

Marriage among Digital Natives

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ABSTRACT

Our culture loves to give labels for everything. The label attached to everyone born before 1980 is the digital native or Generation Z. The digital natives have emerged as a population increasingly worthy of attention due to their peculiar characteristics and culture. This study examines whether what the digital native evangelists claim is valid or not, i.e. being a digital native does influence behavior and attitude toward marriage. A 20-item survey questionnaire was developed and used to assess the attitudes of digital natives on marriage. The results indicate that digital natives support online dating, co-habitation, believe in inter-racial marriage, and inter-faith marriage. A lot of digital natives do not wish to marry and several of them do not want children. This paper reports our investigation on the attitude of digital natives towards life, relationship, and marriage.

KEYWORDS: digitalization, digital technologies, digital natives, marriage, attitude

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INTRODUCTION

Our nation is facing many challenges such as high unemployment, alcoholism, suicides, increasing single parent household, women's empowerment, gender inequality, legalization of gay marriage, and the ongoing fight for racial justice. These problems have their toll on individuals and marriages. As a society, America needs our future generations to be healthy, educated, and productive individuals. Healthy, happy marriages are critical to our society in view of the associated physical, emotional, and financial benefits for families. Government spending to treat the effects of broken families is skyrocketing.

Marriage has changed over the years as the society around it has. Men and women with little excuse disrupt their family life and exit their marriage. The landscape of relationships in general and marriage in particular has shifted dramatically in recent decades in America, from cohabitation to same-sex marriage to interracial marriage. Americans are staying single longer. The divorce rate in America affects about half of all marriages. Remarriage is more common among

men than women. Interfaith marriage is on the rise. Legalization of same-sex marriage has grown in the past decade [1].

Marriage is essentially the legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. It is a natural, cherished bond that comes from the natural desire of the opposite sex to each other, and with the specific terms and conditions. The Bible clearly declares that marriage is between a man and a woman. The hierarchy in a marriage is to place God first, the husband second as head of the household, and the wife subservient to the husband. The wife is regarded as an equal helpmate and partner with her husband.

A healthy marriage results when two people work together to make their marriage work and are determined to tackle the problems that threaten it. A marriage thrives when both the husband and wife are responsible and are committed to meeting each other's most important emotional needs. All marriages face problems, such as selfishness, lack of affection, adultery, irresponsibility, worldliness, materialism,

etc. These common problems can be avoided, fixed, or resolved [2,3].

DIGITAL WORLD

Our society relies heavily on technology. Technology refers to the application of knowledge for human benefit. It provides us with the means to stay warm in cold weather, to communicate with a loved one a thousand miles away, to prevent or cure sickness, to care for those in need, to improve the quality of life, to increase happiness in many ways, to improve living standards, to reduce poverty, and to be connected globally. We live in an always-connected, digital age.

Digitalization has accelerated exponentially, and companies' survival will depend on their ability to reshape their future. It helps transform an entire industry ranging from business processes to customer relationship. It is a catalyst which will promote innovation and transform the operation of companies. It offers exciting new potential to visionary companies. Forward-thinking companies can use their data to create safer, smarter, and more efficient processes. Digital technologies affect all citizens in general and digital citizens in particular in the following ways [4,5].

The digital technologies (from email, file sharing, mobile phones, online gaming, ecommerce, Internet, GPS systems) in general and the Internet in particular are changing the way we live, work, learn, and socialize. It is exciting to see the Internet making the world a better place. The Internet revolution predominantly brought with it changes that were not only technological but societal and pervasive in scope. Technology is playing an increasing role in our culture in general and in young people in particular [6]. Technology has spanned the globe, connecting device, and people of all nations. It has become integrated into personal, professional, and social aspects of our lives. In schools, workplaces, and communities around the world, technology is becoming increasingly embedded into daily tasks. Digital technologies are at the heart of our economic and social life. They have transformed everything from education and healthcare to social services. The marriage between digital technologies and demographics, make the digital world an inevitability. The digital world is real, and it exists today as their way of life [7]. Digital natives live in the digital world and navigate it with their digital skills.

