

Love Language Expressions among Newlyweds and Long-Married Couples: Interpersonal Communication's Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the dynamics of love language and the nature of interpersonal communication in encouraging healthy communication in marriage. The research employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the love languages of newlywed and long-married couples. The sample used is nonprobability sampling, where the population consists of married individuals. Thus, a purposive sampling strategy was employed. For this reason, 64 married individuals from the Bone area were included in the research, divided into 32 newlyweds and 32 long-married couples, each in the Tanete Riattang Barat sub-district, where three of each marital length willingly participated in an in-depth interview. Descriptive and thematic analysis were the types of analysis employed. The findings revealed several key points. Firstly, there is a wide spectrum of love language expressions. Second, "physical touch" was found to be the primary love language among newlyweds. In contrast, long-married couples expressed love primarily through "acts of service. Third, the research further revealed a significant correlation between the duration of marriage (whether newlyweds or long-married couples) and their primary love language, revealing that the duration of marriage may change the way couples express their feelings. Finally, it is worth noting that the findings were limited by a lack of awareness of the sociolinguistic nature of the research population.

Keywords: *love language, interpersonal communication, married individuals, newlyweds, long-married couple*

Introduction

The research examines the love languages of newlywed and long-married couples, indicating a significant influence of the duration of marriage on the expression of love within the relationship. The research examines the love languages of newlywed and long-married couples, indicating a significant influence of the duration of marriage on the expression of love within the relationship. According to Chapman (1994) positive emotional expressions and effective communication of negative emotions contribute to fulfilling and gratifying relationships. Effective communication is crucial in establishing and maintaining successful romantic relationships. Love language encompasses diverse methods that individuals utilize to express and receive love, such as words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, and receiving gifts (Chapman, 1992b). However, a comprehensive comprehension of how newlywed and mature married couples communicate their love language is still limited. Love language theory,

initially proposed by Chapman (1992) has gained popularity and prompted numerous researchers to explore its practical implications in relationships. Evidence indicates that a five-factor model, consistent with Chapman's Five Love Languages, offers a more accurate representation than models with fewer factors.

Nichols et al., (2018) examined the efficacy of a relationship education program rooted in the Five Love Languages concept across seven rural counties. The research findings demonstrate that the Five Love Languages program significantly enhanced participants' knowledge and confidence levels, with the "booster" group exhibiting increased improvement in partner empathy than the "no booster" group. The research underscores the program's value in family life education and offers suggestions for future research in the field. Several studies have examined the impact of Chapman's love language model on marital satisfaction, revealing that when couples utilize one another's preferred love language, it raises feelings of love and contentment in the relationship. In Bekasi, Indonesia, Aulia et al., (2022) conducted research into communication patterns, openness, and the implementation of love language during the first years of marriage. It was concluded that open communication within a marriage can strengthen communication, promote understanding of each other's love languages, and provide motivation. Consequently, the intention of this research was not to test the validity of Chapman's love languages model (which was also done by Goff et al., 2007 and Egbert & Polk, 2006).

This research, employing an interpersonal communication approach, aimed to recognize substantial variances in love language utilization among married couples of different marital durations. This comparative examination facilitated a more profound comprehension of how love language communication can vary throughout a long-term committed relationship. This research distinguishes itself from previous studies that concentrate on one stage of the relationship by offering a broader perspective on how couples navigate their relationships through communication. The researchers employed multiple theories, including the love language theory, social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), and communication accommodation theory (Giles, 1973) for a comprehensive research outlook encompassing three primary objectives.

By investigating how couples reveal and adapt their love language in the relationship, this research aimed to provide insights into the dynamic nature of love language and the role of interpersonal communication in promoting healthy communication between newlyweds and long-married couples' perspectives. Through examining the intricacies of love language dynamics among both newlywed and long-married couples, this research aimed to achieve three objectives: firstly, to identify the love language types used by these couples; secondly, to ascertain the types of primary love language from the perspective of newlywed and long-married couples; and thirdly, to describe love languages from an interpersonal communication perspective.

