

RESEARCH REPORTS

“LOVE, as a Pathway to Prosocial Behaviour: A Theoretical and Pilot Study Using the LUVORA Framework for Social Cohesion”

NILUKA HETTIGE & MALATHIE PRIYANGIKA DISSANAYAKE

University of Colombo

The Open University of Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT *In an era of technological hyper-connectivity and emotional disconnection, the capacity to cultivate empathy, compassion, and moral responsibility has become a pressing social necessity. This study explores love as a transformative psychological and ethical construct capable of enhancing prosocial behaviour and social cohesion. Grounded in Positive Psychology and informed by Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, Haidt’s Moral Emotions Theory, and cultural models of relational selfhood (Markus & Kitayama, 2010), the paper introduces the LUVORA Framework, a multidimensional model comprising six virtues: Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance. Through this framework, love is conceptualised as both an emotional state and a moral practice that connects individual well-being with collective harmony. The study proposes a qualitative, exploratory pilot study involving twelve Sri Lankan community facilitators who will participate in a two-day workshop designed to embody the LUVORA principles through storytelling, reflective journaling, mindfulness, and group dialogue. Data from reflective journals, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The anticipated findings suggest that love-based reflection will heighten emotional awareness, strengthen empathy, and deepen moral reasoning, ultimately fostering greater community engagement and social trust. The study further argues that integrating emotional cultivation with ethical reflection represents a critical advance in contemporary Positive Psychology, transforming it from a framework of personal happiness to one of relational and societal flourishing. By situating the LUVORA model within Sri Lanka’s collectivist context, this research contributes to the decolonisation of well-being science, offering a culturally grounded, evidence-informed approach to human connection. It positions love not as sentimentality but as a measurable civic virtue essential for restoring the moral and emotional foundations of modern life.*

Keywords: *Love, Prosocial Behaviour, Social Cohesion, Positive Psychology, LUVORA Framework*

Introduction

The twenty-first century presents an intricate paradox. While humanity is more connected than at any point in history, the emotional distance between individuals appears to be widening. Communication technologies enable instant contact, yet genuine empathy and mutual understanding often seem to diminish in the process. As digital interactions increasingly replace in-person dialogue, relationships become more functional than emotional, and conversations increasingly more transactional than heartfelt (Turkle, 2015). The acceleration of technological life, coupled with

ISSN 2308-5959/20260731 (c) 2026 The Maldives National University

economic uncertainty and social competition, has quietly shaped a culture of isolation. Individuals are simultaneously surrounded and alone, visible yet unseen, which reflects what Fuchs (2021) calls “the emotional emptiness of the networked self.”

This global pattern has particular resonance in Sri Lanka, where community, compassion, and interdependence have long been considered the moral fabric of society. Historically, Sri Lankan culture has emphasised collective values such as metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion), embedded in both Buddhist and secular traditions. However, rapid modernisation and post-conflict transformations have introduced new layers of individualism and socio-economic strain. Urbanisation, migration, and digital dependency have gradually weakened traditional bonds of trust and emotional intimacy. As families fragment and communities lose cohesion, there is an emerging recognition that psychological healing and moral renewal are essential to sustaining national harmony. The erosion of empathy and relational understanding is not only a social issue but also a profound psychological concern.

Against this backdrop, the present study repositions love as a transformative human strength that can restore interpersonal and societal balance. Love, in this context, is not confined to romantic affection but is understood as an expanded capacity for connection, care, and moral awareness. Within Positive Psychology, love is considered the most integrative of positive emotions, encompassing compassion, gratitude, and trust (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2011). The Broaden-and-Build Theory proposed by Fredrickson (2001) suggests that such emotions expand individuals’ perspectives and foster enduring psychological resources, including resilience and social capital. When cultivated intentionally, love can serve as a foundation for prosocial behaviour, actions grounded in empathy, cooperation, and shared purpose.

The central argument of this paper is that love can be conceptualised, taught, and empirically measured as a psychological and moral construct rather than merely a fleeting feeling. Building on this premise, the study introduces the LUVORA Framework, which integrates six complementary virtues, Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance. Together, they form a model that translates the emotion of love into actionable practice for social development. The framework is intended to guide individuals and communities toward heightened emotional awareness, moral reflection, and relational harmony.

The proposed research will explore this framework through qualitative pilot study with Sri Lankan community facilitators, examining how structured love-based interventions might foster prosocial engagement and social cohesion. The initiative also responds to an urgent academic and societal gap: despite global recognition of empathy and compassion training, few empirical studies have explicitly examined love as a structured mechanism for psychological growth and collective well-being.