WHO ARE DIGITAL NATIVES?

Today, a revolution is taking place-the shift of culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication. This culture is invariably known as digital culture, cyberculture,

Internet culture, information culture, etc. The digital culture is the mixing of culture and computer [8]. It has a far-reaching impact on our lives and marriage.

As far as the digital world is concerned, there are two types of people: "digital immigrants" and "digital natives." While digital immigrants live in two cultures (the pre-digital and the digital), digital natives are only exposed the digital culture. While those who are born after 1980 are called digital natives, those born prior to 1980 are digital immigrants. While digital natives are assumed to be inherently technology-savvy, digital immigrants often have some difficulty with information technology [9]. Figure 1 compares digital natives and digital immigrants [10].

The greater majority of people today are digital natives. Digital natives are also known as millennials or the net generation. They are tech savvy with a very vibrant social media presence. They were born into a world of peak technological innovation, where information was immediately accessible and social media increasingly ubiquitous. They are often characterized by their age and as the generation that has experienced the total infusion of technology since birth. Because this generation is so well connected, their inspiration and views are drawn from regions across the globe. More time is spent on smartphones or watching TV, and less time is spent cultivating meaningful social relationships [11]. Figure 2 shows how digital citizens spend their time [12].

The terms "digital native" and "digital immigrant" were coined and popularized by education consultant Marc Prensky in his 2001 article entitled *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*. He claimed that Digital Natives have spent their entire lives surrounded by computers, social media, videogames, digital music players, videocams, cell phones, and all other toys and tools of the digital age [13]. The concepts became popular among educators and parents, whose children fell within Prensky's definition of a digital native (children born after 1980). Examples of digital natives are shown in Figure 3 [14].

The characteristics of digital natives include [15]:

1. They feel familiar with digital devices and have digital skills.
2. They crave interactivity and function best when networked.
3. They are always attached to a mobile phone or other devices.
4. Online information and technologies are second nature to natives.

5. They depend on technological tools for all kinds of daily issues, such socializing, learning, studying, shopping, getting information, having fun, etc.
6. They tend to be individualistic and patient.
7. They are able to multitask or focus on a single medium when needed.
8. They possess a short attention span and have an inability to tolerate a slow-paced environment.
9. They are quick in their actions and decision-making and want immediate results.
10. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards.

These characteristics help in relating to the digital natives and determining their attitudes to marriage. Some of them are illustrated in Figure 4 [16]. They are common behaviors and preferences of digital natives around the world.

Not everyone agrees with the idea of the digital native or the digital native evangelists. Some argue that digital native and digital immigrant are myths and labels that oversimplify the classification scheme. All kids are different and not all kids like the same things. Everyone has their own personality and affinity to technology. Not all digital natives are created equal.

ATTITUDES OF DIGITAL NATIVES TO MARRIAGE

As mentioned earlier, the term digital natives was popularized by Prensky as a way of defining someone who has grown up immersed in digital technology and is technologically adept and engaged. The attitudes of digital natives toward relationships and marriage are exhibited in the following ways.

1. **Singleness:** Digital natives have personal goals, priorities, values, and roles that differ greatly from previous generations. Some pursue their personal values like politics, education, and religion. They have been shaped by a storm of factors: high divorce rates among their parents, the mortgage crisis, high college debt, and working at home. As a consequence of this storm, digital natives prefer to remain single. Digital natives have been abstaining from marriage, the core institution of society. Just 26% of this generation is married. Digital natives are experiencing marriage as an option instead of a necessity. A shift in women's role in society is also contributing to putting off marriage for a while, as women pursue college education and careers. They view marriage as a dispensable luxury rather than an indispensable necessity. Whatever the reason for holding off on marriage,

these trends show how the digital nations are redefining marriage.