The Concepts of Love Language

Gary Chapman introduced the concept of love languages in 1992, which explores how people express and receive love and affection. Some individuals have a primary love language that they prefer to give and receive love through. Implementing the recognition and expression of one's partner's love language can heighten the overall quality and enjoyment of the relationship. By embracing and acknowledging these differences, people can improve communication and build stronger relationships (Chapman, 1992a). The love languages, inspired by Chapman (1992a) encompass words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Words of

affirmation validate the recipient by using verbal statements and focusing on their personality, appearance, or contributions. Quality time prioritizes one's partner by dedicating their full attention, spending time together, and expressing appreciation through gifts. Acts of service entail actions that display care and support, such as cooking a meal, cleaning the house, or completing errands. Physical touch refers to non-sexual physical connections like embracing, handholding, and snuggling.

Newlyweds Vs. Long-married Couples

Newlyweds are defined as couples who have recently tied the knot or are in the initial stages of their marriage, specifically within their first year of marital union (Payleitner, 2021). During this phase, commonly known as the "honeymoon phase," couples experience high levels of intimacy, passion, and excitement. In contrast, long-married couples are those who have been married for a longer duration, typically several years or more. This period is often characterized by a stronger sense of commitment and attachment, but it may also entail lower levels of passion and excitement. Research indicates that love languages can evolve as couples traverse various stages of their relationship (Papp et al., 2011). The duration of marriage varies for newlyweds and long-time spouses depending on the definition applied. Kurdek (1999) noted that the average duration of marriage for newlyweds is between 0 and 2 years, while long-married couples generally have a marriage duration of more than 10 years. Additionally, C. A. Johnson et al. (2001) recommended a more comprehensive research of love languages at various marriage stages that includes not just newlyweds (0-5 years) but also long-married couples (20+ years). It's worth noting that the ranges may differ depending on the research and specific criteria used to define the groups. For this research, newlywed couples are those who have been married for 0-5 years, while long-married couples are those who have been married for 20 or more years. Hence, this research indicates the marital duration range defined for newlyweds (0-5 years of marriage) and long-married couples (5+ years of marriage).

Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication involves the sharing of information exclusively between individuals rather than roles, masks, or standards (Hartley, 1999). It is a fundamentally relational process that has an impact on relationships (DeVito, 2016). The nature of the relationship between individuals plays a crucial role in determining the way they interact. Luthfi (2017) discovered that inadequate family interpersonal interactions can result in conflict and divorce, whereas Verolyna (2019) demonstrated how a lack of interpersonal communication during the first years of marriage can lead to conflict. Interpersonal relationships are a continuously evolving entity that comprises growth, upkeep, and on occasion termination, all interwoven through communication. Developing effective communication skills is essential for strengthening these connections. Dindia & Timmerman (2003) emphasize the significance of refining these skills to navigate complexities, express oneself authentically, and understand the needs and perspectives of others. By utilizing communication as a tool for connection, individuals can facilitate rapport, cultivate empathy, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the relationship's longevity. DeVito (2022) presents a conceptual framework that captures fundamental aspects of interpersonal communication. The framework encompasses the concepts of "source-receiver," "messages," channels, noise, context, and effects. Together, these dimensions constitute the core of interpersonal communication in diverse contexts, enhancing our comprehension of the general principles regulating interpersonal communication dynamics. In summary, effective communication skills play a significant role in the success of interpersonal relationships. The connection

between communication cadence and the complexities of relationships is significant, thus understanding this relationship is crucial for sustaining relationships.

Method

The research employed a mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative methods. It analyzed the independent variables of love languages and the duration of the marriage while assessing the dependent variable of interpersonal communication. Two categories of marriage were identified by the duration of the union, employing purposive sampling as a non-probability method to classify the participants. Data collection for the research included a comprehensive questionnaire and a meticulous interview protocol. To ensure its effectiveness, the questionnaire was subjected to rigorous validation and reliability testing. The interviews were conducted based on a protocol grounded in theoretical principles and provided a structured exploration of the dynamics of love languages in marital relationships. Participants meeting specific inclusion criteria were asked to complete the questionnaire, which was distributed to them. The survey, comprising 30 validated items, aimed to comprehend participants' affinity for language. The participants were briefed on the survey's objectives and importance to ensure informed participation. Following the questionnaire, a group of selected participants were interviewed in-depth in Indonesian to investigate their love language dynamics in interpersonal communication. The data was analyzed through descriptive and thematic analysis. There were three steps taken in descriptive analysis, including frequency distribution, interval scale, and percentage score calculation. To create a frequency distribution for a categorical response, the steps included: identifying the responses, listing the categories, counting the frequency, tabulating the data, and making the graphs. The researcher utilized various methods to measure which criteria the indicator included, such as indicating the items and calculating the average percentage. In contrast, the percentage score was used to determine the participants' primary love language. The percentage score calculates how each participant leans towards each of the five different indicators (types of love language) and the six items. The purpose of this calculation is to establish a clear understanding of the participant's preferences. The steps taken included utilizing each participant's score as a benchmark, the maximum possible score, percentage score, frequency calculation, and a graphical representation.

