



Examining Expressions of Love: A Qualitative Analysis of Emotional Dynamics between Adult Men and Women in Sialkot, with a Focus on Asian Cultural Contexts

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Abstract

Current research explored the influence of cultural norms and gender roles on the expressions of love and emotional intimacy among male and female adults in Sialkot, with a focus on how traditional Asian values shape these dynamics. Employing a cross-sectional research design with a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 40 male and female participants aged 20-40, representing both rural and urban areas of Sialkot. The research highlights significant gender differences in emotional expression and intimacy. Findings indicate that men exhibit a higher expression of sexual desire (70%) and verbal communication of love (80%) compared to women (30% and 20%, respectively). Women, influenced by cultural norms promoting modesty and restraint, exhibit a higher fear of character assassination (60%) which restricts their ability to openly express their feelings. The study also reveals that men are more inclined towards romantic (Eros) and playful (Ludus) types of love, while both genders equally value friendship (Storge). Women tend to engage in intimacy without overt expressions of love more than men. Cultural norms and societal expectations in Sialkot reinforce traditional gender roles, leading to more subdued and private expressions of affection for women, while men navigate these norms with greater freedom. Positive emotional expression is crucial as it helps to mitigate emotional damage and promotes healthier interactions between genders. The study underscores the need for culturally sensitive educational programs and counseling services to address these gender-specific barriers and promote healthier emotional communication. The findings have implications for understanding the intersection of culture, gender, and emotional expression in romantic relationships within traditional Asian contexts.

Keywords

Love Expressions, Adults, Intimacy, Gender Roles, Love Styles, Emotional Dynamics, Sialkot

Introduction

The expression of love, a fundamental human experience, varies significantly across different genders due to a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. Traditionally, gender roles and expectations have influenced how love is expressed and perceived. Research suggests that while men and women may experience love similarly in terms of emotional depth and commitment, their modes of expression can differ markedly. For instance, studies indicate that women are often socialized to be more expressive and communicative about their emotions, whereas men might express love through actions or practical support rather than verbal affirmation (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Furthermore, biological perspectives argue that hormonal differences can affect emotional responses and behaviors associated with love (Gershon & Kluver, 2020). Sociocultural contexts also play a crucial role, as varying cultural norms and expectations can shape how love is demonstrated. In more collectivist societies, expressions of love might be more subtle and intertwined

with familial duties, whereas individualistic cultures may emphasize romantic gestures and verbal affirmations (Triandis, 1995).

Gender difference in emotional expression and communication

Women are generally more likely to express their love through verbal communication and emotional openness. They often engage in sharing feelings, discussing the relationship, and seeking emotional support, which aligns with findings that women are more socially oriented and empathetic (Tannen, 1990). Studies indicate that women use verbal expressions of affection more frequently and are more likely to engage in affectionate behaviors like hugging and talking about their emotions (Fehr, 1996). In contrast, men often express love through actions rather than words. Research suggests that men might prefer to show their love by providing practical support, such as through acts of service or by fulfilling financial and protective roles (Chapman, 1995). This difference is partly attributed to traditional gender roles where men are socialized to be less expressive of their emotions and more action-oriented (Kilmartin, 2005).

Biological Factors

Biological factors also play a role in shaping emotional expressions. For instance, hormonal differences such as higher levels of oxytocin in women are associated with nurturing and bonding behaviors (Carter, 1998). Men, on the other hand, may have different hormonal influences that affect their expression of love and emotional attachment, often leading to a preference for demonstrating affection through actions rather than words (Fisher, 1998).

Cultural Influences

Cultural norms and expectations further influence how love is expressed. In many cultures, traditional gender roles dictate that women should be more emotionally expressive while men should be stoic and demonstrate love through practical means (Wood & Eagly, 2002). These cultural norms can reinforce and perpetuate gendered differences in love expression. In Asian cultural expression of love by a female is considered as a symbol of her character assassination.

