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## Research Article

# Impact of Love Attitude on Emotional Reactivity among University Students

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## ABSTRACT

In modern university settings, students develop different attitudes and perceptions toward love and romantic relationships. Students' romantic attitudes and relationships significantly impact their emotional stability and psychological well-being. The objective of this study was to determine the influence of love attitude on emotional reactivity among university students. A cross-sectional survey was employed to carry out this research. The total sample of the study consists of 304 students (152 males, 152 females) aged 18-24. The sample was recruited through a convenience sampling procedure. The Attitudes Toward Love Scale (Knox & Spakowski, 1968) and the Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale Short-Form (Becerra & Campitelli, 2013) were administered to the participants. Further, Pearson product-moment correlation and linear regression were used to analyze the data. The results indicated a negative correlation between love attitude and emotional reactivity. Moreover, the findings revealed that a love attitude significantly predicted negative emotional reactivity. These findings emphasize the importance of love attitude and its impact on emotional outcomes. Further, findings provide valuable insights for educators and psychologists to develop supportive programs and counseling strategies that foster and enhance students' emotional regulation and their academic performance.

**Key Words:** Love Attitude, Emotional Reactivity, University Students



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## INTRODUCTION

Emotions are considered the fundamental part of human life, impacting an individual's social, professional, personal, and psychological aspects. As a profound and universal emotion, love plays a crucial role in shaping a person's mental health, emotional regulation, social connections, and psychological well-being (Sternberg, 1986). Love attitude refers to how people experience and perceive the emotion of love. The perspective about love can significantly influence people's emotional responses, which refers to how people react emotionally to various circumstances or situations (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Emotional reactivity plays a significant role in mental health, influencing stress management, decision-making, and overall emotional well-being (Gross & John, 2003). For university students, attitudes toward love hold special significance, as university life signifies a crucial phase of psychological transformation and change. Throughout their university years, students develop emotional maturity, engage in romantic relationships, enhance their emotional regulation skills, and shape their identities (Arnett, 2000). Nonetheless, university students often adopt idealistic views or expectations of love, which adversely affect their emotional well-being, mental

health, and academic success (Eckstein & Makenna, 2023). This highlights the importance of examining how various love attitudes influence students' emotional responses and psychological well-being. Based on this, previous studies show that love attitudes are strongly linked to emotional health and social adjustment (Furman & Shaffer, 2003). Likewise, empirical evidence suggests that positive attitudes toward love enhance emotional resilience, promote well-being, and support overall psychological health (Seligman, 2011; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Conversely, negative attitudes toward love, typically characterized by emotional instability and impractical expectations, may intensify emotional reactivity, stress, and anxiety (Gross & John, 2003; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Emotional reactivity reflects both the intensity and length of an individual's emotional response to various stimuli. Evidence suggests that emotional reactivity is a crucial factor in an individual's ability to regulate emotions, maintain mental well-being, and stay focused on academics. (Pekrun, 2006; MacCann et al., 2020). However, most of these studies are rooted in Western cultural contexts, with limited exploration of how love attitudes influence emotional reactivity in collectivist societies.

This research gap carries particular significance for Pakistan, where distinct cultural dynamics shape romantic experiences. The collectivist nature of Pakistani culture, including family expectations, religious beliefs, traditional values, and social practices, significantly influences a person's attitude toward romantic relationships (Khalid & Kausar, 2008). Love is often considered a socially sensitive topic in Pakistan and is typically viewed through the lens of arranged marriages, family obligations, and societal norms (Hassan & Amjad, 2020). At the same time, young adults in Pakistan are increasingly influenced by Western ideals of love, which shape their perceptions and approaches to romantic relationships. Consequently, due to diverse cultural constraints and societal pressures, it becomes challenging for them to express and articulate their romantic emotions and feelings. Furthermore, unique cultural expectations and perceptions about love can significantly influence how they emotionally and practically respond to romantic experiences, such as emotional intimacy, relationship conflicts, or heartbreak."(Khan & Hussain, 2016).

