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**An Assessment of the relationship between Emotional Intimacy
and Passion among University Teacher-Trainees: An analysis of
part of Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love**

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ABSTRACT

*The study assessed the authenticity of part of the Triangular Theory of Love by Robert Sternberg, that is, the relationship between emotional intimacy and passion. The recipients of the study were 520 in number and consisted of both male and female university students pursuing teacher training. The respondents, who were selected using systematic random sampling, were subjected to the emotional intimacy scale and passion scale, both by Robert Sternberg (1980). From this study, it was discovered that the relationship between emotional intimacy and passion was both positive and statistically significant ($r=0.762^{**}$, $p=0.000$, $n=520$). Hence, an increase in emotional intimacy is associated with an increase in passion, to a statistically significant extent. This therefore creates a need for sensitisation on intimate relationships among students in tertiary institutions of learning so as to avoid the negative consequences of emotional intimacy and the resultant passion which might lead to academic, psychological, emotional and health consequences.*

Key Words: Emotional intimacy, Passion, University students

Introduction

Emerging adults pursuing university studies are involved in intimate relationships (Fletcher, 2002). Intimacy is achieved when interpersonal vulnerability is apparent (Cordova&Scott, 2001). According to Camarena, Saringiani and Peterson (1990), intimacy could mean the tendency to have emotional closeness, a closeness that clearly differs from that which is action or behaviour oriented. Every functional human growth milestone requires some degree of emotional intimacy and for other aspects of human existence to become functional, the individual needs healthy levels of intimacy and social closeness (Gaia, 2002). All human relationships such as friendships, dating and marriage require emotional intimacy to survive. However, there have been challenges in trying to differentiate between intimacy and self disclosure, actualisation and commitment. Young people express emotional intimacy through openness and truthfulness (Lowdes, 1996). Emotional intimacy is also characterised by the ability to express oneself without fear of being wrongly or subjectively evaluated (Giddens, 1992).

It is vital to note that although both emotional intimacy and passion are regarded as elements of intimacy (Sternberg, 1980), the former does not necessarily lead to the latter, but this may be possible in certain isolated instances (Kabatereine, 2005). Whereas emotional intimacy appeals to affect, passion is the resultant energy that appeals to the physical (Sinclair&Dowdy;Giddens, 1990).According to Sternberg (1986), passion is the drive behind romantic relationships and particularly, those that are sexual in nature while emotional intimacy deals with affect. The degree at which one loves their partner highly hinges on the strength of the relationship between these two attributes. The meaning and experience of love should be understood and explained in terms of context, that is, contexts to do with culture, the person being loved, the affective consequences of love, the cognitive processes and experiences that follow love and finally, the behaviours especially relationship behaviours that one has or experiences with the person they love (Beall&Sternberg, 1995). The higher the emotional intimacy, the higher the passion and therefore, whereas emotional intimacy and passion are independent attributes, they are also interactive and connected (Sternberg, 2006). Sternberg goes on to argue that however, their distinct additional value to the relationship differs from one couple to another and this may partly be as a result of the time factor. The author asserts that emotional intimacy which lacks passion can be equated to just liking, while passion that has no additional component of intimacy can be equated to infatuation. The product of the presence of both emotional intimacy and passion is what can be termed as romantic love.

In an effort to establish whether or not emotional intimacy produces passion (Baumeister&Bratslavsky, 1999), the researchers discovered that the relationship between the two attributes is positive, but with no assurance about whether passion generates intimacy (Rubin&Campbell, 2012). Ng and Cheng (2010) also argue that emotional intimacy and passion elements are closely linked, although the direction of this linkage is not clearly shown. Emotional intimacy means a lot of things to many people. It may be feeling close and connected (Sternberg, 1986), self disclosure (Clark&Reis, 1988), being responsive (Reis et al., 2004), favourable attitude to one another (Acker&Davis. 1992) while passion is, among other things, physical arousal (Hartfield&Walster, 1978), romance (Sternberg, 1986) and unique strong affect (Baumeister&Bratslavsky, 1999). Unlike emotional intimacy which can be slow and gradual, passion can be drastic but can fade with time.

The Study

The study was done with the main objective of assessing the relationship between emotional intimacy and passion among university students at Makerere University. The respondents were subjected to the emotional intimacy scale (15 items) and Passion scale (15 items), both by Robert Sternberg (1980). Emotional intimacy was the independent variable while passion was the dependent variable. Emotional intimacy indicators included support, warmth, dependability, sharing, communication, value, closeness, comfort, understanding, trust; while the

indicators for passion were excitement, romance, attraction, idolisation, exclusivity, physical contact, adoration, passion and fantasy.

The Method

The study employed a quantitative approach/method because the objective aimed at correlating emotional intimacy and passion, which could only be established by using statistics. The study also took on a survey design and was both cross sectional and correlational. Respondents were studied at the same point in time. The study was conducted on 520 respondents, who were year three students at the School of Education, Makerere University. The 520 respondents were selected using systematic random sampling. Emotional intimacy and Passion were measured on a three point likert scale Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS) and Agree (A).