Cultural Norms and Gender Expectations in Asian Societies

In many Asian societies, traditional gender roles heavily influence how love and affection are expressed. Confucian values, which emphasize hierarchy and familial duty, often shape these norms. In countries like China, Korea, and Japan, public displays of affection by women can be viewed as inappropriate or disrespectful (Hsu, 2019).

Confucian Influence in East Asia

Confucianism plays a significant role in shaping social norms in East Asian countries. Confucian ideals emphasize modesty and propriety, particularly for women. As a result, expressions of romantic love by women are often restrained to avoid public scrutiny (Kim, 2020).

Influence of Religion and Tradition

In addition to Confucianism, other religious and traditional beliefs also impact how love is expressed. In Hindu-majority India, societal expectations often dictate that women should maintain a level of restraint in their romantic relationships, as public displays of affection can be stigmatized (Gupta, 2021).

Social Stigma and Its Impact

The stigma surrounding the expression of love by women can lead to various social consequences. Women who deviate from traditional norms may face criticism or ostracism, which affects their mental health and social status (Tanaka, 2022).

Social Consequences and Mental Health

Research indicates that women who openly express their romantic feelings often face social backlash, including negative judgments from peers and family. This stigma can lead to stress and mental health issues, as women navigate the pressures of conforming to traditional expectations while expressing their emotions (Lee, 2023).

Media and Cultural Representations

Media representations also play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes toward women's expressions of love. In many Asian countries, media often portrays traditional gender roles and can reinforce the stigma against women expressing love openly (Singh, 2024).

Changing Trends

Recent shifts in societal attitudes and increased globalization are contributing to changes in how love is expressed. Younger generations in Asia are increasingly challenging traditional norms, leading to a gradual change in attitudes toward women's public expressions of affection (Zhang, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and later expanded by Mary Ainsworth, posits that early relationships with primary caregivers shape individuals' expectations and behaviors in romantic relationships.

Gender Differences:

Research suggests that while both genders form secure or insecure attachment styles, men and women may express attachment differently. Women often exhibit more secure attachment styles and are more likely to seek emotional support, while men might exhibit avoidant attachment, reflecting traditional gender norms around emotional expression (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Social Role Theory

Social role theory, proposed by Eagly and Wood, suggests that gender differences in behavior arise from societal expectations and roles. According to this theory, men and women are socialized into different roles which influence how they express love.

Gender Differences: Social role theory indicates that women are typically socialized to be more nurturing and expressive in their relationships, while men are often encouraged to demonstrate love through actions and providing practical support (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

Biological Theories

Biological theories focus on the role of hormones and brain chemistry in influencing romantic behaviors and attachment.

Gender Differences: Hormonal differences, such as variations in oxytocin and testosterone levels, contribute to differing expressions of love. For instance, higher oxytocin levels in women are associated with bonding and nurturing behaviors, while testosterone may affect men's emotional expression and attachment styles (Carter, 1998; Fisher, 1998).

Love Styles Theory

Love styles theory, developed by John Lee, identifies different styles or types of love, including Eros (romantic), Ludus (game-playing), Storge (friendship), Pragma (practical), Mania (obsessive), and Agape (selfless).

Gender Differences: Research suggests that men and women may exhibit different preferences for these love styles. Women are often found to prefer more emotionally expressive and committed styles like Eros and Agape, whereas men might lean towards styles characterized by less emotional intensity, such as Ludus (Lee, 1973). Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, though not specifically a love theory, provides a framework for understanding how cultural values impact emotional expression. Cultural expectations around gender roles significantly influence how love is expressed. For example, cultures with high masculinity values may reinforce traditional gender roles where men express love through actions rather than words, whereas cultures with high femininity values may encourage more verbal and emotional expressions of love (Hofstede, 2001).