In Pakistan's evolving romantic landscape, understanding the role of love attitudes in predicting emotional reactivity among university students becomes increasingly important. Despite extensive Western research (Cook et al., 2013; Schoebi & Randall, 2015), Pakistan's cultural suppression remains overlooked. Social taboos often prevent students from discussing romantic experiences. This suppression may exacerbate emotional reactivity and distress.

To bridge this gap, the current study examines how love attitudes predict emotional reactivity among Pakistani university students. As cultural norms continue to evolve amidst globalization, understanding these dynamics becomes increasingly important for supporting student well-being. The investigation focuses specifically on how traditional collectivist values interact with modern influences to shape emotional responses in romantic contexts. Beyond theoretical contributions, this research provides practical insights for educators and mental health professionals to develop culturally sensitive interventions that enhance emotional resilience and academic functioning within Pakistan's unique sociocultural landscape.

This study advances the understanding of the emotional and mental well-being of young adults. Additionally, findings may offer insights to teachers and mental health professionals to develop suitable counseling approaches and supportive strategies to address their emotional problems during their romantic friendships, to improve their emotional resilience, mental health, and help them to maintain their focus on academic success.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

This study followed a cross-sectional survey design to address the impact of love attitudes on emotional reactivity among university students. A convenience sampling strategy was used in this study. A total of 304 participants were included, comprising 152 boys and 152 girls. The study focused on university students aged between 18 and 24 years. Only those who had experienced a romantic relationship within the past two months were included in the study.

### **Measures**

#### **Attitudes Toward Love Scale (ATLS)**

In 1968, Knox and Sporkowski developed the Attitudes Toward Love Scale (ATLS). ATLS is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the extent of romantic versus realistic attitudes about love. The scale demonstrates sufficient reliability (.70) and good test-retest reliability of .78 over a period of one week (Knox & Sporkowski, 1968). Participants evaluate their agreement with 30 statements using a 5-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 denotes

strong agreement and a score of 5 signifies strong disagreement. Sample item included "Love is more of a feeling than a relationship". A score of 90 is noted as the cut-off point between an extremely romantic perspective and an extremely realistic one.

### Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale S-Form

Becerra and Campitelli (2013) developed the Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale Short Form (PERS-S), which consisted of 18 items. The scale demonstrates adequate alpha reliability of .70 and is designed to evaluate three aspects of emotional reactivity: activation, intensity, and duration, specifically focusing on positive and negative emotions. The scale is divided into six subscales, each scale contains three items covering positive activation, intensity, and duration (for example, "When I feel positive, I can maintain that feeling throughout the day"), as well as negative activation, intensity, and duration (Example, "When I am angry, it takes me time to calm down"). Participants evaluate each item by using a 5-point scale, where 1 represents "not at all descriptive of me" and 5 denotes "very descriptive of me." Three subscales associated with each emotional valence can be summed to generate an overall positive score or an overall negative score.

### Procedure

Students from six different universities, including Islamia University Bahawalpur, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Emerson University Multan, National College of Business Administration and Economics, and Times Institute Multan, were approached for data collection using a convenience sampling strategy. A booklet containing demographic information, Love Attitude Scale, and Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale short-form (PERS-S) was used for data collection. Before participation, students provided informed consent, indicating their voluntary involvement in the study. They were assured of the confidentiality of their personal information. Respondents completed self-administered, paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The entire data collection process was completed within two weeks. Data was analyzed using SPSS.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Number of items and alpha reliabilities of scales (N=304).

Scales	No. of items	$\alpha$
LAS	30	.77
PERS-S	18	.69
PER	9	.58
NER	9	.59

Note. LAS = Love Attitude Scale, PERS-S = Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale (short-form), PER = Positive Emotional Reactivity, NER = Negative Emotional Reactivity.

