



## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF ROMANTIC LOVE

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### ABSTRACT

Present exploratory study entitled “Gender differences in perception of Romantic Love” was undertaken in Hyderabad and Secunderabad city. Perception on sexual relationship scale (PSRS) was developed by researcher to study gender differences in perception of romantic love. 400 men and women of 21- 60 years & above age group were selected as a sample for the study. It was found that mostly female respondents defined love as understanding, caring, and respect whereas mostly male respondents said that it is a friendship, passion, concern and care. Men tended more often to believe in love at first sight than women. Both of them, across age groups in higher percentages felt that understanding nature & physical appearance are the most critical factor for love. Men and women across age groups felt that often sexual attraction was mistaken for love. Men felt romance is not necessary in sex, whereas women felt it is necessary. Self-centeredness was reported as the most important reason for the breakup of romantic relationships by most of the male and female respondents. According to male respondents nonverbal expression of love is the best way to express romantic love. Female respondents said that verbally expressing affection, such as saying “I love you” frequently, emotional and moral support of the partner in need, respecting partner’s opinion is the best way to express love towards partner.

Whilst the term ‘Sex’ refers to the physical aspects, particularly the act of sexual intercourse, sexuality has a broad meaning, encompassing not only physical but also social and mental aspects. Sexuality underpins much of who and what a person is and has significance throughout every-one’s life. To the largest extent, human sexuality determines who we are. It is an integral factor in the uniqueness of every person”. Sexuality is an essential part of a person’s make-up or psyche and expressing it is a basic human right. Earlier Studies on gender differences in sexuality shows that, female sex drive is more malleable than the male in response to sociocultural and situational factors. A large assortment of evidence supports 3 predictions (a) Individual women will exhibit more variation across time than men in sexual behavior, (b) female sexuality will exhibit larger effects than male in response to most specific sociocultural variables, and (c) sexual attitude-behavior consistency will be lower for women than men (Roy, 2000). It was also found that fewer females than males engaged in premarital sexual behaviors. In the most recent National Family Health Survey (2005–2006), 9% of young men aged 15–19 and 13% aged 20–24 reported having had premarital sex. In the same survey, 1% of females in each of those age-groups reported premarital sex (IIPS and Macro International 2007).

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## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Present study was conducted during 2013-14 in Hyderabad and Secunderabad city of Telangana. Exploratory research design was used to investigate the present study. Educated middle class and upper middle class group was selected and Purposive sampling technique was used for the study (since persons who were willing to fill the questionnaire was included for the study). 400 respondents under the age group of 21- 60 years and above, both men and women were selected for the study. A questionnaire (Mayuri&Pandey, 2011) was developed for the present study which included questions on romantic love to understand the gender differences in perception of romantic love. Frequency

percentages in Graphs were used along with weighted scores for Ranked Items. For Ranked Scores weighted Scores were calculated by giving each rank a score in descending order of the ranks. For Instance, if there were 12 options for ranking, Rank 1 would get a score of 12. For each item, the weighted scores were calculated as follows

Rank 1 x Number of Respondents giving that rank x Score + Rank 2 x Number of Respondents giving that rank x Score ..... = Final Score

Items were then placed in Descending order of the Final Scores they achieve.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.1 Some common and interesting definitions of love given by different age group of respondents (N= 400)**

