

# The Role of Love Languages in Enhancing Marital Communication

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### Section:

Family and Couple Therapy

#### How to cite this article:

Rostami, M., Saadati, N., Parsakia, K., & Gharibian, F. (2025). The Role of Love Languages in Enhancing Marital Communication. *KMAN Counseling and Psychology Nexus*, 3, 10-19.

<http://doi.org/10.61838/kman.fct.psynexus.3.14>



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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of love languages in enhancing marital communication among couples in Tehran. This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with 24 participants (12 married couples) selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected until theoretical saturation was reached and analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo software. The study identified four main themes: understanding love languages, expression of love, communication challenges, and strategies for improvement. Understanding and practicing love languages fostered emotional intimacy and relational satisfaction. Participants emphasized cultural influences, mutual adaptation, and the importance of consistent communication. However, challenges such as misinterpretation and emotional barriers highlighted the need for awareness and tailored interventions. Love languages significantly enhance marital communication and satisfaction, but their effectiveness depends on cultural context, individual differences, and mutual effort. Incorporating love languages into therapeutic practices can provide meaningful tools for couples to navigate relational challenges and strengthen their bonds.

**Keywords:** Love languages, marital communication, relational satisfaction, cultural influences, qualitative study.

## 1. Introduction

Marital relationships form the cornerstone of societal stability, offering a foundation for emotional

fulfillment, personal growth, and familial cohesion. Effective communication is widely acknowledged as the bedrock of a healthy marriage, fostering understanding, intimacy, and shared goals among partners (Omoboeye,

2024). Among the various theories aimed at enhancing marital communication, Chapman's concept of "love languages" has gained notable popularity. This theory posits that individuals express and receive love in different ways, categorized into five primary love languages: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch (Polk & Egbert, 2013).

These love languages have been extensively studied for their ability to bridge emotional gaps, enhance relational satisfaction, and promote marital harmony. Understanding and utilizing love languages have shown significant benefits in diverse cultural and relational contexts. Research by Angin and Yeniretnowati (2021) highlights the transformative potential of love languages in improving marital dynamics by fostering mutual understanding and addressing relational needs (Angin & Yeniretnowati, 2021). Similarly, Aulia et al. (2022) emphasize that newlywed couples who effectively communicate using love languages report higher relational satisfaction during the early years of marriage. This underscores the universal relevance of love languages, as they offer a structured framework for couples to navigate their emotional needs and enhance their connection (Aulia et al., 2022).

Despite the popularity of love languages in popular psychology, empirical evidence validating their effectiveness has only recently gained momentum. Studies such as those by Hughes and Camden (2020) and Impett (2023) critically examine the psychological underpinnings of love languages, exploring their connection to relational satisfaction and individual well-being. The findings suggest that aligning expressions of love with a partner's preferred love language significantly enhances relational outcomes, emphasizing the importance of individualized emotional expression (Hughes & Camden, 2020).

Moreover, cultural and societal factors play a pivotal role in shaping how love languages are understood and practiced within marital relationships. For instance, Aekwarangkoon and Noonil (2020) demonstrate that cultural norms and family traditions significantly influence the choice and expression of love languages, particularly among older adults (Aekwarangkoon & Noonil, 2020). Similarly, Stępkowska (2020) highlights the unique challenges faced by multilingual couples, where cultural and linguistic differences intersect with expressions of love, often necessitating greater adaptability and mutual understanding (Stępkowska, 2020).

The effectiveness of love languages also extends beyond their immediate relational benefits, contributing to broader

aspects of marital well-being. Research by Jolin et al. (2024) indicates that couples who consistently communicate using love languages report higher levels of emotional intimacy and reduced conflict over time (Jolin et al., 2024). This aligns with findings by Mostova et al. (2022), who note that responding to a partner's preferred love language fosters emotional security and relational satisfaction, particularly in heterosexual romantic relationships (Mostova et al., 2022).

In addition to enhancing relational satisfaction, love languages have been linked to specific psychological and behavioral outcomes. Studies by Bunt and Hazelwood (2017) and Chen and Chen (2023) reveal that the practice of love languages correlates with improved self-regulation and emotional resilience, suggesting their potential role in promoting individual psychological well-being (Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017; Chen & Chen, 2023). Furthermore, Azarnik et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of communication skills training, including the application of love languages, in fostering marital satisfaction and addressing relational challenges (Azarnik et al., 2022).

