

Are We Confusing Passionate Love with Irrationality? Putting Passionate Love into a Cognitive-Behavioral Framework

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Abstract

Though passionate love has been scientifically investigated for about three decades, current definitions raise concerns about this concept as they cluster cognitions, emotions, and behaviors under the label of emotional state. This is in clear contradiction to the cognitive-behavioral framework. Therefore, the current study attempted to provide a cognitive-behavioral understanding of passionate love, arguing that the core feature of passionate love is an irrational way of thinking. We investigated the relationship between passionate love and irrationality, assuming a positive association between these concepts. Exploratory, we analyzed the relationship between irrationality and the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of passionate love. Also, we looked at the relationship between passionate love and rationality.

For the aims of this cross-sectional study, we recruited 139 volunteers who had been in love in the past or currently in love. They filled in the Passionate Love Scale and the short form of the General Attitude and Beliefs Scale. Results supported our hypothesis in that overall irrationality was positively associated to overall passionate love ($r(137) = .311, p < .001$), as well as with its cognitive ($r(137) = .355, p < .001$), emotional ($r(137) = .280, p < .001$), and behavioral components ($r(137) = .246$). Passionate love was not associated to rationality levels.

Based on the positive association to irrationality, a vulnerability factor to psychopathology and on the lack of an association to rationality, passionate love is most probably unhealthy. However, it remains to be seen in what respect it is unhealthy. One possibility is that passionate love could be a vul-

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nerability factor for subsequent general distress/romantic distress. Additional venues of research are discussed.

Keywords

Irrationality, passionate love, cognitive-behavioral framework