



Love in online dating: Examining the Correlation Between Communication Patterns and the Development of Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to investigate the correlation of love in online dating and how communication patterns influence the development of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The study aimed to understand the unique dynamics of love in the digital age. Drawing upon established psychological theories from Triangular Theory of Love (Robert Sternberg), the study aimed to explore the correlation of love and communication patterns on online dating platforms with intimacy, passion, and commitment in a romantic relationship. To illuminate the interplay, data was gathered from a sample of 120 young adults (18 to 25 years) using Online Dating Survey, Communication Pattern Questionnaire and Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale. Correlation analysis explored the relationships between variables. The study found a moderate positive relationship between love in online dating and its relationship with communication patterns influencing intimacy, passion, and commitment. Additionally, the findings can inform the

development of online dating platforms to better cater to the needs of those seeking genuine connections.

Keywords: *Love, Online Dating, Intimacy, Passion, Commitment Communication Patterns Questionnaire, Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love*

INTRODUCTION

Love is a complex mix of emotions, behaviors, and connections. It's hard to define it perfectly, but it involves feelings of closeness, passion, and a desire to be with someone. Psychologist Robert Sternberg proposed the "triangular theory of love," suggesting that these three elements; intimacy, passion, and commitment can exist in varying degrees and combinations within a loving relationship.

A passionate and intense love affair might be high in passion but lower in intimacy at the start, while a long-term marriage might see a shift towards stronger intimacy and commitment, with the initial fiery passion settling into a comfortable warmth. Love's multifaceted nature extends beyond the stages of a single relationship. It manifests differently depending on the context. Romantic love, often associated with the early stages of a relationship, is that whirlwind of emotions and intense desire. Companionate love, on the other hand, is the deep affection and respect that grows in established, committed relationships. It's the love built on shared experiences, trust, and a sense of comfortable companionship. Platonic love adds another layer to the spectrum. This strong bond of friendship and affection thrives without a sexual or romantic component.

Understanding love's complexities is further enriched by exploring cultural perspectives. The expression and interpretation of love can vary greatly across cultures. In some cultures,

arranged marriages might be seen as a foundation for love that develops over time, with the focus on compatibility and building a strong family unit. In others, individual choice and passionate love might be considered paramount.

Finally, science sheds light on the biological undercurrents of love. Hormones like dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin play a crucial role in the feelings of pleasure, bonding, and attachment associated with love. Dopamine, often referred to as the "reward hormone," is triggered by the anticipation of and connection with the beloved. Oxytocin, sometimes called the "love hormone," is released during physical touch and intimacy, fostering feelings of closeness and bonding. Serotonin contributes to feelings of well-being and contentment, playing a role in the overall sense of happiness associated with love. During the early stage of communication, it's harder to maintain or grow a relationship when people know there are plenty of fish in the pool.

TRIANGULAR THEORY OF LOVE

Love in relationships isn't a one-size-fits-all kind of thing. Psychologist Robert Sternberg proposed a theory that breaks down love into three key ingredients: intimacy, passion, and commitment. The strength of each ingredient in a relationship can create different types of love experiences.

Types of Love

Combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment			
	<i>Intimacy</i>	<i>Passion</i>	<i>Commitment</i>
Liking or Friendship	x		

Infatuation or Limerence		x	
Empty love			x
Romantic Love	x	x	
Companionate love	x		x
Fatuous love		x	x
Consummate love	x	x	x

Figure 1: *Types of Love (Sternberg, 1986)*

Sternberg's 3 Components of Love

In Sternberg's theory of love (1986), the concept of love is a triangle that is made up of three components. Some of these types of love are focused on the love between two people in a romantic or sexual relationship, but these types of love also apply to other forms of interpersonal relationships. The three components are:

- a) **Intimacy**, which involves feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness.
- b) **Passion**, which involves feelings and desires that lead to physical attraction, romance, and sexual consummation.
- c) **Decision/commitment**, which involves feelings that lead a person to remain with someone and move toward a shared goal.

