

## **PECULIARITIES OF CODEPENDENCY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: TRENDS, PROBLEMS AND RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

У статті розглядається роль феномена співзалежності в освітньому просторі, яке потребує активних суб'єктів, здатних до безперервної освіти. Так як, безперервна освіта стане основним інструментом захисту людей в разі втрати ними роботи та інших змін в трудовому житті. Однією з причин, що перешкоджають формуванню такої «дорослої» позиції є вплив феномена співзалежності, який є особистісно-деформацією представників допомагаючих професій (педагогів, медиків, вихователів, психологів тощо).

Названо основні причини співзалежності у студентів. Серед них: порушення психологічної території в ранньому віці, культурний вплив і ставлення викладачів. Часто, поведінка викладачів підпорядковується драматичному трикутнику Карпмана. Трикутник включає три ролі: переслідувач, рятувальник і жертва, засвоєні в дитинстві. Викладач часто використовує роль Переслідувача, коли вважає себе кращим, сильнішим, розумнішим, ніж інші (студенти). Використання таких ролей в педагогічній діяльності автоматично включає студентів в роль жертв.

Отримані результати дослідження підтверджують наявність співзалежності у студентів. Більшість студентів мають високий рівень співзалежності, що негативно позначиться на їхній професійній діяльності та міжособистісних відносинах в майбутньому. Дослідження не виявило значущих гендерних відмінностей співзалежності у студентів.

**Ключові слова:** *співзалежність, освітній простір, суб'єкт-суб'єктні відносини, драматичний трикутник Карпмана, порушення психологічної території, культурний вплив.*

### **Formulation of the problem**

Educational space is an important subsystem of the society and can provoke changes in this system. The higher is the degree of education autonomy, the stronger is the ability to influence the world around us and the whole society (and its other subsystems), but not to obey the influence. Today, the society is developing rapidly and requires professionals who are capable of continuing education. Thus, the report of the expert group, established by the European Commission, has stated that in the present conditions the change of work will gradually become the norm: a person will have to change professions throughout his working life more than once. Because the continuing education will be a means

of protecting people in case of unemployment and other changes in their working lives.

Continuing education requires systematic getting and updating the skills which are necessary for inclusion into the information society. It must be formed in the subjects of education at all the stages of the learning process. One of the reasons that impede the formation of such an “adult” position is the impact of the phenomenon of codependency. This phenomenon is a personal deformation of representatives of the helping professions (teachers, doctors, educators, psychologists, etc.).

That is why the study of the codependency among the subjects of the educational process is necessary at the moment. However, in spite of the high level of social, scientific, and most importantly practical significance of codependency, there are still no attempts to theoretical generalization of the results and it does not allow to create a complete picture of the formation and development of codependency.

### **Analysis of recent researches and publications**

Codependency can be described as a person’s identifying herself with Another person or Others, violation of private psychological territory as a result of blur of its boundaries. Normally, a person perceives the outside as an external “Me – it’s me, and you it is you” [3]. An External object is placed by a man on the border of his territory, and he wonders what, this figure means for me [2]. When we talk about codependency, the figure is included in his or her own psychological territory, “is assigned to” and evaluation of its place and importance can not be objective because it’s self-assessment. Such obsessive thoughts as “I need to have a man (a woman, a loved and loving child)” is supported by the difficulty of separating from the others because in this case there is a sensation of violation of a person’s integrity, existential vacuum. Concentration on Another person is of the greatest value, so the rest of the needs and interests seem to be of a secondary importance, and life without Another person seems monotonous and useless.

Codependency is considered as a condition close to a disease. The first definition was given by Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse. She said the codependency was a pattern of painful dependence on compulsive behavior and on approval from others in an attempt to find safety, self-worth, and identity [9, p.8]. In some studies, codependency is compared with chemical dependency. In particular, the codependency as an analogue of psychological dependence on psychoactive substances can be traced in the works of L.K. Shaydukovoy [5].

