

# Cultural Shifts in Courtship Practices and Their Implications for Family Stability

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## Abstract

This study examines how contemporary cultural shifts in courtship practices influence family stability within rapidly changing social environments. Using a quantitative survey of 400 respondents aged 18 to 45, the research investigates four major dimensions of cultural change: digital courtship behavior, cohabitation attitudes, reduced parental involvement in partner selection, and shifting gender norms. Descriptive statistics reveal high prevalence of technology-driven relationship initiation and evolving expectations in intimate partnerships. Correlation analysis shows significant negative relationships between these cultural shift indicators and family stability variables, including communication quality, conflict resolution, and long-term commitment. Multiple regression analysis further demonstrates that the four cultural predictors account for 37% of the variance in family stability, with digital courtship and cohabitation attitudes emerging as the strongest predictors. Findings suggest that digital interaction patterns may weaken emotional connection skills, while growing cohabitation trends reduce commitment intentions. Reduced parental involvement and evolving gender norms add additional layers of relational tension. The study concludes that while cultural evolution is inevitable, strengthening relationship education, enhancing family support systems, and integrating structured mentoring are crucial for mitigating instability. The findings provide empirical insights for policymakers, community leaders, and family practitioners seeking to enhance long-term relationship outcomes in modern societies.

**Keywords:** Courtship practices; cultural change; digital relationships; cohabitation; gender norms; family stability; interpersonal communication.

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of courtship practices across societies had been widely discussed in sociological, anthropological, and family studies literature, and scholars had consistently argued that the ways individuals initiate intimate relationships were deeply shaped by cultural norms, technological change, economic transitions, and shifting value orientations. In many traditional societies, courtship had been

historically structured around communal norms, kinship participation, and culturally prescribed rituals that shaped expectations for marriage, partner selection, and family formation. However, the last three decades had witnessed profound transformations in how people met partners, communicated affection, evaluated compatibility, and transitioned into long-term unions. These transformations had been particularly visible in emerging economies undergoing rapid modernization, including African societies where changing cultural values, increased urbanization, globalization, and digital communication were continuously altering preexisting marital pathways. Against this backdrop, concerns had been raised regarding whether newer courtship patterns—characterized by increased individual autonomy, digital matchmaking, casual dating, and exposure to global romantic ideals—were contributing to rising marital instability, delayed marriages, weakened extended kin involvement, and increases in divorce within younger generations.

Researchers had observed that traditional African courtship norms had emphasized family approval, religious values, communal screening, shared morality, and clearly defined gender expectations. Such norms had been believed to create stability by ensuring compatibility, social support, and strong family networks from the onset of romantic relationships. Yet, contemporary studies had suggested that younger adults were increasingly adopting globalized dating practices, often mediated by social media, mobile technology, and migration-related influences. The movement from communal to individualized partner selection had raised questions regarding relational durability, conflict-management abilities, alignment of expectations, and the weakening role of families in regulating unions. Studies had further indicated that global romantic media portrayed marriage as a purely emotional contract based on personal fulfillment, a shift that contrasted sharply with earlier models emphasizing obligation, interdependence, and collective identity. This ideological shift had implications for marital longevity, with scholars arguing that couples who entered marriage primarily on emotional excitement rather than shared values or long-term commitment frameworks might be more vulnerable to disappointment and instability when faced with economic stress, infertility, role conflicts, or extended family expectations. In addition to cultural globalization, the rise of digital technologies had

introduced new dynamics into courtship. Social media platforms, dating apps, and instant messaging tools had expanded access to potential partners beyond immediate communities, thereby increasing relationship options but also creating challenges related to trust, fidelity, and unrealistic expectations. Studies had shown that digital environments encouraged impression management, curated self-presentation, and anonymity, all of which could introduce misrepresentation and relational fragility. Furthermore, constant online interaction had blurred boundaries between private and public life, sometimes exposing relationships to surveillance, peer influence, cyber conflicts, and emotional infidelity. The speed of contemporary digital communication—unlike slow-paced traditional courtship cycles—had been said to promote accelerated intimacy, premature emotional bonding, and rapid dissolution when conflicts emerged. These patterns had raised concerns that digitally mediated relationships were less robust in negotiating long-term partnership demands, thereby influencing the stability of eventual marriages.

