

Co-dependency and Relationship Satisfaction among Spouses of Alcohol Abusers

Uzma Zaidi¹

¹(Assistant Professor, Department of Health, College of Health and Rehabilitation, Princess Nora Bint AbdulRahman University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)

Abstract: *the present study aimed to investigate the relationship of co-dependency and relationship satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abusers. It was hypothesized that there is significant relationship between co-dependency ad interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. It was also hypothesized that higher the denial, self- esteem, control and compliance will predict lower interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. A sample of seventy female spouse acquired through addiction treatment centre's of lahore city. The data was collected through purposive sampling technique. Am i co-dependent scale and relationship satisfaction survey was administered. Correlation and regression analysis was used to find out the relationship of co-dependency and relationship satisfaction of spouse among alcohol abusers. Results shows that there is significant relationship between the variables.*

Keywords: *Co-dependency, relationship satisfaction, spouses of alcohol abusers, interpersonal satisfaction*

I. Introduction

There are many casual factors and negative impacts related to alcohol abuse. One of the most studied patterns related to alcohol abuse is known as codependency. This was originally used to refer to the psychological, emotional, and behavioral difficulties exhibited by the spouses, and then the children, of alcoholics who unintentionally enabled continuation of the drinking problem. It replaced the less general terms co-alcoholic, para-alcoholic and enabler.^[1]

Codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and is obsessed or possessed with controlling that person's behavior.^[2,3] Finally this dependence on another person affects the codependent bodily, psychologically and socially. Spann and Fischer, operationally described codependency as a pattern of relating to others characterized by great belief in personal helplessness and the powerfulness of others, a lack of easy expression of thoughts, and excessive attempts to get a sense of purpose through engaging in personally upsetting and care taking relationships which involve high levels of denial, inflexibility, and attempts to direct the relationship.^[4] Codependency describes as a kind of addiction.^[5] A person is said to be affliction from codependency when they show caring for a loved one who is engage with addiction of drugs or alcohol. The actions of the caring individual is said to hold back recovery of the real addict by enabling the addict to carry on the addiction. Further they stated that codependency gives the impression as if all caring for addicts is pathological.

There are many studies that found the relationship of codependent individuals and their involvement in challenging relationship.^[6] Spouse of alcohol abuser adopt the behavioral and emotional imbalance of their partner such as remain loyal to the care and support of their spouse in the face of harsh social and emotional difficulties. Spouse of alcohol abuser have to face many problems. According to Kanjanapipatkul, in a relationship where one individual has an addict spouse, he or she has to face problems such as financial problems, tension about her husband health, fear about future and risk of violent behavior and embarrassment.^[3] All these problems create physical, emotional and mental illness.

There are some common patterns of codependent which are found in many studies.^[3] Many factor are included in codependency i.e. denial, self- esteem, compliance and control. These factors are shared by substance abuser and their partner. First Factor include in codependency is denial refers to the course by which people with addictions act as if (to themselves and/or to other people) that they do not have an addiction, when in reality they do.^[7] Denial may happen intentionally or unconsciously. Similar to the substance abuser his partner shares the factors of denial. The codependent has many painful thoughts and feelings that must be predisposed. Denial may be relied on to avoid the experience of irritation held for parents and others and hatred for one's self. The codependent wishes to avoid self- acknowledgement that controlling behavior is self-defeating and promote low self- esteem.^[8] The example of denial can be seen in a dysfunctional family in which members' experience of fear, anger, pain, or embarrassment but tried to ignored or deny.^[3]

Another factor of codependency that is self- esteem.^[2] As codependents, spouse is likely to enter into thoroughly violent relationship with themselves. Alcoholism destroys the self- worth; create low self- esteem

and self-hearted in alcoholics as well as his spouse. Kanjanapitakul, also explained that the spouse loss her sense of awareness, attendance of mind, the ability to plan and more over spouse may have difficulty in making conclusion.^[3]

Beside these factors of denial and self-esteem there are some other factors that contributes in codependency i.e. compliance and control. Families of addicts do not admit that problems exist. Family members learn to deviate from their own needs and they learn to keep inside their own emotions. They comply the demand instead their own need and they suppressed their own wishes.^[3] Another factor of codependency is controlling. The addict depends upon drug and is anxious with it. The family member without taking the drug is equally anxious with addict's behavior.^[3]