Age group	Gender	Definition of love
21-25 yrs	Male	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional attachments between two people</li> <li>2. Love is life&amp; friendship</li> <li>3. Being passionate about someone to an extent that he/she becomes a reason to do something in life.</li> <li>4. Love is all can be divided into three entitles- trust, romance, attachment</li> <li>5. It is a attraction before marriage</li> <li>6. It's a waste of time</li> </ol>
	Female	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Love is as pure as gold, as soft as wax as hard as diamond &amp; as innocent as child.</li> <li>2. Understanding, respect &amp; care</li> <li>3. It is trust and commitment in relationship</li> <li>4. Love is eternal which make life beautiful. But if not handled carefully, can make life hell &amp; complex.</li> <li>5. Wastage of time</li> </ol>
26-30 yrs	Male	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Friendship, Care, affection</li> <li>2. When a person is in love, he/she feels that he/she is the happiest person of this earth.</li> <li>3. Love is that in which person has to express not impress</li> <li>4. It's an excessive secretion of oxytocin hormones</li> </ol>
	Female	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divine emotion between two individuals</li> </ol>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Love is defined as care, respect, affection &amp; understanding between two people.</li> <li>3. Love is a magical word which binds the two people together. It is another name for friendship.</li> <li>4. Misunderstanding between two fools</li> </ol>
31-40 yrs	Male	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional attachment between two people</li> <li>2. Feeling of togetherness. It is an act of being self-less in a relationship.</li> <li>3. Love is life it is caring &amp; affection stimulates love, without it love is nothing</li> <li>4. It is a undefined emotionally satisfying relation</li> </ol>
	Female	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional dependence on each other</li> <li>2. Understanding between two people</li> <li>3. Love is a spiritual thing</li> <li>4. Love is a race where a person need not come first but all they need is to be the last one.</li> <li>5. Love is blind</li> </ol>
41-50 yrs	Male	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Love is essential part of life, without love life is incomplete</li> <li>2. Love means understanding and giving proper respect and cooperation to partner in all situations.</li> <li>3. Love is faith between two people</li> <li>4. Unconditional support</li> <li>5. Effect of chemical produced in brain carried over the body</li> </ol>
	Female	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Love is most beautiful thing given to us by god.</li> <li>2. Sacrifice and support at each and every stage of life</li> <li>3. Love is unconditional; it is based on faith care.</li> <li>4. Love is emotional, mental and physical attraction</li> </ol>
50 and above	Male	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Love is our feeling of compassion, concern and care for others.</li> <li>2. Emotional attachment with sense of respect for each other</li> <li>3. Love is connected with libido which ultimately converts into orgasm</li> <li>4. Lake of tears, ocean of sorrows, valley of tears, end of life</li> <li>5. Love is very strong feeling of affection towards someone who is romantically or sexually attracted to you.</li> </ol>
	Female	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Love is a god given gift. It is another name of sacrifice, sharing, and understanding.</li> <li>2. Love is a feeling of comfort, security, enjoyment and understanding between two people.</li> <li>3. Attention and mutual understanding between each other</li> <li>4. Love is mesmerizing</li> </ol>

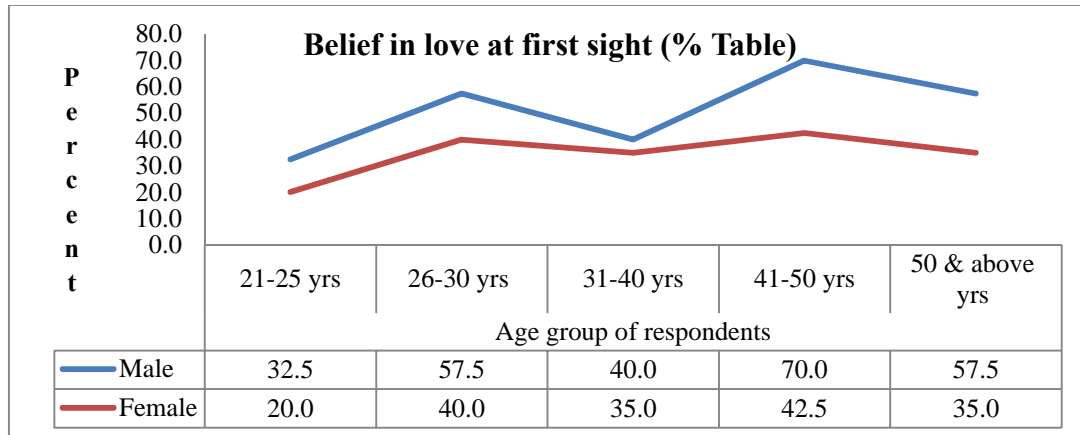
Every respondent defined love in their own words few interesting and most common definitions are given in table 4.1. Most of the female respondents repeatedly defined love as understanding, caring, and respect. They also said that it is an emotional bonding

between two people. Whereas mostly male respondents said that it is a friendship, passion, concern and care even though they agreed with female respondents and almost all age groups of male respondents said that it is an emotional attachment

and mutual understanding between two people. In all age groups few negative comments were also received about love, such as “love is

misunderstanding”, “waste of time” etc. Even though numbers of negative responses were very less compare..to...positive.