Economic factors had also been reported to influence shifts in courtship practices. As more young adults pursued careers, urban migration, and financial independence, the age of marriage had risen across many African contexts. This delay often created prolonged periods of romantic experimentation and casual dating, which some scholars suggested could weaken long-term commitment because repeated short-term relationships might normalize disposability and reduce investment in long-term relational work. On the other hand, economic challenges such as unemployment, inflation, and job insecurity had pressured young couples, potentially amplifying conflicts, reducing marriage prospects, or pushing individuals toward relationships based on financial survival rather than emotional or value-based compatibility. These economic shifts interacted with changing cultural scripts, creating complex courtship trajectories that older generations often found difficult to understand or accept.

Theoretical perspectives such as Social Exchange Theory and Modernization Theory had frequently been applied to explain the shifts in contemporary courtship. Social Exchange Theory emphasized that individuals evaluated romantic relationships based on perceived rewards, costs, and alternative options. As societies modernized and exposure to diverse romantic possibilities increased, individuals especially those with

access to digital networks might reassess partners more frequently, compare relationships, or exit unions they perceived as unsatisfactory. This tendency could weaken family stability because relationships built on continuous evaluation rather than structural commitment were more susceptible to dissolution. Meanwhile, Modernization Theory posited that transitions from traditional collectivist cultures to more individualistic orientations introduced new systems of values, aspirations, and decision-making logics. Within such transitions, courtship practices were expected to shift from communal norms to personal choice, autonomy, and emotional self-realization. While individual choice expanded freedom and reduced coercive marriages, it also introduced uncertainties, incompatibilities, and diminished community accountability—all of which had implications for marital durability.

Another dimension of the cultural shift involved gender relations. Historically, gender roles in courtship were clearly defined, with men expected to initiate contact, provide economic stability, and lead courtship rituals, while women were expected to uphold virtue, modesty, and domestic readiness. Contemporary gender relations had become more fluid due to education, women's economic participation, and feminist discourses. These changes had reshaped partner expectations, communication patterns, and negotiation processes in early romantic relationships. Some studies had reported that unresolved differences in gender-role expectations frequently led to misunderstandings and conflict within marriages. Younger women who embraced autonomy and career ambitions sometimes found themselves at odds with partners who adhered to more traditional expectations. These tensions could undermine family stability, especially in societies where extended families still held strong expectations for traditional gender performances. Cultural diversity within African societies also played a significant role. Urban centers had become melting pots of ethnic groups, worldviews, and cultural norms, producing hybrid courtship styles that combined traditional practices with global influences. This multicultural blending sometimes created strong adaptive partnerships, but in other cases, cultural misalignment had been associated with relational conflict, societal pressure, or extended family disapproval. Intercultural relationships, while increasingly common, had been reported to experience unique stressors related to religion, customary practices,

language differences, and varying expectations for marriage, childbearing, and spousal duties. Viewing these transformations together, scholars had increasingly argued that the stability of modern families could not be understood without critically examining how courtship practices were shifting. The central goal of this paper was therefore to provide a systematic investigation into cultural changes in courtship practices and to evaluate how these transformations shaped relational dynamics, compatibility, commitment, and long-term family stability. By integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence across multiple contexts, the study aimed to illuminate the extent to which evolving courtship norms—whether influenced by technology, economic change, globalization, or gender-role transitions—had contributed to marital fragility or resilience in modern societies. Ultimately, the paper sought to deepen understanding of how societies could balance cultural evolution with the preservation of stable, supportive family structures in an era of rapid social change.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study of cultural shifts in courtship practices had attracted growing scholarly attention as researchers sought to understand the social transformations influencing romantic relationships and family stability. Courtship had long been conceptualized as a culturally embedded process through which individuals selected partners, negotiated compatibility, and established expectations for marriage and family life. Traditionally, courtship in many societies, including African communities, had been governed by well-defined cultural norms, extended family involvement, and clear rituals that guided the progression from acquaintance to marriage (Osei-Hwedie, 2019). However, contemporary scholarship had noted that the accelerating forces of globalization, digital communication, urbanization, and changing value systems were reshaping the ways young adults approached romantic relationships (Giddens, 1992; Arnett, 2015). This literature review examined empirical and theoretical evidence explaining how these shifts occurred, the dimensions they took, and the implications for long-term family stability.

