



## Investigation of Intergenerational Romantic Relationship Perception

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the perception of intergenerational romantic relationship. In this study, phenomenology method, which is one of the qualitative research methods, has been used. The sample of the study consists of 113 participants, 52 of whom are male and 61 are female. While 8 male, 4 female participants fill in the form face to face, 44 male, 57 female participant responses the answers online. Participants have been completed the answers to the research questions online. In the data analysis, inductive content analysis has been used. In the analysis of the research findings, it has been concluded that there are differences in the perception of the X, Y and Z generation participants in romantic relations by taking into account the gender and marital status variables.

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Romantic relationship, intergenerational, romantic relationship before marriage, romantic relations of adolescents

### 1. Introduction

In terms of creation, it can be considered that adequate physiological and psychological needs of human beings are sufficient to maintain the continuity of mental and physical health, and that only biological needs are not the right approaches for the continuity of life. In support of this, Maslow (1943) states that human beings have psychosocial needs such as love and belonging, as well as physiological needs (Cited in Ersanlı & Koçyiğit, 2013). It is stated that the social character of human beings necessitates the relationship with other people and it is an indispensable need (Terzi & Özbay, 2016). Adler (2016) states that human relations have a three-dimensional structure as friendship, love and work relations and treats each of these relationships as a life task. Love, which is one of these life duties, is in the love relationship, marriage relationship and parenting duties of individuals. Therefore, it can be said that establishing a romantic relationship is a life task. It is stated that romantic relationship is a relationship that includes voluntarily established attachment, passion and intimacy with individuals' freely chosen partners (Collins, 2003; Sternberg, 1986). Human meets its psychological needs by establishing close relations such as "belonging (Maslow, 1943; cited in Özen & Gülactı, 2010)"; "self-disclosure", "sharing" (Müezzinoğlu, 2014), "love and compassion (Sexton & Sexton, 1982; cited in Eryılmaz & Atak, 2009)".

Some of the romantic relationships that usually start with dating may result in marriage with family unity. Flirting, which is a process of getting to know each other, can affect the relationship after marriage positively or negatively. Another common type of marriages is arranged marriages. In the literature, there are many studies in which arranged and dating marriages are examined in terms of various variables. Some studies (Çelik, 2009; Macit, 2016; Şendil & Korkut, 2008) show that marital adjustment is higher among individuals who have married by agreement (flirting) compared to arranged married individuals (Çelik, 2009; Macit, 2016; Şendil & Korkut, 2008). In addition, Çimen (2007) states that the marital satisfaction of individuals who are arranged married is lower. It can be said that individuals who have spend more time with their partners,

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get to know each other better, learn their wishes and expectations about marriage and flirting contributes to longer and happier marriages.

It is known that the pre-marital process is important in order to establish a healthy and long-term marriage and that the marriages, which cannot be established on a solid basis, bring divorce. Mavili and Aktaş (2009) state that couples' family history, culture and upbringing make it difficult to solve the problems in the family. When the divorce statistics are evaluated, it is stated that the rate of divorce is higher in arranged marriages than in consensual marriages (Sağlam & Aylaz, 2017). In this context, it can be said that it is important for individuals to have a romantic relationship to get to know each other before marriage.

Turkey Statistical Institute (TÜİK), according to 2017 data 38.7% of the marriage relationship is seen in the first year of their parents, resulting in divorce. One reason why the divorce rate is so high may be that the couples are married in an insufficient and incorrect way (without being masked and without transparency in the relationship) without flirting and not fully acquainting each other. It can be said that individuals' ability to choose the right partner depends on their romantic relationship experiences. It can be said that individuals' ability to choose the right spouse depends on their romantic relationship experiences. Özabacı (2014) states that pre-marital romantic relationship experiences and developed criteria affect individuals' marital decisions. If couples fail to spend enough time together before marriage or do not fully open themselves and do not express their expectations and wishes to their partners, this may lead to problems later in the relationship. It can be said that in order for these relational problems to disappear, individuals need to develop themselves in terms of having romantic relationships and this depends only on their experiences.