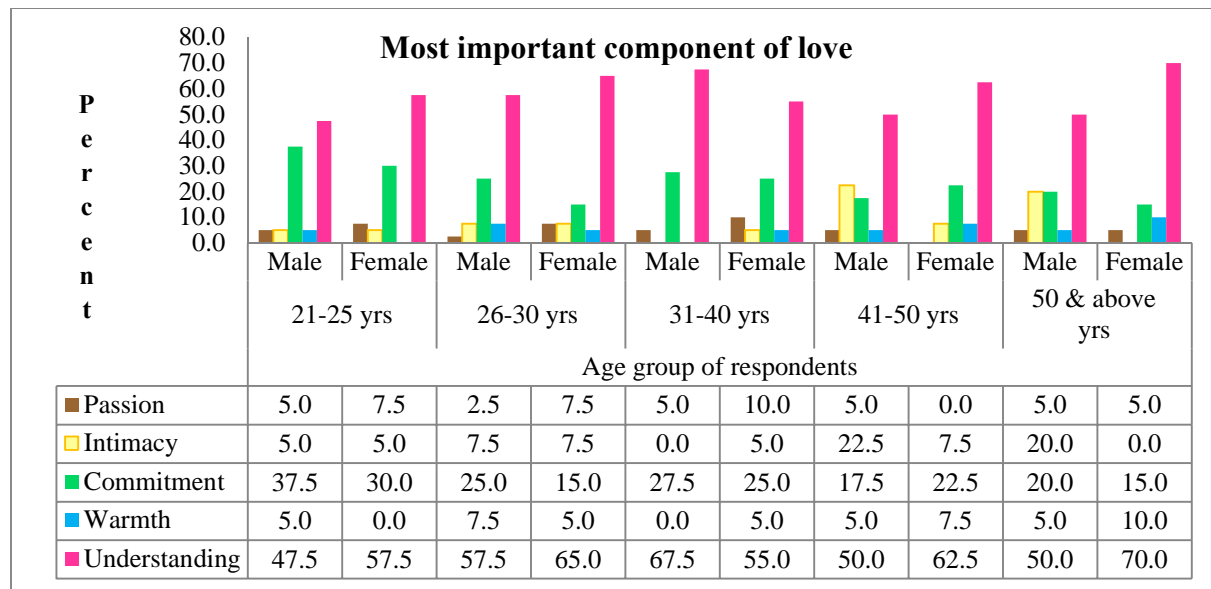
**Table 1.2 Belief in love at first sight**



Men tended more often to believe in love at first sight than women, and that too men above 40 years. Women seemed less enchanted with the idea. By nature, being cautious, women seem to think some familiarity is required with the person before affections can be engaged. Men tend to place high emphasis on physical appearance and therefore see

no problem with the concept of love at first sight; nearly half of them endorsed it across age groups. A recent study also supports this research finding which found that men are more likely to fall in love at first sight than women, which may contribute to their increased propensity to stray compared to their female counterparts. The findings come from an online survey of more than 10,000 people around the world, answering questions about their relationships. Among the findings: 48 percent of men claim they have fallen in love at first sight, while just 28 percent of women say the same (Lindsay Maxfield 2013).

**Table 1.3 Most important component of love**



Both men and women, across age groups in higher percentages felt that understanding nature was the most critical factor for love. Following this, commitment appeared to be important. Passion, intimacy and warmth saw few takers.

In order to understand the respondent’s perceptions on most important characteristics to impress the

opposite sex, weighted rank order were used. Tables (1.4) depict that most of the respondents, irrespective of age and gender thought in the same they ranked physical appearance on top and considered it as the most important characteristics to impress the opposite sex.