The consequences of alcoholism in the marital adjustment appeared in devastating effects. Including the alcoholic themselves, the spouse, their children and whole family members may effect.^[9] The non-alcoholic wife may have low self-esteem and a negative self-picture caused by verbal or physical violence, social withdrawal, sadness and problems at work simply due to the alcoholic partner's unbalanced behavior. Family member including alcoholic suffer from mental and anxiety related illnesses that develop the feelings of anxiousness, depression, confusion and completely annoyed.^[10] Stanely, studied that higher levels of interpersonal conflict and violence have been also recognized in couples with an alcoholic spouse when compared to marital relationships which were not problematical by alcohol.^[11]

There are many researches mainly focused on understanding the marital dynamics involved in alcoholism and its damaging impact on spouse. Characteristics such as neuroticism, higher apprehension levels, depression, low self-esteem and communication anxiety have been reported in wives of alcoholics and recognized to the influential anxiety and trauma practiced by spouse.^[12, 13, 14]

Codependency has negative effects on interpersonal satisfaction. Different elements of interpersonal satisfaction are stress, problem in communication, problem in conflict resolution, problem in relational intimacy, emotional reactivity and boundaries. Alcoholism can develop most important life-threatening, psychological, and emotional problems which often lead to both parties feeling anxious, depressed, puzzled and annoyed. This can lead to stress and other negative feelings within the relationship. Consequently, the non-alcoholic spouse may experience guilt, embarrassment, and helplessness and may in fact initiate drinking themselves or engage in other types of self-defeating behavior as a way of coping with the stress. Communication gap among spouse may create loss of emotional and sexual closeness, lack of satisfaction and depth, more disagreement and a less fulfilling relationship.^[9]

Orford and Harwin, revealed that women undergoing experience of stress as a consequence of living with an alcoholic spouse will result in manifestation of neurotic traits and psychological disturbance.^[15] Lebow, investigated that the causal connections between substance use and marital discord are complex.^[16] Stressful marital interactions are related to increased problematic substance use. Poor communication, financial stressor are common antecedents to alcohol abuse. Negative effect of alcohol use on the family, such as psychological distress of spouse and social behavior, academic and emotional problems among children increase stress in the family system and may therefore lead to or exacerbate substance use.

Emotional problem also interlink with interpersonal satisfaction. According to Potter, the codependent like an addict may develop high tolerance to others, in appropriate, sometimes insulting and aggressive behavior.^[17] There are also codependents that resist, sometimes even rejected, the development of close relationship, out of their fear of rejection. They remain single or distant, displaying the outworking of this fear of rejection and neglecting on their relationship with friends, neighbors and in their job performance. An irregular growing in drinking is often a result to a problem within the family.^[18] For the family the main task is to cool off high amount of reactivity to the alcoholic person and to increase emotional coldness in the family.

Coleman and Straus, showed that whether consciously or unconsciously, people use alcohol as a means of engaging in behavior which would be intolerable to themselves and society if they were sober.^[19] The study also found that alcohol abuse is associated with violence in the husband-wife relationship more often than in the parent-child relationship. According to role incompatibility theory, socially unexpected behavior such as illicit drug use are not compatible with traditional adults, social role such as marriage and parenthood.^[20] Therefore these individuals may be more likely to experience difficulty within a variety of aspects of their lives.

II. Objectives

Spouse of alcohol abuser has psychological, behavioural and emotional problems as alcoholic person. Due to these problems the spouse of alcohol abuser experience denial, low self-esteem, compliance and control. Subsequently all these factors badly impact their interpersonal relationship. Spouse of alcohol abuser has high level of stress, problem in communication, problem in conflict resolution, problem in relational intimacy and emotion reactivity that create dissatisfaction in their marital relationship. The ratio of alcohol abuser is increasing and alarming in Pakistan.^[21] The alcohol abuser affects the spouse emotional, behavioural and psychological health and creates dissatisfaction in their marital relationship.^[22] There are fewer researches in

Pakistan particularly on alcohol abuser’s spouse that’s way the present research was conducted to investigate the relationship of co-dependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. That is why psycho-education or self- help groups for co-dependent spouse are equally essential. The findings of this research will be helpful for psychologists, psychiatrists, professional related to drug addiction, researches and students of psychology. It will open new ways for treatment providers to addresses the spouse of alcohol abuser through family and marital counselling and to provide psycho-education. It will also facilitate further research on channel of information related to co-dependency and marital dissatisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser.

