

Perception of ideal love and family happiness: A case of young students in Vietnam



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Abstract This study investigates Vietnamese students' views on ideal love and family happiness, highlighting the impact of regional and gender differences. Data from 26,311 students nationwide, collected between January 30 and February 6, 2023, via REDcap and analyzed using SPSS, reveal diverse perspectives. Students' opinions on ideal love vary, encompassing both positive and negative views. Despite these differences, many students agree that their emotions stem from genuine, pure, and altruistic feelings, serving as motivation for personal development. Additionally, students emphasize the importance of practical goals—such as securing a stable career, income, and homeownership—in achieving family happiness. This pragmatic approach links personal growth with emotional and financial stability. Regional and gender differences significantly influence these perceptions. Cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and traditional gender roles shape students' expectations about love and family dynamics. These variations suggest the need for tailored approaches to address emotional and social challenges. The study recommends equipping students with essential life skills to navigate emotional challenges and build resilience. We propose training in emotional intelligence, platforms for open discussions, and programs that foster personal growth to enhance students' quality of life, academic success, and long-term development. In conclusion, the research emphasizes understanding students' diverse perspectives on love and family, advocating holistic support to help them build fulfilling lives and relationships.

Keywords: student, ideal love, happy family, Vietnam

1. Introduction

The concepts of ideal love and happy family values are intricately connected, serving as the foundation for a tranquil and balanced domestic existence (Gawda, 2019; Zhao, 2023). This connection is founded upon reciprocal admiration, confidence, and loyalty, which are essential for both an exemplary romantic relationship and a peaceful household (Wang, 2014). This type of affection fosters an atmosphere that is highly conducive to the exchange of emotions and helping, effectively harmonizing both spiritual and material requirements (Petyak., 2022). This equilibrium fosters a domestic environment marked by love, collaboration, and nonaggression, with a focus on lawful matrimony and secure employment to ensure the family's long-term stability (Tkachenko et al., 2019; Petyak et al., 2022; van Doeselaar et al., 2020; Zhao, 2023).

Vietnam is a Southeast Asian country that has long-standing traditional values. Confucianism influences most Vietnamese values and deeply ingrains them in the lives of Vietnamese people (Tho, 2016). For example, a few decades ago, the previous generations prohibited young Vietnamese people from freely seeking love or a partner, instead requiring them to follow their parents' wishes (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). These kinds of values have shaped Vietnamese people for decades and generations. These unwritten rules have become obsolete in the current generation because of the adaptation of new social values and human rights (Social Life, 2016). With respect to these social changes, Vietnamese students have their own rights to their lives, so they set goals and criteria for their potential partners. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, the scale of university training in the 2021–2022 school year has 2,145,426 students (Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2023). The rate of student enrollment (enrollment) compared with the total number of people of university and college age (GER) in 2021 in Vietnam is 35.4%, which is lower than that reported by Indonesia (36.3%), Thailand (43.8%), Malaysia (43.1%), or Singapore (91.1%).

Researchers in Vietnam have conducted thorough investigations into the attitudes of Vietnamese students regarding love and marriage (Luot & Nhung, 2010; Oanh & Nhu, 2018). These scholars generally report that students, as well as young individuals, possess distinct perspectives regarding genuine love, criteria for selecting a partner, and elements that contribute to a lasting and contented family life in the future (Ha & Le, 2014; Luot & Nhung, 2010; Oanh & Nhu, 2018; Social Life, 2016). Furthermore, the reviewed studies focused primarily on specific regions in Vietnam, such as Can Tho, Dong Nai, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hanoi. Therefore, the national level of this research is not well documented. This article seeks to comprehend the perspectives of Vietnamese students regarding how they perceive the ideal love and values associated with a happy family. To



compare the views of happy families between male and female Vietnamese students. This paper examines what and how factors influence the love and happy family perceptions of students from diverse backgrounds. To address this, this paper provides answers to the three questions below.

- (1) What shapes Vietnamese students' perceptions of ideal love and a happy family?
- (2) In Vietnamese students' perceptions of ideal love and family happiness, how does gender manifest itself?
- (3) In what ways do urban and rural backgrounds influence Vietnamese students' perceptions of love and family happiness?

This research contributes novel insight into the perceptions of ideal love and family happiness on a national scale in Vietnam from the student's perspective, thereby addressing a significant gap in the literature. In this paper, a literature review on students' understanding of ideal love and happy families is presented, followed by the methodologies and data utilized in the research. Next, the research findings concerning students' perceptions of ideal love and happy families in Vietnam are presented. The discussion and conclusions interpret the findings of this research. Some recommendations for public agencies on how to support students in developing positive ideas about love, marriage, and family are provided at the end of this paper.

2. Literature Review

This section will be categorized into five subheadings, as shown in Figure 1 below.

