



Exploring the Love Languages of Individuals with Dwarfism Partner in Cabuyao, Laguna

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Abstract

This study examined how partners of individuals with dwarfism in Cabuyao, Laguna, express and interpret love languages through a qualitative phenomenological approach. Grounded in Dr. Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages—words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, receiving gifts, and physical touch—the research explored the unique ways these expressions are shaped by diverse physical and emotional experiences. Researchers conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with five participants, ensuring diversity through purposeful sampling. Data were collected via audio recordings and analyzed to identify recurring themes. The study revealed five key themes: verbal expressions of love, demonstrating love through actions, creating meaningful moments, the role of gifts, and love through physical connection. Findings indicated that acts of service, words of affirmation, quality time, and physical touch were the primary modes of expressing and receiving love. Small but meaningful gestures, shared routines, and mutual support played a crucial role in strengthening emotional bonds. The study contributes to a broader understanding of emotional expression and inclusivity in relationships involving individuals with dwarfism.

Keywords: Individual with Dwarfism Partner, Dwarfism, Love Language, Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Physical Touch

1. Introduction

Love plays a vital role in human relationships, fostering emotional connections across romantic, familial, and platonic bonds. It is often characterized by deep affection, empathy, and commitment, significantly influencing individual well-being and relationship satisfaction. Dr. Gary Chapman (1992) introduced the concept of love languages, categorizing them into five primary forms: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. These love languages provide a framework for understanding how individuals express and interpret affection, ensuring that emotional needs are met within relationships (Longhurst *et al.*, 2022) ^[5]. While extensively studied, there remains limited research on how these expressions function in relationships involving individuals with dwarfism, particularly in the Philippine context.

Dwarfism is a genetic or medical condition that results in short stature, commonly defined as an adult height of 4 feet 10 inches or less (Dunkin *et al.*, 2024) ^[3]. The condition encompasses more than 200 distinct types, with achondroplasia being the most common form. In the Philippines, official statistics on the prevalence of dwarfism are scarce; however, research estimates that achondroplasia affects approximately one in 25,000 individuals (Alcausin *et al.*, 2020) ^[1]. Despite growing awareness and advocacy efforts, individuals with dwarfism often encounter unique social, emotional, and relational challenges, including misconceptions about their capacity for romantic relationships. Societal attitudes, accessibility barriers, and personal insecurities can shape their experiences in forming and maintaining romantic connections. However, there remains a gap in understanding how individuals with dwarfism express and receive love within their relationships. This study aims to examine how love languages are expressed within romantic relationships involving individuals with dwarfism in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Specifically, it seeks to identify patterns preferences, and challenges related to love language expression within this demographic. By utilizing qualitative interviews and a literature review, the study will explore the ways in which individuals with dwarfism and their partners communicate affection and maintain emotional bonds. Additionally, the research will assess whether unique factors related to dwarfism influence the interpretation and reception of love languages within these relationships.

Understanding love languages in relationships involving individuals with dwarfism can contribute to a more inclusive perspective on love and intimacy. This study seeks to bridge the gap in literature by highlighting the lived experiences of individuals with dwarfism and their partners, ultimately providing insights that may inform future studies, relationship counseling, and advocacy efforts. By shedding light on this topic, the research aspires to promote greater awareness, empathy, and support for diverse expressions of love within society.

2. Methodologies

A. Research Design

The study utilizes a Qualitative Research design with a phenomenological approach. This study attempts to examine the love languages of individuals with dwarfism partners. Qualitative research is significant for exploring complex social phenomena, offering rich, human-centered insights into real-world issues. Phenomenology, as part of the qualitative framework, is especially suited for understanding lived experiences. It focuses on how individuals perceive and make sense of their world (Lim, 2024) ^[4]. Researchers have chosen this approach because it allows for an intensive investigation of participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, and emotions within their relationships. By delving into qualitative aspects such as personal narratives and relational dynamics, the research aims to reveal nuanced insights into how love languages manifest among individuals with dwarfism partners.

B. Research Locale

The study was conducted in the city of Cabuyao, Laguna. The participants are individuals with dwarfism partners. Cabuyao is a component city in the landlocked province of Laguna, which has eighteen (18) urbanized barangays. It has an estimated population of 424, 989 according to World Population Review (2024).

The participants are selected from these 18 barangays in Cabuyao. The study focused on individuals with dwarfism partners who are residing in various barangays to ensure a diverse and representative sample of the population in Cabuyao.

This approach aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics and challenges in expressing their love language faced by individuals with dwarfism partners in their relationships within this specific locale. By working closely with the PDAO, the researchers will ensure that the participants are accurately identified and that the study addresses the specific needs and contexts of the dwarfism community in Cabuyao.

