
EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LOVE LANGUAGES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Katica Stoimenovska Mantova

International Balkan University, Skopje, RN Macedonia, k.stoimenovska@ibu.edu.mk

Abstract: The fundamental concept of the five love languages theory and understanding is straightforward - individuals possess unique personalities and therefore express and perceive love in diverse ways. By gaining insight into these variances in both oneself and in significant others, a person can identify the underlying cause of conflicts, develop a more profound connection, and ultimately foster deeper relationships. For the present study I intend to look more specifically into the relationship between love language and relationship satisfaction and explore do the people that speak specific love language tend to be more satisfied in their relationships. For this purpose, we assessed the love languages using love languages profile written by Chapman and relationship assessment scale to assess the relationship satisfaction. The online survey was completed by 108 participants, all women, ranging in age from 20 to 68, who were in committed relationships with a permanent partner. The participants' average age was 38.47 years. The duration of the relationships varied among the participants, with the majority (43.5%) having been together for over ten years, followed by 20.4% in relationships for less than ten years, 19.4% for less than one year, and 16.7% for less than five years. In terms of education, the majority (56.5%) had an undergraduate degree, while 23.1% held a master's degree, 9.3% had a doctorate, and 11.1% had completed high school. All participants identified as Macedonian and practiced the Orthodox religion. Results of the the study found that most participants (84.3%) favored quality time as their preferred love language. This preference was significantly higher than the other love languages, with acts of service being preferred by 7.4% of participants and physical touch being preferred by 4.6%. Words of affirmation and receiving gifts had the lowest levels of preference, each being preferred by only 1.9% of participants. The statistical analysis conducted in this study revealed that participants who preferred quality time as their love language reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction, followed by those who favored receiving gifts, physical touch, words of affirmation, and acts of service. Despite these findings, we concluded that the association between love language and relationship satisfaction was not statistically significant, which led us to reject our hypothesis that there is a relationship between the two. To enhance comprehension of the correlation between love language and relationship satisfaction, conducting further research is necessary. The significance of expanding knowledge in this area lies in the potential outcomes of this study, including resolving relationship and marriage conflicts, offering tools to articulate desires and requirements to one's partner, facilitating improved communication of needs, and providing applications to couples therapy and marriage counseling. Furthermore, it may provide resources for expressing the partner's wishes and needs, and addressing potential problems in relationships and marriages.

Keywords: love languages, relationship satisfaction, love

1. INTRODUCTION

Love languages

A romantic relationship is defined as mutual, ongoing and voluntary interactions between two partners that is characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy (Collins, et al., 2009). It is a complex interplay of emotions that can develop between two individuals. Within each relationship, individuals typically desire to express their affection towards their partner. However, effective communication of these feelings can often be challenging. According to Chapman (2015), one of the primary reasons for this difficulty is that individuals tend to speak different "love languages" - i.e., unique modes of expressing and receiving love that may differ from their partner's preferred love language. These love languages refer to distinct categories that outline different expressions and experiences of love.

The Chapman concept of love languages is simple and consists of five categories that describe different ways of expressing and receiving love: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. However, not everyone communicates their affection in the same way, and individuals also have varying preferences on how they receive love. Understanding these differences is crucial in any relationship, as it can significantly impact its success. By learning how to communicate love in a way that resonates with one's partner and by identifying the love language that speaks to them, individuals can improve their connection, foster a deeper understanding, and build a stronger bond.

The first love language that Chapman describes is **words of affirmation**. This language involves using words to affirm and validate other individuals. For those whose primary love language is words of affirmation, receiving

compliments and verbal validation from their partner is essential to feel loved and appreciated. Public expressions of praise and affirmation hold even greater value for them. This love language is primarily concerned with expressing affection through spoken words, such as compliments, praise, and appreciation. People who resonate with this love language enjoy hearing kind words, uplifting quotes, encouragement, and love notes. On the other hand, unsolicited criticism or negative comments can have a profound impact on them, leaving them feeling shattered and hurt.

The second love language that Chapman identifies is **Quality Time**. This language involves being fully present in the moment and giving undivided attention to one's partner. For those whose primary love language is Quality Time, it means sharing meaningful conversations and engaging in activities without any distractions. Individuals who speak this love language feel loved and valued when their partner prioritizes spending time with them. They feel a sense of togetherness and connection when their partner shows genuine interest in their thoughts and feelings during meaningful conversations. On the other hand, distractions, postponed dates, or failing to actively listen to their partner can be extremely hurtful and leave them feeling unimportant and neglected.