III. Hypotheses

After reviewing literature, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. There would be a significant relationship between codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser.
2. Higher the denial and (low) self- esteem lower will be interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser.
3. Higher the compliance and control lower will be interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser.

IV. Methodology

4.1 Participants

Correlational research design was used. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship of codependency and Interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. The sample consisted of female spouse of alcohol abuse (N=70). The sample was taken from different treatment centers of Lahore city through purposive sampling technique. Age range of participant was from 18-50 years and their minimal education level was primary because the questionnaire was translated into Urdu and the spouse whose education was less than primary cannot understand it. They belonged to middle socio economic status. Only those spouses were included whose partner was alcoholic. Beside the alcoholic’s spouse, any other type of drug abuser’s spouse was excluded. Spouse of alcohol abuser whose age was less than 18 and education was less than primary was excluded. Table (1) indicates that most of the spouse of alcohol abuser age range was 26-30 years. Data show that majority of the participants had done Intermediate (42.9%). Majority (68.6%) were living in nuclear family structure. Demographics also indicate that in majority of the cases alcoholic abuser was considered as head of the family(72.9%) and was having employment (74.3%). The socio demographic characteristics of the spouse of alcohol abuser such as age, education, family structure, head of the family and husband’s employment status are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of variables (N= 70)

Characteristics	I. Frequency	II. Percentage
(1) Age		
18-25 years	13	18.6%
26-30 years	19	27.1%
31-35 years	17	24.3%
36-40 years	9	12.9%
41-45 years	6	8.6%
46-50 years	6	8.6%
(2) Education		
Middle	5	7.1%
Matriculation	14	20.0%
Intermediate	30	42.9%
Graduation	14	20.0%
Master	7	10.0%
(3) Family structure		
Nuclear	48	68.6%
Joint	22	31.4%
(4) Head of the family		
Spouse	51	72.9%
Others	19	27.1%
(5) Husband’s employment status		
Job	52	74.3%
Jobless	18	25.7%

4.2 Measures

Demographic data sheet, Am I a Codependent scale and Relationship satisfaction survey was used.

4.2.1 Socio demographic information form

A socio demographic data sheet was used to gather the personal information about participants including their Age, Education and Employment of the husband, Monthly income, Family structure and head of the family. It was also used to screen out the sample characteristic according to the inclusion/exclusion criteria of research.

4.2.2 Am I a Codependent scale

Am I a Codependent scale was used in this research.^[21] It has 23 items and has 4 subscale namely denial (4 items), self- esteem (6 items), compliance (6 items), and control (7 items). Scale has three response categories, yes, no and sometimes, respectively. Three or more response in yes, suggests co-dependency. Standard procedure of translation and back translation was adapted. Before achieving the main objectives of the study, reliability of the scales were calculated to check the homogeneity of the scale in Pakistani cultures. After translating the test into Urdu, reliability of the scale was calculated using chronbach alpha (that was 0.80). The Coefficient for scale is in the acceptance range, and this shows that the scale being employed in this study is reliable instrument for measurement of the constructs of interest.

4.2.3 Relationship satisfaction survey

Relationship satisfaction survey was used in this research.^[23] It has 30 items and 6 subscales i.e. stress, communication, conflict resolution, relational intimacy, emotional reactivity and boundaries. Each sub scale is having 5 items. Scoring procedure of this test is to sum up the yes answer for each of six relationship categories. Two or more yes in a category suggests that there is dissatisfaction in that area. The questionnaire was administered after translating in Urdu form. Standard procedure of back translation was followed. Before achieving the main objectives of the study reliabilities of the scales was calculated to check the homogeneity of relationship satisfaction scale in Pakistani cultures. The Coefficients for this scales relationship satisfaction survey .77 are near to the acceptance range.

