimensions shape individuals' beliefs about marriage. Additionally, Cunningham & Thornton (2006) highlight the impact of parents' marital quality on adult children's attitudes towards marriage and alternatives, emphasizing the link between attitudes and behaviours like premarital sex and divorce. Furthermore, studies by Willoughby & Hall (2014) and Willoughby et al. (2019) draw on Marital Paradigm Theory to explore how beliefs about marriage's salience, timing, process, context, permanence, and centrality create unique paradigms about marriage. These paradigms influence individuals' perceptions and decisions regarding marriage. Moreover, Serrano & García-Mangano (2023) identify different marital paradigms among populations, ranging from indifferent to traditionalist, showcasing the diversity of attitudes towards marriage. Understanding marital paradigms also involves considering factors like attachment, as discussed by (Jensen et al., 2014), and the importance of marriage in relation to materialism and marital satisfaction, as highlighted by LeBaron et al. (LeBaron et al., 2017). These studies emphasize the multifaceted nature of marital beliefs and their impact on relationship dynamics and satisfaction. In exploring attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy, research by Singh & Agrawal (2022) and Rodriguez-Exposito & Garcia-Gonzalez (2021) provides insights into the genetic

and evolutionary aspects of mating systems. These studies shed light on how selection pressures and sexual conflict influence behaviours and preferences related to monogamous and polygamous relationships. In conclusion, navigating marital paradigms involves a complex interplay of individual beliefs, family influences, attachment styles, and evolutionary factors that shape attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy. Understanding these diverse influences is crucial for comprehensively exploring and interpreting attitudes and behaviours related to different marital paradigms.

To explore attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy in Asia, it is essential to consider cultural, social, and individual factors that may influence these attitudes. While the references provided offer valuable insights into various aspects of attitudes towards relationships and non-monogamous practices, the most relevant references for this specific exploration are as follows: Reference Carter & Perkeybile (2018) by discusses the biological aspects of social monogamy, shedding light on the evolutionary pathways that may have led to the emergence of monogamous behaviours. Understanding the biological underpinnings of monogamy can provide a foundational perspective when examining attitudes towards monogamy in Asian cultures. Reference Chi et al. (2013) by evaluates the impact of a comprehensive sexual education program on college students in Southwest China, including changes in attitudes towards premarital sex and monogamy. This study offers insights into how educational interventions can influence attitudes towards relationship practices, which is crucial when exploring attitudes towards monogamy in an Asian context. Reference Solomon & Ophir (2020) by delves into the evolution of monogamy, highlighting the complexities and variations within the concept of monogamy. Understanding the different forms and behaviours associated with monogamy can provide a nuanced perspective when examining attitudes towards monogamy in Asian societies. By synthesizing information from these selected references, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the biological, educational, and evolutionary factors that may shape attitudes towards monogamy in Asia. These insights can contribute to a more nuanced exploration of attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy in the Asian cultural context.

METHODOLOGY

Participant Selection: A total of 60 Colombo dwellers were selected from various ethnic and religious groups in Colombo, Sri Lanka, ensuring representation from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, 30 participants were aged between 18 and 40 years old, while the remaining 30 were aged 40 and above. This stratified sampling approach aimed to capture a range of perspectives across different age groups and cultural identities within the urban landscape of Colombo.

Data Collection: In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant to gather rich and detailed insights into their lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards monogamous and polygamous relationships. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring participants' narratives while also ensuring consistency in covering key topics related to marital ideals and cultural influences.

Snowball Sampling: Snowball sampling was employed to identify and recruit participants who may not be easily accessible through traditional sampling methods. Initial participants were selected purposively based on their diverse backgrounds and willingness to participate in the study. They were then asked to refer other individuals from their social networks who may offer unique perspectives on the research topic. This iterative process helped in reaching individuals who belonged to specific cultural or religious communities and who possessed valuable insights into the nuances of marital norms and practices in Colombo.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to their involvement in the study, all participants were provided with comprehensive details regarding the research objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring informed consent. They were given ample opportunity to seek clarification and address any concerns before voluntarily agreeing to participate, with the assurance of the right to withdraw without repercussion. Upholding confidentiality, participants' personal information and interview data were meticulously safeguarded, with pseudonyms assigned to ensure anonymity, and access limited solely to the research team, stored securely in password-protected electronic files.