2. **Dating:** When a technology encourages personal choice and exclusion of others, our flesh will want to capitalize upon that value. Digital natives have always been curious about sex, and when they have questions, the Internet is usually their first stop. They also turn to the Internet for information about relationships, sexual health, and dating. Social media has really transformed the way that dating takes place. There are several dating websites such as eharmony, Zoosk, christian mingle, dating.com, black people meet, etc. A lot of American teens have met a romantic partner through online dating. These teens have managed to navigate the digital dating scene and find themselves in a relationship.
3. **Cohabitation:** Most digital natives are getting married later as they have shown skepticism towards marriage. The majority of births to 20- to 24- year-olds currently occur outside wedlock. Current relationship status among all young adults aged 20-24 in the US is depicted in Figure 5 [17]. Digital natives think lifelong cohabitation may be a more convenient and realistic option than the binding legal and economic ties of marriage. Cohabitation or live-in relationship is the new and on-going trend among the youths. It gives digital natives the freedom to live with their partners without any pressure of getting married. It allows them to enjoy the benefits of a conjugal life without the restrictions posed by the institution of marriage. It helps the couple to know each other better by living together before deciding to get married [18].
4. **Marriage:** Marriage is about sharing a life. People of similar beliefs, cultures, and traditions come closer in marriage. This societal institution is not only the bonding between two mature individuals but also their families. Digital natives are marrying at low rates and exhibit high levels of political and religious disaffiliation. Digital natives register the lowest levels of social trust in generations. Most of them go digital with their wedding invitations. From save-the-dates, a personalized invitation cards, and bachelorette invites to engagement and wedding e-vites, some website stocks a massive selection of wedding items a couple may want. Conflict between worker and family roles is exacerbated by additional stressors, such as technological tethering.

5. **Gay Marriage/Same-sex Marriage:** One can notice the eroticism of intense same-sex friendships and many bodily contacts, even between gay women (or men) who were not lovers: kisses, caresses, embraces, pressing heads against bosoms, lying and sleeping in each other's arms. Some states in the US do not recognize same-sex marriages. Some are of the opinion that allowing same-sex marriage (or homosexual marriage) will make our society fairer and more inclusive. Human happiness and social progress depended on such freedom.
6. **Parenting:** We have witnessed a massive use of technology at homes. Technology has dramatically changed our homes and social lives. It is not only becoming omnipresent for many families, it is also increasingly invisible. There is an increase in Internet access at homes. Children use technology a lot to text, chat, play games, Facebook, and YouTube. Young adults are the most digitally connected members of our society. They use technology to maintain relationships, communicate, entertain, seek information, and social network. Digital natives may be using technology in ways that transform aspects of parenting. Parents struggle with setting rules (such as how long can children be online, which sites they can or cannot visit) and boundaries for their children's use of technology. Parenting styles depend on social class, gender, and ethnicity. Effective parenting requires a balance between parental authority and children's autonomy [19,20],
7. **Divorce:** Marital breakup is common among digital natives, like any other segment of the society. The divorce rate in America affects about half of all marriages. Divorce could induce drastic physical, mental, and behavioral changes on couples. It could arouse feelings of loss, loneliness, frustration, and hurt as well as lower self-esteem, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. People's reactions after breakups are diverse. People were more likely to be involved with either actively seeking out or avoiding ex-partners during the termination process of their romantic relationship. Some people also tend to surveil their ex-partners on social media to alleviate the amount of emotional distress and reduce the uncertainty [3].

