

Empirical Analysis of the Love Languages in the Context of Relationship Satisfaction, Sexual Satisfaction and Empathy in Romantic Heterosexual Couples

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Abstract : The present paper explores and tests Gary Chapman's claims that (1) people vary in the ways they prefer to receive and express affection and (2) romantic partners, who communicate their feelings correspondingly to their partner's preferences, experience greater relationship quality. The author proposes five distinct preferences for and tendencies to express love, including acts of service, physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, and gifts. In the present study, partners (N = 100 romantic, heterosexual couples) completed measures assessing their preferences and behavioral tendencies reflecting 1) how they a) tend to express and b) prefer to receive signs of affection in correspondence to the five proposed categories; 2) relationship satisfaction; 3) sexual satisfaction and 4) empathy, which was expected to be the factor that leads to a better understanding of and responding to the partner's needs. The degree of the within-couple match was calculated separately for each individual based on the discrepancies between one's felt (preferred) and their partner's expressed love language. The joint discrepancy indicator was a sum of such discrepancies across the five love languages. Conducted analyses provided evidence for significant associations between matching on love languages and both relationship and sexual satisfaction. In particular, people who expressed their affection in the way their partners preferred to receive it experienced greater satisfaction with their relationships and were more sexually satisfied compared to those who met their partner's needs to a lesser extent. Other results provide some support for mediating effects of certain domains of empathy in the said associations among male but not female participants.

Keywords : affection, empathy, love languages, relationship satisfaction, romantic couples, sexual satisfaction

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