Respect for participants' autonomy and cultural beliefs was paramount throughout the study, with careful

attention to cultural sensitivity during interviews and data interpretation. To foster an environment conducive to open dialogue, researchers refrained from imposing personal values or judgments, striving to create a non-judgmental and inclusive space for participants to share their perspectives. Conscious efforts were made to minimize harm or discomfort, including avoiding sensitive or intrusive questions and providing support resources for any emotional distress that may have arisen.

The research aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of attitudes towards monogamy and polygamy in Colombo, potentially informing the development of culturally sensitive interventions and policies to support healthy and respectful relationships within the community. Participants were made aware of the potential societal benefits of the research and how their participation could contribute to positive social change.

Furthermore, the research protocol underwent rigorous review and approval by an institutional ethics committee or review board, ensuring compliance with ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human participants. Throughout the study, any ethical concerns raised were promptly addressed with transparency, and appropriate measures were implemented to uphold the welfare and rights of participants.

RESULTS

Objective 1: To explore the lived experiences and personal perceptions of individuals in Colombo regarding their attitudes towards and experiences with monogamous and polygamous relationships, with a focus on understanding the factors influencing their perspectives.

Lived Experiences and Perceptions (Code: LEP)

Sub-theme 1.1: Personal Experiences and Upbringing (Code: LEP-PEU):

Participants present perceptions that are firmly anchored in their personal histories and upbringing, demonstrating how these elements influence how they view monogamous and polygamous relationships in the context of Sri Lankan society. For example, Priya's tale reveals the significant influence of her conservative upbringing on her marriage-related beliefs. Priya was raised in a household that placed a high emphasis on tradition. She remembers her parents emphasizing the virtues of monogamy and referring to faithfulness as the foundation of a happy marriage. Recalling her parents' unwavering devotion to one another, she reflects on how this gave her a profound respect for marriage as an institution and a strong conviction in the value of faithfulness for life.

Conversely Ajith, presents a different viewpoint influenced by a more liberal upbringing. Brought up in a family that valued candid communication and analytical thought, Ajith recalls how conversations on partnerships were characterized by acceptance and adaptability. He talks on how his parents' progressive views on love and partnering gave him a sense of independence and the opportunity to experiment with many kinds of relationships. Because he was raised in a setting that valued individual autonomy and choice, Ajith is more accepting of unconventional relationship styles.

The story of Rukshan explores how his conservative background affected his views on dating. Rukshan describes how his parents, who came from a home where traditional values were highly valued, stressed the necessity of fidelity and commitment in marriage. As a result of seeing their unwavering commitment to one another, Rukshan came to understand that monogamy is the cornerstone of a successful and lasting relationship. Rukshan is unwavering in his adherence to traditional beliefs in the face of societal changes, seeing monogamous unions as a sacred link that ought to be cherished and honoured.

Nisha's perspective presents an alternative viewpoint influenced by her liberal background. Growing up in a setting that valued individual liberty and open-mindedness, Nisha considers how her parents' progressive ideas on relationships shaped her own beliefs. Conversations on love and relationships were marked by inclusivity and acceptance, which encouraged a feeling of freedom to experiment with various relationship structures. Nisha welcomes variety in relationships and views monogamy as simply one of many acceptable forms of love. She also thinks that each person should be free to choose their own path to happiness.

Sub-theme 1.2: Cultural Influences and Societal Expectations (Code: LEP-CISE):

In this subtheme, participants provide detailed insights on the complex interactions between social expectations and cultural norms, shedding light on how these interactions affect their understanding of monogamous and polygamous relationships in Sri Lankan society. The story of Ramesh sheds light on the widespread impact of social pressure on marriage ideals. As he grew up in an environment that promoted monogamy, Ramesh remembers feeling the pressure of social norms pressing down on him. He describes how his own needs for autonomy and personal fulfilment frequently collided with social and familial pressure to follow conventional relationship conventions. Despite grappling with these conflicting forces, Ramesh ultimately found solace in carving out a path aligned with his authentic self, one that embraced the complexities of modern love and partnership.

In contrast, Tharini's narrative sheds light on the evolving landscape of societal attitudes towards gender roles and relationship dynamics. As societal norms undergo transformation, Tharini discusses her journey towards embracing a more egalitarian vision of partnership, one characterized by mutual respect and shared decision-making. Drawing from her own experiences, Tharini emphasizes the importance of breaking free from outdated gender stereotypes and fostering relationships built on equality and understanding.