In essence, this introduction lays the foundation for reconceptualising love as a civic virtue, a unifying force capable of addressing contemporary fragmentation and emotional disconnection. In doing so, it aims to reaffirm the human heart as the most powerful instruments for social transformation.

Theoretical and Literature Framework

Theoretical Roots of Love in Positive Psychology

The study of love has evolved from philosophical speculation into a rigorous psychological inquiry grounded in empirical theory. Within the domain of Positive Psychology, love is conceptualised as a central emotion that broadens awareness and builds lasting personal and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson, 2013). According to the Broaden-and-Build Theory, positive emotions such as love, joy, and gratitude expand cognitive flexibility, enhance problem-solving, and encourage approach-oriented behaviour. Repeated experiences of love contribute to resilience, optimism, and relational trust, qualities essential for sustainable well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2023; Seligman, 2011).

From a neurobiological perspective, the emotional state of love activates neural systems responsible for empathy and reward. Davidson and McEwen (2012) demonstrated that affective experiences associated with connection stimulate the brain's prefrontal cortex and oxytocin pathways, reinforcing altruistic motivation. Similarly, Zak (2021) described oxytocin as a "moral molecule," linking physiological bonding with prosocial tendencies. These biological findings validate psychological theories suggesting that love is not merely sentimental but neurochemically embedded in human evolution to promote cooperation and survival.

Despite this evidence, the operationalisation of love as a measurable construct remains limited. Empirical studies have typically explored compassion, empathy, or kindness rather than love itself, largely due to methodological ambiguity (Seppälä et al., 2020). The present research, therefore, builds on these adjacent constructs to propose a multidimensional framework, LUVORA, that clarifies love's behavioural and moral components.

Love as a Moral Emotion and Ethical Principle

Love has long been situated at the intersection of morality and human flourishing. In moral philosophy, it is portrayed as an ethical foundation that transcends individual self-interest. Haidt (2006) classified love as a binding moral emotion that unites groups through shared concern and collective purpose. Nussbaum (2013) similarly contended that love nurtures justice by grounding civic action in empathy and dignity rather than obligation. These philosophical claims have empirical parallels in psychology, where altruistic emotions are associated with cooperative decision-making and reduced prejudice (Singer & Klimecki, 2014; Post, 2023).

Recent studies on compassion-based interventions indicate measurable increases in altruism, patience, and inclusive behaviour (Condon & Makransky, 2020). Such interventions work by encouraging individuals to reframe others' suffering as shared humanity, echoing Buddhist teachings of metta and karuna, principles deeply ingrained in Sri Lankan cultural ethics. Integrating these indigenous concepts with scientific models can enrich both theory and practice, providing culturally grounded frameworks for social transformation.

Vaillant (2008) viewed love as a "positive spiritual emotion" central to mental health and ethical living. His longitudinal research in adult development found that emotional warmth predicted long-term psychological adjustment more consistently than intelligence or socioeconomic status. These insights highlight the moral

dimension of emotional well-being: people flourish not only through autonomy and achievement but through connectedness and moral reciprocity.

Social and Community Dimensions of Love

Beyond the individual level, love functions as a social energy that sustains communities. Holt-Lunstad (2023) recently identified social connection as a public-health priority, arguing that isolation increases mortality risk as much as smoking or obesity. Her framework for relational well-being demonstrates that emotional connectedness carries tangible societal value. Likewise, Goleman (1995) proposed that emotional intelligence, the ability to recognise and regulate emotions in oneself and others, forms the basis of constructive leadership and collaboration.

Within community psychology, prosocial behaviour is often studied under themes of empathy, altruism, and trust. These behaviours contribute to social capital, which Putnam (2000) defined as the network of shared norms enable cooperation. Love can be understood as the emotional foundation of such capital, motivating individuals to invest in others' welfare. In Sri Lanka's post-conflict setting, love-informed engagement could strengthen reconciliation efforts by promoting forgiveness and collective responsibility.

However, globalisation and rapid technological advancement have reshaped emotional life. Turkle (2015) warned that excessive reliance on digital communication erodes empathy, as individuals curate identities rather than share an authentic presence. Fuchs (2021) extended this argument, suggesting that capitalism's efficiency culture has commodified relationships, turning emotional labour into economic transaction. These critiques underscore the necessity of reintegrating emotional literacy within education and community programmes, a role the LUVORA framework seeks to fill.