As the most popular definition of codependency scientists often use the one proposed by V.D.Moskalenko: “A Codependent person is a person who is completely absorbed in controlling another person’s behavior, and she/he does not care about satisfaction of their own vital needs” [1].

In other definitions the codependency is given the status of a purely psychological phenomenon. S. Smalley considers violations of a personal identity as the main characteristic of codependency. Codependency is understood in this case as a set of learned behaviors, feelings and beliefs, dependence on the people and events of the external environment, accompanied by such a degree of a person's inattention to herself, that it leaves few opportunities for self-identification [8, p.13-14.].

The absence of a clear definition suggests the need for research focusing on a clearer delimitation of the symptoms which describe codependency. Most scientists proposed different codependency sub-concepts or core defining features. Among them there are such as: low-self, hiding self, external focusing, self-sacrificing, controlling others, and suppressing one's emotions [7].

It is believed that the cause of codependency is a violation of the child's psychological territory during periods of his/her personality development. The authors of the evolutionary approach Jenny Uaynhold and Berry Uaynhold believe that codependency is an acquired disorder which is the result of cessation the development of a child [4].

A child has been completing the fulfillment of his main development tasks since the birth to the age of two or three years old. The most important task of the psychological development during this period is creating trust between a mother and a child. If the creation of basic trust has completed successfully, a child feels safe enough to engage in a study of the external world and to complete his psychological birth. Psychological birth takes place when a child becomes psychologically independent from his mother. The important skill that a child acquires after the successful completion of this development stage is the ability to declare himself and not to expect that someone else will control the child's behavior. The child feeling of his own "I" is developed, it gives him an opportunity of learning to take the responsibility for his actions, share, interact and restrain aggression, recognize the authority of others appropriately, express his feelings in words and cope with fear and anxiety effectively. If this stage has not been completed to the end, a child becomes psychologically dependent on others and does not have his own "I", which could distinguish him among others.

According to J. Uaynhold and B. Uaynhold the stage of psychological birth is not completed in time in 98% of the population. Because parents didn't either complete this stage of development at their time, as a result they can not help their children to do it, and on the contrary, they subconsciously can resist to attempts of their children to pass through this stage [4].

Authors considered that another cause of codependency was cultural influence. They maintained that codependency was a cultural phenomenon, which appeared as a result of the human species'

evolution: “Our whole culture can be called codependent. If we review this problem from a culture perspective, it becomes clear that all the major institutions of our society are based on the dependent behavior. If this behavior remains among the majority of the population in the future, the social structure can be codependent. Modern history of most societies created in such a way shows that certain groups take a higher status in comparison with others, for example, men have the higher status than women, and managers have higher one than workers. The presence of a more powerful group, which controls resources, creates premises for the emergence and support of codependent relationship. However, if people start to change their codependent model, changes will also appear in the larger social structures” [4, p.].

The whole communicative space of codependents (in particular teachers) is subordinated to the Drama Triangle. This is a model of the dysfunctional social interaction created by the psychotherapist Stephen Karpman. The triangle includes such three roles as: Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim which are acquired during childhood. The teacher often uses the role of Persecutor when he or she considers himself better, stronger, smarter than others (students) [6].

The Persecutor uses the dominating style of interaction and it means that he must always be right. The teacher in the role of the Persecutor uses such methods as: intimidation, threats, accusations, giving moralizing lectures, interrogating, and direct attacks. The Rescuer generally tries “to strangle” an initiative in another person to control and manipulate her – “for his own good”. The Rescuers need to feel that they are appreciated. There is no better way to feel important than the role of the Rescuer.

The more teachers rescue, the less responsibility students assume. The less responsibility students take, the more they are rescued, and this is a downward spiral, which often ends in disaster.

