

The influence of affective addictions on future prospects: a self-assessment questionnaire

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Abstract:

The "love addiction" is a behavioral addiction, according to the first articles published in the European Journal of Psychiatry, is "characterized by a misfit, pervasive and excessive interest towards the reference partner, with renunciation of other interests and other negative consequences".

"Love addiction" is a form of behavioral addiction, according to the first articles published in the European Journal of Psychiatry, is "characterized by a maladjusted, pervasive and excessive interest towards the reference partner, with lack of control, renunciation of other interests and other negative consequences" (Fisher, 2016).

A sort of vicious circle represented by the persistent search for closeness on the part of the companion/ a that indirectly exerts a strong control. This imperious need of the other, results in dysfunctional relational patterns, the loving feeling is replaced by submission to an obsessive relationship. A real "emotional loop", in which both people are enveloped, the dominant one that disguises addiction with the hidden use of oppression and control and the submissive one that annihilates for "love" of the partner. These maladaptive behaviors can be established at any age, they result in a self-destructive and unsatisfactory relationship, with emotive and cognitive contents incoercible. It can exert a strong influence on the ability to self-determination and on the construction of a career or study path.

Although affective dependence is not recognized by DSM-5 as a specific diagnosis, it begins to increase data to support its characterization as a separate mental disorder. According to the characteristics emerged in the literature, a self-assessment questionnaire was proposed to identify traits attributable to a "love addiction".

The target group consists of a total of 746 users aged 18 to 50. The results are not reassuring, a considerable portion has alarming features. Acquiring awareness of it, especially in the early stages, when the alienating dimension is not yet fully established, can prove very useful.

Keywords: *love addiction, dependence, manipulation*

Survey

The self-assessment scale for the identification of an affective dependence is composed of a brief part of the personal data in which the age group and gender of the compiler are requested 10 items. It was built according to a 5-point value criterion (0 to 3) for the 10 questions. **37-45 points:** marked dependence in existence, on the one hand the manipulation and possession prevails, on the other the tendency to cancel, something very far from the loving feeling,

30-38 points: mild dependence: which generally occurs at the beginning of the relationship at risk.

31-38 points: risk of dependence (characteristics approaching an obsessive-morbid relationship)

0-30 points: no addiction, healthy and balanced relationship.

Table 1

Age range	N°	μ	Standard Deviation
18-25	313	46,09	17,56
26-35	128	44,05	19,40
35-50	305	41,34	18,71

Graphic 1

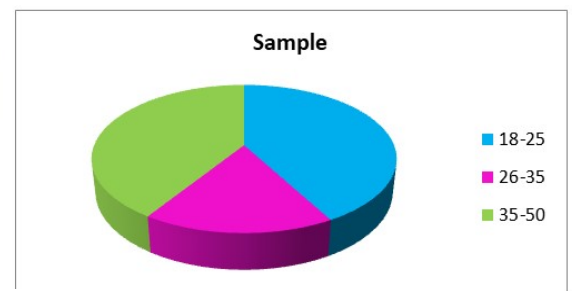
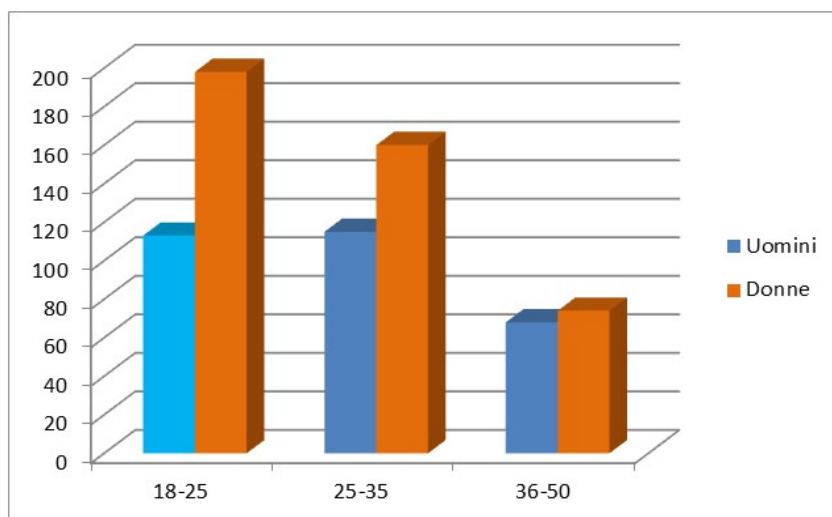


Table 2

Gender	Age range	N°	μ	Standard Deviation
Man	18-20	113	64,72	19,34
	21-35	115	59,89	20,63
	36-65	68	62,35	24,38
Woman	18-20	198	75,31	17,71
	21-25	160	69,76	20,50
	36-65	74	61,93	23,59

The questionnaire was administered online to a sample of n 746 users - aged between 18 and 50.