From Compassion Science to Love-Based Interventions

The recent rise of compassion science has expanded research on empathy training, loving-kindness meditation, and gratitude exercises (Seppälä et al., 2020). These interventions consistently demonstrate increases in psychological well-being and decrease in anxiety and bias. Fredrickson et al. (2008) found that loving-kindness meditation enhances positive affect and builds personal resources such as resilience and social support. Yet most compassion-based models remain individual-centric. They seldom translate emotional cultivation into collective or organisational practice.

The LUVORA framework extends this body of work by embedding love within community development and leadership contexts. It combines affective training with value clarification, encouraging participants to apply emotional insight to moral and social decisions. The inclusion of “Uniformity” and “Virtue” introduces an ethical dimension that bridges inner transformation with outward behaviour. “Openness” and “Acceptance” promote inclusion and cultural humility, aligning with global goals for diversity and social harmony (UNESCO, 2022). “Resilience,” meanwhile, connects personal well-being with community endurance, making it especially relevant for societies managing crisis and recovery.

Cultural Integration and the Sri Lankan Context

Cross-cultural psychology emphasises that emotional expression is contextually shaped by cultural context (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). In collectivist societies like Sri Lanka, the self is defined through relationships, and prosocial behaviour is motivated by interconnected responsibilities rather than individual benefit. This worldview provides fertile ground for implementing love-based interventions. Traditional concepts such as *samma vācā* (right speech) and *ahimsa* (non-harm) resonate with the LUVORA principles of Openness and Virtue. By linking modern Positive Psychology with indigenous wisdom, the framework ensures both cultural authenticity and practical acceptance.

At the same time, Sri Lanka faces psychosocial challenges common to many developing nations: youth alienation, workplace stress, and erosion of community identity. These issues underline the need for emotional re-education not only at the therapeutic level but also within civic life. A love-centred paradigm can strengthen social empathy, guide ethical leadership, and reduce prejudice across ethnic and socioeconomic divisions.

Summary of Gaps and Conceptual Direction

The literature collectively demonstrates that positive emotions broaden awareness, moral emotions sustain cooperation, and compassion interventions improve well-being. Yet few models explicitly conceptualise love as an integrative construct encompassing emotion, morality, and community. Research often isolates individual outcomes, happiness, resilience, or empathy, without addressing systemic social cohesion. The LUVORA framework responds to this void by uniting six virtues into one operational model capable of application in education, community work, and organisational contexts.

By synthesising psychological theory, moral philosophy, and Sri Lankan cultural wisdom, the proposed study seeks to explore how love can move from abstract ideal to an applied methodology. In doing so, it contributes to the evolving discourse that human flourishing is not only a personal pursuit, but also a shared moral project sustained through compassion, integrity, and mutual respect.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1) integrates perspectives from Positive Psychology, moral philosophy, affective neuroscience, and cultural psychology to illustrate how love functions as a transformative force capable of nurturing prosocial behaviour and social cohesion. It synthesises the theoretical insights reviewed earlier, particularly Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, Haidt's (2006) Moral Emotion Theory, and Markus and Kitayama's (2010) model of cultural selfhood, into a coherent structure that positions love as both an intrapersonal process and a social catalyst.

At the centre of this framework is Love, conceptualised not merely as a romantic or affective state, but as an evolving psychological and moral capacity that energises growth, empathy, and ethical awareness. From this nucleus radiate six interconnected virtues represented in the LUVORA model: Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance. Each virtue embodies a functional dimension of transformation that bridges emotional awareness with social responsibility. Together,

these six principles capture the multidimensional nature of love, highlighting its capacity to guide thought, emotion, and action toward collective well-being.

Uniformity reflects the recognition of shared humanity and equality across diversity, countering the fragmentation often produced by social stratification. Virtue represents moral integrity and ethical conduct, aligning emotional experience with moral judgment. Openness embodies curiosity, flexibility, and the willingness to understand alternative perspectives, which are essential for inclusive dialogue. Resilience signifies perseverance through adversity, supported by emotional regulation and psychological flexibility. Acceptance fosters belonging, compassion, and non-judgmental understanding, creating the emotional climate necessary for collective trust. When enacted together, these six virtues transform love from an emotion into a practice that fosters sustained prosocial engagement.

