ORIGINAL ARTICLE   CONTENTS ☒

Conceptual bases of psychocorrectional assistance to women in codependent marriage relationships

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To develop a programme of psychocorrectional assistance for women in codependent marital relationships and to evaluate its effectiveness.

Materials and Methods: The study involved 48 women aged 25–45 years who were in codependent marital relationships. The basic course of psychocorrectional therapy consisted of ten sessions. The effectiveness of the psychocorrectional programme was assessed using the following psychodiagnostic methods: the Codependency Self-Evaluation Scale (CSIS), the Codependency Level Measurement Scale (D. Spann and D. Fisher), Self-Evaluation of Emotional States (A. Wessman, D. Ricks), Self-Evaluation of Mental States (H. Eysenck), and Definition of Self-Evaluation (S. Kovalev).

Results: As a result of the psychocorrectional sessions, the general mental state of the women improved. They reported feeling more energetic, confident, calm, and relaxed. Stabilisation of the new self-position in everyday and partner-related situations, as well as a strengthening of decision-making quality in relationships, was observed in 42 (87.5%) participants during long-term follow-up.

Conclusions: The developed comprehensive psychocorrectional programme demonstrated high effectiveness both in short- and medium-term outcomes and in the long term. This indicates the achievement of a positive personal transformation among the participants, serzzving as a psychoprophylactic factor against the risk of developing further codependent relationships. Future research is planned to focus on developing a psychocorrectional programme for men in codependent relationships and evaluating its effectiveness.

KEY WORDS: codependency, women, mental states, psychological assistance

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of this study is determined by the significant prevalence of codependent relationships and the absence of a clear algorithm for providing psychocorrectional assistance to individuals involved in such relationships. Codependent relationships develop on the basis of dysfunctional interpersonal interactions, fear of loneliness, and fear of rejection [1, 2]. They manifest at the cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and activity levels of the personality [3, 4]. Family codependency is commonly associated with substance abuse [5–7]. Furthermore, predictors of family codependency formation include immaturity of psychological defense mechanisms, impaired communication and role distribution within the family, attachment-related anxiety, and characteristics of early mother–child relationships [8, 9].

Women with a high level of codependency are characterized by low self-esteem, self-blame, preoccupation with their own shortcomings, loss of self-control accompanied by identity disturbance, heightened vulnerability, and persistent feelings of guilt [10, 11]. Psychocorrection enables individuals to reassess existing problems and identify effective ways of resolving them [9, 12].

Thus, although the problem of codependency has recently received considerable attention in the scientific literature, there remains a lack of comprehensive empirical research and practically oriented psychocorrectional models [11, 12]. The need to address these gaps served as the main motivation for conducting this study.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the theoretical substantiation of the conceptual foundations of a psychocorrectional assistance program for women in codependent marital relationships. The practical significance of the study results is defined by the possibility of applying them to the provision of psychocorrectional

and psychoprophylactic support for women in codependent marital relationships.

The hypothesis of the study was based on the assumption that the developed psychocorrectional program will contribute to the improvement of the mental state and positive transformation of the personal characteristics of women in codependent marital relationships.

AIM

The study aimed to develop a psychocorrectional assistance program for women in codependent marriage relationships and evaluate its effectiveness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology was based on the integration of theoretical knowledge regarding the formation of codependent marital relationships and the practical experience of their psychocorrection, as presented in modern scientific literature [1, 9, 10].

The research design provided for a sequential, phased implementation. The research algorithm consisted of the following stages: theoretical and analytical, preparatory, diagnostic, psychocorrectional, processing and analysis of results, and finalization with the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

The study was conducted in a family psychotherapy setting. The sample comprised 48 women aged 25–45 years who sought psychological counseling due to existing codependent patterns in marital relationships. Psychocorrectional work was carried out in a group format, forming six groups of eight women each.

The inclusion criteria for participation in the psychocorrectional group were as follows: psychodiagnostic identification of codependent patterns; readiness for group participation; stability of mental state; informed consent to take part; and adherence to group rules. The exclusion criteria were: acute psychotic conditions; active suicidal risk; active phase of chemical dependency; severe manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder; and unwillingness to maintain confidentiality. No exclusion criteria were observed among the women selected for the study.

The psychocorrection program was based on an integrative approach that combined cognitive-behavioral techniques (attitude reappraisal, work with automatic thoughts), body-oriented practices (awareness and regulation of body signals), group dynamics and mutual reflection, art therapy and narrative tools, as well as metaphorical work and resource integration.

The basic psychocorrection cycle consisted of ten sessions, each lasting 90 minutes and held once per week.

Structured homework assignments were completed between sessions. The post-program support plan included: recommended micropractices for four to six weeks; mini-support groups meeting once every two weeks; individual sessions upon request; identification of personal triggers; and the development of personalized self-help strategies. Typically, post-program support and follow-up lasted from six to twelve months.

