

## From Eros to Agape: A Comprehensive Study of Love Attitudes Across Demographics

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### Abstract

This research examines the complex dimensions of love attitudes by demography, with a focus on gender, age, and cross-cultural differences. Grounded in Sternberg's Triangular Love Theory and Lee's Love Attitudes Scale (LAS), the study integrates knowledge about love styles such as Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape. Evidence of Indian college students, with cross-cultural comparisons, identifies major differences by gender: males are more Ludic, and females are more Pragmatic. Dominant love styles—Eros, Storge, and Agape—indicate the cultural focus on emotional interdependence and commitment in Indian culture. Trends by age indicate that younger people prefer idealistic love styles, whereas older adults are more practical. The study highlights the interplay between psychological and socio-cultural considerations in shaping love attitudes and their consequences for well-being and satisfaction in relationships.

### Keywords

Love attitudes, Indian college students, gender differences, cross-cultural love styles, relationship satisfaction, socio-cultural influences, emotional interdependence.

### Introduction

The study of love attitudes and styles has long been a significant area of psychological research, with models such as Sternberg's Triangular Love Theory and Lee's Love Attitudes Scale (LAS) providing foundational frameworks for understanding romantic relationships. Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (1986) identified three key dimensions of love—Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment—yet empirical evidence has shown that these subscales are highly intercorrelated, suggesting that they may represent a singular, global dimension of love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989). Building on Lee's (1973) theory of love styles, the LAS, developed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986), offers a comprehensive tool to measure attitudes toward love, encompassing six distinct styles: Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape. Research has explored how these love styles vary by factors such as age, gender, culture, and relationship experience, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of love and relationships across diverse populations. This paper presents a synthesis of studies examining gender differences, age-related variations, and cross-cultural patterns in love styles, with a particular focus on the Indian college student demographic, as well as the implications for relationship satisfaction and individual well-being.

Sternberg developed the 45-item Triangular Love Scale to measure three dimensions of love as Intimacy, Passion and Commitment (Sternberg, 1986). However, empirical evidence suggested that the three subscales were highly intercorrelated and measured only one global love dimension

(Hendrick and Hendrick, 1989).

Lee's classification scheme of love styles inspired the development of the Love Attitudes Scale (LAS), designed by Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986. Lee referred to adult dyadic relationships as 'partnering' with each love style, with the possible exemption of Ludus, assuming a long-term relationship with one partner marked by varying degrees of interaction and emotional intensity (Lee, 1973). The LAS has subsequently been redesigned so that each set of items refers to a specific love relationship as opposed to more general attitudes to love (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1990). Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) applied the Love Attitude scale with ratings on Sexual Attitudes Scale to understand love attitudes, gender, previous love experiences, current love status and self-esteem. A sample of 368 female and 199 male college students of ages 18 to 20 with ethnicity of White, White- Hispanic, Black and Oriental were chosen with few members never been in love or been in love three or more times. One-way analysis of variance revealed no meaningful age differences in love styles. Gender differences with males being more Ludic and females more Erotic, Storgic and Pragmatic, with number of times in love reflected in endorsement on Ludus, Eros and Agape love styles. In support of Lee's theory, Eros was indicative of high self-esteem and Mania love style seen in low self-esteem individuals. Cross-cultural differences with Asia-American adults scoring lower on Eros and higher on Storge and Pragma than Caucasian, Latino and Afro-American Adults were seen.

A study investigated the love styles held by three generations using a sample of 48 female college students, their mothers, and their maternal grandmothers using the 48-item version of the LAS (Neto, 2001). Results indicated little love styles similarity among generations. Significant generation differences were found on four love styles: Eros, Storge, Pragma and Agape, with grandmothers showing more practical love than mothers.

