

Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study

Dr. Neerja Pandey^{1*}, Ms. Pooja Dutta²

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present work is a comparative study of couple compatibility in Romantic and Live-in relationships in terms of their interpersonal needs that include inclusion, affection, and control using Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B). **Aim:** It is a pilot study to investigate compatibility among couples with the objective to Study and compare couple compatibility in romantic and live-in relationships using FIRO-B. **Method:** Forty couples (20 in Romantic relationships and 20 in Live-in relationships) participated in the study. The study assessed compatibility through the dimensions of Inclusion, Control, and Affection using a 54-item FIRO-B scale. Expressed and wanted behaviors were analyzed. **Result:** It was revealed that couples with high alignment in both expressed and wanted needs tended to exhibit greater satisfaction and stability in their relationships. Conversely, discrepancies between expressed and wanted behaviors indicated potential challenges in fulfilling interpersonal desires, which could affect overall relationship satisfaction. **Discussion:** The findings underscore the importance of assessing and addressing compatibility dimensions in relationship counseling, aiding in fostering mutual understanding and harmony among couples. The authors conclude that understanding these dynamics is crucial for enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships across different relationship types. Finally, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of compatibility within relationships and lays the groundwork for future research in this vital area of interpersonal dynamics.

Keywords: *Compatibility, Live-in Couples, Couples in Romantic Relationship, Relationship Dynamics, FIRO-B*

The trend nowadays is for individuals, from a very young age, to get into relationships. Not simply relationships, there are many types of relations like, Romantic relationship, Live-in relationship, committed relationship, open relationship, long-distance relationship, relationship with no strings attached, online relationship, platonic relationship, sexual relationship, asexual relationship and what not. Hence, the need to understand the reason to get into relationships and the compatibility within it.

¹Assistant professor Psychology, Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus ORCID ID 0000-0002-7495-2413

²M.A. Clinical Psychology, Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus ORCID ID 0009-0004-4098-1453

*Corresponding Author

Received: May 9, 2026; Revision Received: June 10, 2026; Accepted: June 13, 2026

Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study

Compatibility in relationships refers to the extent to which two individuals align in their personalities, values, interests, and life goals. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the success and durability of the partnership. When compatibility is high, partners often experience a deep sense of connection, mutual ease, and genuine enjoyment in each other's company (Caughlin et al., 2000; Barelds, 2005). Compatibility is of five types namely, emotional compatibility, Lifestyle compatibility, Intellectual compatibility, Values compatibility, and Sexual compatibility. Storaasli, R. D., & Markman, H. J. (1990) assessed 131 couples (aged between 16 & 35 years) for pre-marriage relationship problems and adjustment. Follow up was done at 12 weeks and 1.5, 3, 4, and 5 years. Result showed a moderately strong association between male and female ratings at each stage of family development.

Compatibility is about finding someone who complements you, challenges you, and makes you feel like the best version of yourself. While compatibility is not the only factor that determines the success of a relationship, it is a crucial foundation for building a lasting and fulfilling partnership. Specific personality traits may play a crucial role in determining the ease with which individuals form compatible relationships. Individuals with elevated levels of agreeableness and extraversion, coupled with a secure attachment style, tend to experience a smoother process of compatibility with others. In contrast, those characterized by high neuroticism and an insecure attachment style may encounter greater challenges in establishing compatibility with others.

A romantic relationship is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that involves a unique blend of emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. It is characterized by a deep emotional connection between two individuals, often accompanied by physical attraction, intimacy, and a desire for long-term commitment (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2006; 2019).

A live-in relationship, also known as cohabitation, is arrangements where two people who are romantically involved together without being married. It has become increasingly common in recent decades, particularly in western societies. There are various reasons why couples choose to cohabit, including financial considerations, a desire to test compatibility before marriage, or simply a preference for this type of arrangement. (Manning & Smock, 2002; 2005; Manning et al. 2019) (Rhoades et al. 2009; 2012).