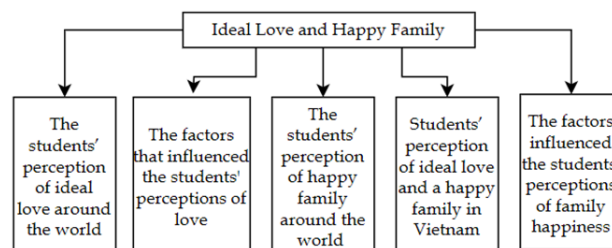


Figure 1 Aspects of Students' Perceptions of Ideal Love and Happy Family.

2.1. The students' perception of ideal love around the world

Globally, positive emotions are considered one of the most important factors in predicting a person's state of happiness (Masuda, 2003; Özer & Tezer, 2008; Wardia & Ismail, 2023). These include love, happiness, admiration, and satisfaction, which are closely related to love (Masuda, 2003; Wardia & Ismail, 2023). Love is characterized by a broad range of associations, including trust, passion, respect, and understanding, as well as more spiritual and moral dimensions such as faith and romance (Gawda, 2019). People often portray love as a powerful force capable of conquering all obstacles and ultimately resulting in fulfillment and happiness. It entails romanticizing a relationship and perceiving it as exceptional and one-of-a-kind. At times, individuals characterize this connection as all encompassing, exceeding one's mere state of being. Giddens (1992) concurred that passionate love is transient, whereas romantic "true love" (in Giddens' terms) is everlasting and represents a lasting connection with the beloved. A love attitude refers to an individual's fundamental perspective and approach to love-related matters. It serves as a concrete manifestation of a person's philosophy and principles (Zhao, 2023).

Many young people around the globe manifest ideal love to anticipate marriage (Liu & Gao, 2013; Kokab & Ajmal, 2012; Wang, 2014). Research by Liu & Gao (2013) surveyed 193 students from Hefei University in China and revealed that university students' views on love in the 21st century are in line with the fundamental principles and trends of marriage during this time. Another study by Kokab & Ajmal (2012) conducted in Pakistan revealed that students hold misconceptions and exhibit skewed perspectives in regard to love. Moreover, they were deficient in the necessary ideological and cognitive readiness to handle it adequately. Research by Wang (2014) was carried out on the design and delivery of training courses with the objective of assisting college students in developing a comprehensive love. The study proposes that contemporary education should incorporate present educational principles and techniques that are tailored to the psychological characteristics and developmental stages of university students. Kokab and Ajmal (2012) conducted research in Pakistan and identified three distinct stages of love. The scholars conducted comprehensive interviews with two Pakistani students who had encountered romantic relationships, one of whom was experiencing her initial love affair while the other was having her second. The findings of this study suggest that students have a concept of love that can be classified into three clearly defined stages. The first stage entails the experience of passionate feelings, which may lead to infatuation and a disregard for the unfavorable attributes of one's spouse. Stage II entails attaining happiness by means of commitment, romanticism, understanding, honesty, and openness. Nevertheless, prejudice toward love throughout both the family and society has the potential to impede advancement. During Stage III, the experience of love persists, resulting in the development of anticipation for marriage. This study revealed how young people perceive love, highlighting factors such as happiness, sincerity, commitment, honesty, understanding, caring, sharing, and money. However, they also revealed a negative association between possessiveness and romantic love, as well as how the media influences this perception.

2.2. Factors influencing students' perceptions of love

Genders and living locations are factors that influence students' perceptions of love (Wardia & Ismail, 2023; Liu & Gao, 2013). In terms of gender, Neto (2007), who surveyed 562 university students in England, India, and Portugal, identified the trend of gender differences in love. Compared with female students, male students viewed love as more permissive, more friendship-oriented, more pragmatic, and more agapic but less manic. Similarly, research by Wardia & Ismail (2023) in Iraq shows that male students tend to have a game-playing love attitude, often with multiple partners, and believe that lies and deception are acceptable. They avoid their current partner and future life plans. Ludic lovers view love as a game, avoiding commitment and dependence. Manic lovers are jealous and obsessively dependent, seeking love and commitment from their partners. Female students have a possessive love attitude, which is characterized by attention-seeking and confidence in their appearance. However, the study by Liu & Gao (2013) in China, where male students demonstrated greater dedication to romance and overall scores on the attitude scale about love, differs from the aforementioned research findings. Various economic conditions, political institutions, and cultural patterns can impact and limit the way people see love on the basis of their gender. Attitudes and perceptions of love reflect different representations. These attitudes and perceptions of love have varied across several historical epochs and have evolved concurrently with the pace of societal advancement.

In addition, living locations are considered a factor that impacts students' perceptions of love. Research by Liu & Gao (2013) also reveals that urban students are more realistic about love than rural students are. Urban students often have a more realistic perception of love, and they tend to approach and build emotional relationships with a more realistic mentality than rural students do. Moreover, research by Kokab & Ajmal (2020) and Wang (2014) shows that their emotional development, social biases, and educational environment often shape their understanding of love. Students from diverse cultures and environments explore love, revealing a rich understanding developed over many stages and shaped by many factors, such as cultural background, personal experiences, and social expectations. These insights highlight the importance of comprehensive educational strategies that not only address the emotional and psychological aspects of love but also incorporate cultural sensitivity and practical instruction to help students learn how to form healthy and realistic relationships. This study focuses on students' perceptions of ideal love on the basis of their gender and hometown.

