

Abstract

The current study proposes Living from a Place of Love is a tripartite construct encompassing loving others, loving oneself and allowing oneself to be loved. We examined these constructs as predictors of well-being. Participants ($N = 125$) completed measures of general well-being, compassionate love for humanity (loving others), unconditional self-acceptance (loving oneself), vulnerability to be loved (allowing oneself to be loved). Results showed compassionate love for humanity and vulnerability to be loved were significant predictors of well-being.

Background

Love is not a new concept in the empirical literature. Past research has commonly examined love and well-being in a romantic sense (e.g., Rowsell & Coplan, 2013; Viejo, Ortega-Ruiz, & Sánchez, 2015). There has been sparse attention in the existing empirical literature regarding dispositional love and well-being. Specifically, past research has failed to explore how loving oneself, loving others, and allowing oneself to be loved are related to well-being. The current study proposes the concept of Living from a Place of Love -- loving yourself, loving others, and allowing yourself to be loved -- is a predictor of well-being.

One way of construing “loving oneself” is having unconditional self-acceptance. Popov (2019) found that unconditional self-acceptance predicts subjective well-being. Accepting the notion that the human tendency is to make mistakes, unconditional self-acceptance promotes accepting oneself regardless of the outcome of behavior (Popov, 2019).

We considered “loving others” as compassionate love for humanity as a whole. Compassionate love encompasses a desire to increase the thriving of others (Fehr et al., 2014). Dorr and Houser (2019) found that compassionate love for humanity was a significant predictor of higher well-being.

To our knowledge, the construct of “allowing yourself to be loved” has not been specifically examined in past research. However, Brown (2012) extensively theorized about vulnerability, a concept that she has defined as uncertain, risky, and emotionally exposing. We extended this concept to explicitly involve love and developed a new scale to measure vulnerability to be loved. Vulnerability to be loved is how intrinsically open a person is to be loved by others. Past research shows preliminary evidence for this scale and revealed a relationship with higher well-being (Houser & Dorr, 2019).

The current research examined the importance of living from a place of love in relation to well-being. We hypothesized that unconditional self-acceptance, compassionate love for humanity and vulnerability to be loved would be positively correlated with well-being.

Method

Participants

- Sample: 125 undergraduates (73.6% female, 94% age 18-21)

Measures

- Vulnerability to be Loved Scale: 22 statements
 - Created by the researchers narrowed over a year and a half span of testing the psychometric properties of the scale.
 - Rating scale: 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 5 (*very true of me*)
- Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005)
 - A measure of love for others
- Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (Haaga & Chamberlin, 2001)
 - A measure of love for oneself
- 14-Item Scale of General Well-Being (Longo et al., 2017)
- Short-Form of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Asgeirsdottir et al., 2016)
 - Two subscales: self-deceptive enhancement and impression management

Results

Zero-order correlations among scores on scales:

- Well-being scores correlated with:
 - Vulnerability to be loved ($r(123) = .64, p < .001$)
 - Unconditional self-acceptance ($r(123) = .30, p = .001$)
 - Self-deceptive enhancement ($r(123) = .54, p < .001$)
 - Impression management ($r(123) = .29, p = .001$)
- Unconditional self-acceptance scores were correlated with:
 - Vulnerability to be loved ($r(123) = .27, p = .002$)
 - Self-deceptive enhancement ($r(123) = .43, p < .001$)
- Vulnerability to be loved scores were correlated with:
 - Self-deceptive enhancement ($r(123) = .47, p < .001$)
 - Impression management ($r(123) = .29, p = .001$)
- Compassionate love for humanity scores were correlated with:
 - Impression Management ($r(123) = .24, p = .01$)

A multiple regression was conducted to examine the extent to which unconditional self-acceptance, compassionate love for humanity, and vulnerability to be loved predict well-being, while controlling for socially desirable responding and the shared variance among predictor variables (see Table 1). Results suggest scores on compassionate love for humanity and vulnerability to be loved were significant predictors of well-being scores, $t(119) = 2.11, p = .04$, and $t(119) = 6.67, p < .001$, respectively. Once the shared variance with other predictors was accounted for, unconditional self-acceptance was not a significant predictor of well-being. Additionally, the social desirability subscale of self-deceptive enhancement was a significant predictor of well-being, $t(119) = 3.65, p < .001$, but the impression management subscale was not. The collinearity diagnostics in IBM SPSS Statistics 24 did not show evidence of multicollinearity being a serious problem in either regression (IBM, 2018).

Table 1

Summary of Regression Analysis Assessing Each Dimension of Living from a Place of Love Predicting Well-Being

Relationship Dimension	B	SE B	β
Compassionate Love for Humanity	.10	.05	.04*
Unconditional Self-Acceptance	.01	.07	.01
Vulnerability to be Loved	.63	.10	.50*
Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.46	.13	.32*
Impression Management	-.06	.09	-.05

Note. * $p < .05$

Discussion

The results suggest that aspects of living from a place of love when it comes to our relationships with others seems to be important in predicting well-being. Specifically, once socially desirable responding was controlled, people who felt higher levels of compassionate love for humanity and those who allowed themselves to be open to the experience of love reported higher well-being as compared to people with lower levels of compassionate love for humanity or lower vulnerability to be loved. Of interest, people high in unconditional self-acceptance were not higher in general well-being once socially-desirable responding was controlled. The current data suggest that the reason the zero-order correlations showed those higher in unconditional self-acceptance were also higher in well-being is due to the shared variance with self-deceptive enhancement. People motivated to present themselves in a favorable light to themselves are more likely to report both higher well-being and higher unconditional self-acceptance, but presumably this reporting is more inflated than what they may truly feel.

Future research should further examine the relationship of self-acceptance and well-being to determine if this construct is relevant, especially while examining socially desirable responding. Future research should also look to continue examining the psychometric properties of the Vulnerability to be Loved scale. Specifically, a larger sample may allow for a second factor analysis to be run. While the constructs are still being refined, Living from a Place of Love seems to have some role in well-being and it is the researchers' goal to further unveil the power of love.