The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) (according to the 'Technical Guide' by Allen L Hammer and Eugene R Schnell) is a well-established and reliable self-assessment tool that assesses how an individual's personal needs affect that person's behavior towards other individuals. It was developed by William Shultz in 1950s. FIRO-B evaluates how an individual's interpersonal needs shape their behavior in social interactions. It offers valuable insights into both personal characteristics and relational compatibility, helping individuals understand how they connect with others and what drives their social dynamics. It measures a person's a) need for expression i.e. what he prefers to do and how much he wants to initiate action (Expressed Behaviour), b) wants of a person i.e. how much he wants others to initiate action and how much he wants to be the recipient (Wanted Behaviour) in a relationship (Doherty et al. 1985).

The instrument has been developed to measure three types of interpersonal needs viz., Inclusion, Control, and Affection. Inclusion is the desire to belong to groups and connect with others. Control is the need to influence and lead others, or to be influenced and led by

Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study

them. Finally, affection is the desire for closeness and intimacy, or the preference for emotional distance.

These three interpersonal needs have further been divided into two dimensions of Expressed and Wanted to make a total of six categories: Expressed Inclusion, Expressed Control, Expressed Affection, Wanted Inclusion, Wanted Control, and Wanted Affection. Two important concepts to understand in FIRO-B are expressed and wanted behaviors. Expressed behaviors are what an individual shows to other people, while wanted behaviors are what one wishes others would show.

Table 1 Categories of Interpersonal Needs in FIRO-B

Types of Interpersonal Needs			Dimensions of Needs
Inclusion	Control	Affection	
Expressed Inclusion	Expressed Control	Expressed Affection	Total Expressed (EI+EC+EA)
Wanted Inclusion	Wanted Control	Wanted Affection	Total Wanted (WI+WC+WA)
Total Inclusion (EI+WI)	Total Control (EC+WC)	Total Affection (EA+WA)	Overall Need (TE + TW)

Rationale of the study

The exploration of compatibility between couples in various types of relationships holds significant importance in understanding the dynamics of interpersonal connections and their impact on relationship satisfaction and longevity. The rationale for conducting this pilot study using the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) framework lies in the gaps within existing research paradigms. And, there is an increasing diversity of relationship structures and the need to tailor interventions to suit the unique dynamics of each type. By examining how couples express and want inclusion, control, and affection, insights can be gained into the strengths and challenges of their relationships.

While extensive work in organizational behavior has utilized FIRO-B, its application to intimate relationships, particularly within the Indian context, remains scant. By bridging this divide, the study aims to enrich both fields, offering valuable insights into interpersonal dynamics within different relationships, which are often overlooked in organizational contexts. Additionally, the dearth of research specifically focusing on relationship compatibility underscores the significance of exploring this vital aspect of life. Through a pilot study, this research endeavors to lay the groundwork for future investigations into the intricate interplay of interpersonal needs, behaviors, and compatibility within couples into different relationships.

Moreover, as FIRO-B offers a comprehensive framework for assessing interpersonal needs and behaviors, it provides a nuanced understanding of compatibility beyond traditional measures. This pilot study lays the groundwork for future research by identifying effective strategies for improving compatibility and satisfaction among couples. By addressing the specific needs and preferences of individuals within different relationship contexts, interventions can be more targeted and impactful. Ultimately, this research contributes to enhancing the quality of relationships and promoting overall well-being for couples across diverse relationship structures.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Study by Dougall et al. (2022) highlights the changing environment of individualism and autonomy among Indian urban young, as well as a shift toward non-arranged romantic partnerships. Through in-depth interviews, the study identified three primary categories: those with uncertain relationships, those experiencing stability, and those concluding in marriage. This review contributes to a better knowledge of the intricacies of relationship compatibility across different relationship forms, as well as the challenges and goals of young adults in romantic partnerships in India. Gosh, V. (2021) explored Indian youth's views on live-in relationships. While live-in relationships are gaining traction, they are not seen as a steppingstone to marriage or replacing it. The study's strengths are its clear focus, data collection method, and relevance. It suggests using the FIRO-B model to analyze compatibility across various relationship types, highlighting a research gap in exploring how compatibility, assessed through this framework, varies, and impacts long-term success in different relationships. Dixit & Ramachandran (2020). The aim of the present study was to explore how married couples fare in their relationships and their individual needs for connection, control, and affection. 300 couples participated in the study for which ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis (hierarchical stepwise) were used to analyse the data. Findings state that the stronger someone's need for interpersonal needs, the less happy they tend to be in their marriage, suggesting that having some, but not excessive, need leads to better relationships. The study's strength lies in its unique look at both personal needs and external factors and offers valuable insights into marital health.