Butler, Walker, Skowronski and Shannon (1995) attempted to determine any possible age related differences in responses to the LAS. The sample consisted of five hundred and twenty five seventeen to fifty year old college students, with a 63% proportion of females and a 37% proportion of males. The sample was divided into two main groups. The first group consisted of 17-24 year old males and females who were termed as traditional and the second group consisted of males and females aged 25-50 years of age who were described as modern age students. Results indicated that increases in age showed a decrease in strength of responses to the Mania and Agape subscales, with the effect being more pronounced in females and among participants who reported being in love at the time of the study.

Another study examined self-reported individuation, love styles, and health-related quality of life among college students (Blair, 2001). A sample of a hundred and sixty four undergraduate students was used. Health-related quality of life was defined by its two components- psychological health (emotional well-being) and physical health (physical functioning). Emotional well-being was assessed based on feelings of being downhearted, nervous, happy, or calm. Physical functioning was assessed based on level of engagement in daily life activities such as bathing, dressing and exercising. Results show that higher levels of Mania and Ludus love styles are significantly associated with lower levels of psychological health, and that higher

levels of Mania were significantly associated with lower levels of physical health and higher levels of Storge and Eros love styles were significantly associated with higher levels of psychological health. Exploratory research results revealed that men in this study had significantly higher levels of Ludus love style than women, and that women had significantly higher levels of Pragma love style than men. Results also revealed a significant difference in levels of Ludus, Storge and Agape love styles in association with length of dating relationship.

### Result and Analysis

The below Table shows the comparison of the male and female groups for love attitudes, as assessed using the Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1998). Each of the six dimensions of love attitudes will be examined individually

#### MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t-VALUES OF THE SUBSCALE SCORES ON THE LOVE ATTITUDES SCALE FOR THE MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS (N= 240)

FACTORS	SEX	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	t-VALUE
EROS	Male	2.21	0.79	0.67(NS)
	Female	2.12	1.37	
LUDUS	Male	3.11	0.84	-4.24 (**)
	Female	3.55	0.76	
STORGE	Male	2.33	1.04	1.71 (NS)
	Female	2.12	0.86	
PRAGMA	Male	2.72	1.05	2.12 (*)
	Female	2.44	0.96	
MANIA	Male	2.69	0.97	-1.30 (NS)
	Female	2.85	0.94	
AGAPE	Male	2.26	0.95	-1.25 (NS)
	Female	2.42	1.00	

NS = Not significant at the 0.01 and 0.01 levels.

\* = Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level

\*\* = Significant at  $p \leq 0.01$  level

Lower the mean, the greater the agreement with the given love styles The **male and female groups differ significantly** with regard to Ludus and Pragma love styles, with males indicative of more Ludic love style and females more indicative of Pragma love style. For **Ludus** (game-playing love), the male and female groups differ significantly ( $t = - 4.24, p \leq 0.01$  level) The mean of the male group (mean = 3.11) was indicative of more game-playing love style being attributed to males, as compared to females (mean = 3.55). This suggests that the Indian college student males in this sample view love as a game to be played with skill and often with several partners simultaneously, with avoidance of commitment and an expectation that the partner should remain in control of her emotions. He would sometimes keep his partner from finding out

