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**SELF-DETERMINATION IN
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS:
FINDINGS FROM THE RUSSIAN
ADAPTATION OF THE COUPLE
MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

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This study tests the psychometrics of a Russian version of the Couple Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ), and analyzes the possible distinctions between the Russian and English versions of the instrument. We hypothesize that the adopted version of CMQ repeats the original structure, and a continuum of motivation in romantic relationships will be found as a result of the correlation analysis. We conducted a correlation study on an online sample of (N = 497) using CMQ, the Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Codependency Scale. The theoretical model, which was proposed in the original study (Blais et al., 1990), linked self-determination theory's motivational styles to adaptive relationship behaviors and the general quality of romantic relationships. The model was successfully confirmed for the Russian sample using a reverse translation and the psychometric testing of CMQ. The model revealed resistance to cultural influences, and the new instrument is suggested for studies of the motivational aspects of relationships using Russian samples.

Key words: self-determination theory, motivation, romantic relationships, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation

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Introduction

People maintain romantic relationships for various reasons. According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), when intrinsically motivated, one is involved in activity because it is enjoyable by itself. Whereas extrinsically motivated behavior aims to avoid negative (e.g., punishment) or obtain positive (e.g., socially approval) outcomes.

Seligman (1980) demonstrates that extrinsically motivated people are less likely to expect to eventually marry their partner than intrinsically motivated people. Moreover, intrinsically motivated couples show greater feelings of love and faithfulness in relationships (Rempel, 1985). They are also less defensive and show better understanding of their partner's point of view (Knee et al., 2005).

Self-determination theory followers have repeatedly attempted to create valid psychometric tools to assess motivation in romantic relationships. An incomplete list might include the Couple Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ; Blais et al., 1990), which measures the quality of motivation; the Motivations for Relational Activities scale (MRA; Gaine & Guardia, 2009), which assesses the extent to which people feel autonomous and controlled in a variety of specific relational activities such as sexual intimacy, physical intimacy, self-disclosure and social support; the Relationship Causality Orientation Scale (RCOS), assessing autonomous, controlled and impersonal motivation orientations toward romantic relationships (Camilla et al., 2017). There is, however, a pronounced lack of adapted and psychometrically tested questionnaires to measure motivation in relationships in a Russian-speaking sample.

Theoretical background

We can distinguish several aspects of motivation: its intensity (high or low), direction (work or relationships) and quality (intrinsic or extrinsic) (Leontiev, 2016). The most developed and experimentally substantiated theoretical model of

the qualitative differences of motivation is presented in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 1989; 2000).

The quality of motivation refers to the type of motivation that stands behind behavior (Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci, 2006). Specifically, it is defined in terms of a continuum of different types of motivation and motivational regulation.

At one pole of the continuum, amotivation refers to the lack of intentional regulation of one's motivated behavior. In other words, people do not know why they do something.

At the opposite pole, intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is interesting or enjoyable. Intrinsic motivation is associated with higher levels of autonomy and joy (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation is based on what a person can expect because of performing activities, e.g. a reward, promotion, permission to play computer games.

Studies show that the distinction between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation is complex (Ryan & Deci, 1989). As they state, extrinsic motivation ranges from low to high levels of self-determination. This shift refers to the process of internalization (Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995).

Figure 1. The Self-Determination Continuum (after Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Behavior	Non-Self-Determined				Self-Determined	
Motivation	Amotivation		Extrinsic		Intrinsic	
Regulation	Non-regulat.	External	Introjected	Identified	Integrated	Intrinsic
Perceived locus of causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat external	Somewhat internal	Internal	Internal
Regulatory processes	Nonintentional, non-valuing, incompetence, lack of control	Compliance, external rewards and punishments	Self-control, ego-involvement, internal rewards and punishments	Personal importance, conscious valuing	Congruence, awareness, synthesis with the self	Interest, enjoyment, satisfaction

As shown in Figure 1, four subtypes are distinguished within extrinsic motivation: external, introjected, identified and integrated.

External regulation occurs when one feels compelled to do something or when behavior is driven by the fear of punishment or the promise of reward. This kind of motivation is completely devoid of self-determination. It is replaced by the control of external agents (such as parents, teachers, bosses). External regulation can be illustrated by an example: "If I do not make a report by the end of the week, my boss will give me the sack."

Introjected regulation is based on learned rules and requirements that force people to act in a certain way. The subject acts this way, and not otherwise, in order to escape from feelings of guilt or shame or to experience self-respect. A student, for example, will not eat with his hands in the dining room, not because a controlling teacher is standing nearby, but because he or she has learned from the environment that this is not appropriate. An example of introjected regulation: "Bright students do not cheat".