2.3. Students' perceptions of happy families around the world

Happiness is a complex and subjective concept. Various circumstances, including financial and emotional prosperity, individual achievements and career success, social relationships, and a harmonious domestic environment, can shape the subjective perception of happiness (Stasova & Vilka, 2018). According to the research results of Czech and Latvian (2018), these authors proposed categories of "a happy family", including four indicators: material and financial prosperity; good relationships and success in the family; family cohesion; doing things and spending leisure time together; and a healthy family. Research by Lam and colleagues (2012) identified four components of family happiness on the basis of interviews with 41 Hong Kongese people. These four factors include family harmony, caring and supportive attitudes and behaviors, feelings of security, cohesion, and satisfaction (Lam et al., 2012). In Thailand, Napa and her colleagues did a study utilizing grounded theory methodology. They conducted in-depth interviews with 13 participants in a single city to investigate their beliefs about "happy families". The respondents indicate that the absence of financial troubles is the primary determinant of a harmonious family. Strong connections and mutual care also exist (Napa et al., 2020).

In regard to the concept of a joyful family among young people around the world, there are many different approaches. A comparison study was performed by researchers to analyze the perspectives of Russian and Mongolian youth regarding the definition of a happy family. A survey of 120 participants aged 18--30 years was conducted. The study collected data via factorial, cluster, and qualitative techniques. These findings reveal distinct cultural and gender differences in the perceptions of a harmonious family. Mongolian respondents idealized a "large" and "parental" family model, whereas Russian responses varied, with men preferring larger families as opposed to women preferring smaller ones with more children. Unlike Mongolia, where traditional views still exist with the parental family as role models, Russian youth are more influenced by modern, media-promoted ideals of family life. However, both groups share similar romantic notions of marriage (Oyunsuren & Yermolaev, 2019). In 2010, K. Gerson conducted in-depth life history interviews with a sample of 120 young adults in the United States aged between 18 and 32 years. The findings demonstrate that the notion of a contented family is not universally uniform. Families have a greater capacity for adaptability, adjusting gender roles and customs when they become impractical, and cultivating flexible financial and lifestyle frameworks. They exhibit resilience when confronted with unexpected events and situations, such as divorce, unemployment, or parental instability (Gerson, 2010). Another study by Valeeva et al. (2016) conducted a survey of 93 high school students in Kazan, which is in the Volga region of Russia. The findings indicate that participants believe that family finances are stable and that a harmonious family is characterized by unity, nurturing, and reciprocal understanding. The National Statistical Office's 2008 national representative sample survey in Thailand provided the data for Gray et al. (2013). These authors reported that adolescents perceive family coherence as a crucial factor for achieving family happiness. Furthermore, effective communication and the ability to adjust to challenges are critical for achieving family

happiness. A study conducted by Nishanbayeva et al. (2021) revealed that in Kazakhstan, happy family happiness is distinguished by affectionate connections, emotional assistance, shared comprehension, and overall well-being. It is often regarded as a fundamental aspect of individual welfare and contentment. The organization fosters the psychological, emotional, and moral aspects of its members, establishing a basis for a satisfying and full life.

2.4. Factors that influence students' perceptions of family relationships

Young students around the world have increased their awareness of happy families from different perspectives (Oyunsuren & Yermolaev, 2019; Liang & Sun 2022). Gender and living location are considered important factors that influence students' perceptions of happy families (Oyunsuren & Yermolaev, 2019; Bayrami et al., 2012; Liang & Sun, 2022; Song et al., 2013). In the 2019 study, researchers analyzed the perspectives of Russian and Mongolian youth regarding the definition of a happy family. A survey of 120 participants aged 18–30 years was conducted. Data collection was performed via factorial, cluster, and qualitative techniques. These findings reveal distinct cultural and gender differences in the perceptions of a harmonious family. Mongolian respondents idealized a "large" and "parental" family model, whereas Russian responses varied, with men preferring larger families as opposed to women preferring smaller ones with more children. Unlike Mongolia, where traditional views still exist with the parental family as role models, Russian youth are more influenced by modern, media-promoted ideals of family life. However, both groups share similar romantic notions of marriage (Jargalsaikhan & Yermolaev, 2019). In a study conducted by Song et al. (2013) in Korea, the demographic data of university students in Jeollabuk-do Province were utilized to investigate their perspectives on the significance of happy families. The findings indicate that male students hold a more favorable perception of the importance of family happiness than female students do. Chinese research by Liang & Sun (2022) shows that male students are more interested in practical aspects such as financial support and job sharing. home. Moreover, female students often pay more attention to emotional aspects and family relationships when they understand the concept of a happy family. In addition to gender and hometown, Bayrami et al. (2012), in Iran, reported that a secure attachment style, positive social relationships, emotional and cognitive components, and information processing methods are important factors affecting cognition. about the happy families of students.

