

Abstract

The present study aimed to determine how depression, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and the co-occurrence of the two disorders affect the interpersonal behaviors of romantic couples. To answer this question, this study used data collected by previous researchers from a large, Midwestern outpatient mental health center specializing in couple and family therapy. From this original dataset, I drew a sample containing conversations from $N = 62$ couples in which one or both members had either depression, GAD, or co-occurring depression and GAD. I employed multilevel models to examine the relationship between each couple's diagnostic status and their interpersonal behaviors as measured by Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB; Benjamin, 1979, 1987, 2000). Couples with co-occurring depression and GAD differed significantly from couples with GAD alone in the amount of Affirming and Understanding and Watching and Controlling behaviors expressed during conversations. Other significant differences – such as in global Other-Focused Affiliation, Self-Focused Autonomy, and specific cluster behaviors – were largely driven by relationship quality differences among the studied couples as well as behavioral divergences between patients and their partners.