Table 1 presents the number of items and alpha reliabilities for each scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values range from .58 to .77, indicating acceptable internal consistency and providing evidence of sufficient reliability of the scales.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for Study Variables (N=304)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. LAS	77.67	14.18	-		
2. PERS-S	60.98	8.78	-.48**	-	
3. PER	31.20	5.28	-.39**	.83**	-
4. NER	29.7	5.28	-.41**	.83**	.38**

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ ; LAS = Love Attitude Scale, PERS-S = Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale (short-form), PER = Positive Emotional Reactivity, NER = Negative Emotional Reactivity.

Table 2 illustrates the correlation between love attitude and emotional reactivity. The result shows a negative correlation between Love Attitude and Emotional Reactivity. Furthermore, love attitude is negatively correlated with both positive and negative emotional reactivity.

Table 3. Simple linear Regression of Love Attitude on Emotional Reactivity (N=304)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
(Constant)	84.32	2.46		34.28	.00
Love Attitude Scale	-.30	.03	-.49	-9.65	.00
$R^2$	.23				

Table 3 describes the impact of a love attitude on emotional reactivity among university students. Regression analysis showed that love attitude explained a significant proportion of the total variance in emotional reactivity.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated the association and impact of love attitudes on emotional reactivity among university students. The findings of this study showed a significant negative association between love attitudes and emotional reactivity, indicating that individuals with more rational, stable, and mature attitudes toward love are less likely to display heightened emotional reactivity. Thus, people with lower levels of emotional reactivity show fewer emotionally intense or impulsive reactions in romantic or interpersonal relationships. These findings contribute to the existing scientific literature by focusing on the impact of love attitudes in shaping emotional responses, particularly with reference to the unique Pakistani cultural context.

Further, the findings of this study are in line with the existing studies carried out in Western contexts (e.g., Neto, 2012; Zacchilli, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011), which have emphasized the influence of romantic beliefs on emotional regulation and relationship quality. However, the present study contributed by extending this line of inquiry to a collectivist culture, where expressions of romantic feelings are often constrained by familial, religious, and societal norms. Additionally, findings suggest that despite cultural boundaries and limitations, individual attitudes toward love remain a significant variable impacting an individual's emotional responses.

Pakistani cultural and societal norms often discourage open expression of romantic feelings, considering them as socially inappropriate or morally questionable. This repression may result in internal emotional conflict, particularly when young adults are simultaneously exposed to Western ideals that promote romantic autonomy and emotional openness. The emotional dissonance created by this cultural clash may exacerbate emotional reactivity, particularly for individuals with love attitudes that emphasize passion, dependency, or unrealistic expectations.

The findings of the study also highlight the need to address love attitudes and psycho-emotional development in university counseling services and mental health programs. Young adults face psycho-emotional stress related to love, identity formation, and relationship conflicts. Thus, their ability to cope and manage emotional responses becomes crucial for their psychological, mental well-being and academic functioning. Awareness of how love attitudes influence emotional responses may help counselors, psychologists, and educators to develop culturally appropriate interventions to enhance emotional regulation and mental health among students.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of love attitude on emotional reactivity among university students. The findings indicated that individuals with more rational, stable, and mature attitudes toward love are less likely to display heightened emotional reactivity. Thus, people with lower levels of emotional reactivity show fewer emotionally intense or impulsive reactions in romantic or interpersonal relationships. These results suggest that individuals' romantic beliefs and preferences may shape not only their interpersonal relationships but also their emotional responsiveness and sensitivity.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has several limitations. Firstly, relying on self-report measures has the potential to cause social desirability bias, particularly considering the sensitivity of the issue within the Pakistani context. Secondly, a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causality between love attitudes and emotional reactivity. Further, longitudinal research could better examine how these variables interact over time. Moreover, Future studies could investigate how specific facets of love attitudes differentially impact emotional reactivity. It would also be valuable to explore the moderating roles of personality traits, gender, attachment styles, or family dynamics.

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