The Relationship Between Big Five Personality Traits and Love Styles among Undergraduate Students in Malaysian Private Universities (IPTS) in Kedah

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between Big Five personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students enrolled in private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah, Malaysia. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving 254 undergraduate students selected using purposive sampling. Personality traits were measured using the Mini-International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP), while love styles were assessed using the Love Attitudes Scale–Short Form (LAS-SF). Data were analysis using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings revealed that conscientiousness was the most dominant personality trait, while pragma emerged as the most prevalent love style among respondents. Significant relationships were found between overall personality and romantic, game-playing, and logical love styles, whereas no significant relationships were observed for other love styles. These findings provide empirical evidence on the role of personality in romantic relationship patterns and offer practical implications for counselling and student development programs in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Big Five Personality, Love Styles, Undergraduate Students, IPTS.

INTRODUCTION

Personality is a fundamental psychological construct that influences individuals' emotional regulation, interpersonal behaviour, and relationship formation [10],[14]. Among various personality frameworks, the Big Five personality model comprising extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience that has been widely applied to understand individual differences across cultures and contexts [5]. In emerging adulthood, particularly during the university years, individuals often engage in romantic relationships that contribute significantly to identity development and emotional maturity [12], [19].

Romantic relationships among university students are shaped by personal values, emotional needs, and personality characteristics [11]. Love styles theory proposes that individuals express and experience love in distinct patterns, such as eros, ludus, storge, pragma, mania, and agape [4], [7]. Understanding how personality traits relate to these love styles is crucial, as it may explain variations in relationship satisfaction, commitment, and emotional well-being [8].

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between personality traits and love styles, empirical research focusing on undergraduate students in Malaysian private higher education institutions remains limited [15]. Given the increasing enrolment of students in IPTS and the unique socio-cultural context of Malaysian youth, this study aims to examine the relationship between Big Five personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah, Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five personality model is one of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding human personality [1], [10]. Extraversion reflects sociability and assertiveness, agreeableness refers to

cooperativeness and empathy, conscientiousness involves self-discipline and organization, neuroticism is associated with emotional instability, and openness to experience reflects creativity and curiosity [5], [14]. These traits have been shown to influence interpersonal relationships, emotional expression, and attachment behaviours [6], [12].

B. Love Style Theory

Love styles theory conceptualizes love as a multidimensional construct comprising six styles [7]. Eros represents passionate and romantic love, ludus reflects playful and uncommitted love, storge emphasizes friendship-based love, pragma denotes practical and logical love, mania involves possessive and emotionally intense love, and agape represents altruistic and selfless love [7]. Individuals may exhibit dominant love styles influenced by personality and life experiences [3], [6].

C. Personality Traits and Love Style

Previous studies have reported significant associations between personality traits and love styles [2]. Extraversion has been linked to eros and ludus love styles, while neuroticism is often associated with mania [12]. Agreeableness has been found to relate positively to agape and storge, whereas conscientiousness is frequently associated with pragma love style [7]. However, findings vary across cultural contexts, highlighting the need for localized empirical research [8], [11].

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between Big Five personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students [20]. A correlational approach was deemed appropriate as the study aimed to identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables without manipulating them

B. Participants

The participants consisted of 254 undergraduate students enrolled in private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah, Malaysia. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure adequate representation across faculties and academic programs. The inclusion criteria required participants to be full-time undergraduate students aged between 18 and 25 years.

C. Instruments

Two standardized self-report instruments were used in this study.

Mini-International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP)

The Mini-IPIP was used to measure the Big Five personality traits, namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The instrument consists of 20 items, with responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Previous studies have reported acceptable reliability and validity for the Mini-IPIP [6].

Love Attitudes Scale-Short Form (LAS-SF)

Love styles were assessed using the Love Attitudes Scale–Short Form, which measures six love styles: eros, ludus, storge, pragma, mania, and agape. The instrument contains 24 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The LAS-SF has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties in previous research [6], [13].

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to participants. Ethical considerations were observed, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Data Analysis

Data were analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 [20]. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between Big Five personality traits and love styles. Statistical significance was set at ($p < .05$).

RESULTS

A. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 254 undergraduate students from private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah participated in this study. Table I presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, year of study, faculty, birth order, place of residence, and relationship status.

TABLE I Variable Category Frequency (n)Percentage (%)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	108	42.5
	Female	146	57.5
Year of Study	Year 1	69	27.5
	Year 2	91	35.8
	Year 3	59	23.2
	Year 4	35	13.8
Faculty	KSU	112	44.1
	KWISH	142	55.9
Birth Order	First-born	53	20.9
	Middle-born	131	51.6
	Last-born	53	20.9
	Only child	17	6.7
Residence	Village	59	23.2
	Town	109	42.9
	City	62	24.4
	Suburban	24	9.4
Relationship Status	Never dated	92	36.2
	Currently dating	115	45.3
	Breakup	47	18.5

Overall, the respondents consisted of a higher proportion of females and were predominantly second-year students.

B. Dominant Big Five Personality Traits

Descriptive statistics were conducted to identify the dominant Big Five personality traits among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah. The results are presented in Table II.