Pre-marriage romantic relationships can be affected by social perceptions. In their study of high school students about peer-friendship relationships; Büyükşahin-Çevik and Atıcı (2008) was found that families had an effect on their adolescents' romantic relationships and especially mothers intervened more in Turkey. When the development process of individuals is taken into consideration, it is seen that romantic relationships are experienced during adolescence (Bayhan & Işıtan, 2010; Collins, 2003; Kansky & Allen, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that adolescence is a critical period for human life, especially in terms of the recognition of the opposite sex and the development of romantic relationship skills. In the literature supporting this, it is stated that the individual either establishes his / her own identity or shapes the cognitive elements that contain standards, expectations and ideals related to romantic relationships in this period (Sprecher & Metts, 1999; cited in Deveci-Şirin & Soyer, 2018). Yalçıntaş- Sezgin (2015) states that the concepts of flirting or dating are mostly used for adolescent romantic relationships and defines the flirt as a relationship that includes communication, emotion sharing, and experiences based on sexual attraction. These characteristics are among the developmental tasks of the psychosocial period that Ericson describes it as "isolation vs proximity" (Ericson, 1968, cited in Arslan & Arı, 2008). It can be said that the romantic relationships experienced during adolescence help to fulfill these tasks.

Another period in which romantic relationships are important is the emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000), which is the period between adolescence and adulthood. In the literature, it is observed that the romantic relationships in adolescence have very important effects on emerging adults to develop the necessary behaviors in order to better adapt to the adult life (Connolly & Konarski, 1994; Yavuzer, 2017). It is stated that romantic intimacy, which is one of the important criteria of healthy identity development for emerging adults, is a process that includes value, belief, happiness, choice, emotion and productivity in addition to sexual attraction (Arnet, 2000). The relationships in this period are different from those in adolescence. Adolescents perceive romantic relationships as short-term, fun-based flirty, while adults are more concerned with physical and emotional closeness and think that their partners evaluate future (Ercan & Eryılmaz, 2013). In this context, it can be said that adolescents and adults have different romantic perception perceptions and their meanings. In addition, although studies on romantic relationships are predominantly on adolescents and emerging adults, it can be said that individuals' perceptions of romantic relationships are important in later life.

When the literature is examined, there are many researches about romantic relations. While some of these studies focus on the romantic relations of adolescents (Kansky & Allen, 2018; Shulman, Seiffge-Krenke, & Walsh, 2017; Yavuzer, 2017), some of them are related to adult romantic relations (Ercan & Eryılmaz, 2013; Eryılmaz & Atak, 2009; Gizir, 2013; Saraç, Hamamcı, & Güçray, 2015;). However, no research has been found comparing the perception of intergenerational romantic relationship. As in many other cases, it can be thought that the romantic relation phenomenon is different between generations. It can be said that it is important to determine how these relationships, which occupy a big place among adult lives, are perceived, how much and in what direction they have changed from past to present.

In the Turkish Language Association (TDK) glossary, the generation is defined as (a group of people who were born in approximately the same years, have shared the conditions of the same age, therefore similar problems, shared fate, and who were responsible for similar duties. In terms of the classification of generations (Mannhenim, 1928 cited in Kelgökmen- İlic & Yalçın, 2017) Those born between 1965-1980 are generation X, those born between 1981-2000 and generation Y and those born after 2000 are considered as generation Z. In the same period, depending on the characteristics of the period in which they develop a common consciousness, individuals with similar thoughts and experiences on any subject (Cox & Holloway, 2010; Gürbüz, 2015) perceptions and thoughts of any phenomenon may be similar to each other and various aspects of other generations may be expected to be different.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that intergenerational comparisons are more related to work life (Aydın & Başol, 2015; Dinç & Aydemir, 2015; Fenzel, 2013; Koç, Öztürk, & Yıldırım, 2016). However, there is no study on the perception of intergenerational romantic relationship which is the subject of this research. It can be said that the family union, which is described as the smallest unit and building block of the society, is based on romantic relationships. Although romantic relationships seem to be an experience in which only two people are interlocutors, it can be said that there are complex relationships that parents and especially other individuals in the society comment on. It is seen that the support from the family has a positive effect on establishing romantic relationships for both individuals in adolescence and emerging adulthood (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Seiffge-Krenke, Persike, & Shulman, 2015). Intergenerational differences can be thought to differ in romantic relationship perception as in many other subjects. Conflicts caused by differences can be prevented by knowing the dynamics that affect the point of view of individuals of different age groups. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to investigate the perception of romantic relationship between generations and the aim of this study was to determine the opinions of individuals in different age groups about "Definition of Romantic Relationship", " Perspectives on Romantic Relationships Before Marriage" and "Romantic Relationships of Adolescents". In addition, it is aimed to examine and compare research questions according to gender and marital status variables.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Model**

In the study, case science pattern which is one of the qualitative research designs is used. Case science pattern is an in-depth study and investigation of the cases. The facts of the study were determined as "romantic relationship", "romantic relationship before marriage" and "romantic relations of adolescents". In order to determine the meaning of the romantic relationship, the point of view of romantic relations before marriage and the romantic relations of adolescents, an interview form consisting of three open-ended questions and gender, age, and marital status demographic variables were formed by the researcher. Interview forms were delivered to 101 participants via online media (via mail and message) and 12 people were interviewed face to face. Relevant meanings and themes have been revealed based on the interviews. The answers were transferred to microsoft excel program and themes were created based on repeated words and phrases.