4.3 Procedure

Permission from was sought from the authority of Addiction Treatment centres of Lahore. The consent form was given to the family support group members and the nature of the study was explained to the participants before administration of the questionnaires. Participants were ensured that the information acquired from them will be held confidential and was not be used for any other purpose other than this research. Participants were provided necessary directions about assessment in order to reduce their anxious feelings. Socio demographic form was administered to the participants to screen out the data according to the criteria of research. Participants were required to make choice on am I co-dependent scale and relationship satisfaction survey according to their personality. SPSS 17.0 was used for analysing, organizing, and interpreting the data. Firstly descriptive statistics was used to calculate the frequency and percentage to describe the socio demographic variables. Correlation was used to find out the relationship of codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuse. Regression was applied to predict the relationship of the variables of denial, self- esteem, compliance and control with interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. Additionally correlation was used to find out the relationship of relationship satisfaction with stress, problem in communication, problem in conflict resolution, problem in relation intimacy, emotional reactivity and boundaries.

V. Results and Discussion

Table 2: Correlation between codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser (N= 70)

Variables	Sig (2- Tailed)	N	r
Co-dependency	.000	70	.678**
Interpersonal satisfaction	.000	70	.678**

**p < 0.01

Table 3: Regression analysis for variables predicting denial and self -esteem among the spouse of alcohol abuser (N=70)

Predicator variables	Beta	SE B	β	p
Denial	1.92	5.97	.346	.002
(Low) Self-esteem	1.37	4.17	.354	.002

R² = .340, ΔR² = .320, p < .05

Table 4: Regression analysis for variables predicting compliance and control among the spouse of alcohol abuser (N=70)

Predictor variables	Beta	SE B	β	p*
Control	1.17	.479	.270	.017
Compliance	1.72	.452	.421	.000

$R^2 = .353, \Delta R^2 = .335, p < .05$

It was hypothesized that there is significant relationship between codependency and interpersonal satisfactions among spouse of alcohol abuser. It was hypothesized that higher the denial, self- esteem, control and compliance will predict lower interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. Correlation was used to find out the relationship of codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. Regression was applied to prediction the variables of denial, self- esteem, compliance and control with interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. The results (Table 2) indicated that there is positive significance correlation between codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser [$r = .678^{**}, p < .01$]. Thereby it is proven the main hypothesis that there is significant relationship between codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. Results (Table 3) shows that denial ($p = .002, < .05$) and self- esteem ($p = .002, < .05$) are the significant predictor of interpersonal satisfaction. There by proven the second main hypothesis that higher the scores on denial and self -esteem, lower will be interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. Results (Table 4) shows that compliance ($p = .017, < .05$) and control ($p = .000, < .05$) are the significant predictor of interpersonal satisfaction. There by proven the third main hypothesis that higher the scores on compliance and control, lower will be interpersonal relationship among spouse of alcohol abuser.

Results of the present study show that there is significant relationship between codependency and interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser as well as higher the denial, self-esteem, compliance and control, lower the interpersonal satisfaction among spouse of alcohol abuser. The result is consistent with previous studies which suggested that spouses under the influence of codependent person tend to act more aggressively and to cover up their inner feelings or to deny the reality.^[24] The results are also consistent with previous studies which suggested that the wives of alcoholics as a group had higher levels of conflict, perceived more danger and experienced more apprehension in relating with their spouses.^[24, 25] Coleman and Straus, finding suggested that alcohol abuse is associated with violence in the husband-wife relationship.^[19] The result is in according with pervious study suggested that alcoholism also has negative effects on the spouse of an alcoholic.^[26] The spouse may have psychological problems i.e; feelings of hatred, self-pity, and avoidance of social contacts. All these factors lead towards the development of low self- esteem. Present study proven the previous researches which result showed that women whose partners had alcohol problems experienced victimization, injury, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and being in fair or poor health.^[27] They also experienced more life stressors and had lower mental psychological quality-of-life scores then normal couples. As for as compliance is concerned, spouse of alcoholics not only face psychological problems but they also comply with their mood fluctuation. Additionally have labile personality and they have to comply with their demand. Present study proven the previous researches which result showed that women whose partners had alcohol problems experienced victimization, injury, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and being in fair or poor health.^[27] They also experienced more life stressors and had lower mental psychological quality-of-life scores then normal couples.

VI. Conclusion

Present study has some limitations like small sample size, non-probability sampling technique and less opportunities of self-help groups for families from treatment centres. For future study other family members e.g., children, parents and sibling can be included to study the vast effects of co-dependency and relational problems on family members. Professional engage in the treatment of drug addicts and family members of drug addicts can be benefited by the findings. Results provide evidence to necessary inclusion of family therapy in any drug treatment program to deal with relational problems.

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