However, the practical application of love languages is not without challenges. Cultural constraints, individual differences, and evolving relational dynamics can complicate their implementation. For instance, Karwal (2021) discusses how customs surrounding gift-giving can vary significantly across cultures, influencing how this particular love language is perceived and practiced (Karwal, 2021). Similarly, Fishbane (2023) underscores the ethical dimensions of relational communication, advocating for a nuanced understanding of love languages within the broader context of couple relational ethics (Fishbane, 2023).

The intersection of love languages with other relational factors, such as emotional self-disclosure and marital commitment, has also garnered attention in recent research. Ardakhani and Seadatee Shamir (2022) highlight the effectiveness of emotion-focused couple therapy in enhancing emotional self-disclosure, suggesting that integrating love languages into therapeutic interventions can further strengthen marital bonds (Ardakhani & Seadatee Shamir, 2022). This is particularly relevant in culturally diverse settings, where the interplay of traditional values and modern relational dynamics often necessitates tailored communication strategies (Rastgoftar & Khodadadi, 2024).

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting the efficacy of love languages, some critics argue that their application is overly simplistic and lacks empirical rigor. For instance, Polk and Egbert (2013) question whether Chapman's original claims withstand empirical scrutiny,

urging researchers to adopt a more critical perspective (Polk & Egbert, 2013). Nonetheless, studies like those by Surijah et al. (2021) and Apriliani (2024) continue to validate the relevance of love languages, particularly in enhancing marital harmony and addressing relational dissatisfaction (Apriliani, 2024; Surijah et al., 2021).

The current study builds on this existing literature, aiming to explore the role of love languages in enhancing marital communication among couples in Tehran. By adopting a qualitative approach and focusing on the lived experiences of participants, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how love languages influence marital dynamics within a specific cultural context. Drawing on insights from previous studies (Aekwarangkoon & Noonil, 2020; Almohtadi et al., 2019; Apriliani, 2024; Aulia et al., 2022; Bahtiar, 2023; Bland & McQueen, 2018; Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017; Chen & Chen, 2023; Dinçyürek & Ince, 2018; Hughes & Camden, 2020; Impett, 2023; Mostova et al., 2022; Surijah et al., 2021), this study examines the practical application of love languages, their challenges, and their potential to foster emotional intimacy and relational satisfaction.

In conclusion, love languages offer a promising framework for enhancing marital communication and relational satisfaction. This, this study aims to explore the role of love languages in enhancing marital communication among couples in Tehran.

## 2. Methods and Materials

This qualitative study explored the role of love languages in enhancing marital communication among couples in Tehran. The research employed an interpretive approach to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perspectives. The study involved 24 participants, comprising 12 married couples. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, duration of marriage, and socio-economic background, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon. Inclusion criteria included being legally married, residing in Tehran, and having at least one year of marital experience.

### 2.1. Measures

#### 2.1.1. Semi-Structured Interview

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in person. An interview guide was developed

based on the conceptual framework of love languages, focusing on how couples perceive and use love languages to improve communication in their relationships. The interviews included open-ended questions to encourage participants to share detailed and meaningful insights into their experiences. Sample questions included:

- "How do you and your spouse express love to each other in daily life?"
- "In what ways has understanding each other's love language influenced your communication?"
- "Can you describe a situation where applying love languages improved or hindered your communication?"

Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, ensuring no new themes or insights emerged from subsequent interviews.

### 2.2. Data Analysis

The data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. NVivo software was employed to assist in organizing, coding, and analyzing the data. Initial coding was performed to identify meaningful segments of the text related to the research question. The codes were then grouped into categories, and overarching themes were developed through an iterative process of comparison and refinement. To ensure credibility, member checking was employed by sharing initial findings with a subset of participants for feedback. Dependability was addressed through a detailed audit trail documenting the research process, including coding decisions and theme development.