WHY MARRIAGE IS GOOD FOR DIGITAL NATIVES

It is needless to say that technology has a profound impact on individuals, especially digital natives, and modern marriages. Socioeconomic factors play a

decisive role in how and how much people use technology. Many digital natives relate to life through mobile phones and other digital devices, causing a range of social and economic problems for themselves and society. They are connected to these devices but disconnected from life. A lot of digital natives or generation Z, do not wish to marry and several of them do not want children. Financial insecurity may be one reason for such decisions. Some of them grew up in a risk society where they saw a high divorce rate in their parents. As a result, they are sort of pulling away from marriage and trying new things such remaining perpetually single and co-habitation. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) and dating apps provide a plethora of choices for lifestyles. The digital natives are quickly rendering old habits a distant memory, creating the greatest generation gap in history. They no longer adhere to traditional norms of marriage, parenting, buying a home and car, working in one place, detaching from religion, or being a member of a political party. They have become "global citizens" with far-flung friends or romantic partners they may never have met. We need to give our youths the education and freedom to make informed choices about their life partners. We need to teach the value of marriage [21].

Monogamous relationships are looked at by digital natives in terms of what you lose. Monogamy is considered by some as a restriction on personal freedoms, including the freedom to do what you want, when you want, and how they want. Many digital natives would prefer living in an online sexual wonderland to following the traditional, long-term monogamous relationships favored by their parents. They eventually find that the pleasurable virtual sex is fleeting and unfulfilling and they crave for longer-term, more intimate emotional connections.

There is a kind of ignorance out there about how much marriage matters in people's lives. Is marriage worth it? The benefits of marriage are many [22]. Marriage is good for the couple; it is also provides the optimal conditions for bearing and raising children. On average, husbands and wives are healthier, happier, and enjoy longer lives than those who are not married.

Being married changes people's lifestyles and habits in ways that are personally and socially beneficial. Governments, companies, and schools assume that marriage (nuclear family) is the primary unit of care. Society is better off when more people are married. Marital status is a better predictor of satisfaction than employment. Marital quality is a better predictor of your happiness in life than your job satisfaction.

Married couples are more likely to avoid trouble with the legal system and incarceration. Marriage makes financial sense. Married couples build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples. There are many emotional benefits to being married. Marriage is worth it. Research and data support it. Marriage can be a blessing if you are willing to pay the price. Getting married for the wrong reasons can have dire consequences [23].

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study to examine whether what the digital native evangelists claim is valid or not, i.e. being a digital native does influence behavior and attitude toward marriage. It is important to know the peculiarities of digital natives so that we take advantage of their qualities and preferences. The main goal is to examine their values on marriage. Although this research study is mainly for digital citizens in America, we will borrow wisdom from other cultures such as India and China. This may help us reflect on what makes marriages from those cultures more successful and determine what is the best way to choose a life partner.

Our investigation involves using a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a useful tool for gathering information. The questionnaire survey is the research instrument based on different set of questions for the purpose of gathering information from the respondents. It includes various questions such as open and closed-ended questions, dichotomous questions, ranking, and Likert scale. Likert Scale is easy to code and report back by simply assigning codes to the responses (for example strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). Likert scales are named after their creator, American social psychologist Rensis Likert, developed in 1932, and are widely used to measure attitudes and opinions. The 20-item survey questionnaire is based on a Likert scale. Survey questions capture information in several categories, including knowledge, attitudes, behavior, beliefs, emotion, experience, and opinion of participants.

FINDINGS

This section presents the responses of various participants to the 20-item questionnaire. The digital natives considered in this work are between the ages of 20 to 42. Those who are below 20 are not qualified because they are mature enough to provide the information in the survey questionnaire. The results are presented using pie charts constructed in Word, followed by discussion of the result.