In summary, many factors influence students' perceptions of a happy family, ranging from culture and modern technology to demographic factors. In this study, factors such as gender and hometown impact Vietnamese students' perceptions of family happiness.

2.5. Students' perceptions of ideal love and a happy family in Vietnam

Perceptions of ideal love among Vietnamese students who live in Can Tho City must come from sincere feelings (Ha & Le, 2014). Research by Ha and Le (2014) surveyed 170 students and conducted in-depth interviews with 20 individuals and reported that focusing on feelings and perceiving true love is a challenge for students. These scholars also highlight that gender and hometown are factors that influence students' concepts of ideal love. However, these scholars do not elaborate further on their arguments. Another study by Oanh & Nhu (2018) on the love value orientations of 599 students at three universities—Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences and Industry—pointed that attachment, commitment, and sexual harmony are priorities of ideal love. This study also suggests that universities should build specialized psychological counseling facilities to improve students' understanding and appropriate behavior in romantic relationships.

In terms of the perceptions of happy families, Ha & Le (2014) also revealed that students are attracted by many different aspects and commitments related to happy families, and they are interested in the aspect of fidelity in marriage and consider it the most important to have a happy family. Next is trust and respect in the marital relationship. In addition, students also promote employment and economic contributions as important conditions for having a happy family. Similar to Ha & Le (2014), Nhung (2019) researched 416 young people aged 16–30 years and conducted in-depth interviews with 15 young people in Thai Nguyen Province and reported that a happy family must be a family. The family has fidelity, respect and shared responsibilities with the husband and wife's family. There is no distinction in raising and dealing with children according to gender. Once again, these values were found in Thuy's (2005) study, where the author conducted a survey of 228 students from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities and the University of Natural Sciences and Hanoi Polytechnic University. Students believe that a happy family is a peaceful, financially stable family. Moreover, a happy family is guaranteed when the husband and wife cooperate in making decisions, share child-rearing responsibilities and have equal rights and obligations.

These studies have confirmed that gender has a strong influence on students' perceptions of happy families, with the tendency for male students to be more interested in the harmony of their spiritual and sexual lives. Meanwhile, female students have higher expectations for economic security, fully furnished homes, and financial success, viewing these as important for future family happiness. Thuy (2005) noted that although students expect to share responsibilities with their family, they still believe that the wife should take on the main role of doing house chores and taking care of the family. In contrast, the husband plays the role of the main financial breadwinner. Research by Ha and Le (2014) and Nhung (2019) revealed that students exhibit a greater degree of focus on the concept of gender equality. This could indicate the growing acceptance of gender equality among students as time progresses.

In general, this topic is also mentioned in studies in Vietnam, but most of them are very descriptive and do not clarify the factors that affect students' perceptions of ideal love and happy families. In addition, research is often conducted only on a local scale, while research on a national scale is lacking. Therefore, this research project is needed to explore and fill this research gap.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research design

The quantitative study utilized a descriptive approach, which was considered the most appropriate method for accomplishing the study's goals. This technique centers on scrutinizing the phenomena in the current state through the collection and analysis of data, followed by the presentation and analysis of the findings, and finally interpretation within the framework of the real world. The survey was conducted online via the REDCap platform from June 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023, with ethical permission from the Vietnamese Student Association. Students were informed that they had the choice to withdraw from the survey at any time while completing the questionnaire. Thus, students' choice to take part in the survey is deliberate and voluntary.

We sent the online survey to units with suggestions for the number of surveys by school year and gender on the basis of the system of student associations of provinces, cities, and schools under the management of the Vietnam Student Association. The Ethical Committee of the Vietnam Student Association granted approval for this study on May 29, 2023 (Ref. No. 767). The dataset was monitored daily by the research team to adjust to align with the expected demographic characteristics.

3.2. Research population

The quantitative research comprised a group of 26,311 students hailing from six distinct regions: (1) the Northern Midlands and Mountains; (2) the Red River Delta; (3) the North Central and Central Coasts; (4) the Central Highlands; (5) the Southeast; and (6) the Mekong Delta. The sample consisted of 17,844 female students, accounting for 67.8% of the total, and 8,487 male students, accounting for 32.2% of the total. With respect to the academic year, there are a total of 10,255 students, which represents 38.9% of the surveyed sample, making it the most significant proportion. Conversely, the final-year students constitute the category with the fewest members, comprising merely 6%, or 1,581 students.

The sample consisted of 35.4% students from urban areas and 64.6% from rural areas. The study revealed minimal variance in student demographics across different regions, which makes it easier to compare and analyze the data. The Red River Delta region in northern Vietnam presented the greatest response rate of 29.6%, whereas the Southeast Region presented a response rate of 23.4%. Conversely, the region known as the 'Central Highlands' had the least amount of participation, with only 9.1% (2,388) participating in the activity. The distribution of majors was quite fair, with the Economics-Foreign Trade block having the largest number of participants (19%) and the Arts block having the smallest student population, which was 1,820 students (see Table 1).

