



Influence of Family Functioning on Love Language among Young Adults

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Abstract

This literature tries to analyse the influence of Family Functioning on the Five Love Languages of an individual. The study examined how the Five Love Languages, namely, Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Acts of Services and Gift Giving are influenced by the individual Family Functioning and upbringing. The study conducted on a sample size of 230 (N=230) administrated the Family APGAR Scale by (Smilkstein) and the Five Love Language Scale by (Dr. Chapman). The results were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that there exists no significant relationship between Love Language and one's Family Functioning. Furthermore, it was noted that there was no significant difference in Family Functioning and Love Language among males and females.

Keywords: *family functioning, dysfunctional family, love languages, Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Acts of Services, Gift Giving.*

Introduction

Family can be defined as a close unit or group of individuals that choose to live in an interdependent relationship typically having a hierarchy of descendants from a common ancestor. Family provides a safe space for trial-and-error learning in the early developmental stages of an individual, learning about different actions and their consequences (Sullivan, 2008). This knowledge that they have achieved will be applied to the different social settings outside their family to develop their personality. How a family functions from early childhood can have lasting effects on the individual even if the individual may or may not have any contact with the family thereafter (Tyrell et al., 2016). The systems of family functions are the role everyone in the family is assigned that serves the family system operations as well as how the system benefits each member of the family. How a family functions can have its impact on multiple areas of the member's life in the family, it can range from general well-being and future of the family to how the interpersonal relationships between family members are affected.

The interpersonal relationships among the family members are core lessons that are watched, adopted and learned by the children in their family. They grow up watching the adults deals with situations and strive to come up to their expectations, often imitating the actions and behaviour of the adults they look up to thus building their behaviour and development of their personality (Karre, 2015). Additionally, how they are held accountable for their actions and behaviour reflects in their personality development. Major aspects of personality development are influenced by temperament.

Temperament is perceived as a multilevel construct, that can be observable through behavioural and neurobiological measurements, and factors such as genetic, biological, cognitive, and environmental factors bring about constant evolvement. Different temperament traits impose inherent vulnerability like high negative emotionality or resilience such as high

Effortful Control, mechanisms which influence outcomes through controlling individual's exposure to enriching or negative environments, constraining what environmental characteristics are beneficial or harmful to specific temperament traits. Temperament traits also affect individuals' level of susceptibility to both aversive and favourable environmental influences. These dynamic interactive processes support the fundamental notion that temperament does not determine developmental outcomes. Rather, it sets the complex foundation on which multiple actors come together to shape developmental outcomes (Fu, Xiaoxue, Perez-Edgar, & Koraly, 2015). Among other factors, the external environment and how the individual perceives and adjusts to a given situation has proven to be a determinantal factor in child development. In a study conducted in Spain among 214 participants who were between the age of 3 to 10 coming from 6 different family structures were assessed on their internal and external adjustment compared to the quality of family context. The six different family structures considered are traditional, single-parent, stepfamilies, adoptive, same-sex parent and multiple-birth. the results indicated astonishing conclusions such as the children coming from same sex parent families scored the highest in internal and external adjustment while children coming from stepfamilies scored the least in internal and external adjustment. These differences disappeared when the effects of sociodemographic and contextual variables were statistically controlled in a covariance analysis. Thus, it must be recognised that these differences arise due to sociodemographic and contextual variables and not due to individual difference in a family.

Thus, we understand that children growing up in any family context would develop appropriate positive child development and adjustment provided they grow in a nurturing family that meets the necessary conditions such as good-quality care and a stimulating environment free from conflict and stress (Oliva et al., 2014). Thus, we understand the environment that the child grows in which also includes the family has an influence on the

child's personality and development. All individual adults have distinctive and unique personality that reflects their upbringing and childhood. So thus, we ask the question, how does family functioning affect one's love life?