Kumar's story explores how his view of relationships is shaped by the ubiquitous influence of cultural expectations. Being raised in a culture that exalts monogamous marriages, Kumar experienced strong social pressure to follow conventional dating customs. Even though Kumar was more interested in investigating different kinds of relationships, he struggled with the shame and guilt that society expected of him. Only by reflecting on and learning about himself did Kumar have the guts to defy these expectations and forge a way that is true to who he really is.

Meera's story sheds light on the shifting landscape of gender roles and relationship dynamics in Sri Lankan society. As societal norms evolve, Meera reflects on her journey towards embracing a more egalitarian vision of partnership. Raised in a family that valued equality and mutual respect, Meera challenges traditional gender stereotypes, advocating for relationships built on partnership and shared decision-making. She believes that true intimacy can only be achieved when both partners are empowered to express themselves freely and participate equally in the relationship.

Chamika feels that her physical and emotional requirements are not defined by her culture, religion, or race. She contends that in this day of women's emancipation, a woman ought to be allowed to have two men for sex, just as two brothers in her culture are permitted to do so in order to save their properties. She highlights the fact that relationships are about more than just love, loyalty, or sex and is extremely possessive of her two loves. Chamika says that partnerships are complicated because they involve things like strength, power, security, and bodily needs. She rejects using ingrained cultural conventions to identify herself because she sees culture as dynamic.

Objective 2: To examine the role of cultural norms and societal expectations in shaping the negotiation and decision-making processes surrounding marital arrangements in Colombo, aiming to uncover the complexities of how individuals reconcile traditional values with modern influences.

Cultural Norms and Expectations (Code: CNE)**Sub-theme 2.1: Negotiation of Traditional Values and Modern Influences (Code: CNE-NVTMI):**

Within this sub-theme, participants engage in candid discussions about the intricate process of negotiating traditional values and modern influences within the dynamic cultural landscape of Sri Lankan society. Nimal's narrative offers a poignant reflection on the challenges of navigating familial expectations while striving for personal autonomy in matters of love and partnership. Growing up immersed in a culture that venerates familial traditions, Nimal grapples with the weight of societal pressure to adhere to conventional marital norms. However, as he embarks on his journey of self-discovery, Nimal finds himself at odds with these entrenched traditions, yearning for the freedom to chart his own path in matters of the heart. Despite facing resistance and criticism from family members, Nimal remains steadfast in his commitment to forging authentic connections based on

mutual respect and understanding. His story encapsulates the profound tension between honoring cultural heritage and embracing individual agency in the pursuit of love and happiness.

23-year-old Shanika, a university student, struggles in her search for love with the conflict between traditional beliefs and contemporary influences. Shanika feels bound by social norms that put planned weddings ahead of individual choice, even though she honors her cultural background. Shanika thinks that in issues of the heart, autonomy and agency are important, even though her parents insist on adhering to tradition. She tries to strike a balance between wanting to build sincere relationships based on love and understanding and respecting her family's standards.

The 48-year-old father of two, Rohan, considers how expectations from family and society have changed over time. Although Rohan was raised in a traditional home where arranged marriages were common, he recognizes that Sri Lankan society is evolving. Although Rohan believes it's important to respect family customs, he also supports being more open-minded and flexible when accepting contemporary methods to partnerships. He urges his kids to make wise decisions and follow their hearts instead of adhering to outdated traditions that might not align with their moral principles.

Dhamika thinks that a closed monogamous relationship is maintained for a variety of reasons, including parental influence, coworkers, profession, and society expectations. He misses the relaxed lifestyle he had in Europe and feels let down, thinking he is living a lie for the benefit of society. He feels that the best way to discover happiness is to have several lovers, which is why he occasionally travels overseas to experience their joy. He thinks it will take society almost a century to come to terms with this kind of behavior. His wife is aware of his behavior, but because of social expectations and her love for their children, she refuses to put up with it, keeping the family together. Dhamika believes that his wife and he would be happier if she could have other lovers. Dhamika feels that his wife's life would be more content if they could have several partners together. She was initially willing to see these kinds of films with him, but she now believes that cultural barriers prevent them from exploring this. According to Dhamika, society and culture are important causes of unhappy marriages and obstacles to happiness. They have spoken about this topic on multiple occasions, and although his wife was involved in polygamous relationships in Europe, she now believes that her kids would never accept it if they knew. Dhamika claims that although his wife needs this kind of connection, cultural pressures have scared her away.