**Table 1.4 Most important characteristics to impress the opposite sex**

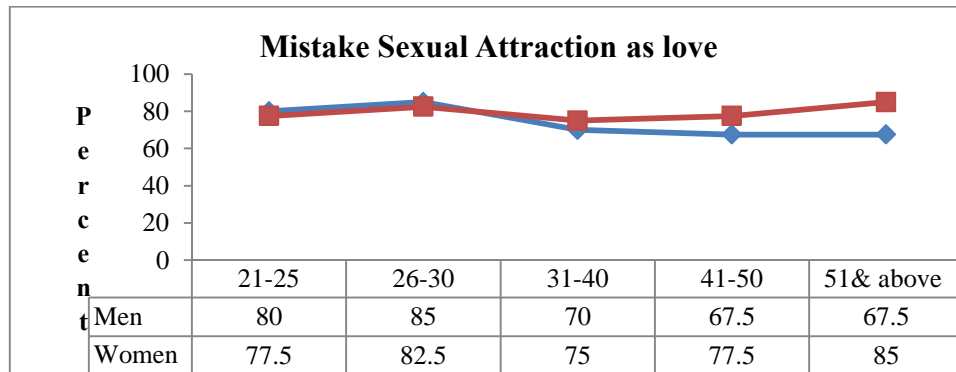
Age group→	21-25 yrs.	26-30 yrs.	31-40 yrs.	41-50 yrs.	50 yrs. & above
Gender↓					
Male	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education
Female	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education	Physical appearance Education



Above table also depicts respondents of both sexes kept education on the second place on preference list, showed the urge of respondents for a well-educated partner. India Today survey (2013) also found that 42 per cent men in India thought

that woman's sex appeal lies in her beauty, 70 per cent men in Chennai thought the same. The same survey found that 95 per cent women in Hyderabad thought poor body image reduces sexual pleasure.

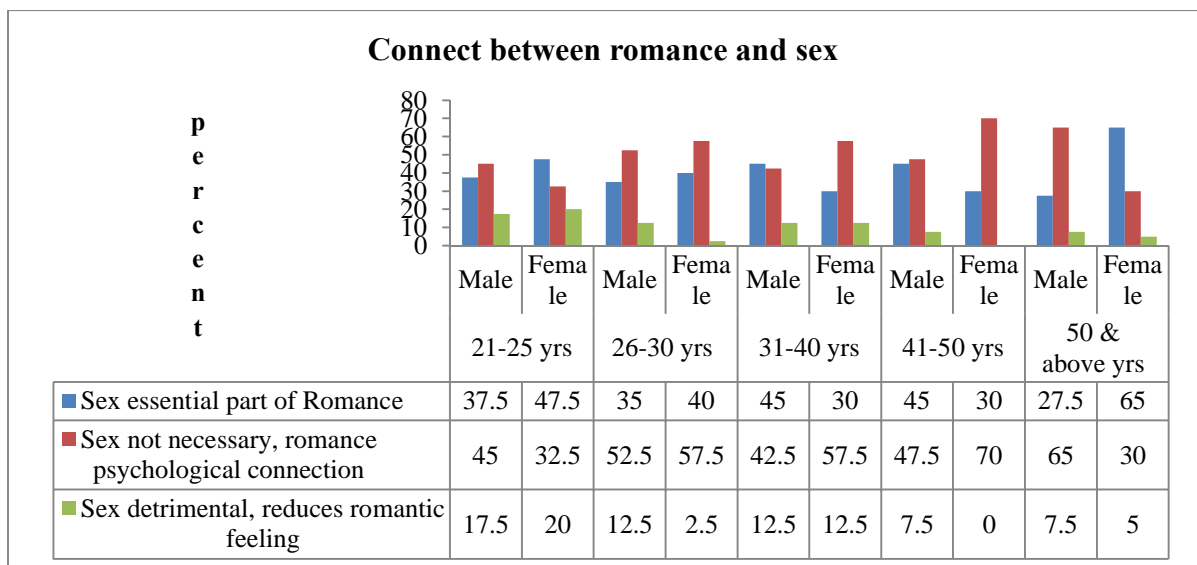
**Table 1.5.Mistake Sexual Attraction as love**



A good percentage of both men and women across age groups felt that often sexual attraction was mistaken for love. The percentages

peaked in the 26-30 years age group and for women in the 51 and above age group

**Table 4.6.Connect between romance and sex**



At the younger age group, more men felt sex was not necessary in romance, whereas more women felt it was necessary. In the next three age groups, respondents more often felt sex was not necessary in romance. In final age group, of above 51 years, interestingly women felt sex was important for romance unlike men of that age group. **Lewandowski (2011)** found that men and women both made stronger and quicker associations between romance pictures and “pleasant” than they did between sexual images and “pleasant.” Women’s positive associations with romance were stronger than men’s. It was also found that overall; individuals who were less

extroverted had a stronger preference for romantic stimuli. However, additional analyses revealed that women made the same associations regardless of their extraversion levels, but men who were low in extraversion preferred the romantic stimuli to the sexual images. The results of this study did not support previous findings that confirmed the common-sense notion that men strongly prefer sex to romance, which is likely the result of how researchers measured men’s attitudes. When men report their own feelings, they may confirm the highly sexualized male stereotype out of pride or simply because they think that is what others expect from them.

