Chapter 4
Comparing the Effects of Specific Variables on Passionate Love among Young People: A Cross–Cultural Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine differences of passionate love by culture, sex and the state of being in love at the time of the research. It was conducted with a total of 235 young people, 118 from a Turkish University and 117 from a US university. As a data collection tool, the Passionate Love Scale (PLS) and personal information forms were used. In this study, it was found that culture and the state of being in love affected passionate love. It was also found that university students in an individualistic culture (the US) reported a higher score of passionate love. However, there was not a significant difference for passionate love between scores obtained by both males and females from the US and Turkey. Furthermore, the PLS scores of the university students in love were significantly higher than those of the students who were not in love in both countries.

BACKGROUND

Social scientists have attempted to conceptualize love in order to define it and explore various related topics including the difficult measurement of love (Hatfield, Bensman & Rapson, 2012). Lee (1977) described the six colors of love; Fisher (2000) described love’s three functional systems; Sternberg’s Triangular Theory (1986) identified eight distinct love states; and others distinguished just two types: companionate love and passionate love (Bersheid & Hatfield, 1969; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). Companionate love refers to a state which includes the concepts such as efforts to make a beloved happy, DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2404-5.ch004
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caretaking, reciprocal openness, sharing, understanding, compassion, and deep emotional affiliation. On the other hand, passionate love, which refers to the intensive desire to become one with the other, (sometimes called romantic love, infatuation, love sickness, or obsessive love) is a powerful emotional state (Hatfield, 1988; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). When someone in passionate love attains a beloved, happiness, excitement, physical stimulation and sexual satisfaction emerge. Conversely, being apart results in anxiety, jealousy, suspicion, suffering and disappointment (Hatfield, 1988).

Cultures vary widely in the norms, attitudes, and customs surrounding these love types (Hatfield & Rapson, 2002). Hofstede (2016a) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing members of one group or category of people from others.” His dimensions of national culture create a framework, which when represented numerically with a cultural comparison tool, allow for comparisons among 70 countries. One of these dimensions is individualism versus collectivism. Using Hofstede’s (2016b) cross-cultural comparison tool to compare Turkey (T) to the US on this dimension numerically, the score indicates vast differences related to social norms. The score is as follows: Individualism: T (37)/US (91); indicating that Turkey is a collectivistic society focused on the “we” aspect of looking out for one another; group harmony must be maintained. On the other hand, the US is individualistic to a very large degree, indicating the focus on the “I” aspects of its’ culture. When we compare the dimension of individualism to that of collectivism, these opposites reflect the degree to which the social framework expects individuals to take care of themselves and their immediate families or there is an expectation of taking care of a larger group in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. This is reflected by the position of a society related to whether their self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “we.” In our study, the US represents the dimension of individualism, while Turkey exhibits the features of a transitional stage society when individual and collective dimensions are taken into account. This is because values peculiar to an individualistic society can be observed in Turkey in daily life along with collectivist culture, traditional practices and the pressures of religion (Ercan, 2008; Delevi & Bugay, 2010). For this reason, it was kept in mind in this study that both individualistic and collectivist culture characteristics may co-exist in Turkey. However, compared to the US through Hofstede’s (2016a) national culture dimension, Turkey was accepted as representing the collectivist dimension.

Most love research has been conducted with samples obtained from individualistic cultures, such as the United States or other Westernized societies; and from collectivistic cultures, such as Japan, India, China and other Asian cultures (e.g. Hatfield, Schmitz, Cornelius & Rapson, 1988; Sprecher et al., 1994; Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Individualistic cultures, such as North American and Western European countries, tend to be characterized by a cultural perspective that includes satisfaction of personal characteristics, needs, and motives for various acts, such as kissing, sex, emotional contact, and companionship in love relationships that are important for happiness or subjective well-being (Carducci, 2003; Kim & Hatfield, 2004). In these countries, people marry for love, and also the majority of people believe that passionate love is the most important factor for marriage (Kim & Hatfield, 2004).

In contrast to individualistic cultures, collectivistic cultures (such as Japan, India, China and other Asian cultures) tend to be characterized by the cultural perspective that satisfaction of personal characteristics, needs, and motives are less important. This is because in these countries, the expectations and duties associated with being a member of a group such as family, country, occupation, or caste are the most important aspects (Carducci, 2003). In this respect, emotional experiments in love relationships are not essential. Companionate love is highly emphasized because passionate relationships disrupt the tradition of family-approved and arranged marriage choices in collectivistic cultures (Kim & Hatfield, 2004).