As shown in Figure 6, more than half of the participants do not feel pressure to get married at a certain age. It appears that parents leave digital native

alone and do not put any pressure on them concerning forming a family. Figure 7 shows that the majority of the participants claim that they do not consider it appropriate to marry before they turn 18. Considering the financial status at 18, it may be realistic for digital natives not to marry at an early age. They delay marriage till they get their college degree. Some will even wait till they make themselves well established in their profession. Figure 8 addresses the question: Is romantic love sufficient for a happy marriage? If one is deeply in love with a certain person, is not that sufficient for a happy marriage, even though others advise against the marriage? [24]. Some digital natives do not really understand what romance or romantic love is all about. An online dictionary defines romantic as “characterized by a preoccupation with love or by the idealizing of love or one’s beloved.” Given that they understand what romantic love is, about half the participants are of the opinion that romantic love between a man and a woman is necessary before marriage takes place. Some may equate romantic love as infatuation. Since infatuation is “foolish or all-absorbing passion,” one may regard infatuation as an extreme form of romance, which naturally occurs between individuals of opposite sex [25]. Four elements that may serve as barometers of the relationship quality of couples between the ages of 20 and 24: love, fidelity, lifelong commitment, and having enough money.

According to Figure 9, the opinion of the digital natives on co-habitation is diverse. About one-third of them favor co-habitation, one-third tend to disagree, while one-third do not care. Figure 10 shows that about half of the respondents approve interfaith marriage. Marriage has changed over the years as the society around it has. We are in an era of interfaith marriage. Interfaith (or mixed-faith) marriage refers to marriage between partners professing different religions. As couples abandon religious boundaries and traditions, religious intermarriages are becoming common. Globalization and migration have greatly contributed to the recent rise of exogamy or interfaith marriages [2].

This study was essentially assessing the custom of digital natives in marriage contexts. This report concludes with the following major findings:

- Digital natives support online dating and co-habitation.
- They believe in inter-racial marriage and inter-faith marriage.
- They strongly oppose domestic violence.
- Their opinion on divorce is diverse.
- Majority of the respondents have not married.

Young adults in the United States have high expectations for love, commitment, and fidelity in their relationships. Most of them have positive views of marriage and wish to marry one day. Compared with previous generations, fewer young adults today are married, and the age of first marriage has risen

CONCLUSION

Marriage is an integral foundation of a society that binds people together. The Christian family is regarded as the first and basic expression of man's social nature. The family is also the smallest social unit and a community of persons, where love, affection, appreciation, and commitment are demonstrated in a genuine, biblical way [26].

As technology becomes more ubiquitous in society, we cannot ignore its impact on relationship and marriage. The digital natives in turn are changing our society. Although the results obtained from this study are encouraging, more work needs to be done. Findings in this study provide motivation for future work in several directions. If our findings would apply to people from the United States, they should apply to digital natives in Canada, United Kingdom, India, China, Spain, Mexico, Nigeria or Brazil. More information about marriage among digital natives can be found in the books in [2,3,21,27-30].

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Figure 1 Comparing digital natives and digital immigrants [10].

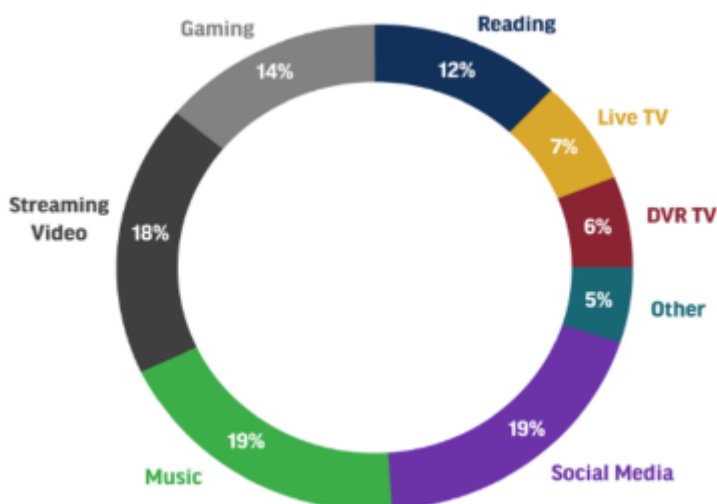


Figure 2 How digital citizens spend their time [12].