## 3. Findings and Results

The study included 24 participants, comprising 12 married couples, all residing in Tehran. The participants' ages ranged from 28 to 45 years, with a mean age of 36.5 years ( $SD = 4.8$ ). The duration of marriage varied between 2 and 20 years, with an average of 10.3 years ( $SD = 5.2$ ). Of the participants, 14 (58.3%) had a university-level education, while the remaining 10 (41.7%) had completed high school or vocational training. In terms of employment status, 15 participants (62.5%) were employed in various professional sectors, 6 (25%) were homemakers, and 3 (12.5%) were self-employed. Regarding socio-economic status, 9 couples (75%) reported a middle-income background, while 3 couples (25%) identified as belonging to a higher-income

bracket. These demographic characteristics reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the participant group.

**Table 1**

*The Results of Qualitative Coding*

| Category                   | Subcategory                         | Concepts                                                                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding Languages    | Love                                | Identifying Primary Love Language                                                |
|                            |                                     | Awareness of preferences, Self-reflection, Partner's input                       |
|                            |                                     | Cultural Influences                                                              |
|                            |                                     | Family norms, Religious teachings, Community expectations                        |
|                            |                                     | Perception of Love Language                                                      |
|                            |                                     | Understanding emotional needs, Different interpretations, Past experiences       |
| Expression of Love         |                                     | Verbal Affirmations                                                              |
|                            |                                     | Compliments, Encouraging words, Positive tone                                    |
|                            |                                     | Acts of Service                                                                  |
|                            |                                     | Helping with chores, Small acts of kindness, Fulfilling promises                 |
|                            |                                     | Quality Time                                                                     |
|                            |                                     | Spending uninterrupted time, Meaningful conversations, Shared activities         |
|                            |                                     | Physical Touch                                                                   |
|                            |                                     | Hugs, Handholding, Comforting touch                                              |
|                            |                                     | Gift Giving                                                                      |
|                            |                                     | Surprise gifts, Celebratory presents, Symbolic tokens                            |
| Communication Challenges   | Misinterpretation of Love Languages | Mismatch in love languages, Unclear expressions, Assumptions about intentions    |
|                            | Lack of Awareness                   | Unawareness of partner's preferences, Minimal communication, Lack of exploration |
|                            | Emotional Barriers                  | Fear of vulnerability, Unresolved conflicts, Emotional distance                  |
|                            | Cultural Constraints                | Community restrictions, Taboos around affection, Traditional expectations        |
|                            | Practical Barriers                  | Busy schedules, Financial limitations, Household responsibilities                |
| Strategies for Improvement | Learning and Adaptation             | Observing partner's needs, Trial and error, Adjusting behaviors                  |
|                            | Mutual Feedback                     | Constructive dialogue, Active listening, Sharing experiences                     |
|                            | Professional Guidance               | Couples therapy, Workshops, Reading self-help books                              |
|                            | Leveraging Technology               | Messaging apps, Video calls, Reminders for gestures                              |
|                            | Setting Priorities                  | Focusing on mutual goals, Balancing individual needs, Negotiating expectations   |
|                            | Consistent Practice                 | Daily habits, Mindful practices, Shared commitments                              |

### 3.1. Understanding Love Languages

One significant theme identified was the process of Identifying Primary Love Language. Participants emphasized the importance of self-awareness and mutual understanding in recognizing each other's love languages. As one participant noted, *"I realized how important it was to understand my preferences and communicate them openly to my partner."* Similarly, another participant shared, *"My partner helped me uncover what truly made me feel loved, and that strengthened our bond."*

Cultural Influences played a crucial role in shaping the perception and practice of love languages among couples. Cultural norms, family traditions, and religious teachings influenced how individuals expressed and interpreted love. One participant explained, *"In our family, showing love through acts of service is more valued than verbal expressions."* Another added, *"Religion teaches us to show love through kindness and understanding, which has guided our relationship."*

The Perception of Love Language varied among couples, influenced by emotional needs and past experiences.