### **Traditional Courtship Systems and Their Functions in Family Formation**

Traditional courtship practices were historically intertwined with cultural norms and communal expectations. Across sub-Saharan Africa, courtship was based largely on family mediation, community participation, and alignment with social values concerning gender roles, moral behaviour, and kinship continuity (Ayisi, 2016). Marriage had been primarily perceived as the union of families rather than merely the union of individuals; therefore, courtship served as a structured process that ensured compatibility, social approval, and long-term commitment (Igboin, 2014). Such systems were reported to provide a stabilizing effect because the selection of partners often occurred within networks that shared similar cultural orientations, religious values, and socioeconomic expectations (Nwoye, 2018). Studies had further suggested that extended family involvement acted as a protective factor for marital durability by providing emotional support, conflict mediation, and guidance during marital struggles (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). These cultural arrangements reflected collectivist orientations in which individuals' decisions were embedded in social structures that promoted family cohesion and stability.

### **The Globalization of Courtship and Exposure to New Romantic Scripts**

One of the most extensively discussed influences on modern courtship was globalization. Scholars observed that global exposure through media, migration, international education, and cultural exchange had introduced new romantic scripts emphasizing personal autonomy, emotional expression, and individual choice (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). According to Giddens' (1992) theory of the "pure relationship," modern romantic partnerships were increasingly based on emotional fulfillment and self-actualization rather than traditional obligations or communal expectations. Empirical research had shown that younger adults across regions were adopting these globalized ideas, often prioritizing compatibility, attraction, and emotional communication over family preferences or cultural prescriptions (Hirsch & Wardlow, 2006). In African urban contexts, the influence of Western romantic media had been documented extensively, with studies indicating that exposure to global entertainment reshaped expectations regarding dating, intimacy, and partner roles (Obododimma, 2020). Globalization had also enabled the rise of hybrid courtship patterns in which individuals combined traditional expectations with modern romantic

ideals (Adebanwi, 2017). While hybrid systems expanded choice and created opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, they sometimes introduced tensions when partners' expectations diverged. Some studies documented an increase in cultural mismatch, value conflicts, and disagreements over gender roles in marriages that originated through more individualized, globalized courtship processes (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2019). These findings suggested that although globalization broadened romantic possibilities, it also challenged traditional support structures that historically contributed to family stability.

### **Digital Technology and the Transformation of Courtship Dynamics**

Digital technology was reported as one of the most transformative forces reshaping modern courtship. Social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online dating systems had created new avenues through which individuals met, communicated, and developed romantic relationships. Empirical studies showed that digital communication accelerated romantic involvement, increased relationship options, and facilitated cross-regional and cross-cultural interaction (Finkel et al., 2012). However, scholars also observed that online environments introduced complexities into courtship processes, including misrepresentation, idealized self-presentation, cyber infidelity, and relational comparisons (Toma & Hancock, 2012).

In many African cities, the rise of smartphone access had contributed to a surge in digitally facilitated courtship (Chiluwa, 2020). Research indicated that young adults were increasingly using social media as their primary medium for initiating romantic connections, discussing intimacy, and maintaining long-distance relationships (Uzochukwu, 2021). While digital mediation expanded the pool of potential partners, it also weakened the communal supervision historically embedded in courtship rituals. Without traditional gatekeepers, individuals were more exposed to deceptive relationships, unstable commitments, and relational volatility. Moreover, the rapid pace of digital communication had been linked to impulsive intimacy, heightened relational expectations, and accelerated emotional involvement, factors that could undermine long-term relational resilience (Smith & Duggan, 2013).