Sternberg's 7 Types of Love

The three components of love interact in a systematic manner. The presence of one component or a combination of two or more components create seven kinds of love experiences. These types of love may vary over the course of a relationship as well. For example, a relationship could begin as passionate love, progress into romantic love, and then eventually reach a state of companionate love.

- a) **Friendship:** This is the love between good friends. There's a strong sense of liking and closeness (intimacy) but no romantic passion or commitment. Friendships often form the foundation for other types of love.
- b) **Infatuation:** Intense initial spark you feel for someone that is infatuation. It's driven by pure passion and physical attraction, but without the deeper intimacy or commitment that comes with time. This initial stage can be very powerful, but it takes more to build a lasting love.
- c) **Empty Love:** This type of love is all about commitment, but passion and intimacy have faded away. Sometimes a strong romantic love can become empty over time. The opposite can also happen: an arranged marriage, for example, might start with little passion or intimacy, but blossom into another kind of love as the couple spends time together.
- d) **Romantic Love:** This is the passionate and exciting kind of love often seen in new relationships. There's a deep emotional connection (intimacy) and a strong physical attraction (passion). Couples in this stage might be enjoying passionate moments and deep conversations but haven't necessarily made long-term plans yet.
- e) **Companionate Love:** Think of this as a deep and comfortable love, like between long-term partners or close family members. There's a strong sense of intimacy and commitment, but

the passionate fire might have simmered down. This doesn't mean the love is any less important – it's a deep affection and loyalty that binds people together.

- f) ***Fatuous Love***: This is where passion and commitment come together quickly, but there's no real intimacy or friendship. Imagine a whirlwind romance where someone sweeps you off your feet – exciting, but maybe lacking a foundation for a lasting relationship.
- g) ***Consummate Love***: A love that has intimacy, passion, and commitment all working together. Couples experiencing consummate love share a deep emotional connection, enjoy a fulfilling physical relationship, and are fully committed to each other. They can face challenges together and see a future where they can't imagine life without their partner.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lemieux et al. (2013) conducted research on intimacy, passion, and commitment among married individuals. The research found out that the Triangular Theory, proposes that three things are important for a strong relationship: intimacy (closeness); passion (excitement and attraction); and commitment (sticking by each other). Researchers have been interested in testing this theory, but it's been difficult to accurately measure these three components. A new study developed a better way to measure them and found evidence to support the theory's main idea. Researchers analyzed data from over 200 married couples. Their findings suggest that intimacy, passion, and commitment are indeed separate and important factors in relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, the study also found that men tend to score higher on intimacy than women in this sample.

Additionally, Lemieux et al. (2014) conducted a cross- sectional analysis of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Testing the assumptions of the triangular theory of love. The results

support the theory's predictions: Intimacy and passion tend to decrease over time, while commitment increases. People reported feeling the least close and passionate when they were just casually dating, more so when they were engaged, and then a dip in passion again for married couples. Commitment, on the other hand, steadily increased from casual dating all the way to marriage.

Llison et al. (2014) conducted research on managing impressions online and Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment. The study dives into how people present themselves on online dating sites to find love. 34 active users were interviewed on a major dating platform. The research investigated that individuals care about the little details in their profiles. They want to put their best foot forward but also be true to themselves. They might try to show their ideal selves, like their hobbies or interests, to attract compatible partners. There's also a focus on making sure their profile seems real. Additionally, individuals want to avoid catfish situations (being misled online).

Gibbs et al. (2015) conducted research on an investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating. This study looked at how individuals behave in online dating when they're unsure about someone. The researchers built on existing ideas about reducing uncertainty and justifying trust online. They created a model that considered people's privacy concerns (like safety and being misled), their confidence in online dating, and their experience using the internet. This model predicted how often people would use certain behaviors to reduce uncertainty, which in turn affected how much they revealed about themselves to potential partners. The study showed that people who are worried about online dating (safety, fake profiles, being recognized) and those who are less confident online daters will use more strategies to figure

out the other person before opening to them. These strategies act as a kind of bridge between the concerns and the amount of self-disclosure.

Bleskeet et al. (2017) investigated the link between GRBS scores and Sternberg's components of love in young adults. Their findings indicated that individuals with more traditional gender role beliefs scored lower on the commitment component, suggesting that rigid gender roles might hinder a sense of long-term dedication in young adult relationships.