Results

The Types of Love Languages were Expressed by Newlyweds and Long Married Couples

The research delves into the multifaceted landscape of love languages. This exploration encompasses an analysis of the various types of love languages that were identified through data collected from both newlyweds and long-married couples. The research illuminates the diverse ways in which individuals express love within the context of their marriages. The results are shown below.

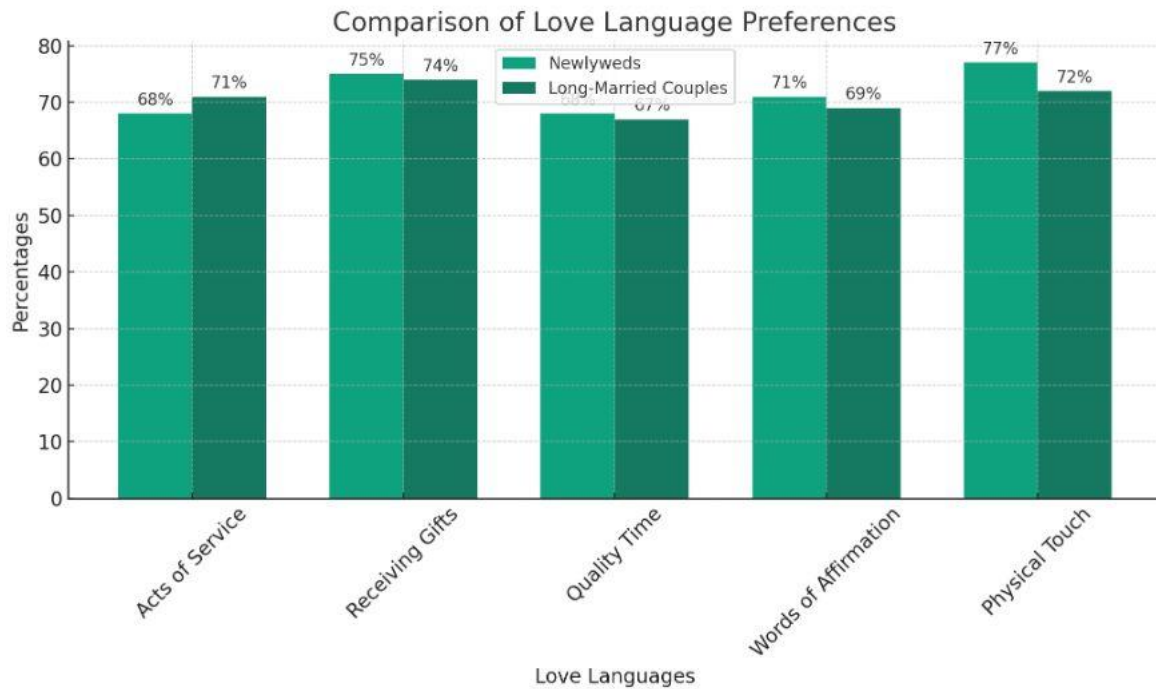


Figure 1. The results of newlyweds' and long-married couples' types of love language

The average percentage was calculated by multiplying the number of participants (32 newlyweds) by the total number of items (6). The frequency values were then calculated to obtain the results. Correspondingly, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, and physical touch have percentages of 68%, 75%, 68%, 71%, and 77%, respectively. Notably, all types of love language satisfy the "strong" criteria. The study results validate the effectiveness and accuracy of the adopted method in evaluating the subtle nuances of love language dynamics, thus underscoring the reliability and usefulness of the research approach in comprehending the intricacies of love expression in newlywed couples. As for the long-married couples, by multiplying the total number of items by the number of participants (32 long-married couples), researchers computed frequency values for the analyzed data. After averaging the percentages for acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, and physical touch, the results indicate that acts of service scored 71%, receiving gifts scored 74%, quality time scored 67%, words of affirmation scored 69%, and physical touch scored 72%. For both newlyweds and long-married couples, all love languages meet the criteria for being "strong" as shown in Figure 1. These results not only support the efficiency and accuracy of the selected method in assessing the intricate facets of love communication patterns but also bolster the authenticity and usefulness of the research methodology in augmenting the understanding of the subtleties of love expression in the relationships of old married couples.