Sub-theme 2.2: Strategies for Negotiating Cultural Norms (Code: CNE-SCN):

In this sub-theme, participants share insights into the strategies they employ to navigate the complexities of cultural norms and societal expectations in their approach to relationships. Priyantha's story demonstrates the positive impact that honest dialogue and respect have on creating wholesome, happy relationships in Sri Lankan society. Priyantha highlights the value of creating a trusting and understanding atmosphere in which both partners feel free to communicate their wants and desires honestly, based on his personal experiences. Priyantha and his partner manage the subtleties of cultural differences with elegance and empathy through open communication and attentive listening, which eventually strengthens their relationship. The tale of Priyantha emphasizes the value of reciprocal and individual compromise in overcoming cultural barriers and creating enduring relationships.

The 38-year-old businessman Kamal highlights the significance of maintaining traditional values and rituals throughout relationships. He thinks that respecting cultural standards builds stability and harmony in families and provides a solid foundation for long-lasting relationships. Kamal supports a traditional method of managing cultural expectations in which married partners put their family's needs and obligations ahead of their own. He contends that upholding familial unity at the expense of individual autonomy is necessary to preserve societal cohesiveness and cultural purity.

The 29-year-old artist Sara challenges accepted ideas about societal expectations and standards in partnerships. Sara promotes a progressive stance that places an emphasis on personal fulfilment and individual liberty, drawing from her own experiences as inspiration. She feels that rather than being constrained by what society expects of them, couples should be allowed to determine their own relationship patterns. Sara hopes that through respecting diversity and tolerance, people will be able to create genuine connections based on acceptance and respect for

one another, even though love transcends cultural barriers.

Janidu, a 38-year-old, navigates the complexities of cultural norms with a strong belief in personal freedom and open relationships. Despite societal expectations, he maintains that his relationship's exclusivity and possessiveness are strengths, fostering immense mutual respect and trust with his life partners. Janidu humorously notes that his soul or body cannot be contained by culture. He cherishes the diverse sex life he shares with his partners, believing that all desires cannot be fulfilled within a monogamous framework. Janidu's strategy for negotiating cultural norms involves embracing an open-minded approach while adhering to a strong, exclusive bond with his partners.

Objective 3: To investigate the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values related to monogamy and polygamy within families and communities in Colombo, seeking to understand how cultural heritage and family dynamics influence individuals' perceptions and choices regarding intimate relationships.

Kaveesha, a 56-year-old, faces a profound challenge in her marriage. After 21 years of monogamy, she discovered her husband's extramarital relationship with a younger woman. While she initially attributed this to menopause, Kaveesha found comfort and fulfillment with one of her younger brother's friends, who had strong feelings towards her in her younger days. Even after having kids, he said that he was ready to marry her and adopt children as his own if she liked. Now he is also married, nonetheless his feelings for her are steady. He helped her a lot to recover from the shocking truth of her husband's affair. She receives love, respect, attention, and everything she desires from her ex-boyfriend. Although he is jealous, her spouse ignores Kaveesha's affair to keep up his image as the ideal man. Kaveesha maintained her relationship with her youthful partner while traversing a challenging emotional environment in her quest for satisfaction and happiness. She was reluctant to shatter this facade and her reputation in society due to the cultural norms they held important. She claimed that it is a safe way to be joyful without endangering one's parents or children or facing social criticism.

Intergenerational Transmission of Beliefs (Code: ITB)

Sub-theme 3.1: Intergenerational Transmission of Beliefs and Values (Code: ITB-IV):

Introspective discussions about the family context's transfer of values and ideas about polygamy and monogamy illuminate the long-lasting impact of cultural heritage on relationship dynamics in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Dilhani's story provides an insightful analysis of the significant influence of her parents' traditional traditions on her own views and preferences about personal relationships. Dilhani, who grew up in a home rich in cultural customs, remembers how her parents upheld the value of monogamy and saw faithfulness as the foundation of a stable marriage. She developed a strong respect for the institution of marriage as a result of her upbringing and a penchant for devoted, monogamous partnerships. Dilhani's story underscores the enduring legacy of familial upbringing in shaping individual attitudes towards relationships, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural heritage and personal identity within Sri Lankan society.