**Table 1.7. Main reasons of breakup of a romantic relationship (21- 25 years)**

Age group→	21-25 yrs.	26-30 yrs.	31-40 yrs.	41-50 yrs.	50 yrs. & above
Gender↓					
Male	Self-centered behaviour, Boredom	Self-centered behaviour, Difference of opinion on issues of importance	Self-centered behaviour, Family compulsions	Self-centered behaviour, Difference of opinion on issues of importance	Self-centered behaviour, Difference of opinion on issues of importance
Female	Self-centered behaviour, Difference of opinion on issues of importance	Difference of opinion on issues of importance, Self-centered behaviour	Self-centered behaviour, Difference of opinion on issues of importance	Lacking in warmth, Difference of opinion on issues of importance	Self-centered behaviour, Poor listening skills, Difference of opinion on issues of importance

According to table 1.7. Self-centeredness was reported as the most important reason for the breakup of romantic relationships by most of the

young male and female respondents. They also reported boredom, difference of opinion as an important issues and other attractions as reasons of



breakup whereas female respondents perceived difference of opinion on important issues, loss of attraction towards present partner and boredom were reasons for the breakup of romantic relationships. Both males and females of younger generation ranked “boredom” quite high on the rank table compared to other older generations and mentioned it as important reasons for the breakup of romantic relationships which showed immature decision of youngsters while selecting their partner.

Both male and female respondents want their partner's attention for igniting warmth in their

romantic relationships and lack of partner's attention can cause the breakup of romantic relationships. It was found in the present survey that most of the male and female respondents thought self-centered behaviour was the main reason for the breakup of a romantic relationship. Other reasons were differences of opinion, poor listening skills and boredom. Female respondents of almost all age groups wanted warmth, love and affection in their romantic relationships and because of the absence of these components, relationships can reach the verge of breakup.

**Table 4.8 Expectations from partner**

Age group→	21-25 yrs.	26-30 yrs.	31-40 yrs.	41-50 yrs.	50 yrs. & above
Gender↓					
<b>Male</b>	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Help partner in her/his other activities	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Be nice to her/his family/friends/relatives	Be nice to her/his family/friends/relatives, Help partner in her/his other activities	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Help partner in her/his other activities	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Help partner in her/his other activities
<b>Female</b>	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Agree with partner on most things	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Be nice to her/his family/friends/relatives	Help partner in her/his other activities, Willingness to be with partner as and when desired	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Help partner in her/his other activities	Willingness to be with partner as and when desired, Help partner in her/his other activities