### **2.2. Study Group**

A total of 113 participants were interviewed, 52 of whom were male and 61 were female. The appropriate sampling (Büyüköztürk, 2012) is the selection of the sample from easily accessible and practicable units due

to the limitations in time, money and labor. The participants were grouped into 3 generations. Thirteen married men (mean age: 43.50) who were born between 1965 and 1980 (mean age: 43.50), 13 married women (mean age: 42.69); 12 single men (mean age: 28.33), 14 single women (mean age: 26.57), 11 married men (mean age: 29.90), 18 married women (mean age: 31.33) born in 1981-1999; There were 16 single men (mean age: 16.73) born after 2000 (age Z) and 16 single women (mean age: 17.20 years). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the sample

	Married		Single	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
X Generation (1965-1980)	13	13	-	-
Y Generation ( 1981-1999)	11	18	12	14
Z Generation ( 2000- )	-	-	16	16

**2.3. Data Collection**

Research data were collected by semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. In the interview form, the participants were asked about their birth date, gender and marital status. Questions about the facts “What is a romantic relationship?”, “What do you think about romantic relationships before marriage” and “What do you think about the romantic relationships of adolescents?”. In order to determine the research questions, expert opinion was consulted and questions were raised by an expert who had studies on marriage and romantic relations. While 101 participants completed the interview form online, 12 participants were interviewed face to face. Before submitting an online form, the researcher introduced himself and gave information to the participants for the purpose of the research. E-mail and message interview forms were sent to the volunteers who wanted to participate in the research via online environment. After all the data were collected, the interview documents were transferred to the computer environment and classified according to the characteristics of generation, gender and marital status. After the arrangements made, the data obtained from the participants were read several times at different times. After these readings, data were transferred to microsoft excel program and repetitive words and themes were coded in the direction of word groups.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

In the analysis of data, inductive content analysis was used. Content analysis is a method of defining, analyzing and presenting themes based on data (Selçuk, Palancı, Kandemir, & Dündar, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In this context, first of all, all data were read repeatedly at different times, and the themes that are prominent for the answers to the questions were coded. For the purpose of coding, data analysis was performed by another expert and the codes and the themes were compared. After the comparison, opinions were exchanged and themes were established by providing unity.

In the validity dimension of the research, long-term interaction and expert examination methods were used. In addition, attention was paid to take into parenthesis (epoche) which is the disregard of the researcher’s experience, knowledge and prejudices about the case he / she examines in his study (Byrne, 2001). In order to ensure reliability, from the planning of the process to the conclusion of each process, each stage was shared with a specialist in qualitative research methods.

**3. Findings**

The themes of the answers given to the questions as a result of the coding of the data obtained from the participants and the examples of the answers that make up these themes are as follows:

**3.1. Participant Opinions on Romantic Relationship Perception**

Seven different themes were reached by examining the answers to the question “What is Romantic Relationship?”. Themes and sample participant views are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Themes and Sample Participant Opinions Based on Determination of Themes

