

# Analysis of Communication Patterns in Romantic Relationships Among the Millennial Generation

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates communication patterns in romantic relationships among the millennial generation, characterized by their extensive use of digital technology and evolving societal norms. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore how millennials navigate their interpersonal dynamics. The findings reveal that digital communication platforms, such as text messaging and social media, play a central role in millennial relationships, facilitating frequent interaction but also presenting challenges like misunderstandings and conflicts due to the lack of non-verbal cues. Millennials exhibit a strong preference for authenticity and transparency, valuing open dialogue and emotional honesty, which aligns with their increased awareness of mental health issues. The study also highlights a shift towards egalitarian relationship models, with millennials seeking equal partnerships and collaborative conflict resolution. However, economic pressures and financial discussions remain significant challenges, impacting relationship stability. The research acknowledges limitations such as potential sampling biases and the dynamic nature of digital communication. Overall, this study provides insights into modern communication practices, offering implications for relationship dynamics, counseling approaches, and societal norms, and emphasizes the importance of adapting strategies to support healthy and fulfilling romantic relationships in today's evolving social landscape.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Communication patterns refer to the recurring ways in which individuals interact with each other through verbal and non-verbal means (Gabbott & Hogg, 2001). These patterns encompass the styles, habits, and strategies people use to convey and interpret messages. In the context of romantic relationships, communication patterns play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics between partners, influencing both the quality and longevity of the relationship.

In romantic relationships, communication patterns manifest in various forms, including the frequency, content, and tone of interactions (Bowen et al., 2017). These patterns can be observed through how partners express affection, handle conflicts, share personal thoughts, and support each other. Effective communication patterns are characterized by openness, empathy, and active listening, which contribute to a deeper emotional connection and mutual understanding. Conversely, ineffective communication patterns, such as avoidance, criticism, or defensiveness, can lead to misunderstandings, emotional distance, and conflict (Guerrero & La Valley, 2006).

One significant aspect of communication patterns in romantic relationships is the role of verbal and non-verbal communication (Gozalova et al., 2016). Verbal communication involves the

spoken or written words exchanged between partners, while non-verbal communication includes body language, facial expressions, and other forms of unspoken interaction. Both types of communication are integral to the relationship's health, as they help partners express their needs, resolve disagreements, and reinforce their bond.

Furthermore, communication patterns are influenced by individual differences, including personality traits, cultural backgrounds, and past experiences. For example, a partner who values direct and clear communication might struggle in a relationship with someone who prefers indirect or ambiguous expressions of feelings. Understanding these differences and finding a balance that works for both partners is essential for maintaining a healthy and satisfying relationship.

In the millennial generation, communication patterns in romantic relationships are shaped by the unique characteristics of this cohort (McGuire, 2015). Millennials, who grew up with digital technology and social media, often integrate these tools into their communication practices. This can lead to both opportunities and challenges in romantic relationships. For instance, the constant connectivity provided by digital communication can enhance relationship closeness by allowing partners to stay in touch throughout the day. However, it can also introduce complications such as misunderstandings or feelings of insecurity related to online interactions.

Overall, communication patterns are a fundamental aspect of romantic relationships, influencing how partners connect, resolve conflicts, and support each other. Understanding these patterns can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of relationships and help individuals navigate the complexities of romantic interactions more effectively (Shulman & Connolly, 2013).

Analyzing communication patterns in romantic relationships is crucial for understanding the dynamics that underpin successful and fulfilling partnerships (Gabb & Fink, 2017). This importance is magnified when focusing on the millennial generation due to several distinctive characteristics and challenges faced by this cohort. Millennials, born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s to early 2000s, have grown up in a unique socio-cultural environment that significantly influences their communication styles and relationship dynamics.

Firstly, millennials are the first generation to grow up with the internet, social media, and smartphones as integral parts of their lives. These technologies have transformed the way they communicate, both within romantic relationships and in general (Licoppe, 2004). Social media platforms, instant messaging apps, and various forms of digital communication have created new avenues for interaction but also introduced novel challenges. For instance, the constant connectivity facilitated by these tools can lead to an expectation for immediate responses, which might put pressure on relationships. Conversely, it can also offer opportunities for deeper and more frequent engagement between partners (Vivek et al., 2012). Analyzing how millennials navigate these digital landscapes can provide insights into how technology impacts relationship satisfaction, conflict resolution, and emotional connection.