Figure 3 Examples of digital natives [14].

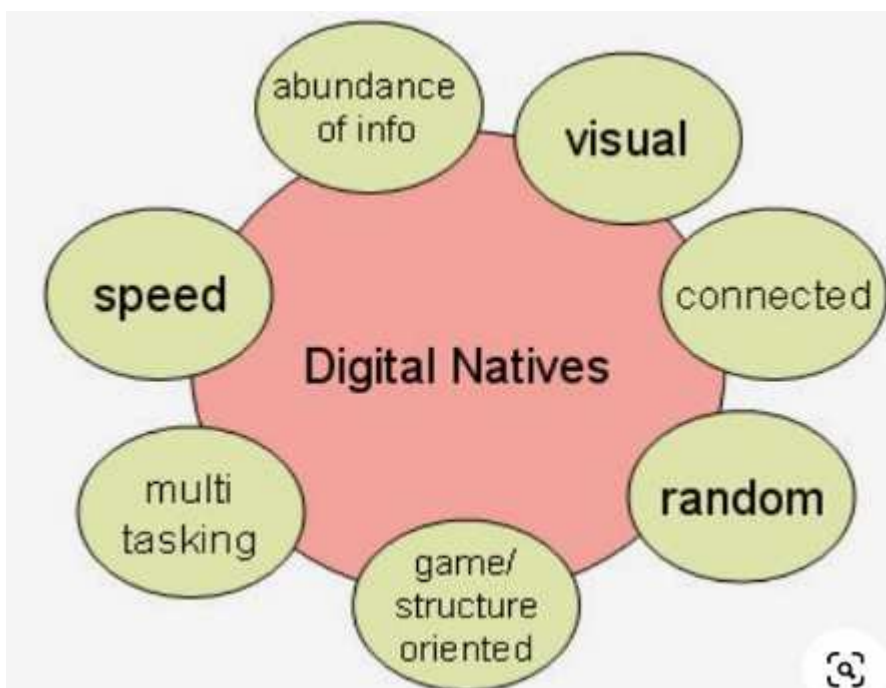


Figure 4 Some characteristics of digital natives [17].

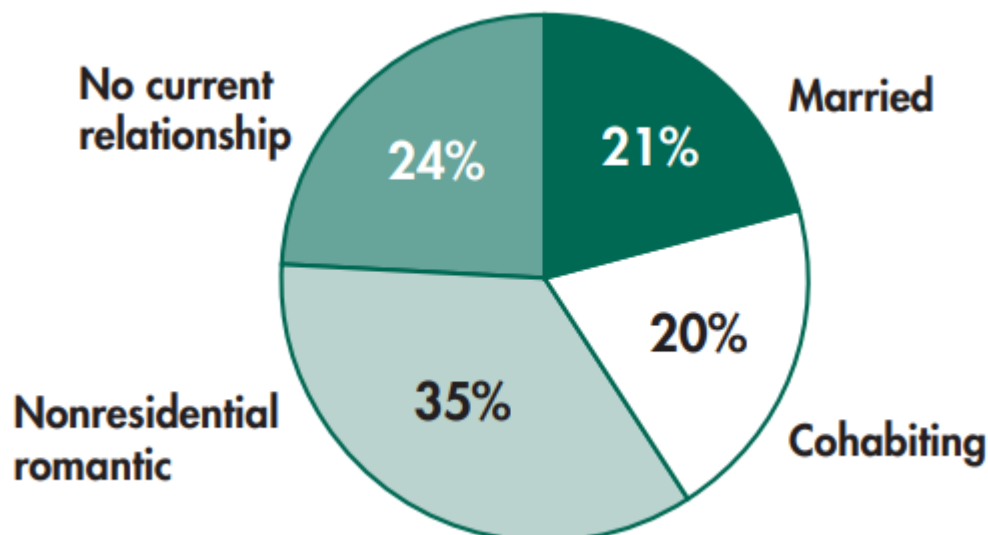


Figure 5 Current relationship status among all young adults aged 20-24 [17].