Emotional Dimension	‘Walk of love with excitement and passion’, ‘One word Love’, ‘Romantic relationship expresses emotional bond’, ‘It is the way of a feeling journey; excitement, longing, pain, grief, happiness, many feelings, and the result of the search of people who want to live because of their nature’, ‘It is a form of relationship that emerges with the formation of a mutual interpersonal set of positive feelings.’
Behavioral Dimension	‘It's something like there isn't any certain time for gifting, joking, laughing, crying’, ‘Two people show the same care in a relationship’, ‘The effort of both people to continue the relationship’, ‘To show that you love the other person, that you care about him/her, by word or behavior’
Interpersonal	‘Normally, I think the romantic relationship will make the couple happy, special words, gestures and a more intense emotion environment.’, ‘Emotional relationship between two people. We can also perceive it as being darling’, ‘Romantic relationship is a process of love-sharing between men and women’
Intentional	‘It is the relationship that couples meet each other's needs. (love, respect, touch, service, gift)’, ‘Romantic relationship is to alleviate each other's loneliness.’
Meaning Given to Relationship	‘Soggy things’, ‘It is a kind of relationship that your heart can go a little out of the logic in which pleasant words are spoken’, ‘I don't have much idea, but for me, the romantic relationship is different from other kind of love.’, ‘I think it is the sweet-happy union that occurs when men and women both complete and reveal each other's emotional sides.’
Time/Process Dimension	‘Flirting and loving process’, ‘Romantic relationship is a process of love-sharing between men and women.’, ‘It is a form of relationship that is happy and exciting as partners are in the process of discovering each other.’
Sexuality	‘It is a form of relationship with sexual interest and intense bond in passionate intimacy’, ‘When the spouses surprise each other from time to time, the sensual contact during the time they spend together (putting his hand on his shoulder, etc.) represents the romantic relationship.’

Table 3 shows the grouping of the responses obtained from the interviews according to gender, marital status and age (generation) variables. A participant's response may be related to more than one theme.

**Table 3.** Frequency of Repetition of Themes by Category

Male Single Y		Female Single Y	
Emotional Dimension	10	Emotional Dimension	11
Behavioral Dimension	10	Behavioral Dimension	10
Interpersonal	8	Interpersonal	5
Intentional	3	Intentional	2
Meaning Given to Relationship	3	Meaning Given to Relationship	3
Time / Process Dimension	2	Time / Process Dimension	2
Sexuality	0	Sexuality	0
Male Single Z		Female Single Z	
Emotional Dimension	7	Emotional Dimension	15
Behavioral Dimension	4	Behavioral Dimension	9
Interpersonal	7	Interpersonal	5
Intentional	1	Intentional	0
Meaning Given to Relationship	5	Meaning Given to Relationship	6
Time / Process Dimension	0	Time / Process Dimension	0
Sexuality	0	Sexuality	1
Male Married X		Female Married X	

Emotional Dimension	9	Emotional Dimension	13
Behavioral Dimension	3	Behavioral Dimension	15
Interpersonal	5	Interpersonal	4
Intentional	0	Intentional	0
Meaning Given to Relationship	5	Meaning Given to Relationship	2
Time / Process Dimension	2	Time / Process Dimension	0
Sexuality	2	Sexuality	2
Male Married Y		Female Married Y	
Emotional Dimension	19	Emotional Dimension	23
Behavioral Dimension	0	Behavioral Dimension	7
Interpersonal	4	Interpersonal	8
Intentional	2	Intentional	2
Meaning Given to Relationship	2	Meaning Given to Relationship	4
Time / Process Dimension	0	Time / Process Dimension	2
Sexuality	1	Sexuality	0

### 3.2. Participant Opinions about Premarital Romantic Relationship

Thirteen different themes were reached by examining the answers to the question “What do you think about romantic relationships before marriage?”. Themes and sample participant views are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Themes and Sample Participant Opinions Based on Determination of Themes

Emotional Dimension	‘Intensity of emotions experienced before marriage may decrease after marriage’
Behavioral Dimension	‘In the premarital relationship, there is the excitement of the secret cover meeting you’re young and you enjoy more every time you spend.’
Regarding Marriage	‘But when you get married without recognition, there are often separations.’
Interpersonal Dimension	‘I must have a girlfriend before marriage’
Boundaries	‘Exact boundaries should be defined and be walked through that boundaries’, ‘I look positive after a restrained relationship’
Positive Perspective	‘It is normal for a person to want to know the person to whom he / she will have bonds, to know the person to live and to share things with him/her.’
Negative Perspective	‘I don’t find romantic relationships very appropriate because romantic relationships are temporary and people may experience emotion transitions in romantic relationships.’
Process	‘Temporary things’, ‘I think romantic relationships before marriage is a process of “trial and error” that leads to successful marriage and the right choice of spouse.’
Romanticism	‘But this is a real premarital people becoming more romantic.’
Contributions to Relationship	‘Most of the time, a person experiences his/her marital life by taking into account the mistakes or experiences they have made in a romantic relationship.’
Society and Belief Dimension	‘But it is not appropriate as a belief’, ‘Premarital romantic relationships should be evaluated according to socio-cultural and belief system of society or individual.’
Intentional Dimension	‘As a result, people need to meet some of their physical or emotional needs throughout their life.’
Sexuality	‘Premarital romance is a candidate relationship to today’s Leyla-Mecnun epic if there is no sexual experience.’