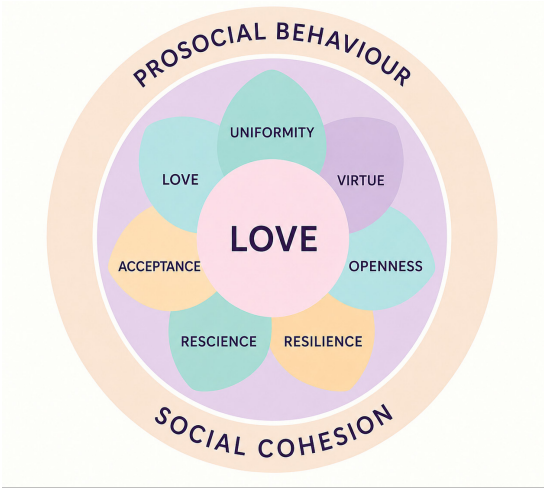
The framework further proposes that these virtues operate through a three-tiered pathway: (1) Intrapersonal transformation, where individuals cultivate self-awareness and emotional intelligence; (2) Interpersonal transformation, where empathy and moral reflection enhance relationships; and (3) Societal transformation, where collective compassion and shared values give rise to social cohesion and flourishing. This progression aligns with Fredrickson’s (2013) assertion that positive emotions build enduring resources that extend beyond the individual to strengthen communities and institutions.

Culturally, the model is grounded in Sri Lanka’s relational ethos and indigenous values such as metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion), which resonate with the global discourse of Positive Psychology while preserving local authenticity. By integrating Western psychological theories with South Asian philosophical sensibilities, the LUVORA framework responds to calls for decolonising psychological science and producing contextually meaningful models of well-being (Christopher et al., 2014).

In practical terms, this conceptual framework serves as both a theoretical map and a developmental tool. It underpins the design of the pilot intervention described in the following methodology section, guiding the selection of reflective, dialogical, and experiential techniques. It also provides a lens for thematic analysis, shaping the interpretation of participants’ narratives about love and virtue in community contexts.

Ultimately, the framework offers a novel synthesis: it unites emotion, ethics, and cultural identity into a single structure that conceptualises love not only as a feeling, but as a civic virtue and developmental mechanism. It illustrates how internal emotional transformation, anchored in compassion and acceptance, can radiate outward to generate collective empathy, mutual respect, and social harmony.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: The Transformative Pathway of Love through the LUVORA Model



Research Objectives and Rationale

The overarching purpose of this study is to examine how love, conceptualised as a multidimensional psychological and moral force, can be operationalised through the LUVORA Framework to enhance prosocial behaviour and social cohesion in community contexts. Building on Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory and the broader literature on compassion, virtue ethics, and collective well-being, the study positions love as a catalyst for emotional awareness, moral clarity, and civic harmony. The objectives are therefore both theoretical and applied, responding to the growing global and local need for emotionally intelligent, value-centred approaches to social development.

Objective 1: To conceptualise love as a measurable construct within Positive Psychology

A core academic objective is to advance the theoretical framing of love beyond its conventional sentimental interpretation. While Positive Psychology has emphasised constructs such as hope, resilience, and gratitude, love itself has remained under-operationalised (Seppälä et al., 2020). This study seeks to define love as an integrative emotion encompassing care, empathy, and moral concern, attributes that can be observed, reflected upon, and nurtured through intentional practice. Conceptualising love in this manner contributes to closing a persistent theoretical gap and establishes a platform for future empirical validation.

Objective 2: To introduce and elaborate on the LUVORA Framework as a structured model for cultivating prosocial behaviour

The second objective is to present the LUVORA Framework, Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance, as a practical mechanism that translates emotion into ethical action. Each dimension reflects a virtue that, when internalised, can generate sustainable patterns of prosocial engagement. By analysing how these components interact and reinforce one another, the study

aims to demonstrate that emotional transformation and moral development are not isolated phenomena but mutually generative processes essential for community well-being (Seligman, 2011; Haidt, 2006).

Objective 3: To design and pilot a qualitative intervention exploring the experiential impact of LUVORA

A methodological objective is to construct and evaluate a small-scale pilot study employing reflective and experiential learning strategies. Through workshops, journaling, and dialogue, participants will engage directly with the six virtues, allowing the researcher to observe emotional, cognitive, and behavioural shifts. This exploratory pilot will inform the refinement of intervention tools and provide a foundation for larger-scale mixed-method research examining measurable psychosocial outcomes.