Aliyah, a 20-year-old Muslim woman, reflects on her upbringing in a conservative Muslim household in Colombo. Raised with the belief in the sanctity of marriage, she was taught that monogamy is ordained in Islam. Her parents emphasized the importance of loyalty and commitment in relationships, instilling in her a deep respect for marital fidelity. Despite societal pressures, Aliyah values monogamous relationships as a reflection of her religious and cultural identity.

Ahmed, a 35-year-old Malay man, shares his experiences growing up in a close-knit Malay community in Sri Lanka. Influenced by his Malay heritage and Islamic faith, Ahmed was taught from a young age about the significance of family unity and fidelity. His parents' emphasis on monogamy as a moral and religious principle shaped his own beliefs and values regarding marriage. Ahmed cherishes the traditions passed down through generations, viewing monogamy as a fundamental aspect of his cultural identity.

Michael, a 22-year-old Christian man, reflects on his Christian upbringing in Colombo. Growing up in a devout Christian family, Michael was taught about the sacredness of marriage and the importance of fidelity in relationships. His parents' strong Christian values emphasized the commitment to a monogamous union as a reflection of God's covenant with humanity. Michael internalized these beliefs, viewing monogamy as a

fundamental aspect of his Christian faith and personal identity.

Sandra, a 45-year-old Burgher, remembers her childhood in a mixed Colombo family. Sandra was exposed to a range of cultural practices and ideas because she was raised in a family that valued diversity. Although she came from a Burgher family that respected liberal ideas and individual freedom, her exposure to Sri Lankan society also made her realize how important it is to appreciate cultural differences. Sandra's parents stressed the value of mutual respect and understanding in relationships, regardless of whether they were monogamous or polygamous, even if they did not formally follow any one religious tradition.

Nalaka, a 30-year-old Sinhala Buddhist, shares his perspective on the interplay between cultural heritage and relationship dynamics. Raised in a traditional Sinhala Buddhist family, Nalaka was taught to uphold the principles of morality and ethics in all aspects of life, including relationships. While Buddhism does not explicitly prescribe a specific form of marriage, Nalaka's upbringing emphasized the importance of commitment and loyalty in intimate partnerships. He values monogamous relationships as a reflection of his cultural heritage and personal values rooted in Buddhist teachings.

Priya, a 50-year-old Hindu woman, reflects on her upbringing in a Hindu household in Jaffna. Influenced by her Tamil Hindu heritage, Priya was taught about the significance of family unity and traditional values. While Hinduism does not have strict prescriptions regarding marriage, Priya's parents emphasized the importance of fidelity and devotion in relationships. She cherishes the cultural traditions passed down through generations, viewing monogamy as a reflection of her Hindu identity and commitment to family harmony.

The 38-year-old atheist Surath thinks it is essentially incorrect to divide people into ethnic groups. He is a strong believer that having sex with several people, either in a group or on an individual basis, is totally fine, but it does not represent his ideal kind of love. According to Surath, a relationship consists of an exclusive bond that he cannot share with anybody else in his life. Since they both value standards and values that promote a great deal of respect for one another, he thinks his spouse feels the same way. Although Surath agrees that couples who have several relationships may still respect each other's needs, he believes that respect is increased when a pair is focused on satisfying every desire with just one partner. He sees possessiveness and exclusivity as positive aspects of his relationship, as they foster immense mutual respect and trust with his life partner. Surath humorously adds that this exclusivity means he never needs latex condoms, reducing environmental pollution. Without insecurities, they enjoy a diverse sex life, maintaining diversity with one partner.

22-year-old Suzane thinks monogamy gives stability in a relationship. She claims that there is no need for polygamy or many partnerships if couples sincerely love each other and recognize that there are different ways to have sex, similar to different genres of pornography. Suzane finds that having sexual variety in a committed relationship along with true love lessens the need for other partners. This conviction supports her opinion that, within the constraints of monogamy, mutual commitment and exploration can lead to a stable and meaningful partnership.

The 38-year-old Malik stated that it's acceptable to have several sexual partners up until a person enters a committed commitment. He thinks it's vital to learn and try a variety of things before committing. He imagines a committed relationship as the beginning of a "happily ever after" fairy tale. Malik believes that while the learning and exploration phase is essential for one's own development and comprehension, the establishment of commitment signals the start of a monogamous and satisfying relationship.