Table 1 The demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	8847	33.6
	Female	17484	66.4
Academic year	Freshman	10255	38.9
	Sophomore	9251	35.1
	Junior	5244	19.9
	Senior	1581	6.0
Geographic region	Northern Midlands and Mountains	4781	18.2
	Red River Delta	7798	29.6
	North Central and Central Coast	2441	9.3
	Central Highlands	2388	9.1
	Southeast	6165	23.4
	Mekong Delta	2758	10.5
Field of university study	Natural Sciences	3712	14.1
	Social Sciences and Humanities	3804	14.4
	Economics-Foreign Trade	5010	19.0
	Science technique and Technology	4525	17.2
	Life Sciences industry	3579	13.6
	Education	3881	14.7
Hometown	Arts	1820	6.9
	Urban areas	17022	64.6
	Rural areas	9309	35.4
N = 26311			



3.3. Instrument

The study revealed distinct indications of ideal love, encompassing emotions, commitments, physical appeal, material factors, attitudes, and same-gender affection. Furthermore, criteria for a contented family included assessments of job position, financial levels, general welfare, sexual closeness, interactions between spouses, parents and children, and social connections within the community. We inherited and modified the scale from previous studies conducted by Ha & Le (2014), Merzlykova & Golubeva (2022), Petyak, Rudenok, Komar, Antonova & Danchuk (2022) and Van (2019). We used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for measurement. The tool was initially evaluated by a panel of experts in educational administration and social work, who provided feedback on the relevance of the indicators to the study. We subjected the updated questionnaire to additional validation after incorporating the expert comments and consulting with a student group to assess its content suitability before conducting the official survey.

Regarding the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, overall, the factors demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha > 0.7, and the correlations among items—total, after adjustment—were > 0.5 (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Specifically, the results are presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2 Scale reliability test results.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
(Ideal Love), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.821					
Ideal Love 1	24.0400	23.954	.581	.700	.798
Ideal Love 2	24.1749	23.242	.624	.778	.792
Ideal Love 3	24.2038	23.165	.633	.749	.791
Ideal Love 4	24.1437	23.427	.615	.662	.793
Ideal Love 5	25.2516	21.900	.505	.607	.809
Ideal Love 6	25.1710	21.881	.558	.668	.799
Ideal Love 7	25.1885	21.950	.526	.607	.805
Ideal Love 8	24.2377	24.118	.503	.523	.820
(Happy Family), Cronbach's Alpha = 0.947					
Happy Family 1	33.83	25.504	.621	.522	.951
Happy Family 2	33.53	24.403	.893	.825	.935
Happy Family 3	33.57	27.389	.692	.560	.946
Happy Family 4	33.48	24.506	.878	.804	.936
Happy Family 5	33.44	24.384	.872	.821	.936
Happy Family 6	33.49	24.487	.881	.811	.935
Happy Family 7	33.43	24.391	.802	.802	.936
Happy Family 8	33.65	24.972	.663	.633	.941
Happy Family 9	33.72	25.119	.693	.506	.946

We assess the ideal love scale using eight items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.821, indicating excellent scale reliability. All variables in the scale have Cronbach's alpha values > 0.7. The total variables of the items exhibit a correlation greater than 0.5, and no items fail to meet this threshold. Therefore, we can conclude that this scale has a high level of reliability. In addition, we evaluate the Happy Family Scale by utilizing nine items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.821, which signifies a high level of scale dependability. All the variables on the scale have Cronbach's alpha values that are greater than 0.7. All of the variables of the items show a correlation greater than 0.5, and none of the items fall below this level. Hence, it may be inferred that this scale demonstrates a significant degree of dependability. Explain chronological research, including how to prepare materials for research, design of the study and research procedures (in the form of an algorithm, pseudocode or other). The minimum research method consists of the research type, type and source of data, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques.

4. Results



4.1. Students' perceptions of ideal love in Vietnam

Most Vietnamese students believe that ideal love is a mutual and genuine love among males and females. However, some believe that ideal love transcends gender boundaries and can exist between individuals of the same sex. This diversity of perspectives reflects the changing attitudes toward love and relationships in Vietnamese society (see Table 3).

Table 3 The perception of ideal love.