Objective 4: To investigate anticipated transformations in emotional awareness, empathy, and moral reasoning

The study seeks to analyse how exposure to love-based reflection may expand participants' awareness of emotional processes, foster empathy, and deepen moral reasoning. Drawing on the Broaden-and-Build principle, it hypothesises that recurring experiences of positive emotion will extend cognitive and behavioural repertoires, encouraging openness, inclusivity, and resilience (Fredrickson, 2013). Observing these transformations among Sri Lankan community facilitators will highlight the framework's potential relevance to culturally diverse populations.

Objective 5: To evaluate the relevance and feasibility of implementing love-based interventions in Sri Lankan community development

Finally, the study aims to determine how culturally adapted love-based programmes can strengthen social cohesion in a rapidly modernising yet emotionally fragmented society. Sri Lanka's post-conflict and collectivist setting provides a distinctive context to explore how emotional education intersects with reconciliation, social justice, and civic responsibility (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Evaluating feasibility and participant response will indicate how the LUVORA framework may guide leadership, education, and policy initiatives that prioritise compassion and inclusion.

Methodology

Research Design

The proposed study adopts a qualitative, exploratory pilot design aimed at understanding how love-based virtues can be intentionally cultivated and expressed within community development contexts. This approach is appropriate because the study seeks depth of meaning rather than measurement of outcomes. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) note, qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to capture “the lived texture of experience” that quantitative tools often overlook. By exploring participants' reflections, emotions, and interpersonal insights, the study aims to reveal how love functions as both an internal state and a social process.

The pilot study will serve as a preliminary stage for a larger empirical project. Its purpose is to assess the conceptual clarity and practical feasibility of the LUVORA Framework before wider implementation. Since love as a research construct is

abstract and multidimensional, an exploratory pilot allows flexibility in refining language, activities, and measurement strategies based on real participant feedback.

This design aligns closely with the philosophical assumptions of constructivism, which views knowledge as co-created through dialogue and context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants' interpretations of love, virtue, and resilience are expected to vary across personal and cultural backgrounds, providing rich insights into how universal emotions manifest within Sri Lanka's collective social ethos.

Research Setting and Participants

The study will be conducted within selected Sri Lankan community organisations that engage in social empowerment and development work. The target group consists of twelve community facilitators, selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, gender, ethnicity, and professional role. These facilitators are already experienced in leading small-scale social or educational initiatives, making them ideal participants for exploring how emotional and moral values can influence community engagement.

The sample size of twelve is justified according to qualitative research principles, which emphasise depth over breadth (Guest et al., 2020). This number allows for detailed narrative exploration while maintaining manageability for thematic analysis. The goal is not to generalise statistically but to develop nuanced understandings that may guide subsequent large-scale studies.

Intervention Design

The central feature of the study is a two-day LUVORA Workshop, designed to introduce participants to six interlinked virtues: Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance. Each virtue will be explored through experiential and reflective methods grounded in Positive Psychology and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 2011).

The workshop includes three phases:

1. Awareness and Conceptualisation: Short theoretical discussions and interactive dialogues will introduce each virtue, linking it to real-life experiences.
2. Experiential Engagement: Participants will take part in guided storytelling, group reflection, and mindfulness-based activities to translate conceptual understanding into emotional experience.
3. Integration and Reflection: The final phase focuses on reflective journaling, small-group sharing, and personal action planning.

These methods were chosen to create a balance between cognitive learning and emotional practice. Storytelling and journaling enable participants to explore how love-based attitudes shape relationships, while mindfulness and value clarification exercises promote self-awareness and resilience (Neff & Germer, 2019; Fredrickson, 2013).

Data Collection Methods

Data will be gathered using three qualitative tools:

1. Reflective Journals: Participants will write daily reflections on how each

LUVORA virtue resonates with their experiences. These entries will provide insight into the personal meaning-making process.

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted one week after the workshop, interviews will capture participants’ reflections on emotional shifts, perceived behavioural changes, and potential applications in community work.
3. **Focus Group Discussions:** A collective discussion held two weeks later will explore shared interpretations and group-level insights, enabling triangulation of data sources.

This multi-method approach allows to observe both individual transformation and collective understanding. It also creates a narrative chain from introspection to group dialogue, which strengthens data credibility (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This method involves an iterative process of familiarisation, coding, theme generation, and interpretation. Both deductive codes (derived from LUVORA’s six virtues) and inductive codes (emerging from participants lived accounts) will be applied.