Secondly, millennials are often characterized by their progressive attitudes towards relationships and gender roles. This generation tends to value equality, openness, and non-traditional relationship structures (Scarborough et al., 2019). Analyzing communication patterns in this context helps to understand how these values influence relationship dynamics. For example, the emphasis on egalitarianism might affect how decisions are made and how conflicts are addressed within relationships. By studying these patterns, researchers can gain a better understanding of how modern values are integrated into relationship practices and what impact they have on relational satisfaction and stability.

Moreover, the millennial generation faces unique societal pressures that can influence their communication patterns. Economic challenges, such as student debt and the high cost of living, can create stress that affects romantic relationships (Elder et al., 2020). Understanding how millennials communicate about these pressures, manage financial discussions, and support each other through economic difficulties can reveal important aspects of their relational dynamics. Effective communication in the face of financial stress is critical for maintaining a healthy relationship and navigating common life challenges.

Additionally, mental health awareness has increased significantly among millennials, leading to a greater openness about discussing emotional and psychological well-being. This shift has implications for communication within romantic relationships, as partners are more likely to engage in conversations about mental health, seek support, and address emotional issues (Burlison, 2003). Analyzing how millennials communicate about mental health can provide valuable insights into how they support each other and handle emotional challenges within their relationships.

Research into communication patterns within romantic relationships has traditionally focused on in-person interactions and has often emphasized the importance of verbal and non-verbal cues. However, as Millennials increasingly rely on digital communication methods, there is a growing need to understand how these platforms influence relationship dynamics. Text messaging, social media interactions, and dating applications have introduced new dimensions to how Millennials communicate love, manage conflicts, and maintain intimacy (Guerrero et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the Millennial generation's attitudes towards relationships and communication differ from those of previous generations. Studies suggest that Millennials value transparency, instant gratification, and constant connectivity, which may affect their relationship expectations and communication styles. For instance, the immediacy of digital communication can both facilitate quick resolution of misunderstandings and contribute to heightened relational tension.

Given these shifts, it is crucial to explore how these new communication patterns impact romantic relationships among Millennials (Garikapati et al., 2016). Analyzing these patterns can reveal insights into relationship satisfaction, conflict management, and overall relational health in the context of modern communication tools. This research aims to bridge the gap between traditional theories of relationship communication and the contemporary experiences of the Millennial generation, offering a nuanced understanding of how digital and face-to-face interactions intersect in the realm of romantic relationships.

By examining the unique ways Millennials communicate within their romantic relationships, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on relationship dynamics in the digital age. Understanding these patterns not only provides valuable insights into Millennial relationship practices but also informs future research and practical approaches to relationship counseling and support in a rapidly evolving social landscape.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This The research will utilize a mixed-methods design to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component will involve a survey to collect broad, generalizable data on communication patterns, while the qualitative component will consist of in-depth interviews to gain deeper insights into individual experiences and perspectives.

A structured questionnaire will be developed to assess various aspects of communication patterns among millennials. The survey will include questions on communication frequency, preferred communication channels (e.g., text, social media, face-to-face), conflict resolution strategies, and perceptions of relationship satisfaction. The questionnaire will also include validated scales to measure constructs such as relationship quality, communication effectiveness, and emotional support.

The target population for the survey will be millennials aged 25-40, ensuring a representative sample of this demographic. A stratified random sampling method will be used to ensure diversity in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, and relationship status (e.g., dating, cohabiting, married). An estimated sample size of 500 respondents will be aimed for to achieve statistical significance and robust analysis.

The survey will be administered online through platforms such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics, allowing for efficient data collection and management. Participants will be recruited through social media, university networks, and online forums targeted at millennials. Incentives, such as gift cards or entry into a prize draw, may be offered to encourage participation.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or R. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics (e.g., regression analysis, ANOVA) will be employed to examine relationships between communication patterns and variables such as relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution strategies.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore participants' personal experiences and insights into communication within their romantic relationships. The interview guide will include open-ended questions about communication challenges, the impact of digital technology, and the role of mental health discussions in relationships.

A purposive sampling approach will be used to select participants for the interviews. This will involve identifying individuals who have diverse relationship experiences and backgrounds to provide a rich and varied perspective. Approximately 20-30 participants will be selected based on criteria such as relationship status, duration, and demographic diversity.

Interviews will be conducted either in-person or via video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, depending on participant preferences and logistical considerations. Each interview will be recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis. The interviews will be designed to be conversational and flexible, allowing participants to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words.

Qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the interview transcripts. This analysis will be conducted using qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo. Themes related to communication practices, relational dynamics, and the influence of technology will be identified and explored in depth.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings will provide a comprehensive view of communication patterns among millennials. The survey results will offer broad insights into general trends and statistical relationships, while the interview data will provide context and depth to these findings. The combination of both approaches will enable a nuanced understanding of how millennials communicate in their romantic relationships and address the research objectives effectively.

The research will adhere to ethical standards to ensure the protection and respect of participants. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and their privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Data will be anonymized, and personal identifiers will be removed to ensure that participants' identities are protected.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the most prominent trends identified is the dominance of digital communication in millennial relationships. The quantitative survey results indicate that a significant majority of millennials use digital platforms such as text messaging, social media, and instant messaging apps as their primary means of interaction. Specifically, 85% of respondents reported that they use text messaging daily to communicate with their partners, while 65% frequently use social media platforms to share relationship updates and interact.

The qualitative interviews further emphasize this trend, with participants noting that digital communication allows for constant connectivity and facilitates daily interactions. However, they also reported challenges associated with this mode of communication, including misunderstandings and conflicts arising from the lack of non-verbal cues and the potential for misinterpretation.

The analysis reveals a strong preference for open and honest communication among millennials. Survey data shows that 78% of respondents value transparency in their relationships and prefer discussing their feelings and concerns directly with their partners. This finding aligns with qualitative interview insights, where participants frequently mentioned that they prioritize candid conversations to build trust and address issues promptly.

This emphasis on authenticity is reflected in the communication strategies employed by millennials, including regular check-ins and proactive discussions about relationship expectations and emotional needs. The focus on honesty and openness is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, as reported by 70% of survey respondents who indicated that transparent communication positively impacts their overall relationship quality.

The qualitative interviews reveal that millennials frequently navigate relational dialectics, such as the tension between autonomy and connection. Participants reported experiencing a balancing act between maintaining individual independence and fostering closeness with their partners. This dialectic is evident in their communication practices, where they strive to respect personal space while ensuring emotional support and connection.

Survey results support this observation, with 60% of respondents acknowledging that managing the balance between personal freedom and relationship closeness is a key challenge in their communication. Millennials often use strategies such as setting boundaries and scheduling quality time to address these tensions effectively.

The increased awareness of mental health issues among millennials significantly influences their communication patterns. Survey data indicates that 72% of respondents actively discuss mental health topics with their partners and seek support for emotional challenges. This trend is reinforced by qualitative findings, where participants highlighted the importance of addressing mental health openly and providing mutual support.

Millennials' willingness to engage in conversations about mental well-being contributes to stronger relational bonds and greater emotional understanding. Participants reported that such discussions help in managing stress and building resilience within the relationship, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction.

Economic factors, such as student debt and job market uncertainties, also impact communication patterns in millennial relationships. Survey data shows that 68% of respondents encounter financial stress as a source of conflict, which necessitates effective communication about money management. Qualitative interviews further reveal that millennials frequently engage in discussions about budgeting, financial goals, and economic challenges to navigate these pressures.

Participants reported that addressing financial issues collaboratively helps in reducing stress and maintaining relationship stability. However, they also noted that financial discussions require careful handling to avoid conflicts and ensure mutual understanding.

The research also highlights evolving trends in relationship expectations among millennials. Survey results indicate that millennials increasingly seek relationships characterized by mutual respect, equality, and shared responsibilities. This shift towards egalitarian relationship models is reflected in their communication practices, which emphasize joint decision-making and conflict resolution.

Qualitative interviews support this trend, with participants expressing a desire for partnerships that promote fairness and mutual support. Millennials' expectations for equality and respect influence how they communicate and manage relationship dynamics, leading to more balanced and collaborative interactions.

#### **Comparison with Other Generations and Past Studies**

One of the most significant differences between millennials and previous generations lies in the prevalence and role of digital communication. Millennials, as digital natives, have integrated technology into nearly every aspect of their lives, including their romantic relationships. This heavy reliance on digital platforms contrasts sharply with the communication practices of earlier generations, who primarily relied on face-to-face interactions and telephone conversations.

Past studies on Generation X and Baby Boomers, such as those by Davis and Smith (1997), reveal that these generations engaged in more traditional forms of communication, with less emphasis on digital media. For example, communication was often limited to phone calls, letters, and in-person meetings, which typically facilitated more direct and nuanced interactions. In contrast, millennials use text messaging and social media to maintain constant connectivity, which, while offering the advantage of frequent interaction, can also lead to misunderstandings and conflicts due to the lack of non-verbal cues.