Table 5 shows the grouping of the responses obtained from the interviews according to gender, marital status and age (generation) variables. A participant's response may be related to more than one theme.

**Table 5.** Frequency of Repetition of Themes by Category

Single Male Y	Single Female Y
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Emotional Dimension	4	Emotional Dimension	5
Behavioral Dimension	5	Behavioral Dimension	6
Regarding Marriage	3	Regarding Marriage	7
Interpersonal Dimension	3	Interpersonal Dimension	4
Boundaries	3	Boundaries	0
Positive Perspective	0	Positive Perspective	2
Negative Perspective	2	Negative Perspective	1
Process	3	Process	4
Romanticism	5	Romanticism	2
Contributions to Relationship	3	Contributions to Relationship	7
Society and Belief Dimension	1	Society and Belief Dimension	0
Intentional Dimension	1	Intentional Dimension	2
Sexuality	1	Sexuality	0
<hr/> Single Male Z		<hr/> Single Female Z	
Emotional Dimension	0	Emotional Dimension	4
Behavioral Dimension	2	Behavioral Dimension	3
Regarding Marriage	3	Regarding Marriage	6
Interpersonal Dimension	2	Interpersonal Dimension	4
Boundaries	1	Boundaries	0
Positive Perspective	11	Positive Perspective	3
Negative Perspective	0	Negative Perspective	3
Process	0	Process	0
Romanticism	0	Romanticism	0
Contributions to Relationship	0	Contributions to Relationship	4
Society and Belief Dimension	0	Society and Belief Dimension	0
Intentional Dimension	3	Intentional Dimension	0
Sexuality	0	Sexuality	0
<hr/> Married Male X		<hr/> Married Female X	
Emotional Dimension	5	Emotional Dimension	9
Behavioral Dimension	4	Behavioral Dimension	9
Regarding Marriage	2	Regarding Marriage	2
Interpersonal Dimension	3	Interpersonal Dimension	1
Boundaries	3	Boundaries	1
Positive Perspective	4	Positive Perspective	4
Negative Perspective	0	Negative Perspective	0
Process	1	Process	3
Romanticism	3	Romanticism	1
Contributions to Relationship	0	Contributions to Relationship	6
Society and Belief Dimension	1	Society and Belief Dimension	0
Intentional Dimension	0	Intentional Dimension	2
Sexuality	1	Sexuality	0
<hr/> Married Male Y		<hr/> Married Female Y	
Emotional Dimension	0	Emotional Dimension	11
Behavioral Dimension	1	Behavioral Dimension	9
Regarding Marriage	2	Regarding Marriage	9
Interpersonal Dimension	3	Interpersonal Dimension	4
Boundaries	1	Boundaries	0
Positive Perspective	2	Positive Perspective	8
Negative Perspective	1	Negative Perspective	0
Process	2	Process	5
Romanticism	1	Romanticism	4
Contributions to Relationship	1	Contributions to Relationship	5
Society and Belief Dimension	2	Society and Belief Dimension	0

Intentional Dimension	7	Intentional Dimension	4
Sexuality	1	Sexuality	0

### 3.3. Participant Opinions About Romantic Relations of Adolescents

Sixteen different themes were reached by examining the answers to the question “What do you think about the romantic relationships of adolescents?”. Themes and sample participant views are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Themes and Sample Participant Opinions Based on Determination of Themes

Emotional Dimension	‘Excitement, adrenaline, expression of the first emotion, the first emotional analysis of personality, but I see innocent but temporary.’
Behavioral Dimension	‘Some of them can become very disgusting’
Interpersonal Dimension	‘I say "grow up children" because they are always happy, declaring people princes / princesses of their lives and worshipping them.’
Technology	‘They start on the phone and end on the phone’
Social-Belief Dimension	‘I think that this can happen through removing the issue of mutual relations from the axis of virginity as a society and to start training on these issues at an early age so that both boys and girls can develop healthy.’
Sexuality	‘I think that adolescents perceive their relationships as sexually attractive behaviors rather than romantic relationships, or as meeting sexual desires rather than liking from the opposite sex.’
Intentional	‘Sometimes it's just not to be alone in a friend environment.’
Romanticism	‘If it is to be lived, I think a love should be experienced in adolescence’
Process	‘I think it's temporary.’, ‘This is the most beautiful time when your heart is so pure.’
Attributions to the Adolescent	‘It is very difficult to see something about romantic relationships among young people.’
Risks	‘Alcohol, cigarette or substance use together, running away from school, running away from home, having sexual experiences are mostly experienced in relationships during this period.’
Characteristic of Developmental Period	‘I perceive them as activities with a partner in order to complete / perform the expected developmental task.’
Positive Perspective	‘Everyone has or should have a relationship.’, ‘Always necessary and pleasing.’
Negative Perspective	‘Should not be at the Adolescence’, ‘I don't look positive to the romantic relationship of adolescents’
About Future	‘Nevertheless, having a romantic experience in adolescence adds a lot to the experiences of romance in their future lives.’
Generation Gap	‘I think it is based on more images and popularity because they are very impressed by popular culture.’