Themes will be compared across data sources to identify convergences and divergences in how participants understand and embody love-based virtues. Researcher reflexivity will play an important role; maintaining a reflective journal will help track assumptions, reactions, and evolving interpretations. The analysis aims to build a grounded conceptual model that connects emotional awareness with practical community outcomes.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigour, the study will apply Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness:

- **Credibility:** achieved through data triangulation and peer debriefing.
- **Transferability:** supported by rich, contextual description of participants’ backgrounds.
- **Dependability:** maintained through an audit trail documenting decisions during data collection and analysis.
- **Confirmability:** ensured through reflexive journaling and supervisor review.

These strategies will enhance transparency and help readers evaluate the authenticity of interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

The research will adhere to ethical guidelines set by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo. Participants will receive clear information about the study’s purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary nature. Informed consent will be obtained before participation. Emotional safety will be prioritised; debriefing opportunities will be provided after potentially sensitive discussions. Data will be stored securely with anonymity preserved in all written reports. Ethical awareness

is especially important because love-based reflection may evoke personal memories and vulnerabilities. The researcher will remain attentive to emotional cues, ensuring compassion and respect throughout the process (Bond et al., 2013).

Methodological Alignment and Anticipated Contributions

The chosen methodology aligns strongly with Positive Psychology's applied ethos, which seeks to transform theory into experiential learning. By employing reflective and narrative methods, the study gives participants agency to co-construct meaning rather than act as research subjects. It also bridges Western psychological theory and Eastern cultural values, offering a balanced, context-sensitive model of emotional cultivation.

Beyond testing the LUVORA framework's feasibility, the pilot aims to inspire a broader conversation about integrating love and moral emotion into community leadership training. The findings are expected to inform future mixed-method studies that examine quantifiable outcomes such as resilience, empathy, and social trust.

In summary, this methodological approach situates love not only as a research construct but as a lived experience that can be empirically explored through dialogue, reflection, and compassionate practice.

Anticipated Outcomes and Discussion

Anticipated Patterns of Change

Based on the theoretical foundation and the structured design of the LUVORA workshop, four interrelated patterns of change are anticipated. First, participants are likely to report heightened emotional awareness, an ability to name, track, and interpret affective states in themselves and others. Activities such as storytelling and reflective journaling foreground inner experience and typically elicit nuanced descriptions of care, vulnerability, and gratitude, which broaden perception and increase cognitive flexibility (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson, 2013).

Second, empathic orientation is expected to strengthen as participants practise perspective-taking and recognise shared humanity across social boundaries. This aligns with evidence that compassion training enhances prosocial motivation and reduces implicit bias (Condon & Makransky, 2020; Seppälä et al., 2020).

Third, a deepening of moral reflection is anticipated, particularly within the Virtue and Acceptance dimensions, where participants weigh intentions, consequences, and fairness in everyday interactions, an outcome consistent with accounts of "binding moral emotions" that sustain group cohesion (Haidt, 2006; Nussbaum, 2013).

Fourth, community engagement may increase as facilitators articulate concrete intentions to apply the six virtues within their organisational roles, signalling a shift from intrapersonal change to interpersonal practice.

These changes are not independent. The Broaden-and-Build mechanism suggests that recurrent experiences of love and compassion expand attentional scope and behavioural repertoires, which, over time, consolidate into durable social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). In the present pilot, Love and Acceptance may

soften defensive postures; Openness can then enable curiosity toward difference; Virtue provides a compass for action; and Resilience helps participants sustain cooperative behaviours under stress. Uniformity, framed here as recognition of shared humanity, serves as a connective tissue that keeps the process relational rather than merely introspective.

Analytical Rationale for Significance

The significance of this study rests on three analytical propositions.

Proposition 1: Operationalising “love” closes a conceptual–practical gap.

Existing interventions often foreground adjacent constructs such as empathy, kindness, gratitude, while avoiding love as the explicit centre due to concerns about measurement or perceived sentimentality (Seppälä et al., 2020). LUVORA addresses this by disaggregating love into six operational virtues that can be taught, practised, and qualitatively evaluated. This structure transforms a diffuse moral ideal into a trainable skill-set, advancing the field beyond generic “soft skills.”