The Common Types of Primary Love Languages were Expressed by Newlyweds and Long Married Couples

This investigation in this section serves as a beacon, illuminating the central avenues through which love languages find their most effective expression among the diverse group of participants. By meticulously examining their patterns of communication and affection, we seek to provide valuable insights into how love is most commonly conveyed within the intricate dynamics of romantic partnerships, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the intricate tapestry of human love and connection.

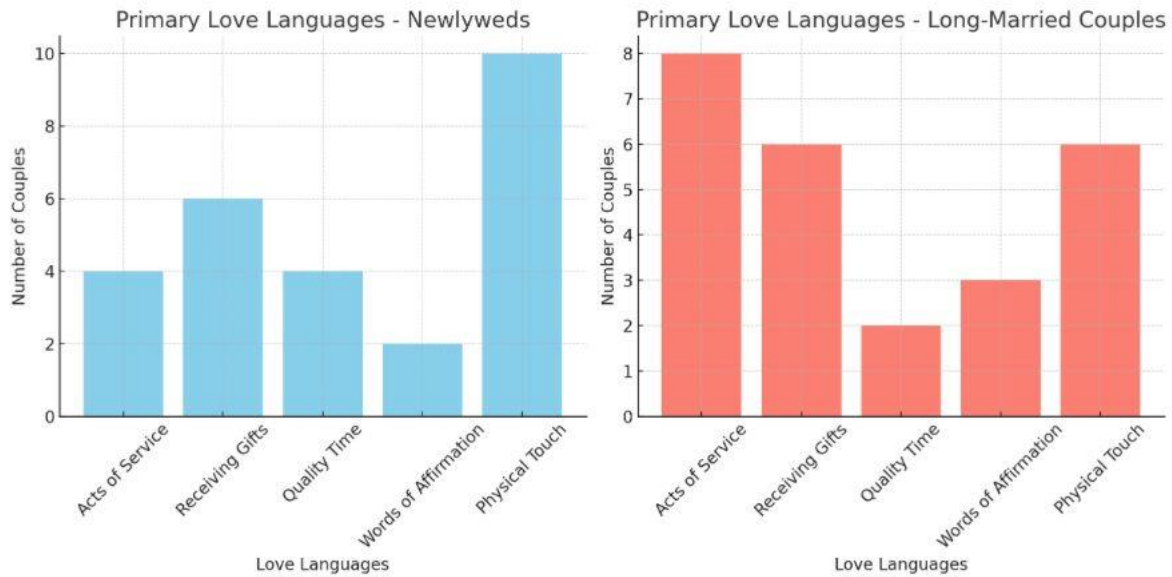


Figure 2. The common types of primary love language



Figure 3. The multiple primary love language

Figure 2 and 3 show that most newlywed couples seem to communicate their primary love language through physical touch. The primary love language percentages among newlyweds are broken down as follows: acts of service as the primary love language for four newlyweds, receiving gifts as the primary love language for six newlyweds, quality time as the primary love language for four newlyweds, words of affirmation as the primary love language for two newlyweds, and physical touch as the primary love language for ten newlyweds. Additionally, five newlywed couples have two primary love languages. These combinations comprise acts of service and quality time, receiving gifts and physical touch, acts of service and physical touch, receiving gifts and physical touch, and quality time and physical touch. Notably, one individual exhibits four primary love languages, including acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and words of affirmation. As for long-married couples, it is important to note that most questionnaire respondents prefer acts of service as their primary love language. The primary love language distribution among long-married couples is as follows: eight couples exhibit acts of service as their main love language, six couples express receiving gifts as their main love language, two couples prioritize quality time as their main love language, three couples primarily employ words of affirmation as their love language, and six couples predominantly engage in physical touch as their main love language. Interestingly, six aged couples exhibit two distinct primary love languages, which include three participants who prioritize receiving gifts and physical touch and three participants who prioritize acts of service and physical touch. Furthermore, data presents a captivating dimension as one individual remarkably demonstrates three

primary love languages, consisting of acts of service, receiving gifts, and words of affirmation.