Rossen et al. (2017) conducted research on the impact of emotionality and self-disclosure on online dating vs traditional dating. Online dating creates a unique path to love compared to traditional dating. Unlike slow-building connections in real life, online daters dive right in with frequent, sometimes emotional emails. The study examined mail exchange to see how it compares to meeting someone in person. The study explored the online dating process, how first impressions differ online vs. offline, and the impact of emotions and personal details in emails. The research suggests strong emotions like "excited" in emails lead to better first impressions than blander language. Sharing personal details is a double-edged sword though – while some prefer less information upfront, this preference varies depending on factors like gender and education.

Schwartz et al. (2017) conducted research on romantic love in virtual space. Research shows that online relationships can be just as meaningful and intimate as face-to-face connections. The article explored how love unfolds in the virtual world, looking at studies from around the globe and South Africa itself. Interestingly, the research suggests that online relationships might even see higher levels of intimacy compared to traditional dating. This could be because online communication (CMC) makes it easier for people to open and share more about themselves,

leading to a deeper emotional connection. Additionally, online love seems to put intimacy before passion, unlike face-to-face relationships where passion often sparks first.

Marston et al. (2018) conducted research on the subjective experience of intimacy, passion, and commitment in heterosexual loving relationships. Researchers delved into how real couples experience love by asking them about intimacy, passion, and commitment. They analyzed the answers and found six ways couples experience intimacy, including things like openness and shared quiet time. Passion showed itself in two ways - romance and physical intimacy. Commitment had five aspects, like expressing love and staying faithful. The interesting finding is that these experiences aren't separate but rather work together to create a unique picture of love for each couple. In other words, love isn't a single thing but a combination of different experiences that come together in their own special way for each relationship.

Carbonneau et al. (2018) conducted research titled "I'm not the same person since I met you": The role of romantic passion in how people change when they get involved in a romantic relationship. This study delves into the idea of romantic passion having two sides; harmonious and obsessive. Researchers examined how these two types of passion influence personal changes linked to romantic relationships. They recruited young adults through universities and social media platforms for three studies. The first study showed that both types of passion predicted feelings of personal growth. However, harmonious passion had a positive impact, while obsessive passion led to a negative impact on other activities and social connections, with people potentially neglecting them to focus on the relationship. These findings were confirmed in a follow-up study that tracked participants over six months, and even when a close friend reported on the participant's behavior. Overall, the research suggests the quality of your romantic passion (harmonious or obsessive) can predict the changes you experience in life as you fall in love.

Downing et al. (2018) explored what helps or hinders people from being themselves (authentic) in romantic relationships. The research focused on heterosexual couples. Interestingly, feeling secure in the relationship, being satisfied, experiencing intimacy, and feeling less lonely were all linked to greater authenticity. Gender roles didn't directly impact authenticity, but the type of relationship (e.g., living together vs. dating) did influence these factors. The study also suggested that a common method for measuring authenticity might need adjustments for adults beyond college age.

Human et al. (2018) examined the co-construction of masculinity and femininity within the context of romance (N = 25). The research employed an ethnographic discursive approach with interviews from middle-class, heterosexual South African couples. Findings suggest that rigid expectations around romance limit women's agency in expressing romantic desires. The pressure to conform to traditional gender roles (men actively orchestrate romance, women passively receive) reinforces patriarchal structures within relationships.

James (2019) conducted a study on paper titled "How to Find and Sustain Love". Maintaining a healthy relationship requires ongoing effort and open communication. Partners who prioritize quality time together, practice active listening, and strive to understand each other's needs and feelings demonstrate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. However, research also suggests that maintaining a sense of independence and personal growth is important. Couples who continue to invest in their own interests and hobbies may experience a more positive and dynamic relationship over time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

AIM

To examine correlation of love in online dating and how communication patterns on online dating platforms influence the development of intimacy, passion, and commitment.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To Investigate correlation between Communication Patterns and 3 key aspects of Love on online dating (Sternberg Theory of love),

- To investigate correlation between communication patterns and intimacy on online dating app.
- To investigate correlation between communication patterns and passion on online dating app.
- To investigate correlation between communication patterns and commitment on online dating app.