Using such roles in the pedagogical activity involves of students automatically into the role of the Victims in which they feel humiliated and, sooner or later they begin to retaliate, turning into the Persecutor. They can not take care of themselves, look at the Rescuer from the bottom up and say: “You are the only one who can help me” and this is what the Rescuer-teacher wants to hear.

It should be noted that the formation of the Victim role occurs because of the influence of settings in childhood. For example, if one of the parents didn’t motivate their children to accept responsibility that was appropriate to their age, after becoming adults, they can feel inadequacy in taking care of themselves or be offended by adults when they get no help.

From our point of view, such interaction is caused by subject-object interactions between all the participants of the pedagogical process. Thus, a student is perceived as the one who has no prospects to rise to

the level of the teacher and he is characterized by a simple hierarchy of needs. Awareness of the significance of codependency relationships in the educational space is closely linked with the implementation of subject-subject relations. This assumes creation of equal participation of students and teachers in the organization of collaborative activities. These relationships form the “pedagogy of cooperation”, “co-management”, “pedagogy of non-violence” and should be leading ones in the practice of educational institutions.

**The purpose** of our empirical study was to examine college students' codependency.

### **Results of the research**

There were two main research questions in the article.

The first one asked if there was a high degree of codependency among college students in the specialty “Social Work”, and the second one asked if there was a significant difference between codependency and gender.

The Experimental base of the research was Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University.

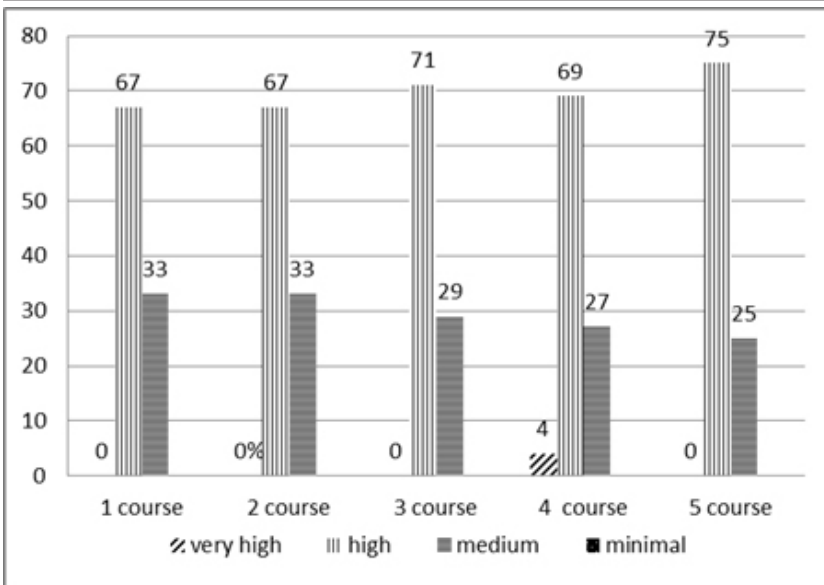
Total 93 college students were interviewed. Among them, 18 students (19%) were males, and 75 (81%) were females. Their middle age was 21 years old. B.K. Weinhold, J.B.Weinhold test was used to determine the degree of codependency.

As we can see in the figure №1, 67% of college students of the 1-st year have a high degree of codependency, and 33% have a medium one. The same results were received in college students of the 2-d year. 71% of college students of the 3-d year have a high degree and 29% have a medium degree of codependency (71%).Whereas 4% of college students of the 4-th year have a very high degree of codependency, 27% have a medium degree, and 69% have a high degree of codependency. College students of the 5-th year have the most indicators on a high degree of codependency (75%) and the least one on a medium degree.