To assess the effectiveness of the psychocorrectional program, psychodiagnostic testing was conducted at the beginning and after the completion of its basic cycle using the following methods:

- Codependency Self-Assessment Scale (CSIS) [13] – a 20-item questionnaire adapted for use in Ukraine The level of codependency is assessed as follows: 20-29 points – low; 30-39 points – medium; 40-59 points – high; 60-80 points – very high;

- Codependency Measurement Scale (D. Spann and D. Fisher) [14] – a 16-item questionnaire aimed at identifying dysfunctional and codependent relationships. The number of points from 16 to 32 indicates normal relationships; the range of 33-60 points corresponds to moderately expressed codependency; 61-96 points – strongly expressed codependency.

- "Definition of self-esteem" (S. Kovalev) [15] – a test questionnaire consisting of 32 statements; the level of self-esteem of the subject is determined as follows: 0-25 points – high; 26-45 points – average; 46-128 points – low;

- "Self-assessment of emotional states" (A. Wessman & D. Rix) [16] – a questionnaire containing 40 questions that allow you to determine the emotional state of the subject on four scales: "Calmness-Anxiety", "Energy, cheerfulness-Fatigue", "Elevation-Depression", "Self-Confidence-Feeling of Helplessness". The maximum possible number of points on each scale is 40. A total score of the emotional state is also calculated for all scales (from 26 to 40 points - high level, from 15 to 25 points - medium level, from 4 to 14 points - low level);

- "Self-assessment of mental states" (G. Eysenck) [17] – a questionnaire with 40 questions that allows you to determine the level of anxiety, frustration, aggressiveness and rigidity (0-7 points – low level; 8-14 points – medium level; 15-20 points – high level).

The study was conducted with the permission of the ethics committee of the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management. All study participants signed an informed consent document. Throughout the entire period of the study, strict adherence to the provisions of the Declaration of Helsinki and other international bioethics documents was ensured, in particular: confidentiality of personal information; anonymity of test results; the right to refuse any training exercise; stabilization algorithm during emotionally necessary); safe and tolerant rules of interaction in the group.

Table 1. Dynamics of psycho-emotional states of women with codependency in the process of psychocorrection

	Scale	Average score (n=48)		Student's t-test	p
		A	A1		
A. Wessman & D. Rix [16]	Calmness-Anxiety	3.7±0.46	6.4±0.52	11.96	0.0003
	Energy, cheerfulness-Fatigue	3.8±0.45	6.1±0.47	363.66	<0.00001
	Elevation-Depression	3.4±0.38	6.3±0.45	106.61	<0.00001
	Self-confidence-Feeling of helplessness	2.9±0.47	6.4±0.51	36.29	<0.00001
	Overall assessment of the condition	13.8±1.76	25.2±1.95	25.28	<0.00001
G. Eysenck [17]	Anxiety [17]	15.6±1.42	10.1±1.52	- 34.11	<0.00001
	Frustration [17]	16.6±1.57	7.2±1.46	- 71.65	<0.0001
	Aggressiveness [17]	15.4±1.63	8.1±1.53	- 73.00	<0.00001
	Rigidity [17]	15.8±1.62	6.9±1.68	- 13.49	0.0002

Notes: A – initial testing, A1 – retesting
Source: compiled by the authors of this study

Table 2. Dynamics of the level of codependency and self-esteem of the women studied in the process of psychocorrection

Scale	Average score (n=48)		Student's t-test	p
	A	A1		
Codependency Level (CSIS) [13]	71.3±2.87	35.4±2.84	- 18.89	<0.00001
Codependency Level (Spann & D. Fisher Method) [14]	75.4±2.89	46.5±2.72	- 116.31	<0.00001
Self-esteem Level [15]	84.2±3.24	45.1±2.88	- 330.93	<0.00001

Notes: A – initial testing, A1 – retesting
Source: compiled by the authors of this study

We used the IBM SPSS Statistics v. 27.0 (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp., USA) for the empirical data analysis. Quantitative indicators were presented as mean ± standard deviation, and compared by the paired Student's t-test at baseline and after completion of the psychocorrectional program. A p-value <0,05 was considered as statistically significant.

FRAMEWORK

RESULTS

The dynamics of the psycho-emotional states of women exhibiting manifestations of codependency during the psychocorrection process, as determined by the methods of A. Wessman and D. Rix [16] and G. Eysenck [17], are presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, the initial testing of women in codependent marital relationships according to the A. Wessman and D. Rix method [16] revealed a depressive state, feelings of helplessness, and increased anxiety and fatigue. Assessment using G. Eysenck's method [17] demonstrated high levels of anxiety, frustration, aggression, and rigidity among the participants.