Romantic relationships help individuals cherish and nurture their emotional and physical needs as well as meet their physical and emotional needs in a healthy manner. We are prone to feel great emotional arousal around our partner or someone we have feelings for accompanied by a set of thoughts also known as cognition associated with them influenced by our previous experiences or past events about our expectations of the relationship, which can be greatly influenced by our past experiences and interactions with our parents or primary caregivers (Toro, 2012). A healthy romantic relationship helps improve one's mood and emotions and can provide stability and support for personal growth and development (Weisskirch, 2018). Therefore, we need to investigate couples on an individual level to examine the differences seen among them. The romantic engagement is an important area in any individual's life as that decides how able they will be to reproduce, the main goal of any organism considered. The core of an individual's romantic endeavours depends on how they choose to express their love and expect to receive it back (Baharvand, 2022). This is also called one's love language. Love language encompasses an individual's preferences for expressing affection and interest as well as how they expect others to behave when expressing forms of affection. The preferred love language may vary for each individual as we all have different proportions of the combination of love language in different contexts as well as differences in expression of love language, as well as receiving (Chapman, 2015). Most of us have one or more preferred love languages and is very important to be understood in a relationship because the form in which you choose to communicate your feelings determines if the other individual perceives the feelings in their intended intensity and meaning. If harmony between everyone based on their love language is not adequate or if they are not attuned to each other love language, they may face relationship

dissatisfaction or loss of interest (Mostova, 2022). Love languages are of different types and can be grouped into five categories:

- ***Words of affirmation***

Individuals whose primary love language is words of affirmation would thrive on spoken affection, praise, encouragement, and compliments. They may find themselves bothered deeply by harsh words or criticisms.

- ***Act of services***

Individuals who enjoy their partner contributing to ease their expected productivity or they like small acts of kindness out of generosity done to them by their partner.

- ***Receiving gifts***

People who enjoy receiving gifts or thoughtful and meaningful objects or materials from their loved ones come under this category.

- ***Quality time***

People who enjoy spending time with their significant other and wish to do things together or spend time together fall under this category

- ***Physical touch***

Individuals who like to spend intimate moments with their significant other or who prefer holding hand, cuddling, or other acts that display forms of affection.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consists of 200 participants who are currently in a relationship and are aged 18 to 30. A convenient sampling technique is administered to select adults aged 18 to 30 who are involved in romantic relationships.

Measures

A survey instrument was used in this study which comprised of three sections. In the first section, demographical and personal information of the participants were obtained. The second section comprised of Family APGAR Questionnaire by Smilkstein. The third section included a standardized scale The Five Love Language Test by Chapman. A brief description of the measures is given below:

1. *Social demographic data sheet*

It includes the individual's personal details such as age, gender, educational qualification.

2. *Family APGAR Questionnaire (Family APGAR; Smilkstein,1978).*

APGAR questionnaire was used for assessing the family functioning of the individual. Each question in the APGAR questionnaire is designed for the qualitative measurement of the individual satisfaction of the five aspects of a functioning family, namely adaptability, partnership, growth, affection and resolve. Family APGAR is a five-item questionnaire that has three optional responses namely almost always, some of the time and hardly ever each score 2, 1 and 0 respectively. The sum of the responses is to be added and may range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 10. The reliability

of the scale was calculated to be Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 indicating reliable internal consistency during the assessment to understand one's family functioning (Smilkstein, 1978)

3. *The Five Love Language Test (FLL; Chapman, 2010).*

The Five Love Language Test is used to identify the six different types of love language namely, receiving gifts, words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, and physical touch. There are 30 items in the questionnaire that are further divided into five subscales. The participants respond by selecting the most appropriate statement between the two optional sentences. The FLL scale showed a promising composite reliability score of 0.884 and satisfactory item-total correlations of an average of less than 0.250 (Surijah & Septiarly, 2016).

Procedure

The data is collected using convenient sampling method and the sample consists of individuals within the age group of 18 to 30. The questionnaire is circulated online using online platforms. The participants are informed prior to the response collection, the objective of the study and the confidentiality and privacy of the participants are guaranteed. The participants are informed that there is no set time limit to respond and that they are allowed to stop responding at any point during the progress of the response. The participants are informed that there is no right or wrong answer, and each response is only a reflection of their opinion.

Results

The data was collected from young adults between the age range of 18 to 30 who are currently engaged in romantic relationship or have previously experienced being in a romantic

relationship at least once. The response was collected from 230 individuals of which 162 were male and 68 were female.