The third love language identified by Chapman is **Receiving Gifts**. For individuals who speak this language, receiving a heartfelt gift is a powerful way to feel loved and appreciated. It's not about materialism or the price tag of the gift, but rather the love, thoughtfulness, and effort that goes into selecting and giving the gift. Those with this love language view gifts as meaningful symbols of affection and appreciation, and they cherish every little gift they receive from their loved ones. However, a missed birthday or anniversary, or a thoughtless or hastily chosen gift, can be deeply hurtful. Conversely, a well-considered gift that shows that their partner really understands them can make them feel truly valued and loved.

The fourth love language is **Acts of Service**. Individuals who speak this language feel loved and appreciated when their partner helps them with their responsibilities and lightens their load. When someone offers to take on a task or helps without being asked, it conveys care and a genuine interest in the other person's well-being. On the other hand, laziness, broken commitments, or adding more work can be deeply hurtful and make these individuals feel unloved and undervalued. It's worth noting that people who speak this love language often find joy in performing acts of service for others and feel fulfilled when they can make someone else's life easier.

The fifth love language identified by Chapman is **Physical Touch**. Individuals who speak this language feel loved and appreciated through physical contact and proximity with their partner. While this love language can include sexual intimacy, it also encompasses non-sexual forms of physical touch, such as hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and affectionate touches on the arm, shoulder, or face. For people who speak this love language, physical presence and accessibility are essential for feeling connected and valued in a relationship. On the other hand, neglect or abuse can be deeply damaging and unforgivable. Physical touch creates a sense of security, comfort, and intimacy in a relationship.

2. RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Relationship satisfaction refers to the evaluation of a relationship, which involves the personal feelings and perceptions of both individuals involved. It is a complex construct that can vary between partners and can have a significant impact on the overall well-being of the family and society. To attain relationship satisfaction, individuals strive to cultivate mutual commitment, love, investment, and communication within the relationship. By doing so, they can help prevent negative outcomes such as breakups, distress, and divorce. (Keizer, R., 2014; Gerlach et al., 2018).

There are several theories about relationship satisfaction, and maybe the closest to our understanding are:

The interdependence theory posits that individuals have a standard against which they compare the current outcomes of their relationship, and that this criterion is crucial in determining relationship satisfaction. This standard, known as the comparison level, represents the minimum level of outcomes that an individual feels they deserve from the relationship. If the outcome exceeds the comparison level, satisfaction is achieved, and the greater the surplus, the higher the level of satisfaction. Conversely, if the comparison level is not met, dissatisfaction ensues. Satisfaction is not solely dependent on the balance between rewards and costs, but rather on whether the comparison level is reached. It should be acknowledged that individuals usually, compare their current relationships with the relationship that they expected to have, with a past relationship and observations of other peoples' relationships (Miller & Tedder, 2011; "APA Dictionary of Psychology", n.d.).

The soulmate theory posits that there is a single or few individuals in the world with whom individuals are destined to have a fulfilling relationship. According to this theory, if the current partner does not meet the criteria of being one's soulmate, the individual will terminate the relationship and search for the perfect match. Believers of the soulmate theory place great emphasis on shared beliefs and values, and may view conflicting opinions as a potential threat to the relationship's viability. Additionally, they tend to seek out partners who share similar characteristics

with them. For individuals who subscribe to the soulmate theory, challenges and conflicts in the relationship may be interpreted as signs that the partner is not the right fit (Franiuk et al., 2002).

Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love suggests that "the three components of love, are an intimacy component, a passion component, and a decision/commitment component." Intimacy is characterized by feelings of closeness, mutual understanding, and affection between partners. Passion refers to the physical and emotional attraction, including sexual desire and excitement, that exists between partners. Decision/commitment is the conscious decision to maintain and support the relationship, and it is responsible for the long-term commitment and devotion to the relationship.

Each of these components can exist in varying degrees in different relationships, leading to different types of love, including romantic love, companionate love, and consummate love. The absence of one or more of these components can result in the lack of love, while the presence and balance of all three components are associated with greater life satisfaction in romantic relationships (De Andrade et al., 2015).

Intimacy, passion, commitment, and social status are critical factors that affect relationship satisfaction. Understanding a partner's weaknesses and limitations at the start of a potential relationship enables partners to determine whether they can create a successful and satisfying relationship.

In accordance with these theories, the Love Languages creator, Chapman, posits that speaking the same love language has a significant impact on relationship satisfaction. Chapman introduces the concept of emotional love tanks, which, when empty, can result in alienation, isolation, withdrawal, conflict, and difficulties in coping with relationship challenges. Conversely, couples who have full love tanks have the necessary resources to handle difficulties and resolve conflicts. One way to fill the love tank is by speaking your partner's love language. The ability of partners to communicate in their partner's love language results in filling the love tank. Being able to recognize and then speak a partner's love language leads to increased relationship satisfaction. Conversely, failing to recognize or not being able to speak a partner's love language can result in relationship dissatisfaction.