Physical Expression of Love

Gender Differences

Physical expressions of love often include gestures such as hugging, kissing, and other forms of touch. Research indicates that women are generally more inclined to use physical touch as a way to express affection and intimacy. This tendency is linked to socialization patterns where women are encouraged to be more nurturing and emotionally expressive (Hoffman, 1998). On the other hand, men may express love through actions that involve physical activities, such as spending time together in shared hobbies or providing practical support (Chapman, 1995). Women are socialized to be more nurturing and expressive, which aligns with their tendency to engage in physical touch as a way to maintain and enhance emotional connections (Fehr, 1996). This difference can be attributed to traditional gender norms that encourage men to demonstrate their love through behavior rather than verbal or physical gestures (Kilmartin, 2005).

Psychological Expression of Love

Gender Differences

Psychological expressions of love involve emotional communication, psychological support, and verbal affirmations. Women are generally more verbal in expressing their feelings and are more likely to engage in emotionally supportive behaviors (Tannen, 1990). They often use language to build and maintain emotional intimacy in relationships. Men, conversely, may express love through actions and problem-solving rather than verbal communication, reflecting traditional gender norms that encourage men to show affection through practical means rather than emotional dialogue (Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Integration of Physical and Psychological Expressions

The integration of physical and psychological expressions of love varies by gender, with cultural and individual factors playing significant roles. While women might blend physical affection with verbal communication to reinforce emotional bonds, men may combine physical actions with less frequent verbal affirmations. These patterns underscore the complex interplay between biological predispositions and socialization in shaping how love is expressed.

Sexual Demand as an Aspect of Love Expression

Sexual demand and its integration into expressions of love can vary significantly between genders. Historically and sociocultural, sexual behaviors have been closely tied to expressions of affection, though the extent and manner of this integration can differ.

Gender Differences in Sexual Demand

Men's Perspective

Research indicates that men often view sexual intimacy as a key component of romantic relationships. For many men, sexual activity is a significant way of expressing love and emotional connection (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Studies have found that men may experience and express love through physical intimacy, with sexual desire sometimes acting as a proxy for emotional closeness and commitment (Miller et al., 2005). This view aligns with traditional gender norms that associate masculinity with sexual assertiveness and performance (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

Women's Perspective

In contrast, women often place a strong emphasis on emotional connection and intimacy as part of their sexual experiences. For many women, sexual activity is intertwined with emotional closeness and relational satisfaction (Moskowitz & Lilienfeld, 2004). Research suggests that while sexual desire is important, women often view it within the context of a stable, emotionally fulfilling relationship. This perspective reflects a tendency for women to prioritize emotional intimacy and relational security over sexual frequency (Basson, 2001).

Biological and Sociocultural Influences

Hormonal differences play a role in sexual desire and expression. For instance, testosterone is linked to sexual drive in both men and women, but its effects are more pronounced in men. This biological difference can partly explain why men might place a higher emphasis on sexual expression as part of their love (Herman, 2002). For women, estrogen and oxytocin levels also affect sexual desire, often linking it to emotional and relational factors (Meston & Frohlich, 2000).

Sociocultural Influences

Cultural norms and societal expectations significantly influence how sexual demand is perceived and expressed. Traditional gender roles often portray men as more overtly sexual and women as more restrained, impacting how sexual needs are integrated into expressions of love (Eagly & Wood, 1999). For instance, cultures that emphasize traditional masculinity may encourage men to express love through sexual assertiveness, while women might be socialized to see sexual activity as a component of relational and emotional intimacy.

Methodology

Cross sectional research design was utilized with mixed method approach. Sample of 40 male and female adults with an age range of 20-40 years was obtained to measure the constructs from both rural and urban areas of Sialkot. A self-developed demographic sheet was employed along with research questions developed and employed on the participants. 5 questions were asked from the focus group for the analysis. Frequency distribution was observed qualitatively from both male and female participants. Responses from the focus group as mentioned below.

Q1: How do cultural norms in Sialkot influence the expression of sexual desire and intimacy between adult men and women?