Saggino et al. (2015) sought to address Italy's rising divorce and separation rates by administering Wilson's Compatibility Quotient (CQ), Big Five Questionnaire, and Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test on 184 married couples. Result highlighted that couples with high compatibility scores have higher levels of marital satisfaction and partner's attractiveness. Markey & Markey (2007) compared three models of complementarity in relationship: interpersonal needs, social exchange theory, and simple similarity. It aimed to see which best predicted partner choices and relationship quality. This research is valuable for its broad analysis of complementarity models and its inclusion of both singles and couples. Future research could explore how these models interact with factors like attachment styles and culture, and how the FIRO-B model could further understand compatibility across different relationship structures. Meyer & Pepper (1977) used modified version of Jackson's Personality Research Form and the Locke-Wallace Marital-Adjustment Scale to evaluate the association between need similarity/complementarity and marital adjustment in young couples. They projected that couples who shared some needs but were complementary in others would have better marital adjustment. The study's strength is its comprehensive methodology. The participants were 66 young married couples, allowing for a more targeted examination within this population. Katz et al. (1960) explored if young couples with matching or balancing needs had happier marriages. This study fills gap by focusing directly on how similar needs impact marital satisfaction. It underlines the importance of compatible needs within marriage, building on existing research about overall compatibility. Highlighting the importance of needs in relationships, this study paves the way for deeper understanding.

METHODOLOGY

The **objective** of the present work was to compare couple compatibility in Romantic and Live-in relationships using Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B). The **hypothesis** being that there will be a significant difference in compatibility

Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study

between couples in Romantic and Live-in relationships. The dependent variable was Compatibility levels in Romantic and Live-in relationship couples. The independent variable was the relationship. **Tool** used: Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation – Behavior (FIRO-B), a 54-items scale measuring three primary dimensions of interpersonal relations: Inclusion, Control, and Affection, published by William Schutz, in the late 1950s. These 54 questions are divided into 3 sections with different multiple-choice options. Section 1: Question 1 to 16 (with options: Most people, many people, some people, a few people, one or two people or nobody); Section 2: Question 17 to 40 (with options: Usually, Often, Sometimes, Occasionally, Rarely or Never); and Section 3: Question 41 to 54 (with options: Most people, many people, some people, A few people, One or two people or Nobody)

The **sample** consisted of 40 couples (20 Romantic couples, 20 Live-in couples) who were currently involved in one of the types of relationships (live-in or romantic). These couples were selected purposely following the inclusion and exclusion criteria. **Inclusive criteria:** Individuals above 23 years of age or older, and in relationships lasting over 3 or more years. **Exclusive criteria:** Individuals below 23 years, Individuals under psychiatric medication, Couples in long-distance relationships, and divorced couples. Ex-post-Facto comparative **research design** has been used in the present work with the below mentioned **procedure**. Area of research along with the topic was finalized and then the respondents were approached randomly whose consent was taken before administering the questionnaire. Both the partners had responded to the questionnaire. Prior to questionnaire administration, the researcher provided the respondents with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and they were also briefed on the purpose of the study and the significance of the participation. Ethical guidelines were adhered to, including ensuring confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and respecting the autonomy of the respondents.

RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The present section includes an overview of the outcomes of the statistical analysis carried out in the study. The current discussion will mostly focus on how the study's goals are fulfilled.

Table 2 Showing the Difference of Scores of all the Interpersonal Needs Between Romantic Couples and Live-In Couples

Needs	Romantic (N=20)		Live-In (N=20)		Significance	Remarks
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Expressed Inclusion	4.5	2.15	4.9	1.87	0.2	Not Significant
Expressed Control	5.05	2.9	5.17	2.51	0.141	Not Significant
Expressed Affection	5.07	3.37	5.02	2.41	0.001	Significant
Wanted Inclusion	6.1	3.29	6.1	2.54	0.009	Significant
Wanted Control	5.07	3.37	5.02	2.41	0.001	Significant
Wanted Affection	6.42	2.08	6.25	1.98	0.311	Not Significant
Total Inclusion	11.55	4.83	11.05	3.85	0.024	Significant
Total Control	10.12	5.2	10.2	4.32	0.059	Significant
Total Affection	12.6	3.48	12	3.46	0.489	Not Significant
Total Expressed	15.67	5.78	15.87	4.99	0.131	Not Significant
Total Wanted	17.6	5.67	17.37	4.73	0.004	Significant
OVERALL NEED	33.27	11.72	33.25	8.96	0.005	Significant

DISCUSSION

According to the results, *Expressed Affection* stands out. This suggests that romantic couples and Live-in couples differ meaningfully in how they outwardly show affection, possibly reflecting differences in emotional expression or relationship expectations. The significance in *Wanted Control* implies differing desires for influence or autonomy. *Wanted Affection* is not significantly different, indicating similar emotional needs across both groups. *Total Inclusion* and *Total Wanted* need are significantly different, suggesting that Romantic and Live-in couples differ in their overall desire for connection and involvement. *Total Control* is borderline significant hinting at nuanced differences in autonomy or decision-making preferences. Total Affection and Total Expressed need show *no significant difference*, indicating similar levels of emotional expression and desire across both groups. The **Overall Need** score is significantly different, reinforcing that the two relationship types have distinct interpersonal dynamics.

The data suggests that both Romantic and Live-in couples are broadly similar in how they express inclusion and control. However, the significant difference in *Expressed Affection* warrants attention. Interestingly, even when mean scores appear identical—as in *Wanted Inclusion*—the statistical significance suggests subtle but consistent differences in how these needs are experienced. The significance in *Wanted Control* points to a psychological tension: Live-in couples might seek more autonomy or clarity in roles whereas Romantic couples, by contrast, may operate within clearer expectations, reducing the need to assert control. The statistical significance implies that the distribution and interplay of needs differ meaningfully. Romantic couples may experience their needs as more integrated, while Live-in couples might compartmentalize or prioritize differently based on situational demands.

The differences in *Total Inclusion* and *Total Wanted Needs* reinforce the idea that Romantic and Live-in couples experience relational dynamics through distinct psychological lenses. Romantic couples may prioritize emotional integration, while Live-in partners might emphasize negotiation and adaptability.

CONCLUSION (PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS)

Affection, in its wanted form, shows no significant difference, indicating that regardless of relational structure, the desire for emotional closeness remains a shared human constant. Clinicians or researchers must remain attuned not only to what partners say they need, but to how those needs are shaped by the relational container they inhabit. The data here is not just statistical, it's a mirror to the evolving nature of intimacy in contemporary life.

Limitations

The cause and effect could not be established in the present study. Moreover, the data is limited for any conclusion. Factors that could have influenced the results range from life events that lead to intense self-reflection to withdrawal from others to cultural differences affecting the expression of needs, misunderstanding the terms, consciously trying to avoid extreme responses, and/or pressure from the environment to express certain behaviors.

Future Implications (Social Implications)

This type of study is urgently needed in today's times to understand and resolve the issues being faced by young couples in their personal relationships. The issues like compatibility, trust, and longevity of relations are affecting people.