Ideal love	Mean	SD
Mutual and genuine love	4.02	0.813
Excluding personal benefits	3.88	0.870
Not due to physical appearances	3.86	0.872
Future marital aspirations	3.92	0.853
Love is often intertwined with sexual desire	2.81	1.231
You must support the person you love materially.	2.89	1.154
Love to fill the void when away from home	2.87	1.191
Love is not influenced by gender	3.82	1.026

Table 3 provides a statistical analysis of different dimensions of ideal love, such as mutual affection, the exclusion of personal benefits, authenticity beyond external display, aspirations for future marriage, the connection between love and sexual desire, financial support in love, filling emotional gaps, and gender independence in love relationships. This finding reveals a strong consensus on the importance of genuine mutual love (M = 4.02, SD = 0.813) and suggests that love should go beyond personal gains and superficial appearances, with similar mean scores for these dimensions (M = 3.88 and M = 3.86) and moderate variability. There is a positive attitude toward marriage (M = 3.92), whereas views on love's relation to sexual desire, financial support, and the ability to fill emotional voids show greater diversity and greater variability (mean scores of approximately 2.81--2.89 and SDs above 1.1). The role of gender in love also presents diverse opinions (M = 3.82, SD = 1.026), indicating varied beliefs on its significance. This summary highlights a general agreement on love's core values but shows divergent views on aspects such as sexual desire, material support, and the impact of gender.

The perception of love is associated with geography. The survey results on love perceptions among rural and urban students highlight significant variations in the connection between love and sexual desire as well as the influence of gender while also revealing a consensus across both settings regarding the authenticity of love, underscoring the importance of geographical and cultural contexts in shaping individual beliefs and values (see Table 4).

Table 4 The results of ideal love responses according to the variable of hometown.

Ideal love	Hometown				t	df	p
	Rural		Urban				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Mutual and genuine love	4.01	0.806	4.03	0.825	-2.069	18758.277	0.390
Excluding personal benefits	3.89	0.860	3.87	0.890	1.225	18592.847	0.221
Not due to physical appearances	3.86	0.859	3.85	0.895	1.225	18487.109	0.221
Future marital aspirations	3.92	0.845	3.91	0.869	1.096	18693.954	0.273
Love is often intertwined with sexual desire	2.79	1.247	2.85	1.201	-3.733	19764.511	0.000
You must support the person you love materially	2.88	1.163	2.91	1.137	-1.908	19519.330	0.056
Love to fill the void when away from home	2.87	1.198	2.87	1.178	-0.345	19413.685	0.730
Love is not influenced by gender	3.76	1.037	3.94	0.996	-13.783	19812.793	0.000
	N= 17022		N= 9309				

Minor variations in perceptions of "mutual and genuine love" were found between rural (M = 4.01, SD = 0.806) and urban (M = 4.03, SD = 0.825) areas, with a p value of 0.390. "Excluding personal benefits" and "not due to exterior ostentation" have comparable mean scores and standard deviations in both rural and urban locations, suggesting a consensus on the genuineness of love that transcends materialistic and superficial influences. Future marriage goals are equally important in rural and urban areas (Table 4). This study explores love perceptions among rural and urban students, revealing how geographical and cultural contexts shape individual beliefs and values. While fundamental elements of love are generally recognized, their significance varies significantly, emphasizing the importance of context in understanding love and relationships.

Data from Table 5 highlight significant gender-related disparities in perceptions of love, with women tending to prioritize reciprocal and authentic love as well as gender-neutral perspectives, whereas men exhibit varying opinions, particularly regarding the relationship between love and sexual desire and the importance of money assistance, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing these differences in interpersonal dynamics and relationship counseling (see Table 5).



The key findings show notable disparities in perceptions of reciprocal and genuine love, the exclusion of personal benefits, attitudes toward material assistance in relationships, and opinions of love's detachment from gender, among other factors. Females scored better on reciprocal and real love and love independence from gender, whereas males scored lower on love interlaced with sexual desire and monetary support necessity. The results, supported by extremely significant p values ($p < 0.000$), indicate substantial gender-related variations in the perception of love (Table 5). Gender significantly impacts the way love is perceived, affecting expectations and goals in romantic relationships. This highlights the need to comprehend and address these variations in interpersonal dynamics and relationship counseling.

Table 5 The results of ideal love responses according to the variable of gender.

Ideal love	Gender				t	df	p
	Male		Female				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Mutual and genuine love	3.89	0.928	4.09	0.739	-17.762	14669.069	0.000
Excluding personal benefits	3.77	0.949	3.94	0.822	-14.770	15686.586	0.000
Not due to physical appearances	3.75	0.948	3.91	0.826	-13.555	15769.738	0.000
Future marital aspirations	3.82	0.929	3.96	0.808	-12.681	15736.235	0.000
Love is often intertwined with sexual desire	3.16	1.129	2.63	1.242	35.089	19329.405	0.000
You must support the person you love materially	3.12	1.092	2.77	1.167	24.095	18843.822	0.000
Love to fill the void when away from home	3.15	1.120	2.73	1.200	28.435	18889.844	0.000
Love is not influenced by gender	3.51	1.102	3.98	1.102	-34.476	15582.919	0.000
	N= 8847		N= 17484				

4.2. Students' perceptions of happy families in Vietnam

The data in Table 6 show that fidelity, a nonviolent family environment, and especially family income stability are considered the most important factors contributing to a family's happiness.

Table 6 The perception of ideal love.