Table 1

1.1 Mean scores and Standard Deviation of the participants for family functioning and love languages

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family Functioning	6.6	2.8
Words of Affirmation	5.66	2.02
Quality Time	8.36	1.84
Receiving Gifts	2.73	2.00
Acts of Services	5.94	1.94
Physical Touch	7.31	2.46

Table 1 describes the mean and standard deviation of family functioning and the different subscales of love language. The average family functioning of the population earned a score of 6.6 which falls under moderately dysfunctional family settling. The scoring of the family functioning is 0 – 3 being severely dysfunctional, 4 – 6 being moderately dysfunctional, and 7 to 10 being dysfunctional family. The mean of the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch have values of 5.66, 8.36, 2.73, 5.94, and 7.31 respectively. This indicated that the general population prefer the use of quality time above other forms of love language, followed by physical touch being the second most desirable. Words of affirmation and acts of services is moderately preferred and the least preferred is receiving gifts.

Table 2*1.2 normality of the variables*

Variable	Significance
Family Functioning	.000
Words of Affirmation	.000
Quality Time	.000
Receiving Gifts	.000
Acts of Services	.000
Physical Touch	.000

Table 2 shows the results of the Shapiro Wilk test for testing the normality, the family functioning, and the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch have a significance value (p) of 0.000. The $p < 0.05$ (critical value), therefore the assumption can be made that the data collected from the participants is not normally distributed. Hence, the non-parametric tests of Spearman's correlation are adopted.

Table 3*1.3 Point-Biserial Correlation between family functioning and love languages*

Variable	Correlation and Significance with Family Functioning
Words of Affirmation	-0.029
	0.663
Quality Time	-0.05
	0.945
Receiving Gifts	0.049
	0.456
Acts of Services	-0.013
	0.845
Physical Touch	-0.018
	0.791

Table 3 provides the Spearman's correlation of family functioning with the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch is -0.29, -0.00, 0.049, -0.013, -0.018 respectively, when the significance level (p value) is 0.663, 0.945, 0.456, 0.845, 0.791 respectively. This indicates that there is no correlation between family functioning and any of the subscales of love language. Thus, the Alternate Hypothesis is rejected, and Null Hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4

4.1.4 Mann-Whitney U Test results comparing females and males on family functioning and love languages

Variable	Z value and Significance
Family Functioning	-.124
	.902
Words of Affirmation	-.580
	.562
Quality Time	-.606
	.545
Receiving Gifts	-1.096
	.273
Acts of Services	-2.224
	.026
Physical Touch	-1.176
	.240

Table 4 depicts the Mann-Whitney U Test score obtained. The Mann-Whitney U Test was computed to compare the means of the total scores of family functioning and the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch. The results earned a significance level of .902, .562, .545, .273, .026, .240 for total scores of family functioning and the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch respectively. The

results indicate no significant difference between the means of male and female for total scores of family functioning and the subscales of love language which are, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, and physical touch. The significance level of Acts of Services is 0.026, which is less than 0.05, thus significant. The Z value = -2.224, N = 230, to calculate Effect Size(r) we use the equation $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$, which earns 0.14. According to Cohen (1988) criteria, .1 is low effect, .3 is large effect, and .5 is large effect. Since the p value is 0.026, we understand that there is a significant difference of low effect between the preference for Acts of Services among male and female. Thus, the Null Hypothesis is rejected, and the Alternate Hypothesis is Accepted.

Discussion of Results

Family dynamics and the functioning of an individual have a vast impact on their emotional and physiological state as well as well-being. Our family has the power to make us feel different extreme emotions such as joy, sorrow, guilt, pain, etc. Growing up with them would have certain long-lasting effects that can be influential in certain factors. Our love language is one such factor that is in direct relation to our family functioning. An individual's love language is their way of expressing affection and how they expect to be loved, it tells us how we express our needs and emotions. Our family functioning has a great influence on our love language and romantic relationship. At least that's what we believed; the results of the literature however proved otherwise.

The results indicates that there is no significant relationship between family functioning and love language. There was no noticeable correlation between family functioning and the subscales of the love languages such as words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services, and physical touch. This may be since we may have overlooked multiple other factors, one of them being the complexity of the family dynamics. Family functioning is a

multifaceted concept influencing various factors such as communication patterns, conflict resolution styles, and family roles. The five love languages, while important, may not capture the entirety of these dynamics, leading to a lack of significant correlation.