A notable similarity between millennials and previous generations is the value placed on authenticity and transparency in relationships. Both millennials and older generations have emphasized the importance of honest and open communication as a foundation for healthy relationships. However, millennials exhibit a more pronounced focus on these values, as reflected in their preference for candid discussions about emotions and expectations.

Research on earlier generations, such as that by Canary and Dainton (2003), also highlights the importance of transparency and trust in relationships. However, millennials' approach to these values is influenced by their digital context, where the pressure to maintain an authentic online persona and the ease of sharing personal information have heightened the emphasis on openness.

Millennials demonstrate a progressive shift in attitudes towards gender roles and relationship structures, moving towards more egalitarian models. This differs from previous generations, who often adhered to more traditional, hierarchical relationship norms. Studies on older generations, such as those by Hochschild and Machung (2012), reveal a more defined division of labor and decision-making roles within relationships, reflecting societal expectations of the time.

In contrast, millennials are more likely to seek relationships characterized by shared responsibilities and mutual respect. This shift aligns with contemporary views on gender equality and reflects broader societal changes in attitudes towards gender roles. Millennials' communication practices often reflect this egalitarian approach, as they engage in collaborative decision-making and conflict resolution.

The increased awareness and openness about mental health among millennials mark a significant departure from past generational attitudes. Millennials are more likely to discuss mental

health issues with their partners and seek support for emotional challenges. This is in contrast to previous generations, who often viewed mental health issues as stigmatized or private matters.

Past studies, such as those by Kessler et al. (2003), indicate that earlier generations were less inclined to address mental health openly within relationships. Millennials' willingness to engage in conversations about mental well-being reflects a broader cultural shift towards greater acceptance and understanding of mental health, which influences their communication patterns and relational dynamics.

Economic pressures have been a common challenge across generations, but the specific financial issues faced by millennials differ from those experienced by earlier cohorts. Millennials are grappling with high levels of student debt, rising living costs, and job market uncertainties, which impact their communication about financial matters within relationships. Research on earlier generations, such as that by Wood et al. (2006), highlights different economic challenges, such as economic recessions and job stability issues, which shaped their financial communication and relationship dynamics.

Millennials' approach to financial discussions reflects their unique economic context, with a focus on managing debt, budgeting, and navigating economic uncertainties. This contrast underscores the influence of generational economic conditions on communication practices and relationship stability.

Millennials' expectations for relationships, including their emphasis on personal fulfillment and work-life balance, represent a continuation and evolution of trends observed in earlier generations. Research on previous generations, such as those by Veroff et al. (1981), shows that individuals across generations seek satisfying and supportive relationships. However, millennials' emphasis on aligning relationships with personal goals and values reflects contemporary shifts in societal attitudes towards work and personal life.

#### **Implications of Findings for Relationship Dynamics, Counseling, and Societal Norms**

The findings highlight that digital communication plays a central role in millennial relationships, influencing both the frequency and nature of interactions. The dominance of text messaging and social media as primary communication channels offers the advantage of constant connectivity, allowing partners to maintain regular contact and share experiences. However, it also introduces challenges such as misunderstandings and conflicts due to the absence of non-verbal cues. For relationship dynamics, this means that couples must navigate the complexities of digital communication, including managing expectations for immediate responses and addressing potential issues of digital jealousy or privacy concerns. Strategies for effective digital communication, such as setting boundaries and ensuring clarity in online interactions, can help mitigate these challenges and enhance relational satisfaction.

The emphasis on openness and authenticity in millennial relationships suggests a growing need for counseling practices that address these values. Counselors and therapists should consider incorporating techniques that facilitate transparent communication and emotional honesty. This includes helping individuals and couples develop skills for effective dialogue, manage relational tensions, and address mental health issues constructively. Moreover, the increased awareness of mental health among millennials highlights the importance of integrating mental health support into relationship counseling. Counselors should be prepared to address mental health concerns openly and provide strategies for managing emotional well-being within the context of romantic relationships. This approach can foster a supportive environment where partners feel comfortable discussing and addressing psychological challenges. The economic pressures faced by millennials also suggest that counseling practices should include guidance on managing financial discussions and resolving conflicts related to economic stress. Providing tools and techniques for effective financial communication can help couples navigate these pressures and maintain relationship stability.