Happy family	Mean	SD
Ownership of a private residence	3.91	.837
Engagement in a stable and secure occupation	4.22	.737
Consistent family income	4.37	.523
The family is in excellent physical condition.	4.26	.736
Fidelity	4.30	.755
Parents hold their children's opinions with high regard.	4.25	.736
Nonviolent family environment	4.31	.761
Positive neighborly relations	4.09	.754
Sexual compatibility	4.02	.816

This analysis intends to examine the importance and agreement of several factors, including home ownership, job stability, stable income, health status, loyalty, valuing children's viewpoints, nonviolence, neighbor relations, and sexual compatibility. High mean values indicate a high level of agreement on their significance, whereas low standard deviations suggest consistency in replies. These criteria provide a thorough perspective on the components of a happy family, focusing on the combination of material, emotional, and relational elements. The perception of a happy family is also associated with geography. Urban residents rated factors contributing to a happy family significantly higher than rural residents did for most aspects, except for positive neighborly relations, where rural residents scored higher, indicating that urban environments may foster higher expectations or satisfaction in familial relationships, except in community engagement (see Table 7).

Table 7 Results for happy family responses according to the variable of hometown.

Happy family	Hometown				t	df	p
	Rural		Urban				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Ownership of a private residence	3.89	0.836	3.95	0.839	-5.320	19081.402	0.000
Engagement in a stable and secure occupation	4.2	0.737	4.26	0.736	-6.289	19177.562	0.000
Consistent family income	4.35	0.516	4.41	0.534	-8.176	18587.579	0.000
The family is in excellent physical condition.	4.25	0.739	4.29	0.732	-3.623	19288.073	0.000
Fidelity	4.28	0.755	4.35	0.753	-6.567	19180.132	0.000
Parents hold their children's opinions with high regard.	4.23	0.737	4.29	0.734	-7.014	19197.517	0.000
Nonviolent family environment	4.28	0.763	4.36	0.756	-8.353	19294.127	0.000
Positive neighborly relations	4.1	0.749	4.06	0.764	4.011	18822.168	0.000
Sexual compatibility	4.02	0.813	4.04	0.822	-1.858	18954.181	0.000
	N= 17022		N= 9309				



Table 7 analyzes the elements that are believed to contribute to a happy family among 17,022 rural and 9,309 urban students. Factors that contribute to creating a happy family include owning a home, having a stable job, having stable finances, having family members in good health, being faithful in marital relationships, demonstrating good health, parental attention to children, maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in the family, cultivating pleasant relationships with neighbors and having harmony in sexual relationships. The research findings indicate that there are statistically significant disparities between students residing in rural and urban regions across all the parameters, with the exception of positive relationships with neighbors. Notably, rural students ranked this characteristic somewhat higher than urban students did (Ha & Le, 2014; Thuy, 2005; Tkachenko & Komarova, 2019). Both groups prioritize financial stability, health, integrity, respect, and sexual compatibility between husbands and wives. However, there is a small statistically significant difference between rural and urban areas. Different cultural or socioeconomic factors in the two regions may have an impact.

In terms of gender, there is a clear difference between men and women, with women tending to rate higher than men in all criteria of family happiness. This reflects gender differences in perceptions and expectations of family happiness, as well as life priorities (see Table 8).

Table 8 Results for happy family responses according to the variable of gender.

Happy family	Gender				t	df	p
	Male		Female				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Ownership of a private residence	3.74	0.907	4.00	0.786	-22.376	15702.521	0.000
Engagement in a stable and secure occupation	4.02	0.843	4.31	0.656	-28.440	14415.291	0.000
Consistent family income	4.29	0.511	4.42	0.524	-18.579	18169.741	0.000
The family is in excellent physical condition.	4.09	0.846	4.35	0.657	-25.077	14397.945	0.000
Fidelity	4.11	0.861	4.4	0.674	-27.736	14473.301	0.000
Parents hold their children's opinions with high regard.	4.07	0.835	4.34	0.662	-27.245	14624.388	0.000
Nonviolent family environment	4.11	0.87	4.41	0.678	-28.435	14418.489	0.000
Positive neighborly relations	3.96	0.851	4.15	0.692	-18.132	14907.114	0.000
Sexual compatibility	3.92	0.891	4.08	0.771	-13.823	15686.980	0.000
	N= 8847		N= 17484				

Table 8 analyzes how male and female students perceive characteristics that contribute to a happy family in a sample of 8,847 males and 17,484 females. The criteria consisted of owning private property, having a secure job, maintaining a steady family income, good physical health, faithfulness, respecting children's viewpoints, a positive relationship of nondomestic violence with neighbors, and sexual compatibility. Compared with males, females consistently scored higher on all the factors, suggesting a stronger focus on these components of family satisfaction. The statistical significance ($p < 0.000$ for all components) indicates strong gender disparities in views. Compared with male students, female students prioritized owning private property and having secure employment. According to these statistics, women prioritize economic stability, health, fidelity, mutual respect, and a pleasant family life more than men do in regard to having a happy family.