Participants highlighted that understanding each other's love language required sensitivity and openness. As one interviewee remarked, *"It took time to realize that what I saw as an act of love might not mean the same to my partner."* Another stated, *"Our love languages were shaped by how we were treated in our childhoods."*

### 3.2. Expression of Love

The category of expressing love included various subcategories. Verbal Affirmations were a common form of expressing affection, with participants emphasizing the value of compliments, encouraging words, and maintaining a positive tone. One participant shared, *"A simple 'I appreciate you' goes a long way in making my partner feel valued."*

Acts of Service were highlighted as a meaningful way of expressing love. Participants noted that helping with household chores, fulfilling promises, and small acts of kindness strengthened their relationships. For instance, one participant explained, *"When my partner helps me without me asking, it makes me feel loved and supported."*

Quality Time was described as an essential aspect of connection. Couples shared that spending uninterrupted time together, engaging in meaningful conversations, and sharing activities deepened their emotional bond. *"Our best moments are when we just sit and talk without distractions,"* one participant reflected.

Physical Touch emerged as another vital love language. Participants described the importance of hugs, handholding, and comforting touch in fostering intimacy. One participant explained, *"Sometimes, just holding hands says more than words ever could."*

Lastly, Gift Giving was mentioned as a symbolic way to express love. Surprise gifts, celebratory presents, and meaningful tokens were seen as ways to demonstrate thoughtfulness. *"It's not about the value of the gift; it's the thought behind it that matters,"* one participant said.

### 3.3. Communication Challenges

Participants often faced Misinterpretation of Love Languages, leading to misunderstandings in relationships. Mismatched expectations and unclear expressions of love were recurring challenges. *"I thought I was showing love through gifts, but my partner needed words of affirmation instead,"* one participant shared.

The Lack of Awareness of love languages among some couples hindered effective communication. Participants reported minimal communication and little exploration of their partner's preferences. One interviewee confessed, *"We never really talked about what we needed from each other until it became an issue."*

Emotional Barriers such as fear of vulnerability and unresolved conflicts created distance between partners. As one participant noted, *"It's hard to express love when you're holding onto past arguments."* Another remarked, *"I was afraid that showing too much affection would make me seem weak."*

Cultural Constraints added another layer of complexity, with participants citing traditional expectations and community restrictions as factors that limited open expressions of love. *"In our culture, public displays of affection are frowned upon, so we had to find other ways to show we cared,"* one participant explained.

Lastly, Practical Barriers such as busy schedules, financial limitations, and household responsibilities often left couples with little time or energy to focus on their love languages. *"We both work long hours, and by the time we're home, we're too tired to connect,"* a participant shared.

### 3.4. Strategies for Improvement

Couples emphasized Learning and Adaptation as a key strategy for enhancing marital communication. Participants described observing their partner's needs, engaging in trial and error, and adjusting their behaviors accordingly. *"It's all about figuring out what works and being willing to change,"* one participant said.

Mutual Feedback was identified as another important strategy. Constructive dialogue, active listening, and sharing experiences helped couples align their expectations. *"When we talk openly about what makes us happy, it brings us closer,"* a participant explained.

Professional Guidance such as couples therapy and workshops provided valuable tools for understanding and applying love languages. One participant shared, *"Therapy taught us to recognize each other's love languages and communicate more effectively."*

Leveraging Technology also played a role in maintaining communication. Participants used messaging apps, video calls, and reminders to express love, especially in long-distance relationships. *"A quick text saying 'I love you' makes a big difference during a busy day,"* one participant remarked.

Finally, Consistent Practice and prioritization of mutual goals were highlighted as long-term strategies for sustaining healthy communication. *"Making time for each other every day, even if it's just for five minutes, keeps our connection strong,"* one participant noted.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed significant insights into the role of love languages in enhancing marital communication among couples in Tehran. The results align with Chapman's conceptual framework of love languages, demonstrating that understanding and practicing these languages fostered emotional intimacy, improved relational satisfaction, and mitigated communication challenges. Furthermore, the findings emphasized the cultural nuances and individual differences that influence how love languages are perceived and implemented.

Understanding Love Languages emerged as a foundational theme in this study. Participants expressed that identifying their primary love language and understanding their partner's preferences significantly enhanced mutual understanding and emotional intimacy. This finding aligns with the work of Hughes and Camden (2020), who demonstrated that congruence between partners' expressed

and received love languages positively correlates with relationship satisfaction (Hughes & Camden, 2020). Similarly, Mostova et al. (2022) highlighted that when individuals respond to their partner's love language, it fosters emotional security and deepens relational bonds (Mostova et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of mutual awareness and adaptation in implementing love languages effectively.