As a result of the psychocorrection sessions, according to the methods of A. Wessman and D. Rix [16] and G. Eysenck [17], the mental state of the participants normalized. They began to feel more energetic, confident, calm, and relaxed. The overall assessment of their mental state (based on the A. Wessman and D. Rix questionnaire [16]) improved significantly. Testing according to G. Eysenck's method [17] showed that, following psychocorrection, the participants demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in the levels of anxiety, aggressiveness, and rigidity to average values. At the same time, their frustration index decreased to within the normal range, indicating increased self-esteem, greater resilience to failure, and readiness to overcome life's difficulties (Table 1).

The effect of the psychocorrection program on enhancing self-esteem was also confirmed using the S. Kovalev method [15] (Table 2). This table additionally

presents the dynamics of codependency level indicators, determined using the CSIS [13] and the D. Spann and D. Fisher [14] methods.

During the initial testing of the women studied, high scores according to this method indicated a very low level of their self-esteem. Repeated testing recorded a statistically significant and significant decrease in the index according to the S. Kovalev method [15], which indicated the normalization of self-esteem and corresponded to the upper limit of the range of its average values. The normalization of self-esteem occurred synchronously with a decrease in the level of codependency, which was confirmed by the dynamics of indicators according to the CSIS [13] and D. Spann & D. Fisher methods [14].

During follow-up observation, long-term results of psychocorrection in the form of stabilization of the new self-position in everyday and partner situations and improvement of the quality of choice in relationships were noted in 42 (87,5%) cases.

DISCUSSION

Our study was motivated by the need for an in-depth study of the gender specifics of the problem of codependency and the development of effective approaches to providing psychocorrectional assistance to women stuck in codependent marital relationships. The formation of a person's personal qualities that determine her tendency to codependent relationships is determined primarily by socio-psychological factors [18]. At the same time, women who are in codependent marital relationships are characterized by increased anxiety, aggressiveness, depression, fatigue, lethargy, self-doubt and disruption of both interpersonal contacts and self-attitude [10, 11, 19], which is confirmed by the very low level of self-esteem we found in such women. Codependent relationships transform the substantive characteristics and value-semantic sphere of a woman, her worldview and image of "I" [20].

Accordingly, psychocorrectional assistance to women in codependent relationships, according to researchers, should be comprehensive, consistent, and coordinated [11]. There is evidence of the effectiveness of using interactive and role-playing psychodramatic techniques with reflection and fairy tale acting for the correction of codependent relationships [21]. When developing the author's psychocorrectional program, we took these recommendations into account.

Psychodiagnostic testing in dynamics and subsequent follow-up observation demonstrated the high effectiveness of the psychocorrectional program we developed and allowed us to determine three levels of achieved psychocorrectional results: short-term results (increased awareness of one's own bodily and emotional signals, reduced automatism of self-contempt, gaining experience in safely setting boundaries and verbalizing one's own needs); medium-term results (normalization of self-esteem, reduced frequency of codependent reactions, expansion of the repertoire of assertive strategies and increased tolerance to emotions; long-term results (stabilization of the new self-position in everyday and partner situations and increased quality of choice in relationships).

The limitations of this study during the experimental period were associated with several factors, including a temporary increase in emotional reactivity at the outset, heterogeneity of the group in terms of readiness, and the need for individualized refinement of certain topics between sessions. It should also be emphasized that the psychocorrection program does not in any way replace pharmacological treatment or crisis intervention. Therefore, among the many women exhibiting manifestations of codependency who were under our observation, only 48 participants were selected for inclusion in the study. These participants fully completed all stages of the psychocorrection program and took part in both the initial testing and retesting, providing accurate responses to all questionnaire items.

This study focused on assessing the effectiveness of psychocorrection for codependent relationships among women; however, men also experience codependent relationship patterns. In our previous publications, we examined the gender-specific characteristics of codependency formation and highlighted the importance of considering these differences in the process of psychocorrection. Accordingly, the psychocorrection program presented in this study was designed specifically for women, while a separate study will be devoted to the development and evaluation of a psychocorrection program for men in codependent relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

Direct and strong correlations were established between the level of codependency and the negative psycho-emotional states of the women studied, including feelings of helplessness, increased anxiety, depression, and fatigue, as well as high levels of frustration, aggression, and rigidity.

Stabilization of the new self-position in everyday and partner situations, along with the strengthening of decision-making quality in relationships, was confirmed in 42 (87.5%) cases during long-term observation. The high effectiveness of the developed comprehensive psychocorrection program was demonstrated in short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives, indicating posi-

tive personal transformation among the participants as a psychoprophylactic factor in preventing the formation of further codependent relationships.

Thus, the psychocorrection program we developed can be recommended for providing psychocorrec-tional and psychoprophylactic assistance to women in codependent marital relationships. Future research is planned to focus on the development and evaluation of a psychocorrection program for men in codependent relationships.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The Authors declare no conflict of interest

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