Joel, 36, revealed that he and his spouse have treasured their 11-year monogamous relationship. But now that he is paralyzed from cancer, they are thinking of becoming a throuple. Joel wants to secure his wife's future in the event of his death because, in her absence, the responsibilities of the home have become too much for her. They entered into this triple connection with the intention of supporting and sharing responsibilities. To live a better and more secure life, all three partners are dedicated to this tight relationship with no extramarital affairs. Joel feels fortunate to be a part of a generation that appreciates diversity and cultural customs.

Sub-theme 3.2: Impact of Cultural Heritage on Relationship Choices (Code: ITB-CHR):

Within this sub-theme, participants offer insights into the intricate dynamics between cultural heritage and

personal agency in shaping relationship choices and marital preferences. Sanjeev's narrative provides a nuanced exploration of the competing influences of cultural expectations and individual autonomy in his decision-making process. Reflecting on his own experiences, Sanjeev elucidates how his cultural background instilled in him a deep sense of duty towards familial harmony, often at the expense of his own desires. Despite grappling with the tension between tradition and personal freedom, Sanjeev ultimately navigates the complexities of cultural expectations with grace and resilience, forging a path that honours both his heritage and his individuality. His story serves as a poignant reminder of the multifaceted nature of identity and the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity within the realm of intimate relationships in contemporary Colombo.

As a Muslim, Rahim highlights the importance of family unity and marital faithfulness in Islamic teachings by sharing stories from his family's oral history. He talks about how these beliefs are inherited by the Muslim community in Colombo and influence people's views and actions about monogamous relationships.

Ahmed, a devoted Muslim, expresses his opinion that, provided that all parties are treated fairly and with respect, having several wives may be legal under Islamic law. He stresses how crucial it is to give vulnerable women protection and support, as they could otherwise find it difficult to start a family. Ahmed's story demonstrates the range of perspectives among Muslims on polygamy, illustrating the various ways that Muslims in Colombo understand religious precepts and cultural conventions.

Similarly, Lakshmi, representing the Tamil community, reflects on her family's cultural heritage and its impact on relationship dynamics. She narrates stories of her ancestors, where monogamy was upheld as a sacred bond rooted in mutual respect and devotion. Lakshmi elucidates how these traditional values continue to resonate within Tamil families, guiding individuals in their pursuit of meaningful and enduring partnerships. Through their narratives, Rahim and Lakshmi offer valuable insights into the enduring legacy of intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values within Muslim and Tamil communities in Colombo, illuminating the rich tapestry of cultural diversity within the city.

DISCUSSION

The exploration of individuals' lived experiences and perceptions regarding monogamous and polygamous relationships in Colombo unveils the intricate interplay between personal upbringing, cultural values, and societal influences. The narratives provided a rich tapestry of contrasting experiences, highlighting how individuals navigate the complexities of intimate partnerships within the context of Sri Lankan society. Priya and Rukshan's stories underscored the enduring influence of conservative upbringings, where traditional values such as fidelity and commitment are deeply ingrained, shaping their steadfast belief in the sanctity of monogamy. Conversely, Ajith and Nisha's narratives portrayed a more liberal approach, where openness to diverse relationship models and individual autonomy are celebrated. These diverse perspectives shed light on the multifaceted nature of attitudes towards relationships, reflecting the dynamic cultural landscape of Colombo.

The examination of cultural norms and societal expectations in shaping negotiation processes surrounding marital arrangements elucidates the complexities individuals face in reconciling traditional values with modern influences. Nimal's narrative poignantly illustrates the tension between familial expectations and personal autonomy, as he grapples with societal pressure to adhere to conventional marital norms while striving for authentic connections based on mutual respect and understanding. The contrasting experiences of Kamal and Sara further underscore the diversity of strategies employed to navigate cultural expectations, ranging from upholding traditional values to advocating for individual autonomy and personal fulfillment. These narratives highlight the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity within the realm of intimate relationships, reflecting the evolving dynamics of Colombo's cultural landscape.

The investigation into the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values surrounding monogamy and polygamy unveils the enduring legacy of cultural heritage on relationship choices within families and communities in Colombo. Through narratives from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, such as Rahim, Ahmed, and Lakshmi, we gain insights into the deep-seated influence of cultural traditions on individuals' perceptions and preferences regarding intimate partnerships. The stories of Dilhani and Priya underscore the profound impact of familial upbringing in shaping attitudes towards marriage, highlighting the intricate interplay

between cultural heritage and personal identity. These narratives illuminate the rich tapestry of cultural diversity within Colombo, emphasizing the importance of understanding the complex interplay between tradition, religion, and individual agency in shaping relationship dynamics within Sri Lankan society.

CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, personal perceptions, and intergenerational transmission of beliefs, this research has shed light on the complex dynamics surrounding attitudes towards monogamous and polygamous relationships in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The narratives provided a nuanced understanding of how personal upbringing, cultural influences, and societal expectations intersect to shape individuals' perspectives and choices regarding intimate partnerships.

The findings underscore the need for policymakers and stakeholders to recognize the diversity of cultural norms and values within Sri Lankan society and develop policies that respect and accommodate these differences. It is evident that a one-size-fits-all approach to relationship norms is inadequate, given the myriad of factors influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviours.

Policy recommendations include the promotion of comprehensive relationship education programs that incorporate discussions on cultural diversity and communication strategies, as well as the implementation of cultural sensitivity training for policymakers and service providers. Furthermore, there is a call for the development of supportive policies that recognize and protect individuals' rights and autonomy in relationships, while also addressing systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities.

Additionally, further research and data collection efforts are needed to deepen our understanding of the factors influencing attitudes towards monogamous and polygamous relationships in Sri Lanka. Future line for further research under this area could benefit from a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to capture more complex points of view. Including all the parts of Sri Lanka in the demographic scope outside Colombo guarantees more representation and a more complete awareness of the problem. Investigating the effects on marital attitudes of socioeconomic elements, education levels, and media exposure, internet exposure, would also be beneficial. Including longitudinal data offers a dynamic view of the subject and helps one understand changes in paradigms over time.. By investing in research and targeted interventions, policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society where individuals are empowered to navigate diverse relationship dynamics with dignity and respect.

REFERENCES

1. Carter, C. S., & Perkeybile, A. M. (2018). The monogamy paradox: what do love and sex have to do with it *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2018.00202>
2. Chi, X., Hawk, S. T., Winter, S., & Meeus, W. (2013). The effect of comprehensive sexual education program on sexual health knowledge and sexual attitude among college students in southwest china. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 27(2), NP2049-NP2066. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1010539513475655>
3. Cunningham, M., & Thornton, A. (2006). The influence of parents' marital quality on adult children's attitudes toward marriage and its alternatives: main and moderating effects. *Demography*, 43(4), 659-672. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2006.0031>
4. Jensen, T. M., Willoughby, B. J., Holman, T. B., Busby, D. M., & Shafer, K. (2014). Associations between family and interpersonal processes and emerging adult marital paradigms: does adult attachment mediate?. *Journal of Adult Development*, 22(1), 50-62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-014-9200-3>
5. LeBaron, A. B., Allsop, D. B., Hill, E. J., Willoughby, B. J., & Britt-Lutter, S. (2017). Marriage and materialism: actor and partner effects between materialism, importance of marriage, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Financial Therapy*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.4148/1944-9771.1145>
6. Rodriguez-Exposito, E., & García-González, F. (2021). Metapopulation structure modulates sexual antagonism. *Evolution Letters*, 5(4), 344-358. <https://doi.org/10.1002/evl3.244>
7. Singh, A., & Agrawal, A. F. (2022). Sex-specific variance in fitness and the efficacy of selection. *The*

-
- American Naturalist, 199(5), 587-602. <https://doi.org/10.1086/719015>
8. Solomon, N. G., & Ophir, A. G. (2020). Editorial: what's love got to do with it: the evolution of monogamy. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2020.00110>
 9. Serrano, C., & García-Manglano, J. (2023). Marital beliefs and concerns of Spanish emerging adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 45(4), 1019-1043. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x231169657>
 10. Willoughby, B. J., Hall, S. S., & Luczak, H. P. (2013). Marital paradigms. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(2), 188-211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x13487677>
 11. Willoughby, B. J., James, S. L., Marsee, I., Memmott, M. K., & Dennison, R. P. (2019). "I'm scared because divorce sucks": parental divorce and the marital paradigms of emerging adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 41(6), 711-738. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x19880933>
 12. Willoughby, B. J., & Hall, S. S. (2014). Enthusiasts, delayers, and the ambiguous middle. *Emerging Adulthood*, 3(2), 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696814548478>