Numerous factors can significantly influence relationship satisfaction, including demographic variables, individual characteristics such as attachment style, communication abilities, and external stressors. Culture is a crucial factor for relationship satisfaction, with research indicating that spouses who fulfill culturally determined obligations experience higher satisfaction levels (Keizer, R., 2014). Gender equity, or fairness in the relationship, is another essential aspect of satisfaction. It is essential that individuals possess a realistic perception of their partner and do not have unrealistic expectations (Miller & Tedder, 2011). Other demographic variables influencing marital satisfaction include race, class, and religion.

Individual factors such as attachment security play a significant role in relationship satisfaction. A study by Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury (2001) found that positive perceptions of a partner's security were associated with supportive behavior, which predicted increased marital satisfaction. Personality and temperament are additional individual factors impacting marital satisfaction. Research indicates that marital satisfaction is positively correlated with couples who exhibit similarity in pleasantness and dominance. Individuals who are more pleasant tend to report greater happiness in their marriages, and vice versa (Blum and Mehrabian, 1999).

Emotions, including positive and negative emotions, communication skills, and support, also impact relationship satisfaction (Keizer, R., 2014). It is critical to consider all these factors when examining the complex nature of relationship satisfaction. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that influence relationship satisfaction can aid in the development of effective interventions and strategies to promote healthy and fulfilling relationships.

Relationship satisfaction is of utmost importance, particularly as it predicts the overall quality of a relationship and subsequently, the well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction of individuals involved. Research has demonstrated that individuals experiencing a breakup and those involved in low quality relationships tend to experience greater suffering, pain, and mourning (De Andrade et al., 2015). In contrast, a fulfilling relationship has been linked to a better lifestyle, improved well-being of partners, effective coping mechanisms during difficult situations and stress. Thus, prioritizing and nurturing a healthy relationship is crucial for long-term happiness and overall life satisfaction.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

This study was conducted with 108 women between the ages of 20 to 68 who are in an intimate relationship with a permanent partner. The average age of the participants was 38.47 years. The duration of the relationships varied, with 19.4% being in a relationship for less than 1 year, 16.7% for less than 5 years, 20.4% for less than 10 years, and 43.5% for more than 10 years. In terms of education, 11.1% completed high school, 56.5% have an undergraduate degree, 23.1% have a master's degree, and 9.3% have a doctorate. All participants were of Macedonian nationality and Orthodox religion.

Instruments

To determine the participants' preferred ways of showing affection, the Love Languages Profile created by Chapman (2015) was utilized. This assessment involved a set of 30 pairs of statements, each representing one of the five love languages - words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Participants selected one statement from each pair, and earned one point for each answer that corresponded with a particular love language. The love language with the highest number of points for each participant was considered their preferred way of expressing affection.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a concise questionnaire consisting of seven questions designed to assess an individual's level of satisfaction in their relationship [2]. Respondents rate each question using a 5-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 represents low satisfaction and a score of 5 represents high satisfaction. The total score can range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating a higher level of relationship satisfaction.

Procedure

In this study, participants were requested to fill out surveys covering various aspects, such as love languages, relationship satisfaction, and demographic information including age, gender, relationship status, and education. The survey was conducted online, and participation was voluntary, with a convenience sample being formed. The collected data was analyzed, and it was observed that the number of male participants was minimal, with only 18 respondents. Therefore, their responses were eliminated from the analysis. Similarly, only a small number of respondents were not in a relationship, with only 12 individuals, so their answers were also excluded. Ultimately, the total number of respondents included in the analysis was 108.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency of Love Languages

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
words of affirmation	2	1.9	1.9	1.9
quality time	91	84.3	84.3	86.1
receiving gifts	2	1.9	1.9	88.0
acts of service	8	7.4	7.4	95.4
physical touch	5	4.6	4.6	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 provides details on the distribution of participants across different love languages. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of participants (84.3%) favored quality time as their preferred means of expressing and receiving affection. In contrast, the other love languages had relatively lower levels of preference, with acts of service being preferred by 7.4% of participants and physical touch being preferred by 4.6% of participants. Words of affirmation and receiving gifts had the lowest level of preference, each being preferred by only 1.9% of participants.