Proposition 2: Emotional cultivation is a public-good intervention. Social connection carries measurable health and societal benefits (Holt-Lunstad, 2023). If the pilot yields evidence, even at a qualitative level, that love-based practice increases empathic attunement and cooperative intention among community facilitators, the downstream effects plausibly include improved programme uptake, more inclusive decision-making, and reduced interpersonal conflict. Such outcomes accumulate as social capital, the network of norms and trust that enables coordination (cf. Putnam, 2000). In short, love is not merely intrapsychic; it is infrastructural.

Proposition 3: Cultural attunement is a mechanism, not a backdrop. In collectivist contexts such as Sri Lanka, relational self-construals mean emotional change is socially mediated rather than individually contained (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). By integrating indigenous ethical themes (e.g., metta, karuṇā) with Positive Psychology practice, LUVORA leverages cultural consonance as an active mechanism for internalisation. The study therefore contributes to decolonising methodologies by refusing to export a universalist affective model unaltered; instead, it builds a context-sensitive praxis that is theoretically legible and locally resonant.

Critical Appraisal and Theoretical Integration

A critical question is whether “love,” even when structured, risks normativity that could silence justified anger or dissent. The framework addresses this by pairing Acceptance with Virtue and Resilience: acceptance is not acquiescence; virtue requires discernment; resilience legitimises struggle while guarding against burnout. In analytical terms, LUVORA integrates Broaden-and-Build (expanding repertoires), with value-based ethics (orienting action), and reflective practice (sustaining change). This triangulation reduces the risk of affective idealism, love without critique and guards against moralism, virtue without compassion.

Another concern is transferability: will short-format workshops produce effects that persist beyond the reflective moment? Here, the anticipated mechanism is not a one-off “lift” in positive affect but a reframing of social interpretation that,

if rehearsed, becomes habitual. Qualitative indicators, shifts in narrative framing, language of agency, and concrete intentions for practice are appropriate early markers before later mixed-method studies examine behavioural outcomes.

Anticipated Contributions to Knowledge

At the theoretical level, the study clarifies love as an integrative construct with identifiable facets. By mapping Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance onto observable narratives and decisions, LUVORA proposes a mid-level theory linking emotion to ethical action in context. This addresses a recurrent critique that Positive Psychology under-theorises the moral content of flourishing.

At the methodological level, the study demonstrates the relevance of reflexive thematic analysis for affective constructs. The combination of reflective journaling, individual interviews, and group dialogue captures both interiority and social negotiation, aligning with constructivist assumptions about co-created meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audit trail, member checks, and triangulation enhance evaluative transparency.

At the level of practice, the study offers a facilitation-ready scaffold. Community organisations can adapt the six-virtue arc for leadership development, conflict mediation, or youth empowerment. Because the framework is principle-based rather than technique-bound, the model is portable across diverse contexts while remaining open to contextual tailoring.

Anticipated Limitations and How They Inform Future Work

The pilot study's small, purposive sample limits generalisability; however, that is methodologically appropriate for conceptual refinement. The short intervention window restricts longitudinal inference; follow-on studies should incorporate booster sessions and delayed measurement points. Social desirability bias is a risk when discussing moral emotions; triangulating private journals with post-workshop interviews and group discourse should partially mitigate this, and reflexive memos will document researcher influence. Finally, the construct of Uniformity requires careful facilitation to avoid erasing difference; framing it as "shared dignity" rather than sameness will preserve pluralism while emphasising common moral worth.

Why This Study Matters Now

Polarisation, performative online discourse, and institutional mistrust have made it harder for communities to act collectively. Interventions that teach people to regulate emotion are valuable but insufficient if they ignore moral orientation and social application. By explicitly naming and operationalising love, and by showing how it can be practised as a civic virtue, this study offers a route from intrapersonal regulation to interpersonal repair. The implications extend from micro-settings (facilitator-participant dynamics) to meso-level institutions (schools, NGOs, workplaces) and potentially to macro-level policy that recognises social connection as a public good (Holt-Lunstad, 2023).

In sum, the expected findings, if supported, would demonstrate that cultivating love is neither sentimental nor ancillary to development work. It is a disciplined practice with theoretical coherence, cultural fidelity, and practical leverage. By

furnishing a replicable, values-driven model, the study advances an urgently needed proposition: emotional literacy anchored in moral purpose is foundational infrastructure for social cohesion.