Response: *Cultural norms in Sialkot often promote modesty and restraint, leading to more private and subdued expressions of sexual desire and intimacy between men and women.*

Response: *In Sialkot, traditional values and social expectations encourage discretion in romantic interactions, which can limit open displays of sexual desire and intimacy in public and even private settings.*

Q2: In what ways does the Asian cultural context shape perception of intimacy and romantic relationships in Sialkot, and how does this affect emotional expression?

Response: *The Asian cultural context in Sialkot often emphasizes familial approval and social harmony in romantic relationships, leading individuals to express intimacy and emotions in more reserved and controlled ways to align with societal expectations.*

Response: *In Sialkot, traditional Asian values prioritize respect and modesty, which shapes perceptions of intimacy by encouraging subtle, indirect expressions of affection and emotional connection, thus impacting how openly individuals convey their feelings*

Q3: How do social stigmas and cultural expectations impact the ability of individuals in Sialkot to openly express their love and sexual needs?

Response: *Social stigmas and cultural expectations in Sialkot often discourage open expressions of love and sexual needs, leading individuals to navigate these feelings privately to avoid judgment and maintain social respectability.*

Response: *The pressure to conform to traditional norms in Sialkot creates barriers to openly discussing or demonstrating love and sexual desires, as individuals may fear social ostracism or damage to their reputations if they deviate from accepted practices.*

Q4: To what extent do traditional gender roles and societal pressures in Sialkot affect the dynamics of romantic and sexual relationships between men and women?

Response: *Traditional gender roles in Sialkot impose distinct expectations on men and women, with men often expected to be assertive and women to be passive, which can lead to imbalanced dynamics and limit genuine, mutual expression in romantic and sexual relationships.*

Response: *Societal pressures in Sialkot reinforce conservative views on gender, resulting in restricted communication and expression of affection between men and women, as both genders may feel constrained by rigid expectations and fear of social repercussions.*

Response: *The influence of traditional gender roles in Sialkot can lead to unequal power dynamics in romantic relationships, with societal norms often placing men in dominant positions and women in more submissive roles, affecting the overall balance and quality of emotional and sexual interactions.*

Q5: How do personal and cultural character assessments influence the way love and emotional intimacy are communicated and perceived in relationships in Sialkot?

Response: *Personal and cultural character assessments in Sialkot often shape how individuals express and perceive love, with those adhering to traditional values tending to communicate affection through reserved and respectful behaviors, aligning with societal expectations.*

Response: *In Sialkot, cultural character assessments that prioritize honor and reputation can lead to more cautious and controlled expressions of emotional intimacy, as females may avoid overt displays of affection to maintain social approval while its an honor for male to express overtly about love relationships.*

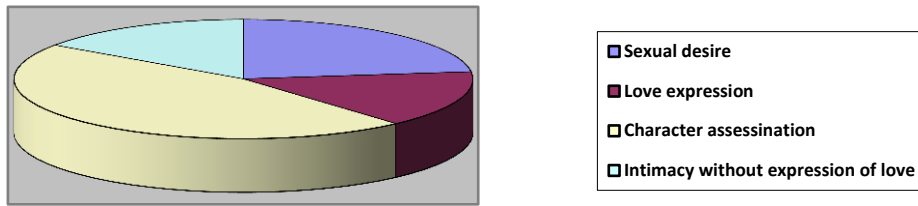
Response: *The influence of personal and cultural character assessments in Sialkot results in a nuanced approach to love and emotional intimacy, where individuals may tailor their expressions to fit cultural ideals of modesty and propriety, impacting how their feelings are perceived by others.*

Data Analysis and Discussion

Variables	Women	Men
Sexual desire	30%	70%
Love expression verbal communication	20%	80%
Fear of Character assassination	60%	10%
Intimacy without expression of love	20%	80%
Cultural Influence	40%	60%
Eros (romantic)	25%	75%
Ludus (game-playing)	35%	65%
Storge (friendship)	40%	60%

Pragma (practical)	10%	05%
Mania (obsessive)	25%	75%
Agape (selfless)	10%	05%

Table 1. Presents the frequency of different types of love, cultural influence and their expressions among male and female adults in Sialkot



Pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of emotional expression of love and gender difference.