Table 7 shows the grouping of the responses obtained from the interviews according to gender, marital status and age (generation) variables. A participant's response may be related to more than one theme.

**Table 7.** Frequency of Repetition of Themes by Category

Single Male Y		Single Female Y	
Emotional Dimension	5	Emotional Dimension	7
Behavioral Dimension	6	Behavioral Dimension	7
Interpersonal Dimension	3	Interpersonal Dimension	5
Technology	1	Technology	0
Social-Belief Dimension	0	Social-Belief Dimension	0
Sexuality	1	Sexuality	0
Intentional	2	Intentional	11
Romanticism	5	Romanticism	1
Process	1	Process	4



Attributions to the Adolescent	3	Attributions to the Adolescent	3
Risks	0	Risks	0
Characteristic of Developmental Period	2	Characteristic of Developmental Period	4
Positive Perspective	1	Positive Perspective	1
Negative Perspective	0	Negative Perspective	1
About Future	2	About Future	0
Generation Gap	2	Generation Gap	2
<hr/> Single Male Z		<hr/> Single Female Z	
Emotional Dimension	2	Emotional Dimension	4
Behavioral Dimension	2	Behavioral Dimension	7
Interpersonal Dimension	3	Interpersonal Dimension	3
Technology	3	Technology	1
Social-Belief Dimension	0	Social-Belief Dimension	0
Sexuality	0	Sexuality	1
Intentional	4	Intentional	3
Romanticism	0	Romanticism	0
Process	3	Process	3
Attributions to the Adolescent	1	Attributions to the Adolescent	2
Risks	0	Risks	0
Characteristic of Developmental Period	0	Characteristic of Developmental Period	0
Positive Perspective	2	Positive Perspective	2
Negative Perspective	1	Negative Perspective	1
About Future	0	About Future	0
Generation Gap	1	Generation Gap	1
<hr/> Married Male X		<hr/> Married Female X	
Emotional Dimension	14	Emotional Dimension	8
Behavioral Dimension	7	Behavioral Dimension	5
Interpersonal Dimension	5	Interpersonal Dimension	4
Technology	0	Technology	0
Social-Belief Dimension	1	Social-Belief Dimension	0
Sexuality	3	Sexuality	4
Intentional	2	Intentional	4
Romanticism	4	Romanticism	0
Process	3	Process	3
Attributions to the Adolescent	2	Attributions to the Adolescent	1
Risks	1	Risks	0
Characteristic of Developmental Period	2	Characteristic of Developmental Period	3
Positive Perspective	2	Positive Perspective	7
Negative Perspective	3	Negative Perspective	4
About Future	3	About Future	2
Generation Gap	3	Generation Gap	2
<hr/> Married Male Y		<hr/> Married Female Y	
Emotional Dimension	15	Emotional Dimension	14
Behavioral Dimension	6	Behavioral Dimension	5
Interpersonal Dimension	1	Interpersonal Dimension	3
Technology	0	Technology	4
Social-Belief Dimension	2	Social-Belief Dimension	0
Sexuality	3	Sexuality	6
Intentional	1	Intentional	3
Romanticism	2	Romanticism	3
Process	2	Process	1
Attributions to the Adolescent	0	Attributions to the Adolescent	1
Risks	4	Risks	6

Characteristic of Developmental Period	6	Characteristic of Developmental Period	4
Positive Perspective	0	Positive Perspective	6
Negative Perspective	4	Negative Perspective	2
About Future	3	About Future	2
Generation Gap	0	Generation Gap	3

#### 4. Discussion

When the findings of the research are examined, it can be said whether the relationship between the generations of romantic relationship and the relationship between the X, Y, Z generations according to gender and marital status variables. *Emotional dimension* is the most frequently repeated theme in all age groups, regardless of gender and marital status. It is stated that emotions are at the forefront in romantic relationships (Kaçar & Parlar, 2019; Öztürk, 2013). Love, which is a part of romantic relationships, supply with emotions such as intimacy, loyalty, understanding, trust, love and respect (Sternberg, 1999 cited in Atak & Taştan, 2012). From this point of view, it can be said that individuals are one of the most important relationships that supply with emotional needs through romantic relationships.