TABLE II

Personality Trait	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Extraversion	12.35	2.46
Agreeableness	13.23	2.32
Conscientiousness	14.36	2.70
Neuroticism	12.66	2.20
Openness to Experience	12.65	2.34

As shown in Table II, conscientiousness recorded the highest mean score (n = 14.36), indicating that it was the most dominant personality trait among the respondents. In contrast, extraversion recorded the lowest mean score (n = 12.35).

C. Dominant Love Styles

Table III presents the descriptive statistics of love styles among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah.

TABLE III

Love Style	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Eros (Romantic)	13.85	2.76
Ludus (Game-playing)	10.30	2.85
Storge (Friendship)	13.90	2.99
Pragma (Logical)	15.39	2.60
Mania (Possessive)	13.78	3.63
Agape (Selfless)	13.60	3.02

The findings indicate that pragma (logical love style) recorded the highest mean score (n = 15.39), suggesting that it was the most dominant love style among the respondents, while ludus (game-playing love style) recorded the lowest mean score (n = 10.30).

D. Correlation Between Personality and Love Styles

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between personality and love styles among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah. The correlation results are summarized in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Variable	r	p
Personality – Friendship (Storge)	0.11	0.64
Personality – Romantic (Eros)	0.20	0.00
Personality – Game-playing (Ludus)	−0.14	0.02
Personality – Logical (Pragma)	0.16	0.01
Personality – Selfless (Agape)	−0.08	0.16
Personality – Possessive (Mania)	0.32	0.61
Personality – Overall Love Style	0.07	0.26

As shown in Table IV, personality was significantly correlated with romantic ($r = 0.20$, $p < .001$), game-playing ($r = –0.14$, $p < .02$), and logical love styles ($r = 0.16$, $p < .01$). However, no significant correlations were found between personality and friendship, selfless, possessive, or overall love styles ($p > .05$).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, the results demonstrated that conscientiousness was the most dominant personality trait, while pragma was the most dominant love style among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that personality was significantly related to romantic, game-playing, and logical love styles, whereas no significant relationships were observed for other love styles.

DISCUSSION

A. Discussion of Major Findings

The present study examined the relationship between Big Five personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students in private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah. The findings indicate that conscientiousness emerged as the most dominant personality trait among the respondents. This suggests that students tend to be disciplined, responsible, and goal-oriented, which may be influenced by academic demands

and cultural expectations within Malaysian higher education settings. This finding is consistent with previous studies that identified is consistent with previous studies that identified conscientiousness as a key personality trait among university students [10], [17].

In terms of love styles, pragma (logical love style) was found to be the most dominant among the respondents. This indicates that students prefer rational and practical considerations when engaging in romantic relationships, such as compatibility and long-term suitability. Such tendencies may be influenced by cultural and religious values that emphasize responsibility and stability in relationships [5], [18].

B. Personality Traits and Romantic Love Styles

The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between personality and romantic love style (eros). This suggests that individuals with stronger personality traits are more likely to experience emotional intimacy and passion in romantic relationships. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that personality traits play an important role in shaping emotional expression in romantic relationships [2].

Additionally, a significant negative relationship was found between personality and game-playing love style (ludus). This suggests that individuals with stronger personality traits are less likely to engage in casual or manipulative romantic behaviours. This supports earlier findings that link personality maturity with healthier relationship patterns [3], [12].

A significant positive relationship was also identified between personality and logical love style (pragma). This indicates that personality traits, particularly those associated with responsibility and emotional regulation, may encourage individuals to adopt rational approaches when forming romantic relationships.

C. Non-significant Relationships

Despite these findings, no significant relationships were found between personality and friendship-based love style (storge), selfless love style (agape), possessive love style (mania), and overall love style. These results suggest that such love styles may be influenced by external factors such as cultural norms, family background, religious beliefs, and past relationship experiences rather than personality traits alone.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings indicate that the relationship between personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students in IPTS in Kedah is generally weak to moderate. While certain love styles are significantly associated with personality traits, most dimensions do not show strong relationships. This highlights the complexity of romantic relationships and suggests that personality traits alone may not sufficiently explain variations in love styles among university students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between Big Five personality traits and love styles among undergraduate students in private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah, Malaysia. Overall, the findings indicate that conscientiousness was the most dominant personality trait, while pragma (logical love style) emerged as the most

prevalent love style among the respondents [17]. These results suggest that undergraduate students tend to approach both academic life and romantic relationships with responsibility, structure, and rational consideration.

The corelation analysis revealed that personality traits were significantly related to certain love styles, particularly romantic (eros), game-playing (ludus), and logical (pragma) love styles [6]. However, no significant relationships were found between personality traits and friendship-based (storge), selfless (agape), possessive (mania), and overall love styles. These findings indicate that while personality traits contribute to

romantic behaviour, their influence is generally weak to moderate and may be shaped by other contextual and cultural factors.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between personality and love styles within the context of Malaysian private university students [12]. The findings highlight the importance of considering both individual personality characteristics and broader socio-cultural influences when examining romantic relationships among emerging adults.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to undergraduate students from private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Kedah, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions or public universities in Malaysia. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires may have introduced response bias, as participants' answers could be influenced by social desirability or personal interpretation.

Future research is recommended to include a more diverse sample involving students from public universities and different geographical regions. Additionally, qualitative or mixed-method approaches could be employed to gain deeper insights into how personality traits influence romantic relationship dynamics. Future studies may also explore the role of mediating variables such as cultural values, attachment styles, or religious beliefs in shaping love styles.

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