The Love Language from Interpersonal Communication's Perspective

The final section of the results offers a nuanced exploration of love languages within the framework of interpersonal communication. It draws upon data gathered from both newlyweds and long-married couples to provide a comprehensive perspective on how love languages manifest in the context of marital communication. This section unravels the intricate dynamics of how individuals convey their affection and emotional connection through effective communication channels within their marriages. Figure 4 below shows the primary love languages expressed among newlyweds and long-married couples.



Figure 4. Primary love languages among six participants for an in-depth interview

Interpersonal communication is essential for conveying affection and emotional intimacy within marriages. This research examines the concept of love languages in the context of interpersonal communication, specifically focusing on the experiences of newlyweds and long-married couples. The research included six couples, three of whom were newlyweds, and three of whom had been married for a substantial length of time. The research participants consisted of two women and one man. All participants maintained that their methods of displaying affection remained unchanged since the start of their relationships, regardless of their marital status. The research unveiled a reoccurring trend among newlywed couples, who exhibited a vast variety of love language expressions, particularly in times of conflict. The inaugural newlywed, who had been wed for 11 months, demonstrated a broad spectrum of love language expressions, including acts of service and words of affirmation. The second newlywed, who has been married for three years, exhibited different forms of love language, including receiving meaningful gifts and expressing love through physical affection. In contrast, the third newlywed, who has been married for four years, favored the love language of physical touch, particularly during times of emotional turmoil. The newlywed stated, "When we argue, his comforting hug mends any hurt feelings." They also expressed that "His hand in mine as we walk together is a silent reminder of our unity and connection," and "he

understands my emotions, and his touch is a source of comfort during difficult times." The research examined the development and adaptation of love languages in long-term marriages. The first long-married couple who had been married for 29 years demonstrated their ability to understand and adapt to each other's love languages through open communication. Their appreciation for acts of service was evident in their enjoyment of preparing tea on the front porch, sharing moments of household chores, and making each other's favorite meals. The second long-married couple, married for three decades, attributed their understanding of each other's preferences to their proficiency in navigating love languages. They conveyed their affection through shared activities and conversations (quality time), effectively bridging any emotional distance. Conversely, the third long-married couple, married for 27 years, encountered challenges in their marriage, but these ultimately provided the impetus for growth and progress. The importance of acts of service in their relationship was emphasized. According to the research, love languages were found to be crucial in the context of marital communication. The research also revealed the distinctive ways in which individuals express their emotional connection and affection.

Discussion

The research explores the intricate dynamics of expressing love language in romantic relationships by scrutinizing the patterns prevalent among newlywed and long-married couples. The research employs precise methods such as descriptive analysis of frequency distribution and interval scale measurements to expose varying patterns of love language. The findings indicate the questionnaire's effectiveness in capturing the complex dynamics of love language expression in marital relationships. The research demonstrates that all love language indicators, including acts of service, gift-giving, quality time, words of affirmation, and physical touch, consistently met the "strong" threshold. The research emphasizes the significance of expressing affection and nurturing emotional intimacy. Acts of service, such as doing household chores or running errands, serve as concrete expressions of love amongst newlywed couples. These actions demonstrate dedication and support (Chapman, 1992b). For long-married couples, these same acts hold a deeper sense of symbolism, as they represent a lifetime of commitment and care (Anderson et al., 2003). Gift-giving is a pleasant method for newlyweds to pleasantly surprise each other and exhibit thoughtfulness (L. Johnson & Anderson, 2016). As time passes, the exchange of gifts takes on more significance, signifying enduring gratitude (Reynolds & Patterson, 2020). According to S. Johnson (2008), quality time is essential for newlyweds to establish a strong foundation. Long-married couples continue to prioritize spending quality time together as an opportunity to strengthen their bond, deepen their understanding of each other, and cultivate intimacy (Carter & Mitchell, 2019). Expressions of affirmation hold great importance for newly married partners as they help build confidence and foster a sense of security (Chapman, 1992a). As couples age, these expressions continue to serve as a vital source of emotional support, especially during challenging times (S. Johnson, 2008). Physical touch is crucial for the closeness of newlywed couples, as noted by Whisman and Alexander (2003). For long-married couples, physical touch is a symbol of ongoing commitment, providing calmness, security, and a deep sense of familiarity (Reynolds & Patterson, 2020). The research indicates that the identified love languages, which include Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, and Physical Touch, serve as crucial components in the intricate fabric of romantic relationships. Each

language plays a distinct role in expressing affection and nurturing emotional intimacy, highlighting their significance.

