

Autonomy and Other Variables Related to the Expression of Love among Saudi Couples

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Abstract : The primary aim of this study was to examine the hypothesis presented by Self Determination theory which suggests that autonomy impacts positively the expression of love. Other hypotheses were also examined which suggest that other variables explain the expression of love, including: dyadic adjustment (dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction and dyadic cohesion), couple satisfaction, age, gender, the length of marriage, number of children and attachment styles. The participants were Saudi couples, which provided the opportunity to consider the influence of Saudi culture on the expression of love. A questionnaire was employed to obtain measures of all the relevant variables, including a measure of expression of love that was built from 27 items, constituting verbal, physical and caring features, and a measure of autonomy based on three features: authorship, interest-taking and susceptibility. Data were collected from both members of 34 Saudi couples. Descriptive analysis of both expression of love and autonomy was conducted. Correlation and regression were used to assess the relationships between expression of love and autonomy and other variables. Results indicated that Saudi couples who most often express their love tend to be more than somewhat autonomous. Not much difference was found between husbands and wives in expressing love, although wives were slightly more autonomous than husbands. Expression of love was enhanced by the autonomy of the participants to a greater extent when dyadic satisfaction was controlled, since the latter was negatively correlated with autonomy and had no effect on the expression of love. Basic psychological needs, dyadic consensus and dismissive-avoidant attachment improve the expression of love, while it is decreased by the number of children.

Keywords : autonomy, determination theory, expression of love, dyadic adjustment

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