HYPOTHESIS

Examine the correlation of Love and communication patterns on online dating platforms with intimacy, passion, and commitment in a romantic relationship.

VARIABLES

Independent: communication patterns

Dependent: intimacy, passion, and commitment

SAMPLING DESIGN

A convenient sampling was employed to collect a sample (N=120) within the age range of 18-25 years comprising 60 male participants and 60 female participants. The sample was recruited from various universities of Delhi- NCR diverse educational apartments. Online responses were collected on Google Forms and offline responses were also collected using Online Dating Survey, Communication Patterns Questionnaire and Sternberg's Love Triangle Scale.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The study excluded anyone not in a romantic relationship and individuals of other age groups, who were below age 18 or above age 26. Inclusion criteria involved young adults (age range- 18 to 25) and participants who were currently involved in a romantic relationship.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research follows correlational research design that was used to collect data on young adults to study the relationship between variables. Quantitative research method was employed for the study to analyze the data method as well as survey method was used to collect responses from the participants using Online Dating Survey, Communication Patterns Questionnaire and Sternberg's Love Triangle Scale.

TOOLS USED

Online Dating Survey

Dating platforms use surveys to understand user experiences, preferences, and frustrations. This helps them improve their services, matching algorithms, and user interface.

Communication Patterns Questionnaire

Self-report tool for evaluating couple communication behavior is the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen, 1987). It has been shown to be highly valid for identifying the demand/withdraw interaction pattern, which is a strong indicator of both negative individual and relationship outcomes (Schrodt et al., 2013).

Sternberg's Love Triangle Scale

Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (STLS; Sternberg, 1986, 1997) was created based on the Triangular Theory of Love (Sternberg, 1986, 1988). It evaluates a person's views toward their spouse based on a range of acts and emotions related to love. Intimacy, passion, and commitment are the three elements that the STLS assesses and can be thought of as the vertices of a triangle. According to psychologist Robert Sternberg, love is made up of three elements: commitment, passion, and closeness. The scale's first fifteen items measure closeness, the next fifteen measure passion, and the last fifteen measure commitment.

RESULT**TABLE 1***N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

Variable	Sample size	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication (CPQ)	120	34.92	14.19
Intimacy	120	87.5	30.33
Passion	120	95.86	29.48
Commitment	120	92.33	32.5

TABLE 2

Correlation Coefficients: Correlation between communication patterns in online dating and development of intimacy, passion, and commitment

Communication in Online Dating Vs (Variable)	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Intimacy	0.1488	0.025
Passion	0.3688	0.026
Commitment	0.4043	0.027

Analysis revealed some significant connections, with all correlations between communication pattern and the key aspects of romantic relationships: intimacy, passion, commitment (Shown in Table 1).

Intimacy: There's a weak positive correlation (0.1488) between communication and intimacy. This means that as people communicate more on dating apps (possibly through more frequent messages or deeper conversations), their sense of intimacy also tends to increase slightly. The statistically significant p-value (0.025) indicates this result is unlikely to be random.

Passion: There's a moderate positive correlation (0.3688) between communication and passion. This suggests a clear link as communication on dating apps increases, there's a more substantial tendency for passion scores to also increase. The significant p-value (0.026) strengthens this observation. Perhaps more frequent communication strengthens the initial stages of an online relationship.

Commitment: Moderate positive correlation (0.4043) between communication and commitment. This is the strongest correlation, suggesting that increased communication on dating apps is associated with a more significant rise in reported commitment levels. The p-value (0.027) again indicates statistical significance. More communication might lead to a deeper understanding of a partner's values and goals, potentially solidifying the desire for a long-term connection.

This data suggests that communication plays a crucial role in fostering positive connections on online dating platforms. Increased communication, potentially characterized by quality interactions and deeper conversations, is associated with a rise in intimacy, passion, and commitment.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to examine correlation of love in online dating and communication patterns on online dating platforms influence the development of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The objective of the research was to investigate how communication patterns on online dating platforms influence the development of key elements of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment in romantic relationships.