Conclusion

In a world increasingly driven by technological acceleration, competition, and fragmented social realities, the search for connection and meaning has become both an individual and collective imperative. This study emerges from that search, positioning love, the most profound yet understudied positive emotion, as a scientifically grounded and morally compelling pathway toward social cohesion. Drawing from the theoretical foundations of Positive Psychology, moral philosophy, and affective neuroscience, the study argues that love is neither an abstract sentiment nor a private emotion, but a dynamic force that can be intentionally cultivated to transform individuals, relationships, and communities. The conceptual framework developed through this research, LUVORA, Love, Uniformity, Virtue, Openness, Resilience, and Acceptance, offers a structured approach to reimagining love as a measurable and applicable construct. Each dimension corresponds to a psychological or ethical quality that contributes to emotional growth and social harmony. Love fosters empathy and care; Uniformity emphasises shared humanity; Virtue anchors moral integrity; Openness encourages cognitive and emotional flexibility; Resilience sustains perseverance in adversity; and Acceptance cultivates inclusion and psychological safety. Together, these interwoven virtues form a holistic model through which love becomes both a personal practice and a collective force for transformation. The LUVORA framework proposes that when these six dimensions are intentionally cultivated, individuals move beyond self-centred emotional gratification toward empathic understanding, ethical awareness, and communal belonging.

In doing so, love ceases to be viewed as a transient feeling and is repositioned as an enduring psychosocial mechanism capable of countering alienation, prejudice, and moral disengagement in modern societies. The model aligns with Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build Theory (2001), which demonstrates that positive emotions expand thought–action repertoires, enabling individuals to build enduring psychological and relational resources. Similarly, it draws from Haidt’s Moral Emotion Theory (2006), positioning love as the moral foundation from which compassion, fairness, and justice emerge. The inclusion of resilience and acceptance integrates insights from self-determination and mindfulness-based frameworks, highlighting love’s capacity to regulate emotion, sustain well-being, and facilitate social trust.

Through these interlinking pathways, the LUVORA framework advances a vision of love that transcends romance or spirituality, it becomes an actionable paradigm for human flourishing and civic harmony. Within this paradigm, love operates as both a psychological energy that broadens awareness and a moral compass that guides ethical action. It restores balance between technological advancement and emotional intelligence, reminding societies that genuine progress requires both innovation and empathy.

Ultimately, this study argues that love, when operationalised through structured virtues, can be empirically explored, pedagogically taught, and socially embedded.

It establishes a foundation for future empirical investigations into love-based interventions, offering a new theoretical and practical direction for Positive Psychology. The LUVORA framework thus transforms love from an abstract ideal into a measurable, teachable, and transformative force that reconnects individuals and communities in an increasingly divided world.

References

- Bond, F. W., Hayes, S. C., Baer, R. A., Carpenter, K. M., Guenole, N., Orcutt, H. K., Waltz, T., & Zettle, R. D. (2013). Preliminary psychometric properties of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire–II: A revised measure of psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance. *Behavior Therapy*, 44(4), 676–695. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2013.05.001>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Condon, P., & Makransky, J. (2020). Sustainable compassion training: Integrating meditation science and contemporary psychology. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 224. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00224>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Davidson, R. J., & McEwen, B. S. (2012). Social influences on neuroplasticity: Stress and interventions to promote well-being. *Nature Neuroscience*, 15(5), 689–695. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.3093>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dispenza, J. (2012). *Breaking the habit of being yourself: How to lose your mind and create a new one*. Hay House.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). *Love 2.0: Finding happiness and health in moments of connection*. Hudson Street Press.
- Fuchs, C. (2021). *Social media: A critical introduction* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLoS ONE*, 15(5), e0232076. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076>

- Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom*. Basic Books.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2011). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Holt-Lunstad, J. (2023). Social connection as a public health issue: The evidence and a systemic framework for prioritising the “social” in social determinants of health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 44, 193–213. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-052020-110732>
- Krznaric, R. (2014). *Empathy: Why it matters, and how to get it*. TarcherPerigee.
- Langer, E. J. (2009). *Counterclockwise: Mindful health and the power of possibility*. Ballantine Books.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2023). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want* (2nd ed.). Penguin.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (2010). Cultures and selves: A cycle of mutual constitution. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), 420–430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610375557>
- Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2019). *The mindful self-compassion workbook: A proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. Guilford Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2013). *Political emotions: Why love matters for justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Post, S. G. (2023). *Dignity for deeply forgetful people: How caregivers can meet the challenges of Alzheimer’s disease*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Seppälä, E., Simon-Thomas, E., Brown, S. L., Worline, M. C., Cameron, C. D., & Doty, J. R. (Eds.). (2020). *The Oxford handbook of compassion science*. Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.