C. Population and Sampling

The population for this study consists of individuals in Cabuyao, Laguna, who are partners of people with dwarfism. The researchers collaborated with the Persons with Disability

Affairs Office (PDAO) to identify and recruit potential participants. Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants who met specific criteria, such as having a partner with dwarfism and representing various age groups, genders, cultural backgrounds, and relationship statuses, to ensure that the sample was diverse.

As stated by Stratton (2024) ^[6], purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to select participants based on specific characteristics or experiences, ensuring that the sample reflects the population of interest. This method allows the study to focus on individuals who can provide relevant insights into how love languages manifest in relationships involving individuals with dwarfism partners, ensuring that the findings are both meaningful and applicable to the target group.

D. Participants of the Study

The study is conducted in the City of Cabuyao, Laguna. The researchers collaborated with the Person with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) in Cabuyao to ensure rich data collection. The participants of this study are five (5) individuals residing in the City of Cabuyao who have a relationship with someone who has dwarfism; the researchers focused on the partner of an individual with dwarfism. The participants must be in a serious relationship that includes the individuals who are committed in their relationship, cohabiting, engaged, and married. The participants should be willing to engage and share their experiences and perceptions regarding this study.

E. Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers interviewed the participants in a semi-structured manner. During an interview, the researcher asked participant's questions directly connected to the topic to collect data. In addition to guiding questions, semi-structured interviews allow the researchers to provide follow-up questions to clarify and delve into details. The researchers also used a device or gadgets as a tool for the audio recording; this helped the researchers to have an accurate response from the participants and an in- depth analysis of their responses.

F. Validation of Instrument

This research used a semi-structured interview as an instrument. According to the Dovetail Editorial Team (2023), a semi-structured interview is a qualitative study method used to thoroughly understand the respondents' feelings and ideas about specific themes. As the interviewer prepares the questions, they can adjust the order, skip redundancies, or create new ones. Furthermore, the interviewer should prepare to ask follow-up questions and explore for additional information. Using this method, the interviewer may also observe the participant's verbal and nonverbal cues in real time, allowing them to adjust their approach accordingly. The interviewer aimed to maintain a conversational flow, allowing the participants to speak freely about their experiences while staying focused on exploring the significant subjects.

G. Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process began with securing the necessary permissions from participants to ensure their voluntary participation. The researchers conducted an orientation, explaining the study's purpose, objectives, and ethical considerations, and instructed participants to respond

honestly and completely to the semi-structured interview questions. An informed consent form was provided to each participant, allowing them to make an informed decision about their participation. Any inquiries or concerns raised by participants were addressed to clarify the study's goals and procedures.

Furthermore, after collecting the signed consent forms, the semi-structured interviews commenced with the participants' consent. Questions were carefully adapted to ensure they were easily understandable by all participants. Audio recordings were made during the interviews to capture the participants' responses with their permission accurately.

Upon completing the interviews, the researchers meticulously transcribed the qualitative data to prepare it for analysis. The transcriptions were reviewed thoroughly for accuracy, ensuring no detail was overlooked. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researchers employed member checking, wherein participants reviewed their respective data to confirm its accuracy and consistency with their lived experiences. This step reinforced the alignment of the results with participants' perspectives and upheld the study's reliability.

Ultimately, the data gathering process adhered strictly to ethical standards, ensuring participants' confidentiality and fostering an environment of trust and openness throughout the study.

H. Ethical Consideration

The study strictly followed ethical guidelines to protect participants' well-being, privacy, and rights. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used, and all data were handled securely.

Professionals validated the questionnaire to ensure respectful and appropriate content. The study adhered to institutional ethical standards and secured formal approval. Participants received clear information about the research, their rights, and the option to pause or withdraw if uncomfortable.

Given potential emotional risks, researchers anonymized participants and ensured confidentiality under the Data Privacy Act of 2012. A letter was submitted to the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) to address any challenges participants might face.

After data collection, participants underwent debriefing, and researchers maintained open communication about the study's results. Mental health professionals were available for guidance, with referrals to counselors if participants experienced distress post-interviews.

1. Treatment of Qualitative Data

Researchers conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative, open-ended data on the love languages of individuals with dwarfism. These interviews provided in-depth insights into participants' perspectives, attitudes, and experiences. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the data.

Interviews were transcribed to capture emotions and language nuances, followed by data cleanup to remove personal details and organize information by participant or theme. To ensure reliability and validity, researchers used participant verification, cross-referencing, and detailed record-keeping. The findings from this process contribute valuable insights into the lived experiences and love

languages of individuals with dwarfism.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of findings, analysis and interpretation of data gathered parallel to the order of how the statement of the problem is presented in Chapter 1 of the study. This presents the statements of the participants. Moreover, this chapter provides the analyzed lived experiences of the participants.