5. Discussion

5.1. Emphasis on Emotional and Spiritual Values in Ideal Love

This study investigates Vietnamese students' perceptions of ideal love, emphasizing the importance they attribute to sincerity and selflessness. This highlights their preference for emotional and spiritual factors over financial considerations and social status. This discovery bears a notable similarity to the inquiries carried out by Dion & Dion (1996), Ha & Le (2014), Love Frankie & Indochine Research Ltd. (2020), and Petyak et al. (2022). When students discuss ideal love, they attach importance to honesty and selflessness.

5.2. Progressive Views on Same-Sex Relationships

Moreover, students tend to support same-sex relationships, indicating a progressive change in the acceptance of various gender identities in society that goes beyond traditional heterosexual norms (Oanh & Nhu, 2018; Social Life, 2016).

5.3. Traditional Values and Family Unity

Students believe that a harmonious family life ensures both economic security and professional achievement. They maintain the conviction that building a solid and enduring domicile enhances family life by fostering contentment and harmony. Nevertheless, the students in the research sample persist in prioritizing conventional values such as maintaining family unity and faithfulness in marital relationships. This exemplifies the resilience of traditional Vietnamese family values across multiple generations, despite the increasing emphasis on financial considerations for maintaining family stability (Thuy, 2005; Nhung, 2019).

5.4. Gender Disparities in Perceptions of Love and Family

The survey reveals that there are gender disparities in perspectives on the concepts of ideal love and family happiness, which align with global trends, particularly in Asian nations. Female students prioritize financial security when considering raising a family, as well as loyalty in romantic relationships and marriage. Conversely, male students express apprehension over autonomy, parity in romantic relationships, and obligations toward their family when examining the concept of a contented family (Thuy, 2005; Ha & Le, 2014; Nhung, 2019).

5.5. Cultural and Regional Differences in Family Happiness

The disparity in perspectives regarding peaceful families among rural and urban students primarily revolves around the element of communal bonding. Compared with their urban counterparts, students residing in rural areas expressed better ratings for community cohesion and networks of relationships. Liu and Gao (2013) discovered this consequence in their research, asserting that students residing in rural areas highly prioritize intergenerational relationships within extended family and social connections. Benevolence toward the village and its neighbors is an answer to or explanation of the research problem.

5.6. Implications of Shifting and Enduring Norms

These disparities may arise from conventional gender roles and societal expectations, emphasizing the intricate interplay between shifting cultural norms and enduring traditional beliefs. Men and women may encounter distinct societal pressures and expectations concerning their responsibilities in relationships, which can influence their priorities and ideals surrounding love and intimacy. Historically, families have held the belief that men should primarily be responsible for providing financial support and supplying material requirements, whereas women are expected to take charge of the emotional and caregiving parts of life. In general, gender roles in family and social situations are influenced by enduring cultural and social norms, which can differ significantly depending on cultural, regional, and individual factors (Ha & Le, 2014; Liu & Gao, 2013; Neto, 2007). Moreover, this focus on communal bonding can also be added to the development prospects of the research and further application in subsequent studies.

6. Conclusions

Vietnamese students view ideal love as characterized by generosity, resilience, and mutual tolerance, often linked to a commitment to future marriage. Their perceptions of family happiness are shaped by an emphasis on financial and career stability, alongside traditional values such as loyalty and family harmony. Social norms and cultural principles also play a crucial role in shaping their expectations. Gender differences are evident, with male students demonstrating a more pragmatic approach compared to female students, influenced by societal expectations. Male students are more focused on practical aspects like career and financial goals, whereas female students may prioritize emotional and interpersonal elements of relationships. Students from rural areas place greater emphasis on community connections and social interactions as key factors in family happiness compared to their urban counterparts. This reflects the strong communal bonds and intergenerational relationships typical of rural settings, whereas urban students may prioritize individual and nuclear family dynamics. With respect to this study, some recommendations are made. Universities should implement comprehensive consulting and support programs aimed at equipping students with knowledge and skills pertaining to love, marriage, and family. These programs should encompass seminars led by specialists, classes that emphasize soft skills in communication and conflict resolution, counseling services for individuals and groups, extracurricular and team-building activities, the provision of educational materials and online resources, and the creation of clubs and forums. The objective of these exercises is to provide students with the essential knowledge to cultivate robust and significant connections while also assisting them in honing their personal skills. This study acknowledges significant limitations, primarily the use of convenience sampling, which may not fully represent the diversity of Vietnamese students' perspectives. Future research should explore the impact of globalization and cultural transformation on students' views regarding love, marriage, and family. Longitudinal studies are essential to track changes over time in the context of a rapidly evolving socioeconomic landscape. Comparative studies between domestic and international students could reveal the influence of multicultural experiences on interpersonal values. Additionally, examining the role of digital media in shaping perceptions of love and modern family dynamics could provide valuable insights.

Ethical considerations

With respect to the materials utilized and data collection, this study complied with ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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