Graphic 2



The sample is represented mainly by women (n 432) and n 296 men, divided into three age groups, as shown in Table 2

Question	Answers and scores			
Is the partner very apprehensive?	Always (3)	Often (2)	Sometimes (1)	Never (0)
Do you feel uncomfortable interacting with groups of people in the absence of your partner?				
Did you give up a career perspective or a course of study because the partner is against it?				
Have you set aside your passions or hobbies because you don't like them from your partner?				
Does the partner belittle your skills and perform certain tasks for you?				
Has the comrade tried to belittle, a person close to you, to distance you from it by making you believe that it is prejudicial, or harmful?				
Do you need to feel the partner incessantly?				
If you were sleeping somewhere far from your partner, would you feel anxiety or panic?				
Do you experience discomfort, agitation to carry out daily activities without the partner?				
Do you suffer from anxiety/panic attacks?				
Do you use substances such as alcohol, narcotics, psycho drugs?				

The homogeneity of the scales was studied on the sample by grouping the data collected on the groups of subjects. It was evaluated by calculating the Cronbach alpha coefficient. For each item the item-total correlation (corrected with the exclusion from the calculation of the item in question) and the value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient that would have been obtained by omitting the item from the scale were calculated. In order to provide normative values for the scales, the mean subscale scores and their standard deviations have been calculated.

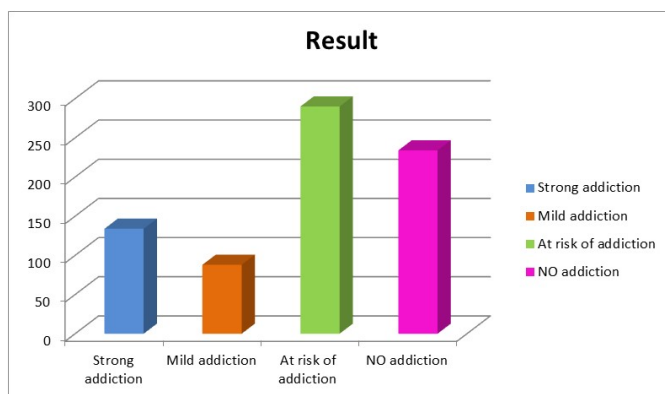
Results

The results show that:

- n 290 subjects (38.87%) were classified as at risk of dependence,
- n 234 (31.37%) no current dependency
- n 134 (17.96%) as employees
- n 88 (11.80%) mild dependence

A considerable portion of the sample is therefore at risk of dependence, a good part, well over 30% has an ongoing dependence, a very serious condition, capable of irreversibly compromising the life prospects of the silent victim.

Knowledge of these characteristics could serve as an ideal viaticum for early identification and treatment of this widespread phenomenon.



The questions studied on the basis of the characteristics of dependent personalities according to the scientific literature, are based on 4 answer options, following nominal characters: always, often, sometimes, never.

The analysis of the proposed questions is as follows:

Are you discouraged in carrying out some activities because according to the partner you are not capable of it and must he carry them out in your place?

Is your beloved/a very apprehensive?

Those who provoke manipulation need instances of devotion, will become the center of the universe and the interests of the companion/ a. It will be able to influence the way the partner sees and hears, each word, or behavior will affect the way he perceives himself. The latter/a will rely completely on the beloved/a for problem solving, or for carrying out simple activities, as if it were indispensable for their own balance. One is willing to give up any freedom, autonomy and emancipation. The strong fear of change is so marked that we remain prisoners of addiction, even though it is a source of affliction

Do you feel uncomfortable interacting with groups of people in the absence of your partner?

Doing without the other, especially in contexts where interactions with friends and not, evokes a condition of discomfort and a sense of inadequacy. There is a gradual tendency to move away from the group, especially if it could call the relationship into question. A typical tendency of dependency relationships is the need to assert oneself by using the presence of the partner.

Has the comrade tried to belittle, a person close to you, to distance you from it by making you believe that it is prejudicial, or harmful?