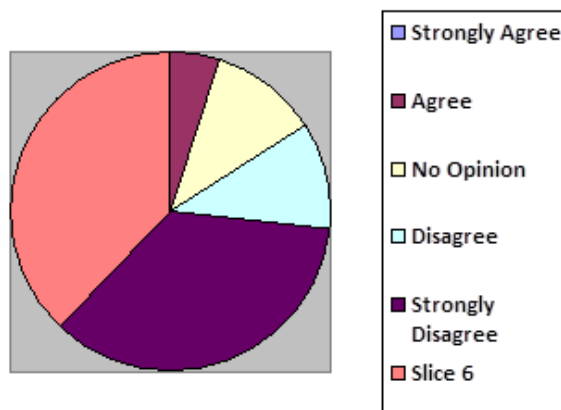


Figure 6 No pressure to get married.

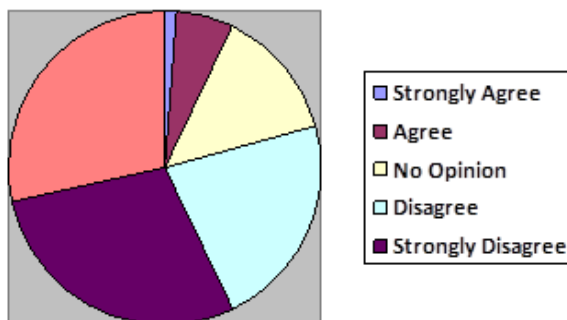


Figure 7 Not appropriate to marry before age 18.

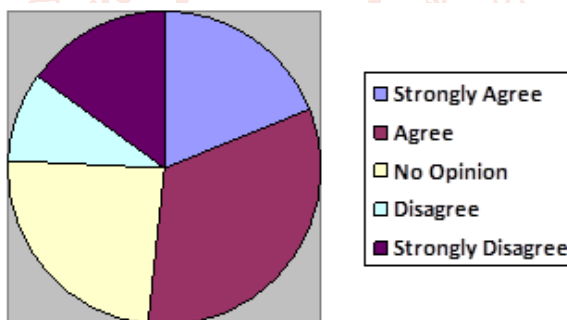


Figure 8 Is romantic love sufficient for a happy marriage?

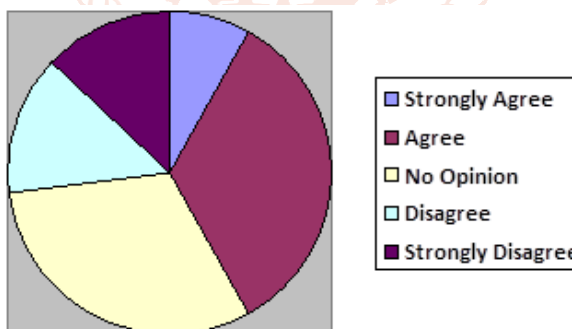


Figure 9 The opinion on co-habitation is diverse.

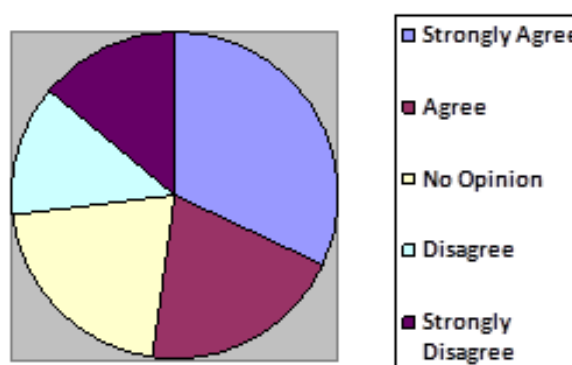


Figure 10 About half of the respondents approve interfaith marriage