In addition, this research examines the dynamics of expressing romantic love among both newlyweds and long-term married couples, shedding light on the significance of comprehending and effectively communicating love in manners that resonate with one's partner. Among newlywed participants, most commonly, physical touch was identified as the principal love language (10 out of 32), aligning with previous studies conducted by Chapman (1992b) and Van Lange et al., (1997). Acts of service, receiving gifts, and spending quality time were also common among newlyweds, highlighting the importance of expressing love in various ways during the early stages of marriage. Words of affirmation were the least common primary love language among newlyweds, demonstrating the intricacy of expressing love among newlywed couples. This is in accordance with previous research conducted by Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) who suggest that verbal expressions of love and affirmation may be less prevalent in relationships than other love languages. The prevalence of individuals who speak multiple primary love languages, including one person who communicates in four primary love languages, emphasizes the intricacies of love expression in newlywed couples. Long-married couples tend to prioritize words of affirmation less frequently as their primary love language, with only three individuals placing it first. This aligns with the findings of Gottman & Levenson (2000) who discovered that couples in long-term relationships rely less on explicit verbal affirmations over time. In addition, the research revealed a discrepancy in the distribution of primary love languages, with acts of service being the most common expression among eight out of 32 participants, followed by receiving gifts and physical touch. A few elderly married couples disclosed that they had multiple primary love languages. Specifically, three couples valued receiving gifts and physical touch while three others emphasized acts of service and physical touch. These findings underscore the dynamic nature of love languages in romantic relationships, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and adapting to each partner's evolving preferences. Understanding and effectively communicating love in ways that strongly connect with one's partner is vital for sustaining fulfilling and enduring marriages.

Further, the research also examines how love languages are utilized in interpersonal communication among newlywed and long-married couples, highlighting intriguing patterns in their displays of affection and capacity for adjustment over time. This is consistent with previous research on love languages and interpersonal dynamics in marriages. Newlywed couples frequently employ different love languages to express their emotions, which echoes Chapman's (1992a) research. Gottman et al., (1998) argue that successful marriages maintain "bids for connection," and this multifaceted concept is confirmed by Floyd (2006) as a crucial element in establishing emotional intimacy and connection. According to Thibaut & Kelley (1959) love language expression can be viewed as a form of social exchange within an intimate marriage relationship. Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) suggested that love evolves over time, ranging from passionate love to companionate love. This research supports Bowlby's (1969) emphasis on open communication and understanding as crucial in maintaining long-term relationships. According to the Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), couples adapt their communication style to meet their partner's preferences over time. In the context of this research, the capability of elderly married couples to adjust to each other's love languages can be interpreted as a way of accommodating communication that supports the longevity of their relationships. The research emphasizes the significance of

comprehending different love languages and their influence on interpersonal dynamics in marital unions.

Conclusion

The research examined the expression of love language within romantic relationships, with a focus on newlywed and long-married partners. Results consistently met the "strong" threshold for all indicators of love language, demonstrating the questionnaire's effectiveness in capturing the dynamics of love language within marital relationships. Central elements in romantic relationships include acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, and physical touch. Newlyweds often prioritize physical touch as their primary love language, underscoring the value of embracing multiple methods of expressing affection in the early stages of marriage. Acts of service, gifts, and quality time are also popular among these couples, highlighting the importance of adapting to diverse expressions of love. Words of affirmation are the least frequently selected primary love language among newlyweds, which highlights the complex interaction of emotions and personal preferences during the early stages of a relationship. In contrast, quality time and words of affirmation are not typically prioritized as primary love languages among long-married couples, with acts of service being the most frequently selected primary love language. Understanding and effectively communicating love with one's partner is crucial for maintaining gratifying, enduring marriages. Interpersonal communication in marriage is dynamic, with love languages playing an essential role in expressing emotions. Exploring these languages and their evolution over time can improve emotional connection and satisfaction. This research presents practical recommendations for couples intending to enhance their communication abilities, drawing on theories such as social exchange, attachment, and communication accommodation theory. This research is valuable in furthering our understanding of the relationship between love languages and interpersonal communication in intimate relationships. However, the researcher recognizes certain shortcomings. The restricted sample size and potential participant bias may constrain the applicability of these research findings. Future research efforts can benefit from more extensive and varied sample sizes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these phenomena.

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