Obviously the control mechanisms fail if an external subject is able to offer an objective vision of the facts, therefore who pursues such obsessive conducts will tend to isolate the companion/ a and to select the contacts. The relational life will be impoverished, emphasizing the relationship, avoiding any possible risk of a hypothetical abandonment.

Did you give up a career perspective or a course of study because the partner is against it?

Have you set aside your passions or hobbies because you don't like them from your partner/girlfriend?

These two steps highlight once again the need to renounce independence, to set aside passions and even lose awareness of oneself and one's own needs, in order to support the partner. The hypothetical amorous feeling becomes so obsessive that it takes over the individual, leaving him less and less personal spaces.

More and more "doses" of presence and time with the partner are sought. His lack leads to a state of frustration, he feels he exists only when there is another. It is not enough to think about the relationship, we need the presence and the continuous and concrete manifestations.

*If you were sleeping somewhere far from your partner, would you feel anxiety or panic?
Do you experience discomfort, agitation to carry out daily activities without the partner?*

Those who have developed an experienced employee cannot separate themselves from the beloved/ a, if not behind a strong state of anguish. Without it you feel null and deeply uncomfortable, will tend to seek reassurances even at a distance using computer devices, or mobile phones. As mentioned above, it will present difficulties in maintaining a certain autonomy, sensing an unbridgeable sense of emptiness and lack of the other/s. He may even experience a psychophysical discomfort caused by the inability to tolerate the lack, finding real withdrawal symptoms, uncontrollable panic and fear of a definitive abandonment.

Do you suffer from anxiety/panic attacks?

Do you feel a sense of emptiness?

Do you use these substances? Smoking, alcohol, narcotics, psycho-drugs?

Those who suffer from a "love addiction" feel a strong need for the constant presence of the person on whom he totally depends and on whom he invests all his energy. She lives in constant anxiety to lose her and needs constant reassurance

It is common that they exhibit psychosomatic symptoms such as anxiety, panic, depression, sleep and eating disorders, migraines, and emotional instability. In the literature there is also a correlation between emotional dependence and substance abuse, psychotropic, alcoholic, narcotic, tobacco. Thus the subjects find themselves wrapped in a double spiral of dependence on substances and people.

What made you fall in love with your partner?

Typically, physical attraction and sexual drives prevail during the first stage, they turn out to be very marked. To this question the employee will tend to answer that the feeling is born exclusively for the attentions received and above all for the established sense of safety. They satisfy the need to have a relationship at all costs, they are dazzled by false flattery, in a short time can not do without him/her. Characteristic features of the beginning of a morbid relationship.

In-depth analysis: Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of abuse and psychological manipulation agitated against a person in order to make him doubt himself, his perception of reality and his thoughts. It is a form of insidious psychological violence, characterized by false perceptions put in place by the abuser with the aim of placing the victim in a condition of psychological and physical dependence. The aim is to undermine autonomy, the ability to make decisions, to take full control. The person will be devalued with a subtle irony, and then discredit him openly undermining his self-esteem. Intelligence and morality are questioned, also affecting the affective reference points, in order to lead it progressively to isolation. But positive reinforcements can be used as words of affection, praise, nods of esteem, whenever the victim appears on the verge of collapsing or when he complies with his requests.

The manipulator can deny the reality, stating that the victim has a bad memory, or that what he says is the result of his imagination or redirect it to other focus. Gaslighting can be used in different types, these include: family relationships, between parents and children, employment relations, the relationship.

The affective employee puts his life at the service of the partner, but this is not attributable to a loving impulse, but to an obsessive/ morbid state. A dualistic mechanism in which one prevails and the other is subdued to the point of annihilating the ego.

It feeds the illusion of feeling relieved by the relationship of couple, as if it were the only lifeline, isolating from others and going to reproduce a deep depersonalization. Often this condition originates from their own insecurities and fragilities and only accentuates them, feeding a vicious circle that becomes increasingly difficult to break. It is evident that a "love addiction" considerably influences the development of human potential, of any existential expansion, remaining suspended in a kind of limbo, a real alienating experience.

A situation that is not easy to deal with, also because even before facing it it would be necessary to acquire full awareness of it. It happens that the victim, even in the presence of obvious connotations, or unlivable situations, denies himself such status, since acceptance could plunge him into an abyss, or lead him towards a radical change that he strongly fears. Knowledge of these characteristics could serve as an ideal viaticum for early identification and treatment of this widespread phenomenon.

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