Results

The findings on emotional intimacy are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages on Emotional Intimacy as an Element of Intimacy

		Percentage
1. I am actively supportive of X	D	15.3
	NS	14.5
	A	70.2
2. I have a warm relationship with X	D	12.6
	NS	14.5
	A	72.9
3. I am able to count on X in times of need	D	16.8
	NS	13.4
	A	69.8
4. X is able to count on me in times of need	D	13.4
	NS	14.0
	A	72.6
5. I am willing to share myself and possessions with X	D	21.3
	NS	14.5
	A	64.2
6. I receive considerable emotional support from X	D	11.8
	NS	13.0
	A	75.2
7. I give considerable emotional support to X	D	11.1
	NS	9.6
	A	79.3

		Percentage
8. I communicate well with X	D	8.4
	NS	8.4
	A	83.2
9. I value X greatly in my life	D	12.2
	NS	12.6
	A	75.2
10. I feel close to X	D	9.5
	NS	10.8
	A	79.7
11. I have a comfortable relationship with X	D	9.2
	NS	14.8
	A	76.0
12. I feel that I really understand X	D	8.4
	NS	22.0
	A	69.6
13. I feel that X really understands me	D	9.2
	NS	22.0
	A	68.8
14. I feel that I can really trust X	D	12.3
	NS	19.7
	A	68.0
15. I share deeply personal information about myself with X	D	15.2
	NS	13.6
	A	71.2

As far as emotional intimacy is concerned, it was observed that the majority, that is, 70.2 percent agreed that they are actively supportive of their partners, have a warm relationship with their partners (72.9 percent), can count on their partners in times of need (69.8 percent), can be counted on by their partner in times of need (72.6 percent), can share their possessions and themselves with their partners (64.2 percent), receive considerable emotional support from their partner (75.2 percent), give back this emotional support (79.3 percent), communicate well with their partner (83.2 percent), value their partners (75.2 percent), feel close to their partner (79.7 percent), have a comfortable relationship with their partner (76.0 percent), understand their partner (69.6 percent), feel understood by their partner (68.8 percent), feel their can trust their partner (68.0 percent) and share deeply personal information about themselves about their partner (71.2 percent).

The findings on passion are presented in table 2 below:

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages on Passion as an Element of Intimacy

		Percent
1. Just seeing X excites me	D	14.5
	NS	9.9
	A	75.6
2. I find myself thinking about X frequently during the day	D	22.2
	NS	10.3
	A	67.6
3. My relationship with X is very romantic	D	10.7
	NS	2.7
	A	86.7
4. I find X very personally attractive	D	7.7
	NS	11.8
	A	80.5
5. I idealise/see X as a perfect partner for me	D	15.3
	NS	22.5
	A	62.2
6. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as X does	D	25.2
	NS	18.7
	A	56.1
7. I would rather be with X than anyone else	D	22.9
	NS	18.7
	A	58.4
8. There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with X	D	42.0
	NS	20.2
	A	37.8
9. I especially like physical contact with	D	21.3
	NS	11.1
	A	67.6
10. There is something almost magical about my relationship with X	D	20.6
	NS	17.6
	A	61.9
11. I adore X	D	20.6
	NS	17.2

		Percent
	A	62.2
12. I cannot imagine life without X	D	32.9
	NS	21.4
	A	45.8
13. My relationship with X is passionate	D	16.4
	NS	15.3
	A	68.3
14. When I see romantic movies or read romantic books, I think of X	D	21.0
	NS	9.9
	A	69.1
15. I fantasise about X	D	16.8
	NS	17.2
	A	66.0

Regarding passion, 75.6 percent of the respondents admitted that just seeing their partner excites them while 67.6 percent think about their partner frequently. Those that found their partner attractive were 86.7 percent and about 80.5 percent thought that their relationship with their partner was very romantic. A vast majority (62.2 percent) admitted that they view their partner as perfect while about 56.1 percent felt that they cannot imagine another person making them as happy and an almost equal number (58.4 percent) agreed that they would rather be with their partner than anyone else. Less than half of the respondents (42 percent) agreed that there is nothing more important in their life than their relationship with their partner while 67.6 percent like physical contact with their partner. About 61.9 percent agreed that there is something almost magical about their partner and more than half (62.2 percent) agreed that they adore their partner while 45.8 percent cannot imagine their life without their partner. A considerable number (68.3 percent) feel that their relationship is passionate and actually think about their partner whenever they read romantic books or watch romantic movies (69.1). About 66 percent of them said they fantasise about their partners.

The relationship between emotional intimacy and passion was established using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, as illustrated in table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between Emotional Intimacy and Passion

		Age	Total vulnerability to HIV
Total Emotional Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.762(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	520	520

Total vulnerability	Pearson Correlation	.762(**)	1
to HIV	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	520	520

**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

From the above correlation, it is observed that the relationship between emotional intimacy and passion was both positive and statistically significant ($r=0.762$, $p=0.000$, $N=520$). This implies that an increase in emotional intimacy is associated with an increase in passion, among university students, to a statistically significant extent. Therefore, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional intimacy and passion among university students.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

The objective of the study was to assess the relationship between emotional intimacy and passion among university students. The hypothesis stated that there is a significant relationship between the two attributes. Indeed, the findings which turned out that the relationship was both positive and statistically significant led to the upholding of the hypothesis. ($r=0.762$ $p=0.000$, $N=520$). This implies that an increase in emotional intimacy is related to an increase in passion. These findings seem to rhyme with similar findings established by Rubin and Campbell (2012) who assert that the relationship between intimacy and passion is positive; Ng and Cheng (2010) who re affirm that emotional intimacy and passion are indeed linked and Sternberg (2006) who asserts that the higher the level of emotional intimacy, the higher the passion. However, some researchers such as Rubin and Campbell (2012) argue that there is no guarantee that passion produces emotional intimacy the same way emotional intimacy produces passion. The relationship is not a reciprocated type. It can therefore be concluded that an increase in emotional intimacy produces an increase in passion among university students and hence there is a need to sensitise students in tertiary institutions of learning to beware of heightened levels of the former in order to control the consequent increase in the latter so as to avoid the physical, health, mental, emotional and psychological effects that come with this reality, such as heart break, health consequences such as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections especially HIV, lack of concentration on studies/academics, preoccupation with the relationship and low self esteem.

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