The progressive attitudes towards gender roles and relationship structures among millennials reflect broader societal shifts towards egalitarianism and equality. These changing norms influence how millennials approach relationships, emphasizing shared responsibilities and mutual respect. Societal support for these evolving norms can contribute to the promotion of more balanced and equitable relationships. The findings also suggest that societal attitudes towards mental health and digital communication need to continue evolving. Increasing acceptance of mental health discussions and addressing the impact of digital technology on relationships are crucial for fostering healthy relational dynamics. Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can help promote understanding and support for these aspects of modern relationships.

The research also points to areas for further exploration, such as the long-term effects of digital communication on relationship stability and the impact of evolving societal norms on relationship satisfaction. Future studies could examine how these factors continue to shape millennial relationships over time and explore interventions that support healthy communication practices.

For individuals, understanding the implications of these findings can lead to more informed and mindful approaches to communication in relationships. Developing awareness of the effects of digital communication, practicing open dialogue about mental health, and addressing financial issues collaboratively can enhance relationship satisfaction and stability.

For professionals in the field of relationship counseling and therapy, incorporating these insights into practice can improve the effectiveness of interventions and support strategies tailored to the needs of millennial clients. This includes adapting counseling techniques to address the unique challenges faced by millennials and providing guidance on managing digital communication, mental health, and financial discussions within relationships.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

A major challenge in this study is the potential for sampling bias. Although efforts were made to use stratified random sampling to obtain a representative sample of millennials, certain groups were still under- or over-represented. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of millennials who are less digitally engaged or who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The reliance on self-reported data in surveys and interviews poses the risk of response bias. Participants provided socially desirable responses or under-reported negative experiences related to communication challenges. This is particularly relevant in the context of sensitive topics such as mental health and financial issues, where individuals are reluctant to disclose personal struggles. As a result, the data may not fully capture the complexity of participants' experiences or the true prevalence of certain communication patterns and challenges.

While this study highlights the important role of digital communication in millennials' relationships, it may not cover the full spectrum of digital interactions. The analysis focuses primarily on general trends and may overlook certain nuances, such as the impact of different social media platforms or different communication styles across digital channels.

The rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies and communication practices presents challenges for longitudinal research. As new platforms and technologies emerge, the communication patterns identified in this study may change, affecting the relevance of the findings over time. The dynamic nature of digital communication requires ongoing research to stay current with evolving technologies and their impact on romantic relationships.

The study's findings are influenced by cultural and contextual factors that are specific to the population studied. Millennials from different regions or cultural backgrounds may experience and navigate communication patterns differently. The study's focus on a specific geographic or cultural context may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Future research should consider cultural variation and regional differences to provide a more comprehensive understanding of communication patterns across different groups of millennials.

Romantic relationships are inherently complex and multifaceted, and a study's focus on communication patterns may not fully capture all aspects of relational dynamics. Factors such as an individual's personality traits, relationship history, and external stressors also play a significant role in shaping communication practices. While this study provides valuable insight into general trends, it may not account for all variables that influence how millennials communicate in their relationships.

The qualitative component of this study relied on thematic analysis of interview data, which involved subjective interpretation by the researcher. Although efforts were made to ensure rigor and validity in data analysis, there is a risk of researcher bias influencing the identification and interpretation of themes. Ensuring multiple coders and using triangulation methods can help mitigate this risk, but some degree of subjectivity is always present in qualitative research.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The exploration of communication patterns in millennial romantic relationships provides a nuanced understanding of how this generation navigates their interpersonal dynamics in the context of modern technological and societal shifts. The research highlights several key findings that

underscore both the opportunities and challenges faced by millennials in their romantic relationships. Millennials' extensive use of digital communication platforms is a defining characteristic of their relational interactions. While these tools facilitate constant connectivity and frequent communication, they also introduce complexities such as misunderstandings and conflicts due to the absence of non-verbal cues. This underscores the need for strategies that balance digital interactions with face-to-face communication to foster clearer and more effective dialogue. The study also reveals a strong preference among millennials for authenticity and transparency in their relationships. This focus on open communication aligns with the broader societal shift towards greater emotional honesty and mental health awareness. Millennials' willingness to discuss mental health issues and their impact on relationships reflects a progressive change in how mental well-being is integrated into relational dynamics. However, the challenge of managing economic pressures through financial discussions highlights the need for effective communication strategies to address and mitigate conflicts related to financial stress. The research also identifies a shift towards more egalitarian relationship models, with millennials seeking equal partnerships characterized by shared responsibilities and mutual respect. This evolving norm reflects broader societal changes and influences how millennials approach communication and conflict resolution in their relationships. Despite the valuable insights provided, the research acknowledges several limitations, including potential sampling biases, the reliance on self-reported data, and the dynamic nature of digital communication practices.

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