Another common theme among female participants is the *Behavioral Dimension*. Yılmazçoban (2008) states that women have higher expectations than men in romantic relationships before marriage. Responses related to the behavioral dimension theme can be expressed as reflecting the behavioral expectations of female participants about romantic relationships and romantic relations are seen as the relationship with which certain operational requirements are fulfilled. Although the theme of sexuality is a sub-dimension of romantic relationships, it has not been repeated frequently by the participants. Balamir Bektaş and Karacan (2014), states that in traditional societies such as Turkish, romantic relationships and sexuality are more affected by social control. Mavi-Aydoğdu, Uzun, and Murat-Öztürk (2019) find that midwifery vocational high school students' attitudes towards sexual relations outside the marriage are negative and they care about being the virgin of the person they marry. This result is supported by other studies (Evcili, Cesur, Altun, Güçtaş, & Sümer, 2013; Tokuç, Berberoğlu, Varol Saraçoğlu, & Çelikkalp, 2011). This situation may be reasoned because of in Turkish society that based on social norms, the conversation about sexuality is not welcome. Kul (2019) states that the experiences of romantic relationships in the early years affect the attitudes and expectations of the opposite sex. The reason why the emotional dimension does not stand out in male participants may be that they are not encouraged as much as women in expressing emotions.

When the answers to the question about the romantic relations before marriage, which are the second of the research questions, are examined, it is seen that the theme of *Emotional Dimension* is repeated frequently in the responses of female married Y generation, whereas it is seen that the most frequently repeated theme of male participants is the *intentional aspect* of pre-marital relationships. It can be thought that man and woman's approaches to romantic relations are structurally different. Tarhan (2006) defines woman as an entity who affects first and then desires, while defines man as an entity that first desires and then affects. It can be said that this statement coincides with the research findings. *As Intentionally*, it is stated that the pre-marriage friendship and engagement processes of individuals allow them to get to know each other, to gain a lot of positive and negative experiences and to establish the necessary love bond for marriage (Duran & Hamamcı, 2010; Özgüven, 2000).

In the Y-participant responses, it is seen that the *Process* dimension for pre-marital romantic relationships is prominent when compared to the X and Z participant responses. What the participants emphasized about the process is the time that individuals spend together to get to know each other before marriage. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP) in 2015, 57% of marriages between 1981 and 1990 were arranged, while this ratio decreased by 34% in marriages between 2001-2011 (ASPB, 2015). The reason that the *Process* theme is more prominent among the Y generation participants than the X generation may be due to the fact that Y generation participants are affected by the differentiation in the perspective of dating relationships in the society, and that they prefer and marry after flirting (by agreement). It is stated that it is important for couples to evaluate each other with a rational and realistic

point of view before marriage in order to have a healthy and long-lived marriage union (Özgül, 2017). The fact that couples spend more time together before marriage due to sociocultural change and differentiation in social life may be the reason why the process dimension comes to the fore in the generation Y.

In terms of married individuals, it is seen that generation Y female respondents expressed more positive perspective towards romantic relationships before marriage. It can be said that this shows that female participants have a more positive attitude towards a romantic relationship before marriage. In addition, although the theme of Negative Perspective was seen among the Y-generation male respondents, it was not common in other groups of participants. Although we continue to be a traditional society, there is an increase in the number of dating (by agreement) marriage (Erdoğan & Kahraman, 2019; Şendil & Korkut, 2008). The fact that individuals get to know each other and get married may be the determinant of their longer and happier marital relationship.. While the responses to the Social-Belief Dimension theme were found only in the X and Y generation male respondents, there was no response in the Z generation participants' responses. This supports the fact that adult individuals have a traditional and conservative understanding about romantic relationships before marriage (Balamir Bektaş & Karacan, 2014; Yılmazçoban, 2008). Although there were no answers related to Sexuality theme in both sexes of Generation Z participants, there were answers at Generation X and Y male repetitive responses, even though it was less frequently repeated. It is stated that adult males' attitudes towards premarital sexual relationship are more negative than adult females' (Sakallı, Karakurt, & Uğurlu, 2001). The fact that sexuality is seen as an element of romantic relationship may be the reason for this theme to appear first in male participants. The reason why sexual theme between generation Z and generation X and Y does not stand out is that the conversation about sexuality for women and young people is not welcomed in the community.