Digital platforms were also associated with the rise of "choice overload," a phenomenon in which individuals struggled with commitment due to access to

numerous romantic alternatives (D'Angelo & Toma, 2017). Social Exchange Theory explained that individuals might continually compare partners, seeking better alternatives, which could reduce investment and increase relational fragility (Rusbult, 1980). This had implications for family stability, as marriages originating from digital courtship might lack the foundational screening and relational grounding historically associated with traditional partner selection.

### **Urbanization, Modern Lifestyles, and Changing Courtship Timelines**

Urbanization had substantially altered romantic patterns, particularly in African metropolises experiencing rapid economic and demographic shifts. Urban centers offered increased anonymity, freedom from communal surveillance, exposure to diverse worldviews, and expanded opportunities for mixed-romantic interactions (Potts, 2012). Studies documented that urban lifestyles encouraged delayed marriage, prolonged dating periods, and increased experimentation in intimate relationships (Mokomane, 2013). Young adults living in urban areas often pursued educational and career goals before marriage, resulting in extended pre-marital romantic trajectories.

Longer periods of dating were found to correlate with greater likelihood of cohabitation, serial monogamy, and dissolution of relationships before marriage (Arnett, 2015). Some scholars argued that extended dating phases allowed individuals to clarify their expectations and identify compatible partners, thus potentially promoting marital stability (Hall, 2017). However, other research suggested that repeated short-term relationships might normalize relational disposability, weaken commitment expectations, and introduce emotional baggage into marriages (Stanley et al., 2014). Urban courtship patterns therefore had a complex, dual effect: while offering individuals more autonomy and maturity before entering marriage, they also introduced relational instability that could undermine family cohesion.

### **Shifting Gender Norms and Their Influence on Courtship**

Gender roles had historically anchored courtship and marriage expectations in many societies. Across both traditional and modern contexts, men were commonly expected to initiate relationships, provide economic stability, and direct the pace of courtship, while women's roles emphasized modesty, receptiveness, and homemaking readiness (Morrell, 2016). However, growing female education, economic empowerment, and

feminist discourse had significantly reshaped these gender expectations. Contemporary African women increasingly participated in decision-making during courtship, expressed autonomy in partner selection, and negotiated egalitarian expectations in marriage (Amadiume, 2015).

Although such changes had promoted gender equity, they also created tensions when expectations differed between partners. Studies indicated that mismatched gender orientations such as when a woman preferred egalitarian partnership but the man adhered to traditional patriarchy were associated with increased relational conflict (Choi & Ting, 2015). These mismatches often emerged during early courtship but became more pronounced during marriage when expectations around household roles, finances, and family leadership became central. Gender-transformative shifts therefore shaped courtship experiences and influenced the long-term stability of relationships by altering how partners understood commitment, responsibility, and relational negotiation.

### **Religious Transitions and Their Effects on Courtship and Marriage**

Religion had historically functioned as a major regulator of courtship practices. In traditional African societies, religious teachings guided sexual behavior, marriage timing, interpersonal expectations, and family formation (Mbiti, 1969). However, contemporary research suggested that religious influence on courtship was declining among younger adults due to secularization, exposure to global ideas, and increased prioritization of personal autonomy (Hutchinson, 2017). The decline of religious oversight had implications for relationship pathways because religious communities historically provided moral guidance, accountability structures, and conflict mediation in courtship and marriage. Nonetheless, religion continued to exert influence in many contexts. Studies indicated that couples sharing religious beliefs were more likely to experience marital stability due to alignment in values and strengthened conflict-management strategies (Mahoney, 2010). Conversely, religiously mixed relationships faced increased stress due to competing value systems, family expectations, and differences in marital theology (Curtis & Ellison, 2002). As courtship practices drifted from religious structures, the absence of shared spiritual frameworks might weaken the foundation for long-term marital resilience.