about other lovers, reporting that she would become upset if she knew about aspects of his relationships with other lovers. He would also reduce dependency of the partner on him. The male and female groups differ significantly on the love style of **Pragma** ( $t=2.12$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  level). On comparison of the means, the female group (mean = 2.44) was more likely than the male group (mean = 2.72) to show practicality in love style. Rational calculation on the desired attributes of the partner to ensure partner compatibility can be attributed to the female sample. This love style is a blend of friendship based love and game playing love. *Trends* indicated by differences in mean scores of the male and female groups (while not statistically significant) suggest males to show more Manic and Agapic love styles, and females to show more Storgic and Erotic love styles. For **Mania**, while the groups do not differ significantly ( $t = -1.30$ ), the means of the male (mean = 2.69) and female (mean = 2.85) groups indicate that males tend to show more possessive, dependent love than females. The status of the romantic relationship tends to affect the physical and psychological health of the individual, with desperate attempts to force affection from the partner and an inability to trust any affection displayed. These individuals lack the self-confidence associated with Eros and the emotional self-control associated with Ludus (their primary love styles). Regarding **Agape** love style, there is nil significant difference between males and females ( $t = -1.25$ ). However, on comparison between means, males (mean = 2.26) emerged as more self-sacrificing and altruistic than females (mean = 2.42). They show a tendency to sacrifice their own needs and happiness for that of the partner's and would show unconditional love even if the partner becomes angry with them. Unselfish devotion to the partner is present. Regarding **Storge**, with no significant difference between the college student groups ( $t = 1.71$ ), the means of the male (mean = 2.33) and female (mean = 2.12) samples indicate that females are more likely to show friendship-based love. College student females show an inclination to merge love and friendship, with less physical attraction, higher demonstration of affection in non-sexual ways and an expectation to always be friends with the partner. For **Eros**, there is a nil significant difference between the male and female groups ( $t = 0.67$ ). While the means of the male (mean = 2.21) and female (mean = 2.12) groups do not differ significantly, the female group places greater importance on early attraction, physical preferences and high intensity of emotions, with the involvement of a passionate, sexual component.

**Gender differences** in the present sample revealed males to be more Ludic and females to be more Pragmatic in their love styles. Research findings support this gender differences. In Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) study, males emerged more Ludic and females more Erotic, Storgic and Pragmatic, with a higher tendency for Storgic love style to be predominant among Orientals. Scully (2003) found that males endorsed more Ludic items than females. Blair reported men to have significantly higher levels of Ludus and women to have significant higher levels of Pragma love style in his study of 164 under-graduate college students (Blair, 2001).

For the **Entire Sample**, the present college student sample, in the age range of 18 – 22 years, is reflective of more passionate (Eros) (total sample mean = 2.17), friendship based (Storge) (total sample mean = 2.23), and self-sacrificing, idealistic (Agape) (total sample mean =

2.34) love styles based on the lower range of mean scores. This can be understood in the socio-cultural context, with relationships viewed as important and long-term. Asia-Americans, in a cross-cultural study were also found to show higher Storgic love (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1998). The high level of friendship based, passionate and self-sacrificing love can be related to the Indian construct of a relational rather than an individualised self. Roland, in his analysis, (Roland, 1988) described qualities of the Indian extended family as involving strong emotional inter-dependence, reciprocal demands for intimacy and a high degree of empathy and sensitivity to others needs.

Among associations between relationship profile items and love styles, Times in Love was correlated significantly with Ludus ( $r = -0.19$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$  level) and Pragma ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$  level) in the present sample. The relationship profile was suggestive of males being in love at least once and engaging in multiple relationships, characteristic of Ludus style; and females never been in love. The males in the sample came from a joint familial lower income background. Abraham (2002) in his study of lower income, metropolitan Mumbai males found them to be engaging in multiple concurrent romantic relationships by using the fluidity present in the 'bhai-behen' relationship boundaries. The females were found to predominantly engage in single, true love relationships.

### Conclusion

The findings from the various studies reviewed provide a rich understanding of how love attitudes and styles differ across genders, age groups, and cultures. In the present sample of Indian college students, significant gender differences were observed, with males demonstrating a higher tendency toward Ludus (game-playing) love, while females exhibited more Pragma (practical) love styles. These findings align with previous research by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986), Scully (2003), and Blair (2001), which suggest that males are generally more inclined towards Ludus, while females lean more toward pragmatic or friendship-based love styles. Additionally, the sample's predominant endorsement of Eros, Storge, and Agape reflects the cultural context of India, where relationships are often viewed through the lens of emotional interdependence and long-term commitment. Age-related differences were also evident, with younger individuals more likely to endorse passionate and idealistic love styles, while older individuals tended to favor more pragmatic approaches to love. These insights into love attitudes not only enhance our understanding of the emotional dynamics in romantic relationships but also highlight the influence of socio-cultural factors on how love is experienced and expressed across different groups.

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