Identified regulation implies that the subject sees his or her actions as important. That is, he or she acts this way not because he or she experiences external or internal pressure, as in the previous types of regulation, but because the activity or its result is valuable to him or her. In other words, we act because the activity is important for us, even if we do not enjoy the process. This can be illustrated by the following example: "I am ready to stay up late in order to finish my thesis".

Integrated regulation represents the last stage of internalization. This kind of regulation is the closest to intrinsic motivation; both these types together are sometimes labeled autonomous motivation. Nevertheless, it differs from the intrinsic motivation in its extrinsic origins.

Aims and Hypotheses

The study tests the psychometrics of a Russian version of CMQ and

analyzes possible distinctions between the Russian and English versions of the instrument. We added an alternative motivational instrument and two measurements of the quality of relationships to test the construct validity of the concepts.

The main hypothesis of the study is that the adopted version of CMQ will repeat the original structure, and the same continuum of motivation in romantic relationships will be found as a result of correlation analysis. To specify, in line with self-determination theory and the original CMQ study, it is expected that constructs reflecting higher levels of self-determination should be more positively associated with positive indices of relationship quality (i.e. perceptions of couple's adaptive behaviors). We also expect that additional measures of motivation and the quality of relationships will demonstrate concordant and predictable results, i.e. the higher the codependency experienced in romantic relationships, the lower the autonomy manifested by respondent in general.

Method

Sample and procedure

We used an online sample of those who accepted an invitation to participate in an anonymous study of motivation in romantic relationships. The sample (N=497) included 87% females and 13% males aged from 16 to 59 (M = 25.79; SD = 6.33). The respondents were asked to respond to statements about their relationships with a particular person with whom, in their opinion, they were in a romantic relationship at the time of the survey. The respondents who gave the same answer to all items, and those who had more than three missing responses were excluded from the analysis.

Instruments

Autonomy in Romantic Relationships. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with statements about the reasons why they presently live with their

partner. They rated their motivational reasons using a 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

We performed a blind reverse translation of the questionnaire and engaged a native English speaker who knows Russian professionally and holds a PhD in psychology granted in the US. Only minor improvements were needed after the translation process.

As an alternative measurement of autonomy, we also use the Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships (TEMIR: Ukolova, Shumski & Osin 2014) based on the theory of Längle (1999). The questionnaire consists of 36 items and 4 scales describing the four fundamental existential motivations (FM): the 1st FM: Trust in relationships (e.g., “I feel I’m not alone in my life due to these relationships”), the 2nd FM: Value of life in relationships (e.g., “When my partner is around, I have a feeling that life is good”), the 3rd FM: Authenticity in relationships (e.g., “I feel that the partner respects me and what is important to me”), the 4th FM: Meaning of relationships (e.g., “I think our relationship has a future”). Participants rated their motivational reasons using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Quality of relationships. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976; Polyakova, 2018) was used to measure the general quality of relationships. Three of the four subscales were presented to respondents, and the original psychometric testing set by Blais et al. (1990) also included it. The first dimension measured dyadic consensus (e.g., “sexual relations” and “aims, goals, and things believed to be important”) using a 6-point Likert scale. The second dimension evaluated dyadic cohesion. Participants evaluated how often they “laugh together” or “work together on a project”, etc. The third dimension assessed the dyadic affectional expression. The total score of all items of the three dimensions – the Dyadic adjustment – was used for the analysis.

As a negative measurement of relationship quality, we added the Codependency Scale (Fischer, Spann & Crawford, 1991; Moskalenko, 2009), which includes 16 questions (e.g. “It’s hard for me to make decisions”, “I often put

the needs of others ahead of my own”) and measures the general tendency to reveal codependent behavior in relationships.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The means, standard deviations and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Outcome Measures (N = 497)

Variable	Female		Male		Total		Cronbach’s Alpha
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
DAS – Consensus	3.54	.91	3.42	1.03	3.52	.93	.85
DAS – Aff. Expression	4.33	.94	3.93	1.08	4.27	.90	.85
DAS – Cohesion	4.39	.94	4.23	1.08	4.36	.96	.83
Dependency	2.80	.92	2.90	1.05	2.82	.94	.94
1st FM	5.55	.59	5.52	.53	5.54	.58	.92
2nd FM	3.06	1.38	2.90	1.45	3.04	1.39	.90
3rd FM	4.77	1.07	4.97	.98	4.80	1.06	.88
4th FM	1.55	.65	1.70	.86	1.57	.68	.87
Amotivation	1.80	.90	1.86	.84	1.81	.89	.89
External	2.52	.98	2.56	1.00	2.53	.91	.90
Introjected	2.92	1.08	2.48	1.08	2.85	1.09	.91
Identified	3.36	.96	3.08	1.04	3.32	.98	.88
Integrated	3.85	.70	3.60	.82	3.81	.72	.92
Intrinsic	3.59	.79	3.33	.81	3.55	.80	.90

Note. DAS – Dyadic Adjustment Scale; FM – Fundamental Existential Motivations

The reliability indices (Cronbach’s alpha) of all six scales of CMQ were at

the recommended level and ranged from .88 to .92. No items, if excluded, negatively affected the internal consistency of the test.