The data reveals significant gender differences in the expression of sexual desire and emotional intimacy in Sialkot. According to the responses and the table, men report a higher expression of sexual desire (70%) and verbal communication of love (80%) compared to women (30% and 20%, respectively). This disparity aligns with traditional gender roles in Sialkot, where men are often expected to be more assertive and expressive, while women are encouraged to be more reserved and modest. Cultural norms in Sialkot promote modesty and restraint, which affects how both genders express their feelings. Women, adhering more closely to these norms, exhibit a higher fear of character assassination (60%) compared to men (10%). This fear likely restricts their ability to express sexual desire and emotional intimacy openly, supporting the observation that women are less verbal and expressive in romantic contexts. The types of love preferred by different genders reveal interesting insights: Eros (Romantic Love) Men (75%) show a higher inclination towards Eros compared to women (25%), indicating a more dominant focus on romantic and passionate expressions. Ludus (Game-Playing) Men (65%) also display a higher propensity for Ludus, suggesting that they may engage in relationships with a more playful or less serious approach. Storge (Friendship Love) Both genders show similar levels of Storge (men 60%, women 40%), indicating that friendship and companionship are valued across the board. In contrast, Pragma (Practical Love) and Agape (Selfless Love) are significantly lower across genders, reflecting that practical or purely altruistic approaches to relationships might be less emphasized in the context of Sialkot's romantic dynamics. The data highlights that both genders exhibit high levels of intimacy without the overt expression of love, with men (80%) being notably more inclined towards this form of interaction compared to women (20%). This might be a reflection of societal expectations where men feel freer to engage in intimate interactions without necessarily verbalizing love, while women, constrained by cultural norms, might avoid expressing love openly to conform to societal expectations. Cultural influence (40% for women and 60% for men) shows a notable impact on emotional expression, with men slightly more influenced by cultural norms. This indicates that while cultural expectations shape the behavior of both genders, the impact may differ, potentially allowing men more leeway in expressing emotions publicly. Character assessments reveal that women (10%) are less inclined towards overt expressions of Agape (selfless love) compared to men (5%). This might be due to the higher societal pressure on women to conform to specific behavioral standards, affecting their ability to express selfless love.

Conclusion

In sum, the analysis demonstrates the influence of traditional cultural norms and gender roles in Sialkot significantly influencing the expression of sexual desire and intimacy. Men tend to be more expressive and less constrained by societal expectations, whereas women navigate their emotional expressions more cautiously due to fears of judgment and character assassination. By the suppression of emotions females find it hard to cope with their emotional disturbances. The preference for different types of love further underscores the impact of societal norms on relationship dynamics, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of emotional expressions in this cultural context.

Study Implications

Theoretical Implication: Present study enhances understanding of cultural norms and gender roles in shaping the expression of love and intimacy, providing insights into the dynamics of romantic relationships within traditional Asian contexts.

Practical Implication: The findings highlighted the need for culturally sensitive approaches in counseling and relationship education, addressing gender-specific barriers and promoting healthier emotional communication in Sialkot.

Policy Implication: This research can inform policymakers and community leaders about the impact of cultural norms on emotional well-being, guiding efforts to foster environments that support open and respectful expressions of affection and intimacy.

Recommendations

Current research study suggests that there is a need to develop and implement educational programs that address the impact of traditional gender roles on emotional expression and intimacy. These programs should aim to educate both men and women on healthy communication practices and encourage a more balanced and open approach to expressing love and sexual desire. Moreover, establish counseling services that are sensitive to the cultural and social norms of Sialkot, providing a safe space for individuals to explore and express their emotions. These services should address the unique challenges faced by different genders and work to reduce stigma surrounding open discussions of love and intimacy.

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