Table 2. Results for mean score for relationship satisfaction

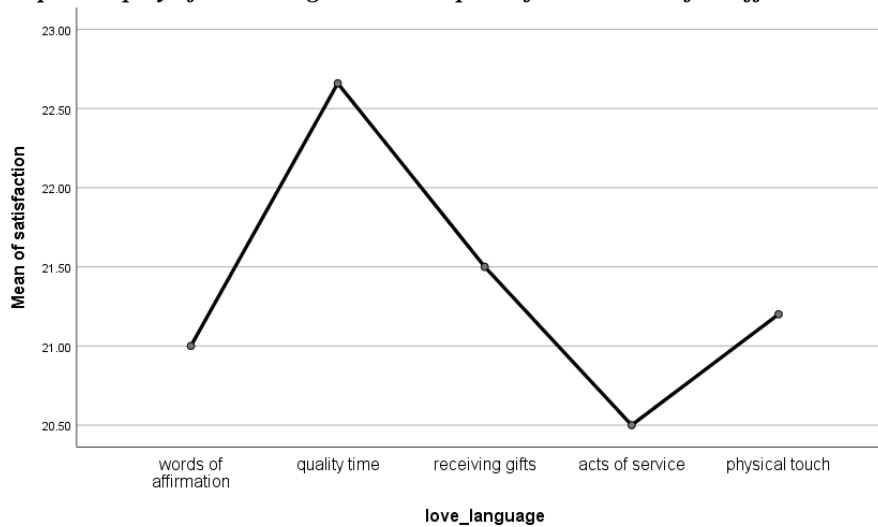
	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic
satisfaction	108	15.00	32.00	22.3796	.35997	3.74095
Valid N (listwise)	108					

As indicated in the table, the arithmetic mean for relationship satisfaction, based on the maximum score, is 22.37. To explore which love language had the strongest association with relationship satisfaction, an ANOVA analysis was performed. The resulting data are presented below:

Table 3. Descriptive data on relationship satisfaction among different love languages

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
words of affirmation	2	21.0000	1.41421	1.00000	8.2938	33.7062	20.00	22.00
quality time	91	22.6593	3.69751	.38760	21.8893	23.4294	15.00	32.00
receiving gifts	2	21.5000	3.53553	2.50000	-10.2655	53.2655	19.00	24.00
acts of service	8	20.5000	4.50397	1.59239	16.7346	24.2654	15.00	27.00
physical touch	5	21.2000	3.96232	1.77200	16.2801	26.1199	17.00	27.00
Total	108	22.3796	3.74095	.35997	21.6660	23.0932	15.00	32.00

Chart 1. Graphic display of the average relationship satisfaction values for different love languages



According to the findings presented in Table 3 and Chart 1, participants who expressed a preference for the love language of quality time tended to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Participants who preferred receiving gifts had the second highest level of relationship satisfaction, followed by those who preferred physical touch and words of affirmation. In contrast, participants who favored acts of service as their love language tended to experience relatively lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

The further statistical analysis showed that these differences are not statistically significant $F(4.103) = .847$ $p > 0.05$.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the literature on love languages and relationship satisfaction. The aim of the research was to explore the relationship between the preferred love language that the person has and the satisfaction from the relationship that he experiences.

The study revealed that a large majority, 84 percent of participants, identified quality time as their primary love language. This indicates that meaningful conversations and uninterrupted activities hold great value for most participants in their relationships. Individuals with this love language seek their partner's undivided attention and feel most loved when their partner is fully present and engaged during their time together. This involves setting aside technological distractions, making eye contact, and actively listening to their partner. Among all these actions, actively listening and engaging in conversation holds the most significance for individuals who identify quality time as their love language.

The individuals with this preferred love language most of all reported to have higher satisfaction in their relationships than other.

The results of this research are in line with the results of other research on this topic where quality time was also the most preferred love languages (Hughes, J, L; Camden, Abigail, A 2020).

Among the participants, the second most favored love language was acts of service, which refers to kind gestures and helpful actions performed by a partner that make them feel loved and valued. This can include completing

household tasks, as well as the small acts of kindness shown by their partner. People who favor acts of service as a love language often tend to reciprocate these actions and show kindness to others as well.

The participants' third most preferred love language is physical touch, revealing that they derive feelings of love and affection through physical contact. In addition to sexual intimacy, they also feel loved when their partner shows them small physical gestures of affection.

Last preferred love language are words of affirmation and receiving gifts.

After conducting statistical analysis to explore the association between love language and relationship satisfaction, the results indicate that participants who favored quality time as their love language reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. Following closely behind were those who preferred receiving gifts, physical touch, words of affirmation, and finally acts of service. This association was proven to not be statistically significant and with that our hypothesis that there is relationship between love language and relationship satisfaction was rejected. The reason for this result may lay in limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged like small number of participants and lack of information of their partner preferred love language,

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, our statistical analysis found that participants who valued quality time as their love language reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction, followed by those who favored receiving gifts, physical touch, words of affirmation, and acts of service. However, we found that this association was not statistically significant, leading us to reject our hypothesis that a clear relationship exists between love language and relationship satisfaction. It's worth noting that this study has some limitations, such as a small sample size and the absence of information about the preferred love language of participants' partners. Therefore, further research with a larger and more diverse sample may be needed to gain a deeper understanding of the potential links between love language and relationship satisfaction.

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