Bivariate correlations. We performed a correlation analysis with different types of regulatory variables (Table 2). In our data, the identified and integrated motivation correlation indices were reversed compared to the original version of CMQ. For instance, the expected connection between the dyadic adjustment measure and identified and integrated motivation were $r = .26$ and $r = .23$ respectively. In Russian version, they were $r = .28$ and $r = .06$ respectively.

Table 2
Pearson Correlations Between Couple Motivation Questionnaire Scales and Different Measures
(N = 497)

Variable	<i>r</i>					
	Amotiv.	Extern.	Introj.	Identif.	Integ.	Intrin.
DAS – Total	-.55**	-.27**	-.31**	.28**	.06	.41**
Dependency	.45**	.23**	.28**	-.10*	-.07	-.23**
1st FM (Trust)	-.62**	-.25**	-.27**	.34**	.12**	.46**
2nd FM (Value of life)	-.59**	-.27**	-.27**	.41**	.13**	.59**
3rd FM (Authenticity)	-.59**	-.18**	-.27**	.25**	.06	.35**
4th FM (Meaning)	-.57**	-.20**	-.24**	.48**	.23**	.50**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; DAS – Dyadic Adjustment Scale; FM – Fundamental Existential Motivations

The tendency was also confirmed with another motivational measure and both measures of relationship quality. However, a more accurate analysis using the *Fisher r-to-z transformation* showed that there is no confirmed statistical difference between the two correlation coefficients both in the original study and in our data ($p = 0.07$ or more for two-tailed test).

Discussion

The theoretical model that was proposed in Blais et al. (1990) linked self-determination theory's motivational styles to adaptive relationship behaviors and the general quality of romantic relationships. That model was successfully confirmed in the Russian sample as a result of a reverse translation and the psychometric testing of CMQ. The model was resistant to cultural influences, and the new instrument is suggested for studies of the motivational aspects of relationships using Russian samples.

We hypothesized that the six different types of motivation postulated would correlate with the self-determination continuum. In fact, neither the present study nor the original results confirmed this pattern precisely. While the distance between the measures of introjected and identified motivation for their relatedness to dyadic adjustment was .56 (from $r = -.30$ to $r = .26$) in the original study, the same distance between the identified and integrated types was .03 there (Blais et al., 1990, p. 1027). Our data showed an even greater dispersion of the indices at the first pair and the reversion of the pattern at the point of integrated motivation measures.

However, a more detailed analysis revealed that these differences are more accidental than statistically reliable, both in the original and the Russian studies. In that way, the problem with empirical differentiation and even the reliable measurement of integrated motivation is still relevant and far from solved, as shown in several studies (e.g. Sheldon et al., 2017; Gagné et al., 2015; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009).

A deeper understanding of the construct was reached as a result of additional measures of motivation and the quality of relationships. The intrinsic type of regulation had closer connections with a higher valuing of life in relationships, according to the data obtained with the Test of Existential Motivations in Interpersonal Relationships. Amotivation was more about a lack of trust in relationships.

While the original study tested only the convergent construct validity, the present study included an additional discriminant validity measurement. The data showed the expected pattern of gradually changing connections between codependency and autonomy from the most negative for amotivation to strongly positive for intrinsic motivation. Along with general personality self-determination, as shown in a number of studies (e.g., Sheldon et al., 2017), the degree of dependency is also important for romantic relationships.

The present research is limited in several ways. First, the study sample was recruited online and might not be representative of all romantic relationships. Even in the original study, objective measurements of relationship quality were not performed, so the criterion validity of the questionnaire is yet to be confirmed.

Because of online sampling and the topic of the study, our participants were inhomogeneous in terms of gender, and further studies should estimate whether gender differences could affect the results. Our data, which included 65 male respondents, showed no gender differences.

In sum, the present results support and develop the motivational model of romantic relationships, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy-driven processes as opposed to controlling and amotivated processes in the development and maintenance of the quality of such relationships. This Russian version of CMQ is a valid and reliable instrument, and is suggested for further research in the field.

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