REFERENCES

- Barelds, D. P. H. (2005). Self and partner personality in intimate relationships. *European Journal of Personality*, 19(6), 501-518. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.549>. <https://research.rug.nl/en/publications/self-and-partner-personality-in-intimate-relationships>
- Caughlin, J. P., Huston, T. L., & Houts, R. M. (2000). How does personality matter in marriage? An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 326–336. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.326>
- Dixit, V., & Ramachandran, K. (2020). Marital Adjustment and Interpersonal Needs of Married Individuals. *Defence Life Science Journal*, 5(2), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.14429/dlsj.5.15341>
- Doherty, W. J., Colangelo, N., Green, A. M., & Hoffman, G. S. (1985). Emphases of the major family therapy models: A family FIRO analysis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 11(3), 299–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1985.tb00622.x>
- Dougall, M., Konantambigi, R. M., & Khanna, R. (2022). Nature of romantic relationship in committed emerging adults: Exploring challenges and resilience. *Psychological Studies*, 67(4), 537–548. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-022-00692-5>
- Eugene R. Schnell and Allen L. Hammer (2013). *FIRO-B® Interpretive Report for Organizations with FIRO-B® Profile*. <https://ap.themyersbriggs.com/content/Sample%20Reports/231000.pdf>
- Ghosh V. (2021). Perception of Youth Towards Live-In Relationships in India. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(2), 2117-2125. DIP:18.01.209.20210902; DOI:10.25215/0902.209
- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (1986). A Theory and Method of Love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 392-402. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.50.2.392>
- Katz, D. (1960). The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24(2), 163–204. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2746402>
- Manning, W. D., Smock, P. J., & Fetro, M. N. (2019). Cohabitation and Marital Expectations among Single Millennials in the U.S. *Population research and policy review*, 38(3), 327–346. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-018-09509-8>
- Manning, W.D. and Smock, P.J. (2005), Measuring and Modeling Cohabitation: New Perspectives from Qualitative Data. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67: 989-1002. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00189.x>
- Markey, P. M., & Markey, C. N. (2007). Romantic ideals, romantic obtainment, and relationship experiences: The complementarity of interpersonal traits among romantic partners: The complementarity of interpersonal traits among romantic partners. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24(4), 517-533. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507079241>
- Meyer, J. P., & Pepper, S. (1977). Need compatibility and marital adjustment in young married couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35(5), 331.
- Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2009). Working with Cohabitation in Relationship Education and Therapy. *Journal of couple & relationship therapy*, 8(2), 95–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332690902813794>
- Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2012). The impact of the transition to cohabitation on relationship functioning: Cross-sectional and longitudinal findings. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(3), 348–358. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028316>

Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study

- Saggino, A., Martino, M., Balsamo, M., Carlucci, L., Ebisch, S., Innamorati, M., ... Tommasi, M. (2015). Compatibility quotient, and its relationship with marital satisfaction and personality traits in Italian married couples. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 31*(1), 83–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2015.1070952>
- Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review, 93*(2), 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119>.
- Sternberg, R.J. & Sternberg, K. (2019). *The New Psychology of Love*. Cambridge University Press 978-1-108-47568-6 https://assets.cambridge.org/97811084/75686/frontmatter/9781108475686_frontmatter.pdf
- Storaasli, R. D., & Markman, H. J. (1990). Relationship problems in the early stages of marriage: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Family Psychology, 4*(1), 80– 98. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.4.1.80>

Acknowledgment

The present work could not be completed without the collaboration and support of dedicated students and, of course, the participants. I must name a few students here namely, Ms. Anubha Pathak and Ms. Kashish Ahuja.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Pandey, N. & Dutta, P. (2026). Comparative Study of Couple Compatibility in Romantic and Live-in Relationships using FIRO-B: A Pilot Study. *International Journal of Social Impact, 11*(2), 419-426. DIP: 18.02.038/20261102, DOI: 10.25215/2455/1102038