The cultural influences on love languages were evident in this study, with participants noting that family norms, religious teachings, and societal expectations shaped their expressions of love. Aekwarangkoon and Noonil (2020) and Angin and Yeniretnowati (2021) similarly emphasized that cultural norms significantly impact the selection and prioritization of love languages in marital relationships (Aekwarangkoon & Noonil, 2020; Angin & Yeniretnowati, 2021). For instance, acts of service were more prominent among participants influenced by traditional values, mirroring findings by Karwal (2021), who explored the cultural significance of gift-giving and other symbolic gestures in marital relationships (Karwal, 2021). These observations highlight the necessity of considering cultural contexts when applying love language frameworks in diverse populations.

In terms of Expression of Love, the study revealed that verbal affirmations, acts of service, quality time, physical touch, and gift-giving were all meaningful in enhancing marital communication. The results reflect findings by Bunt and Hazelwood (2017), who noted that verbal affirmations and quality time were particularly effective in fostering emotional connection (Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017). Similarly, Bahtiar (2023) observed that newlyweds who prioritized acts of service and physical touch experienced higher levels of intimacy and relational satisfaction (Bahtiar, 2023). The findings further validate Chapman's categorization of love languages while emphasizing the individualized nature of their practice within marriages.

Participants also highlighted several Communication Challenges, such as misinterpretation of love languages and lack of awareness of partner preferences. These challenges align with findings by Bland and McQueen (2018), who reported that discrepancies in understanding and expressing love languages often lead to relational dissatisfaction (Bland & McQueen, 2018). Emotional barriers, including unresolved conflicts and fear of vulnerability, were also identified as significant obstacles to effective communication. These findings echo those of Jolin et al. (2024), who emphasized the critical role of open

communication in resolving conflicts and fostering marital satisfaction (Jolin et al., 2024).

The Strategies for Improvement identified in this study, such as mutual feedback, consistent practice, and professional guidance, reflect findings by Azarnik et al. (2022) and Ardakhani and Seadatee Shamir (2022). These studies highlighted the importance of communication skills training and therapeutic interventions in enhancing relational satisfaction (Ardakhani & Seadatee Shamir, 2022; Azarnik et al., 2022). Leveraging technology, as noted by some participants, further supports findings by Smith-Osborne and Jani (2014), who explored the role of digital communication tools in maintaining relational intimacy among long-distance couples (Smith-Osborne & Jani, 2014).

While this study provides valuable insights, it has certain limitations that warrant consideration. First, the study focused solely on participants from Tehran, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or geographic contexts. Future research could expand the sample to include couples from diverse regions and cultural backgrounds to provide a more comprehensive understanding of love languages. Second, the qualitative nature of this study, while rich in depth and detail, does not allow for statistical generalization. Quantitative research with larger sample sizes could complement these findings by offering broader statistical validation. Finally, this study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies might incorporate observational methods or longitudinal designs to capture more nuanced relational dynamics.

Future research could explore the intersection of love languages with other psychological constructs, such as emotional regulation, resilience, and attachment styles, to provide a more holistic understanding of their impact on marital satisfaction. Additionally, studies could examine how love languages evolve over the course of a relationship, particularly during major life transitions such as parenthood, relocation, or retirement. Cross-cultural research would also be beneficial, investigating how different cultural and religious contexts shape the perception and application of love languages. Finally, integrating love languages into therapeutic frameworks and evaluating their efficacy in diverse clinical settings could provide practical insights for practitioners.

Practitioners working with couples should prioritize helping partners identify and understand each other's love languages as a foundation for improving communication and intimacy. Tailored interventions, such as workshops or

therapy sessions, can guide couples in aligning their expressions of love with their partner's preferences. Therapists should also consider cultural and individual differences when applying the love language framework, ensuring that recommendations are relevant and meaningful to each couple's unique context. Furthermore, promoting consistent practice and encouraging couples to engage in open dialogue about their relational needs can help sustain the positive effects of love languages in their daily lives.

### Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

### Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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