There may also be individual variances, although taken from similar population, each family functions uniquely and created their own dynamics as they evolve through time spent with each other and according to the uniqueness of the roles assigned to each member of the unit. And again, Bangalore, the city of focus, being a multicultural community, we may have not considered the impacts of the cultural contributions in its full entirety, the perception and expression of love can vary significantly across cultures and contexts. The five love languages model may not fully account for these variations, leading to differences that don't align neatly with family functioning measures. External factors such as societal influences, cultural context, normative behaviours, economic stressors, or individual life events within families can also impact both family functioning and the expression of love languages, potentially masking any underlying correlations. Larson et al. (2001) studied dysfunctional family-of-origin rules, current dating behaviours, dating anxiety, relationship satisfaction and commitment. The results showed that family dysfunction was positively correlational to dating anxiety and was negatively correlational to relationship satisfaction and commitment (Larson et al., 2001). even though they were able to find a positive correlation between the variables, in this research it proved to find no significant relationship between both. The aim of the study was to analyse the influence of the family functioning on one's love languages but since we do not find any correlation between the two variables, the hypothesis that there is no relationship between family functioning and love language is accepted in this research.

It was also observed that there is no difference between the family functioning between gender. This may be due to the influence of the cultural norms and expectations; Cultural

factors play a significant role in shaping family dynamics and gender roles. In some cultures, there may be strong expectations regarding family roles and responsibilities that are not necessarily tied to gender. These cultural nuances can impact how individuals perceive and experience family functioning. The Social Desirability Bias may be another influence, Respondents may provide answers that they believe are socially desirable rather than reflecting their true experiences. This bias can occur when participants feel pressure to conform to societal expectations or present themselves in a favourable light. However, it must be noted that the general population fell under the moderately functioning family background. This challenges the study done by Weisskirch and Rob (2018) conducted on emerging adults who were college students on their intimacy development, identity development, self-efficacy in romantic relationships, and parenting styles such as attachment styles, parental caring and overprotection, and parental challenge, and well-being which includes depressive symptoms, loneliness, happiness, and self-esteem (Weisskirch & Rob, 2018). The results showed women are more prone to high parental over-protectiveness and depression than men. But our study differs in this conclusion and states that both male and female are equally satisfied with their family functioning.

It was also observed that there was no significant difference in multiple factors of love language but one among males and females. Love languages are highly individualistic and can vary widely among individuals regardless of gender. People may have different primary and secondary love languages, and these preferences may not necessarily align with traditional gender stereotypes. Individuals learn and develop their love languages through socialization, experiences, and relationships rather than solely based on gender. Factors such as family upbringing, cultural background, personal values, and past relationships can all influence one's love language preferences and bring in an individualistic response than a collective response.

Tyrell's (2016) study on the prospective associations between the family context and adolescents' romantic relationships are examined as moderated by adolescents' gender and culture among Mexican American families. The study was conducted on multiple domains of family context when the child was in his early adolescence to predict the future adolescent's romantic relationship. The hypothesis was that the adolescent's former relationship with the family did have a direct impact on later romantic Relationships. But the hypothesis related to the role of gender and culture attained minimal support (Tyrell et al., 2016). This study supports our findings that there is no significant difference on love language among male and female very similar to Tyrell's conclusions. Love languages can also be influenced by specific interpersonal dynamics within relationships. Factors such as compatibility, communication styles, emotional needs, and relationship satisfaction can play a significant role in how love languages are expressed and received, regardless of gender.

Although all the factors of love language yield no significant difference between gender, Acts of Services did show a small amount of difference. Women showed more interest in acts of services than men, which can be explained by multifactorial approach. This difference cannot be traced back to a single cause or reason. It can be understood that cultural, biological, environmental, and psychological as well as genetic factors contribute to the difference. Biologically, a male physique in general tend to be a lot stronger than their female counterparts, making them capable of executing manual labour with a lot more ease (Stachenfeld, 2020). And we are brought up in a normative society where in it is courteous or chivalrous of men to favour women. Throughout history, women have faced rudimentary criticism over their efforts and have been dictated as to what their gender roles are and what they can contribute to, the repercussions of which the women still face in gender role, job position, salary difference etc which leaves woman at a large disadvantage (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2018). The hormonal difference give rise to difference on mood and emotion. Their evolutionary trait to

show enhanced sensitivity for danger towards their offspring as primary caregivers, have currently developed to be more understanding and empathetic (Givon et al., 2023). While indicating a preference for act of services, does not indicate predisposition, potential or capability of the individual.

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