The results and discussion of the findings are presented in three parts. The first part deals with their lived experience regarding the expression and interpretation of love languages within their relationship. The second part contains themes emerging in expressing and interpreting love languages among individuals with dwarfism partners. The third part contains programs or interventions that can be developed based on the findings of this study to support individuals with dwarfism and their partners.

Table 1: Expression and interpretation of love languages within the participant's relationship

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Emerging Concepts</i>	<i>Themes (Clustered Categories)</i>
Words of Affirmation	"Sinabihan ko siya ng 'I love you,' 'Mahal na mahal kita. sinasabihan ko rin siya ng miss na miss na kita'."	Affirmations
	"Sinabi ko, 'Kaya natin ito. Problema lang yan, mapapagdaanan din natin yan.'"	Supportive Encouragement
	"pagkagising namin, sinasabi ko sa kanya, 'Good morning,' tapos kung kumain na ba siya,"	Daily Check-ins and Reassurance
	"Bilang pag pagagaan ko ng loob sa kaniya, ang galing mo sa gan'yang bagay."	Gratitudes and Praises
Acts of Service	"ang ginagawa ko, naglilinis ako ng bahay, nagluluto ako para sa kanya."	Household Assistance
	"Binibihisan ko siya, pinapaliguan ko siya,"	Personal Care
Quality Time	"Ang bonding talaga namin kumain..."	Recreational Activities
	"Every Sunday, nagsisimba kami tapos dumidiretso sa mall."	Religious and Practical Outings
	"Luluto siya, kakain kami, kwentuhan"	Meaningful Conversation
Receiving Gifts	"Ah, isang kakanin lang na galing niya, saan siya nanggaling."	Minimalist Expression
	"Yung pagbibigay ng regalo it's a sign of parang importante siya sa iyo eh at yung value Talaga."	Gifts as a Symbol of Value and Commitment
	"Ayun, nung pagbukas ko, yung pang plantsa ng buhok ko. Ah, salamat."	Feelings of Gratitude and Surprise
Physical Touch	"niyayakap ko siya ganyan."	Affectionate Gestures
	"yung lambing namin, kagat ganun kaya panay pasa yun kagat, hug, kiss tapos yun."	Strengthening Emotional Bonds

Table 1 highlights different ways individuals express love and care, categorized into five love languages. Love is expressed in many ways, from Words of Affirmation like daily check-ins and encouragement to Acts of Service such as cooking and caring for a partner. Quality Time strengthens bonds through shared meals, outings, and deep conversations, while Receiving Gifts symbolizes appreciation through

thoughtful gestures. Lastly, Physical Touch — hugs, kisses, and playful affection—reinforces emotional closeness. Each act, whether big or small, reflects the depth of love and connection between individuals.

Table 2: Emergent themes in expressing and interpreting love languages among individuals with dwarfism partners

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Verbal Expressions of Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmations • Supportive Encouragement • Daily Check-ins and Reassurance • Gratitudes and Praises
Demonstrating Love Through Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Assistance • Personal Care
Creating Meaningful Moments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational Activities • Religious and Practical Outings • Meaningful Conversations
The Role of Gifts in Expressing Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimalist Expressions • Gift as a Symbol of Value and Commitment • Feelings of Gratitude and Surprise
Love Through Physical Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affectionate Gestures • Playful Physical Affection • Strengthening Emotional Bonds

Table 2 shows the expressions of love can take various forms, ranging from verbal affirmations to physical connections. Verbal expressions include affirmations, supportive encouragement, daily check-ins, and words of gratitude and praise. Love is also demonstrated through actions such as household assistance and personal care. Creating meaningful moments strengthens relationships through recreational activities, religious or practical outings, and deep conversations. Gifts serve as a symbol of value and commitment, with minimalist expressions often evoking feelings of gratitude and surprise. Lastly, physical connection plays a crucial role in love, with affectionate gestures and playful interactions fostering emotional bonds.

