
Passionate Love and Personality Traits of College Students

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ABSTRACT

Thinking about and exploring love by college students is not a very uncommon scenario in the present times. The trend of relationships being a necessity in colleges is very much prevalent nowadays. Most college students who are susceptible to relationships go through the phenomena of passionate love. This study tries to investigate the relationship between passionate love and Big Five personality traits that may help us to predict how an individual may experience and perceive passionate love. The PLS and TIPI inventory was used to measure the passionate love and personality of college students. The passionate love scale was composed of three components which are cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. The Big Five personality traits are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. The questionnaire was administered to 120 college students who were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The collected data was analysed using a correlational research technique. The results of this study revealed that various components of passionate love were found to be significantly associated with Big Five personality traits. Individuals who possess high levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience displayed comparatively higher levels of the cognitive component of passionate love than the other personality traits. While the emotional component showed a significant negative correlation with emotional stability whereas the behavioural component had a significant positive correlation with agreeableness and conscientiousness. The limitations and suggestions for further research regarding passionate love and limitations were discussed.

Keywords- Sternberg's triangular theory of love, Big five personality, Passionate love, College students

1. Introduction

One of a human's fundamental needs is to feel loved. It is an additional manifestation of commitment, enthusiasm, and continuous performance. Evidently, during college years, love blossoms the utmost. Because college years are the pinnacle of one's life, this is the moment when one can truly reinvent themselves and offers the chance to change totally. It has also been revealed that the experience of being in a relationship fosters changes in personality attributes (Robins et al., 2002). After the constraints of high school pressure, it is a place where you experience a variety of freedoms.

This liberty lends credence to the theory of increased romantic inclination during college years (Kiran, 2020). According to Sternberg (1998), there are seven different sorts of relationships that can be formed, each of which can be based on one of these elements, two of them, or all three, including consummate love- the ideal form of love which is often challenging to achieve or maintain, only established when all three triangle's angles are equally strong and balanced. However, consummate love shouldn't be confused with idealisation-which is a striking characteristic of passionate love and a widespread inclination of people to think that their relationships are the best or ideal.

Sternberg's triangular model of love, which delves into the scientific substratum of love, offers a framework for understanding its varied elements. Sternberg contends that there are three fundamental elements to all romantic relationships, namely, intimacy, passion, and commitment (Sternberg, 1984).

Intimacy is the feeling of closeness connecting two individuals that strengthens their relationship and drives them to care about each other's happiness and well-being. The second component, passion, is anchored in romance, sexuality, and experiences of physical and emotional arousal that are intense. The third factor, commitment or decision, represents the cognitive factors, such as the decision to be in love with that person and the commitment to keep the relationship going for a longer period. Commitment was referred to as the cognitive component whereas intimacy was the emotional component of love (Sternberg, 1986). A variety of emotions, motivations, cognitions and behaviours that are typical of romantic love are produced by the brain system of passionate love is primarily associated with elevated dopamine levels in the brain's reward pathways along with elevated levels of central norepinephrine and suppressed levels of central serotonin (Fisher et al., 2002). One interesting phenomenon of love is love at first sight which is the sudden, overwhelming, surging, all consuming positive reaction struck with a thunderbolt feeling, something that feels as if it is beyond our control. This emotional and unrealistic response is passionate love (Baron & Branscombe, 2017). Love at first sight, which is not much different from love, is used to describe a strong initial attraction that some people either refer to in the moment of first sight or later on (Zsok, 2017). Even though it seems like something that only occurs in movies, research shows that the majority of individuals have experienced "love at first sight". Passionate love is the longing for a union with another person, whether the desire is reciprocated or is uncertain and unrequited (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986). The three basic factors that must be present for passionate love to exist are a basic understanding of what love is and a belief that it exists; an appropriate love object and finally a physiological state of arousal that can be interpreted as feelings of love (Hatfield and Walster, 1981).

The present study analyses how passionate love and the Big Five personality traits are related to each other. Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) put forth the following three key components of passionate love that are cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. The first attribute of the cognitive component is intrusive thinking, which involves spending the majority of time daydreaming or thinking about one's partner. The second trait is an idealisation, in which they believe their relationship to be the best or ideal. The desire for intimate familiarity is the third trait. The emotional component displays intense physiological and sexual arousal. They desire to be loved in return or long for reciprocated love and they yearn for a complete union. Induction of intense unpleasant emotions is seen in this component when things go wrong. The behavioural component is characterised by the efforts portrayed by the individual to maintain physical contact with their mate. The inclination to the expression of love by acts of service for the partner is seen here. Also, the individual tries to contemplate the feelings of the partner towards them and is highly motivated to study his/her partner. Individuals were found to be attracted to those who appeared similar in personality (Grant-Jacob, 2016).

The Big Five personality traits were proposed by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1992). Extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience make up the Big Five personality paradigm, which divides personality into its five main components (Ciccarelli & White, 2017). Being smart, imaginative, and having a diverse range of interests are all characteristics of openness. Being organised, methodical, and thorough are qualities of the trait conscientiousness. Energy, talkativeness, and assertiveness are examples of extraverted personality qualities. Being agreeable includes having compassion, tenderness, and empathy. The term "neuroticism" is often used to describe emotional stability. This dimension has to do with how emotionally stable someone is and how much negativity they experience. Some researchers have established a connection between passionate love and Robust dimensions along with life satisfaction which concluded that life satisfaction, intimacy, passion, and conscientiousness were positively related, while neuroticism, intimacy, and passion were negatively related, but the rest of the Big Five personality traits had no significant relations with intimacy,

passion and life satisfaction (Monego & Teodoro, 2011). Less conscientious, expressive, agreeable, and slightly more neurotic individuals were mostly involved in unhealthy relationships (Lampis, 2018). As passionate love is an under researched area, especially while considering personality traits, this study hopes to give new insights into the relationship between the two. Through this study, we may be able to pave a new way for understanding how an individual's specific personality traits may contribute to how an individual may perceive passionate love. As there are no existing theories that relate to love and personality, the current investigation of these associations may help in formulating theories about how to love and specific personality domains are related through empirical evidence.