### **Intercultural Relationships, Global Mobility, and Compatibility Concerns**

Modern courtship had become increasingly multicultural due to global migration, education, and digital connectivity. While intercultural relationships created opportunities for cultural enrichment and hybrid identity formation, empirical evidence suggested that these unions experienced unique challenges. Partners from different cultural backgrounds often disagreed over marriage rituals, fidelity expectations, childrearing norms, and extended family involvement (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). Such conflicts could undermine stability when partners lacked intercultural competence or emotional adaptability. Migration studies further indicated that individuals who relocated across regions often adopted new romantic norms that clashed with expectations in their home communities, creating relational tensions upon re-entry (Levitt, 2015). These cultural discrepancies influenced courtship choices and could create long-term challenges in forming stable families within culturally mixed environments.

### **Theoretical Perspectives Explaining Courtship Shifts**

Two theoretical frameworks had been central in explaining cultural change in courtship: Modernization Theory and Social Exchange Theory.

Modernization Theory posited that societies undergoing technological, economic, and ideological transformation gradually shifted from collectivist to individualist orientations (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). This shift influenced courtship by promoting autonomy, emotional self-expression, and personal choice over communal decision-making. The theory explained why traditional courtship rituals were declining and why individuals increasingly evaluated marriage through the lens of emotional satisfaction rather than obligation.

Social Exchange Theory suggested that individuals evaluated relationships by comparing perceived rewards and costs, alongside possible alternatives (Rusbult, 1980). The proliferation of digital options, globalization, and urban exposure widened individuals' access to alternatives, thereby weakening commitment and increasing relational turnover. This theoretical lens explained why modern courtship might produce less stable marital outcomes.

### **Implications for Family Stability**

Empirical research consistently linked courtship transformations to marital outcomes. Relationships formed through unstable, rapidly evolving, or poorly supervised courtship patterns were more likely to experience conflict, misaligned expectations, and dissolution (Stanley et al., 2014). Cultural shifts that emphasized emotional excitement over structural compatibility sometimes produced fragile marriages prone to disappointment when faced with financial, social, or extended-family pressures (Hall, 2017). Conversely, individuals who balanced modern autonomy with traditional commitment principles demonstrated stronger marital endurance (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2019). Thus, the literature indicated that cultural shifts in courtship were multidimensional, shaped by global, technological, economic, gender-based, and religious factors. These shifts influenced how individuals evaluated relationships, negotiated compatibility, and transitioned into marriage. Consequently, understanding these transformations remained essential for explaining trends in marital stability across contemporary societies.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to investigate how contemporary cultural shifts in courtship practices influence family stability. The approach integrates quantitative and qualitative strategies to generate comprehensive and triangulated insights. The methodology is structured around research design, population and sampling, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

#### **Research Design**

A convergent mixed-methods design is employed. The quantitative component assesses patterns, prevalence, and statistical relationships among variables such as digital courtship behaviors, cohabitation trends, reduced parental involvement, and indicators of family stability. The qualitative component offers deeper explanations of how individuals interpret these cultural shifts and how such interpretations shape family outcomes. Both data strands are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and merged during interpretation to strengthen validity through methodological triangulation.

## **Population and Sampling Procedure**

The target population includes adults aged 18–45 in urban and peri-urban regions, reflecting the demographic most involved in emerging courtship behaviors. A multi-stage sampling technique is adopted. First, states are stratified into geopolitical zones. Within each selected zone, two cities are purposively chosen based on population density and technological penetration. From these cities, participants are selected using systematic random sampling from households and community clusters.

A sample size of 400 survey respondents is targeted for the quantitative strand, sufficient for generalization at a 95% confidence level and allowing for subgroup comparisons. For the qualitative strand, 20–25 participants are purposively selected for in-depth interviews, ensuring diversity in age, gender, religious affiliation, marital status, and courtship experiences. This allows the study to capture a wide range of perspectives on cultural shifts in courtship.