Table 3: Programs or interventions can be developed based on the findings of this study to support individuals with dwarfism and their partners

Goals	Activities	Person Responsible	Expected Outcome
To enable individuals with a dwarfism partner to understand their partners' unique preferences.	Mind Rejuvenation: a once a year gathering of individuals coupled with a person with dwarfism.	Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO), Licensed Counselors or Psychologist,	50% of individuals with dwarfism partners will participate and attend the gathering.
To promote Awareness about lived experiences of individuals with dwarfism and their partner.	Sharing "IKAKO" - a once-a-year seminar in the month of July of individuals coupled with a person with dwarfism.	Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO), Licensed Counselors or Psychologist,	At least 80% of individuals with dwarfism partners in the community will participate in the seminar.
To enrich the comprehension of individuals with dwarfism partners to compromise in their relationship	Union: A Communication Workshop for couples. This is a 2 days' workshop and will happen twice a year.	Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO), Licensed Counselors or Psychologist	In the workshop, at least 40% of individuals with dwarfism partners will participate.

Table 3 demonstrates the programs and interventions that aim to support individuals with dwarfism partners by enhancing understanding, promoting awareness, and strengthening relationships. Three key activities are planned: Mind Rejuvenation, an annual gathering to help partners understand unique preferences; Sharing "IKAKO", a yearly seminar in July to raise awareness about lived experiences; and Union, a bi-annual communication workshop to improve relationship compromises. These programs, facilitated by the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) and licensed professionals, aim to encourage participation and foster deeper connections within the community.

3. Discussion

The discussion of this research highlights the importance of language in creating intimacy between couples with a dwarfism partner. The developing themes emerging from the narratives of individuals with dwarfism and their partners regarding the five love languages: (1) Verbal Expressions of Love, (2) Demonstrating Love Through Actions, (3) Creating Meaningful Moments, (4) The Role of Gifts in Expressing Love, and (5) Love Through Physical Connection. Subordinate themes were identified and explored to further support the study in understanding how these love languages are expressed in relationships of individuals with dwarfism partners. In (1) Verbal Expressions of Love, includes sub-themes (a) affirmations, (b) supportive encouragement, (c) daily check-ins and reassurance, and (d) gratitude and praises. For (2) Demonstrating Love Through Actions, the sub-themes are (a) household assistance, and (b) personal care. For (3) Creating Meaningful Moments the sub-themes are (a) recreational activities, (b) religious and practical outings, and (c) meaningful conversations. For the fourth main theme, (4) The Role of Gifts in Expressing Love, the sub-themes are (a) minimalist expressions, (b) gifts as a symbol of value and commitment, and (c) feelings of gratitude and surprise. In (5) Love Through Physical Connection, the sub-themes are (a) affectionate gestures, (b) playful physical affection, and (c) strengthening emotional bonds.

Verbal Expressions of Love

This study found out that Verbal Expression of Love in individuals with a dwarfism partner are vital in fostering relationships, they not only express concern or gratitude but also provide verbal support to their relationship, building trust, strengthening bonds, and promoting security. Prioritizing verbal expression of love helps couples develop resilience and emotional stability, ensuring a strong connection even during challenging times.

Demonstrating Love Through Actions

This study found out that demonstrating love through actions emphasizes the commitment to a partner's pleasure and well-being. Acts of service demonstrate a profound feeling of support, care, and concern. By proactively attending to their partner's physical and emotional needs, acts of service show that love is a strong basis for enduring commitment and attachment when it is expressed using meaningful actions.

Creating Meaningful Moments

For individuals with dwarfism partners, this study found that spending quality time together is a key love language. It highlights the significance of engaging in activities, having

conversations, and creating shared experiences to strengthen emotional bonds, deepen understanding, and enhance relationship fulfillment.

The Role of Gifts in Expressing Love

The study found that there is a complex role of gifts in nurturing emotional closeness and relationship happiness in individuals with a dwarfism partner. In expressing love among individuals with dwarfism. This study found that small gestures can convey love and care, while gifts can symbolize value and commitment. Feelings of gratitude and surprise were also significant, as they made recipients feel appreciated.

Love Through Physical Connection

This study found out the importance of physical touch in expressing love and emotional closeness of an individual with a dwarfism partner. Physical touch plays a key role in creating emotional security and providing comfort, helping to maintain a sense of balance within the relationship. It deepens the emotional connection between partners, making them feel supported and cared for. Beyond just physical closeness, it fosters trust and stability, which are essential for building a strong, emotionally resilient bond that can weather life's ups and downs. Affectionate gestures, such as hugging and kissing, are crucial for managing relationship stability and attachment.

The main objective of this qualitative study is to understand the love languages of individuals with dwarfism partners in Cabuyao, Laguna, the researchers seek to uncover patterns and preferences in their relationship. Researchers aimed to bridge this knowledge gap and provide insight into expressing love language.

Furthermore, the study also found out that understanding the love language of individuals with a dwarfism partner is essential in helping them to develop and upgrade their life as couples, particularly helping them to understand each other on a deeper level. Also, this study contributes to the community for awareness and in widening the study about love languages of individuals with dwarfism partners.

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