In Sternberg's theory, the concept of love is a triangle that is made up of three components. Some of these types of love are focused on the love between two people in a romantic or sexual relationship, but these types of love also apply to other forms of interpersonal relationships. The three components are Intimacy, which involves feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness; Passion, which involves feelings and desires that lead to physical attraction, romance, and sexual consummation; Decision/commitment, which involves feelings that lead a person to remain with someone and move toward a shared goal.

Research was conducted by Madey (2019) on the Effect of Attachment and Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love on Relationship Satisfaction. The relationship between attachment and intimacy, passion, and commitment. Fifty- five college students who were in romantic relationships completed the Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love Scale. The study found two things about what makes relationships satisfying: Feeling secure and loved by your partner (secure attachment) leads to feeling more committed and closer (intimacy) to them, which in turn makes you happier with the relationship. It's like a chain reaction where security builds a strong foundation for a happy relationship. Passion (like feeling attracted and excited by your partner) also directly contributes to relationship satisfaction. This means excitement keeps things interesting and adds another layer to why you enjoy being together.

A correlational research design was employed, meaning data was collected from a sample of participants at a single point in time. The sample size for this study was 120 young adults (aged between 18 to 25). The results, showing positive correlations between communication patterns and intimacy, passion, and commitment, suggest that communication plays a significant role in the development of love in online dating contexts. Increased communication, likely characterized by more messages or conversations, provides opportunities for connection and understanding. This can be the foundation for building intimacy and passion. Deeper communication, possibly involving vulnerability exchange and emotional expression, fosters a sense of closeness and intimacy. Sharing personal experiences and feelings allows partners to connect on a deeper level, strengthening the emotional bond. Communication styles that are positive, humorous, and validating contribute to a more enjoyable interaction. This can keep the spark alive and fuel the feelings of excitement and passion in the early stages of an online relationship. Increased and positive communication might lead to a better understanding of a partner's values, goals, and compatibility. This deeper knowledge can solidify the desire for a long-term commitment.

LIMITATIONS

Communication Measurement: The way communication patterns were measured might be a limitation. The study might have focused solely on frequency (number of messages) without capturing the quality or depth of communication (emotional expression, vulnerability exchange). This could lead to an incomplete understanding of how communication truly influences love.

Sample Specificity: The research might have been conducted with a specific population (age group, location, dating app). The results might not be generalizable to a broader online dating audience.

Moderating variables: Exploring how personality traits, relationship goals, or cultural backgrounds might influence the communication-love connection.

IMPLICATIONS

The research suggests that communication patterns are a significant factor influencing the development of intimacy, passion, and commitment in online relationships. It highlights the importance of going beyond just swiping right and engaging in meaningful conversations to build stronger connections.

While, frequent communication might be a starting point, the findings imply that the quality of communication likely matters more. Deeper conversations that involve vulnerability exchange, emotional expression, and positive interaction styles can foster a stronger sense of connection and potentially lead to a more fulfilling online relationship.

Online dating platforms can play a role in encouraging positive communication patterns. Features that facilitate deeper conversations, emotional expression tools, and nudges towards vulnerability exchange could be explored to create a more supportive environment for love to develop.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between communication and intimacy, passion, and commitment in the context of online dating applications. The findings reveal a positive correlation between communication and all three aspects of a developing relationship.

- a) **Intimacy:** A weak positive correlation (0.1488) suggests that increased communication leads to a slight increase in feelings of intimacy.

- b) **Passion:** A moderate positive correlation (0.3688) indicates a clearer link between communication and passion. More frequent communication may contribute to the development of passion in the initial stages of online relationships.
- c) **Commitment:** The strongest positive correlation (0.4043) was found between communication and commitment. This suggests that increased communication is associated with a more significant rise in reported commitment levels. More communication might lead to a deeper understanding of a partner's values and goals, potentially fostering a desire for a long-term connection.

Overall, the results highlight the importance of communication in fostering positive connections on dating apps. Further research could explore the specific types and depths of communication that contribute most to intimacy, passion, and commitment development in online relationships.

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