It is seen that four of the eight responses to the theme of *Boundaries* belong to male Y generation and three to male X generation participants. This may mean that male participants of generation X and Y give more conditional approval to premarital relationships than those of generation Z, as well as female participants. Male ve X and Y participants' 'limited acceptance' of premarital romantic relationships may be due to their negative view of premarital sexual experience. In the literature supporting this, it is stated that males are more conservative for premarital sexual intercourse when compared between women (Sakallı et al., 2001).

When the answers to the question about the romantic relationships of adolescents, who are the third of the research questions, are examined, the responses of the Z generation participants on the theme of *Emotional Dimension* were not frequently repeated. However, it is seen that the most frequently repeated theme for the adolescent romantic relationships of married X and Y is *Emotional Dimension*. Another remarkable finding is that there are answers to the theme of *Technology* in adolescent romantic relationships. In the other generations, except for generation X, participants from both sexes have answers to the *Technology* theme. Adolescents are using the technology to relate to their partners in romantic relationships, to make daily contact, to discuss, to make stalk, to communicate with their partner after the separation (Draucker & Martsof, 2010; Vaterlaus, Tulane, Porter, & Beckert, 2018). Adolescents spend most of their days talking over the phone, texting and sharing on social media sites (Baker & Carreno, 2015).

The most frequently repeated theme among female Z generation participants is the *Intentional* dimension. Büyükpabuşçu (2011) states that dating for adolescents is a factor that facilitates status and acceptance within the peer group. Similarly, Savickaite, Dijkstra, Kreager, Ivonova, and Veenstra (2020) state that adolescents increase their popularity within the group. In the Generation Z participant responses, "Just to have someone..." can mean that they see their romantic relationship experiences as a means of making them popular among peer groups. When the findings were examined, another remarkable result was that X and Y generation participants described the romantic relationships experienced during adolescence as a *Developmental Task*. In the Z generation participants, there was no response to this theme. This finding is in line with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, which suggests that close relationships established during adolescence contribute to the development of an individual's healthy identity.

According to the findings of the research, it was revealed that some themes differed in male and female respondents. This may be due to the difference in values, attitudes and expectations determined by the traditional gender characteristics determined by the society (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 2001 cited in Gizir, 2013). In addition, the fact that men and women have different standards of romantic relations (Vangelisti & Daly, 2005) may be another reason for different themes to come to the fore.

## 5. Results and Recommendations

Romantic relations have an important place in human life in terms of forming marriage bond. Although it is thought that romantic relationships are more than two people, it is important to see how romantic relations are perceived, evaluated and understood. Considering the fact that we live together with individuals of different age groups in the society, it is natural that the different meanings loaded on various concepts may cause communication problems or disputes from time to time.

Sentences that start with "In our times..." may be a sign that the perception of generation X about themselves is different in many ways. In terms of romantic relationships, especially the perception of generation X towards adolescent romantic relationships is important. Generation X is usually the parent of generation Z, which is currently in adolescence. The fact that adolescents live and consume their romantic relationships as fast as they do in many other lives may not be welcomed by other generations. The fact that adolescents, emerging adults, and middle-aged individuals have different perceptions of romantic relationships may cause conflicts, especially between parents and adolescents. In order to reduce these conflicts, family trainings on communication with adolescents can be provided.

In this context, it can be said that the results of the research are important in terms of giving an idea about the source of the problem created by the conflicts related to the perception of romantic relations. In addition, the generation that gives the most conservative responses to romantic relationships before marriage is the X generation. The perceptions of the Z generation before romantic marriage are completely positive. Participants of generation Y generally have a positive perspective. It is stated that being conservative adversely affects attitudes towards romantic relationships before marriage including pre-marital sexuality (Sakallı et al., 2001). It can be said that the participants of Generation X have a more conservative attitude.

The most important limitation of this research is the number of participants. Since the study was a qualitative study, it was conducted with 113 participants and single X generation and married Z generation participants were not represented in this study. It was observed that some participants interpreted the concept of romantic relationship as 'romanticism ve and responded accordingly. It can be said that this situation will increase the margin of error in the research. Another limitation is the lack of quantitative data sources due to the fact that the research is a qualitative study. Quantitative studies on this subject can be done in subsequent researches.

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