## **Research Instruments**

Two major instruments are used:

### **Structured Questionnaire**

The questionnaire includes Likert-scale items measuring constructs such as digital dating usage, family value orientation, premarital sexual norms, cohabitation attitudes, and family stability indicators (communication, conflict resolution, commitment). Items are adapted from previous empirical studies to ensure content validity (e.g., Toit & Kotze, 2020; Boateng, 2021).

### **Interview Guide**

Semi-structured questions probe how participants perceive changes in courtship norms, how these changes affect relationship expectations, and how they connect courtship experiences to family outcomes. The guide allows flexibility, enabling respondents to elaborate freely.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection spans eight weeks. Trained field researchers administer questionnaires using a hybrid approach—physical distribution and secure online forms. For qualitative data, interviews are conducted face-to-face or via virtual platforms,

depending on participant preference. Each interview lasts 30–45 minutes and is audio-recorded with consent.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Quantitative data are coded and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) summarize responses. Inferential tests including Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA, test hypotheses on how cultural shifts predict family stability variables. Statistical significance is set at  $p < .05$ . Qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts are coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to digital dating experiences, shifting gender norms, cohabitation, and changing parental roles. Themes from interviews complement quantitative findings.

### **Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations**

Validity is ensured through expert review of instruments and pilot testing with 30 respondents. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, with coefficients above 0.70 considered acceptable. Ethical considerations include informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation, and secure data handling. Participants are assured that the study poses no physical or psychological risks.

This methodological framework provides a robust structure for examining the complex relationships between cultural changes in courtship and indicators of family stability.

## **4. Results**

### **1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Table 1

**Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 400)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Gender	Male	180	45.0
	Female	220	55.0
Age	18–25	120	30.0
	26–35	170	42.5

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education	36–45	110	27.5
	Tertiary	260	65.0
	Secondary	110	27.5
	Other	30	7.5
Relationship Status	Single	180	45.0
	Married	150	37.5
	Cohabiting	70	17.5

Respondents represent a diverse group with adequate variability for robust statistical interpretation.

## 2. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Table 2

Mean Scores of Cultural Shift Indicators and Family Stability Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Digital Courtship Behavior	3.68	0.81
Cohabitation Attitude	3.44	0.92
Reduced Parental Involvement	3.21	0.88
Shifting Gender Norms	3.72	0.79
Family Communication Quality	3.56	0.84
Conflict Resolution	3.49	0.87
Long-term Commitment	3.40	0.90

Mean values show that digital courtship and shifting gender norms are the most prevalent cultural change indicators.

## 3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine relationships between cultural shift variables and family stability.

Table 3

**Correlation Matrix**

Variable	FCQ	CR	LTC	DCB	CA	RPI	SGN
Family Communication Quality (FCQ)	1	.612**	.584**	-.431**	-.389**	-.302**	-.355**
Conflict Resolution (CR)	—	1	.548**	-.402**	-.351**	-.281**	-.366**
Long-term Commitment (LTC)	—	—	1	-.455**	-.398**	-.336**	-.322**
Digital Courtship Behavior (DCB)	—	—	—	1	.521**	.438**	.493**
Cohabitation Attitude (CA)	—	—	—	—	1	.379**	.402**
Reduced Parental Involvement (RPI)	—	—	—	—	—	1	.316**
Shifting Gender Norms (SGN)	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

p < .01 (2-tailed)

Interpretation:

Digital courtship behavior shows a significant negative correlation with communication ( $r = -.431$ ), conflict resolution ( $r = -.402$ ), and commitment ( $r = -.455$ ). This suggests that heavy reliance on digital dating platforms may weaken interpersonal skills that support stable family relationships.

Cohabitation attitudes also correlate negatively with stability indicators, indicating that normalizing cohabitation may reduce long-term commitment tendencies.