1.1 Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and the cognitive component of passionate love among college students
2. There will be no significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and the emotional component of passionate love among college students
3. There will be no significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and behavioural component of passionate love among college students

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between passionate love and big-five personality traits among college students. The sample selection was done using the convenience sampling technique. A sample of 120 college students including both males and females were taken from private and aided colleges in Kerala state. The age of the participants ranged from 18-25. The data collection was administered using Google Forms. The survey was conducted based on the consent taken from the participating students. The students were allowed to complete the survey based on their leisure time. An opportunity for asking any doubts was provided. They were given instructions on how to respond to each statement. The respondents were thanked for their participation after completing the survey. The collected data was analysed for drawing conclusions based on the aim of the study. The data was analysed using SPSS - 28.0.1.1(14). The relationship between the two variables was assessed using Pearson bivariate correlation.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Personality

Gosling et al. (2003) developed a ten-item personality inventory (TIPI) to examine the BigFive personality traits i.e., extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Each of the five personality traits had two elements on the TIPI. Two desirable descriptors were present in the positive statement, while two undesirable descriptors were present in the negative statement. The ten statements were scored based on a seven-point Likert scale. The TIPI exhibited test-retest reliability of 0.72 and validity was established.

2.2.2 Passionate love

A self-report inventory was developed by Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) to measure passionate love. The passionate love scale (PLS) consists of 30 items and a 9-point Likert scale. The longer version of the PLS inventory was used in this study which comprised three components, they are cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. PLS had an internal consistency of 0.94 and the validity was established.

3. Results and Discussion

The collected data was analysed based on the formulated objective and hypothesis. The scores of Passionate love and Big Five Personality (see Table 1).

Table 1

Bivariate correlation among the analyzed variables

	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioural
Extraversion	0.233**	0.054	0.084
Agreeableness	0.175**	0.028	0.239**
Conscientiousness	0.008	0.078	0.153*
Emotional Stability	0.127	-0.214*	0.049
Openness to experience	0.408**	0.259	0.122

$N = 120$

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

The extraversion ($r=0.233^{**}$), agreeableness ($r=0.175^{**}$) and openness to experience ($r=0.408^{**}$) personality factors were positively and significantly related to the cognitive component. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be no significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and cognitive component of passionate love”, is partially accepted in terms of extraversion and conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Emotional stability ($r=-0.214^{*}$) had a negative and significant correlation with the emotional component. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be no significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and emotional component of passionate love”, is partially accepted in terms of emotional stability. Agreeableness ($r=0.239^{**}$) and conscientiousness ($r=0.153^{*}$) had a positive and significant relationship with the behavioural component. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be a significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and behavioural component”, is accepted in terms of agreeableness and conscientiousness.

This study aimed to find the relation between passionate love and integrants of the Big Five. The results of this study showed a significant relationship between the cognitive component of passionate love and with Big Five personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Individuals who are creative, adventurous, expressive, altruistic, and enthusiastic to learn new things have intrusive thoughts, which involve thinking about one's partner most of the time, idealise one's relationship, and having the desire to get to know one another.

Interestingly, the emotional component had a significant negative correlation with emotional stability. Individuals who score high on emotional components have a higher craving for reciprocity and desire for total unity, along with physiological and sexual excitement, and also they experience intensely unpleasant emotions that arise when things go wrong. Such people tend to be more anxious, irritable, impatient, emotionally unstable, and experience frequent mood fluctuations (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Several items of agreeableness and conscientiousness correlated with a behavioural component of passionate love (Hatfield & Sprecher 1986). The behavioural element is characterised by the efforts to preserve physical contact, displaying love by doing acts of service for the mate, ascertaining the feeling of the partner towards the individual, and studying the spouse. Conscious people may direct their achievement aspirations into their romantic relationships and, as a result, show their partners more affection to build successful relationships (Engel et al., 2002). Individuals who showed more attributes of behavioural component tend to be highly dependable, organised, systematic, agreeable, kind, trusting, generous, and sympathetic. People who score well on conscientiousness are also trustworthy and demonstrate stronger commitment, whereas those who score poorly on conscientiousness report a lower level of commitment (Arriaga, 2001).

However cognitive component, conscientiousness, and emotional stability did not exhibit any relation. The relation between extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience with the behavioural

component was not significant according to the findings of this study. All the robust dimensions except emotional stability which did not show any significant correlation with the emotional component of passionate love.

The present study did not investigate the effects or interactions of passionate love with the Big Five personality dimensions. This research solely focused on the relationship between one aspect of passionate love and personality features. The study used a small sample size. Only college students made up the study's sample. Another restriction is the paucity of prior research in this field. Furthermore, the correlation may not indicate a causal relationship. TIPI is a short inventory which measures personality based on two items only. Regression analysis may reveal to us the impact of each domain of personality with the various components of passionate love. Further research including various components of love based on Sternberg's Triangular theory with the big five personality traits is necessary.

4. Conclusion

The results of the present study revealed that personality traits played a significant role in determining the level of passionate love experienced by each individual. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components of passionate love were found to be significantly associated with various domains of Big Five personality traits. The findings of this study helped us understand one of the main components of Sternberg's triangular theory of love based on specific personality traits. This study provided a new avenue for understanding how the personality profiles of each individual affected their approach to various components of love.

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