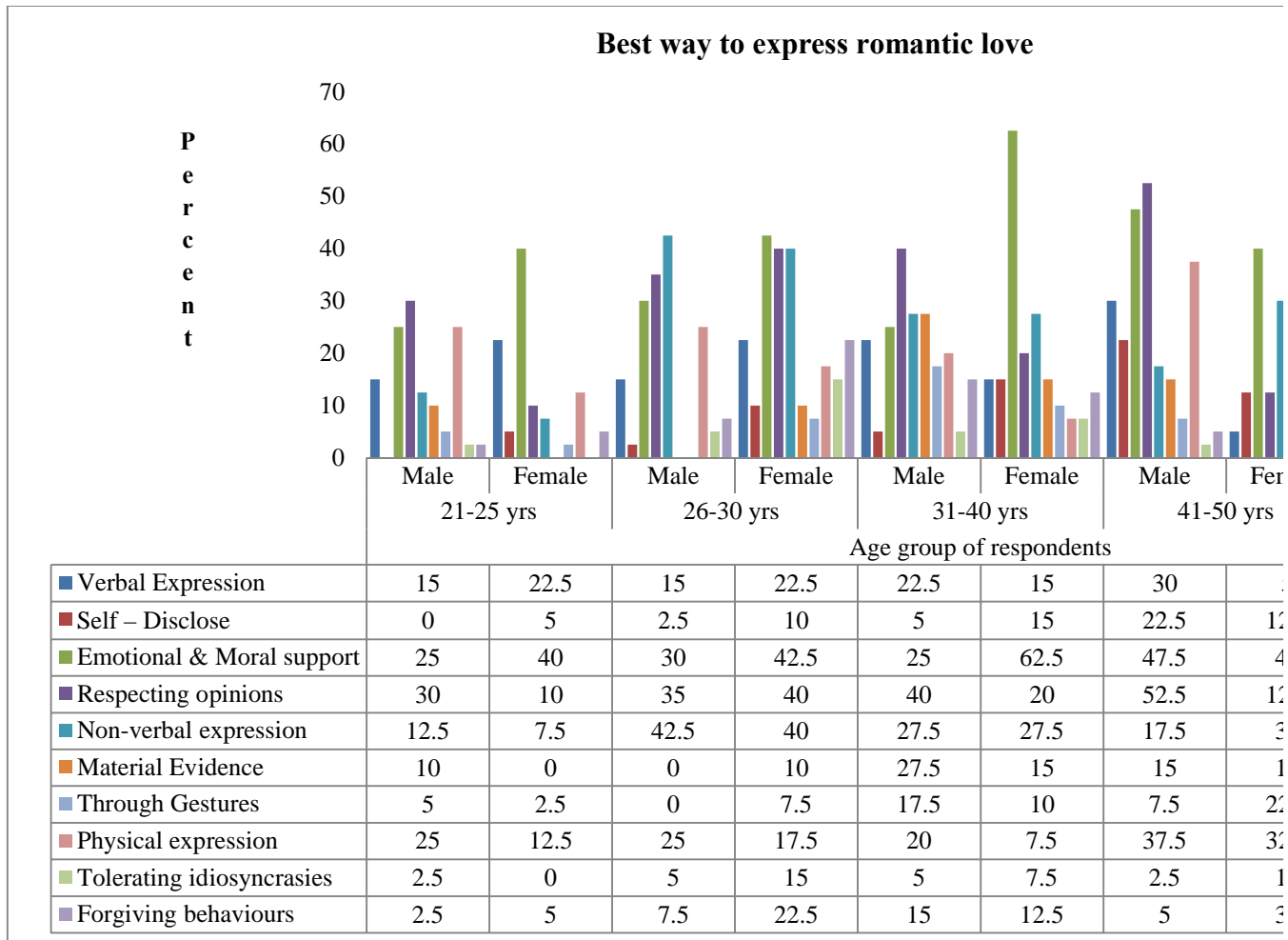
Most of the respondents of 21-25 years both males and females expected their partner's company at the time of their needs and requirements. This age group of respondents even though most of them were un-married, perceived their partner as most trustworthy person and the person on whom they can rely more when they were in need and emotional support. Most of the male respondents expected help from their partner in their activities whether it is day to day or professional which showed that younger generation males expected smart partner for themselves with whom they can share their responsibilities. Male respondents of this age group expected good and nice behaviour from their partner towards their family friends and relatives. Female respondents expected agreement of their partner on most of the things. They too expected good and nice behaviour of their partners for their family friends and relatives.

It was also found by the study that as age increases life partners need each other's company, some time for physical, some time for moral and some time for emotional support. They need each other's help in performing their day to day activity. They want their life partner's agreement while taking important decisions.

According to table 1.9 young age group of male respondents perceived that nonverbal expression of love, such as expressing feelings like happiness/contentment/secure when the partner is present, respecting partner's opinions, emotional and moral support and physical expression of love like hugging, kissing, making love were the best way to express romantic love. Females always

want proof of love from their partner, so most of the younger female respondents said that verbally expressing affection, such as saying "I love you" frequently, emotional and moral support of the partner in the need, respecting partner's opinion and sometime nonverbal expression of love can also work to express love towards partner. Middle age group of men said that respecting partner's opinions, nonverbal expression, and some time giving material evidence can also be the best way to express romantic love. The higher percentage of the middle age group of women needed emotional and moral support from their partner and thought it as the best way to express romantic love. Older age groups of male respondents thought that giving nonmaterial evidence, such as giving emotional and moral support at the time of need and respecting partner's opinions were the best way and females thought that nonverbal expression such as expressing happiness and feeling secure when the partner is present and sometime physically expressing love like hugging, kissing, making love was the best way to express romantic love.

**Table 1.9 Best way to express romantic love**



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