#### 4. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted with family stability (composite score) as the dependent variable.

**Table 4**

#### Regression Model Summary

Predictor	$\beta$	t-value	Sig. (p)
Digital Courtship Behavior	-0.321	-6.22	.000
Cohabitation Attitude	-0.284	-5.74	.000

Predictor	$\beta$	t-value	Sig. (p)
Reduced Parental Involvement	-0.201	-4.10	.000
Shifting Gender Norms	-0.245	-4.98	.000

Model Fit:

R = .61

R<sup>2</sup> = .37

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .36

F(4, 395) = 57.82, p < .001

### Interpretation:

The four predictors jointly explain 37% of the variance in family stability. Digital courtship behavior is the strongest predictor ( $\beta = -0.321$ ), followed by cohabitation attitudes ( $\beta = -0.284$ ). All predictors show significant negative effects, indicating that emerging courtship practices have measurable implications for family relationships.

### 5. Summary of Key Findings

- Digital courtship behavior is high and significantly undermines family communication, conflict resolution, and long-term commitment.
- Cohabitation attitudes significantly predict lower commitment tendencies, supporting claims that cohabitation normalizes less-stable relational arrangements.
- Reduced parental involvement weakens young adults' preparedness for healthy relationship-building.
- Shifting gender norms correlate negatively with stability indicators, suggesting tension around evolving expectations of roles.
- Regression results confirm that cultural shifts collectively explain a substantial portion of family instability in contemporary contexts.

These results provide empirical support for the argument that changing courtship cultures exert measurable influence on family stability, highlighting areas where further qualitative and longitudinal research is needed.

### 5. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that contemporary shifts in courtship practices are significantly reshaping the landscape of relationship formation and long-term family

outcomes, revealing deep structural and behavioral changes that influence how couples build and sustain intimate partnerships. Digital courtship emerged as a dominant force, characterized by the rise of online dating, virtual interaction habits, and algorithm-driven partner selection; the data show that while digital platforms expand access to potential partners, they simultaneously erode essential interpersonal competencies required for stable relationships, such as emotional intimacy, communication depth, and conflict-management abilities. Cohabitation attitudes also reflect a major cultural transition as increasing numbers of young adults embrace co-residential arrangements as alternatives or precursors to marriage, but the negative correlations with long-term commitment suggest that cohabitation may normalize relational impermanence and reduce motivation toward marital stability. Reduced parental involvement further compounds this shift, as traditional family systems that once guided courtship norms have weakened, leaving young adults with less mentorship, intergenerational learning, and value transmission; consequently, reduced parental influence limits the development of relationship-building skills grounded in cultural expectations, communal accountability, and structured role modeling. Shifting gender norms add yet another layer, as evolving expectations regarding power dynamics, financial contributions, emotional labor, and domestic responsibilities create friction within emerging couples who may lack the negotiation experience needed to balance modern individualism with cooperative partnership values. Collectively, these factors form a complex interplay in which changing cultural norms weaken the foundations of family stability by altering the motivations, expectations, and behaviors that drive relational continuity. The statistical evidence, including strong negative correlations and a regression model showing that cultural shifts predict 37% of the variance in family stability, underscores the urgency for policymakers, educators, religious institutions, and family-oriented organizations to expand relationship-literacy programs, strengthen premarital counseling frameworks, and update community-based mentoring systems that help young adults navigate modern courtship complexities. Given that cultural evolution is unavoidable, the way forward lies not in attempting to revert to older practices but in strategically integrating traditional elements—such as parental guidance, communal accountability,

and structured value systems—with contemporary realities like digital interaction, gender equality movements, and diversified pathways to intimacy. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs, qualitative interviews, and cross-cultural comparisons to deepen understanding of how these shifts unfold over time and across different social environments. Ultimately, the study highlights that sustaining family stability in the face of cultural transformation requires coordinated efforts that support healthier relational behaviors, strengthen decision-making capacity, and promote intentionality in partner selection and long-term commitment.

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