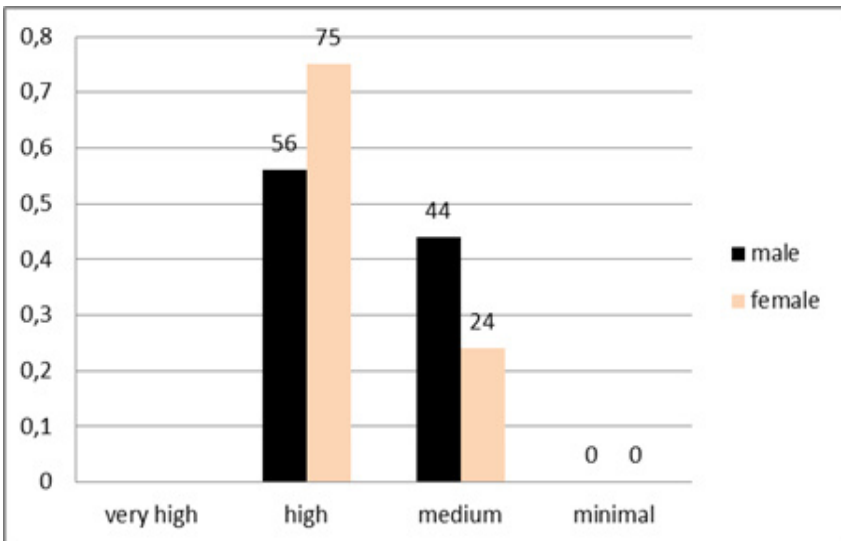
It should be said the number of college students having a high degree of codependency increased steadily among students of all the courses. There is a significant decline in the number of college students who have a medium degree of codependency. And finally a very high degree of codependency has been discovered in the students of the 4-th courses only. For all that, according to our research, only one person has a very high degree.

In this way, the majority of students of the specialty of social work are co-dependent. It means that they will use the role of the Drama Triangle in their work. As a result, their clients will not learn to solve their own problems independently.

Insignificant gender differences in codependency have been found among college students (figure №2).



**Figure 1. Degree of codependency among college students of Social Work specialty, %**



**Figure 2. Comparison of students by level of codependency and gender, %**

75% of female college students had significantly higher codependency scores than males (56%). We can suggest that female college students tend to be more relation-oriented than males. They tend to derive a sense of self and personal meaning through connection and interaction with others. Also, women are traditionally socialized to be nurturing, caring, helpful, and sensitive to the needs of others in our country. Because of this fact women are codependent and the codependency will be associated to them for a long time.

Whereas, 44% of male college students have a medium degree of codependency in comparison with women college students. They have 24% of a medium degree.

### Conclusions

These results confirm the presence of codependency among students of specialty «Social work». The majority of students have a high level of codependency, which will have a negative impact on their professional activity and interpersonal relationships in the future. However, the research hasn't found significant gender differences in codependency in college students.

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**Милушина М.А. Особенности созависимости у студентов: тенденции, проблемы и результаты исследования**

В статье рассматривается роль феномена созависимости в образовательном пространстве, которое нуждается в активных субъектах, способных к непрерывному образованию. Так как, непрерывное образование станет основным инструментом защиты людей в случае потери ими работы и других изменений в их трудовой жизни. Одной из причин, препятствующих формированию такой «взрослой» позиции является влияние феномена созависимости, который является личностной деформацией представителей помогающих профессий (педагогов, медиков, воспитателей, психологов и т.п.).

Названы основные причины созависимости у студентов. Среди них: нарушение психологической территории в раннем возрасте, культурное влияние и отношение преподавателей. Часто, поведение преподавателей подчиняется драматическому треугольнику Карпмана. Треугольник включает три роли: преследователь, спасатель и жертва, усвоенные в детстве. Преподаватель часто использует роль Преследователя, когда считает себя лучше, сильнее, умнее, чем другие (студенты). Использование таких ролей в педагогической деятельности автоматически включает студентов в роль жертв.

Полученные результаты исследования подтверждают наличие созависимости у студентов. Большинство студентов имеют высокий уровень созависимости, что негативно скажется на их профессиональной деятельности и межличностных отношениях в будущем. Исследование не выявило значимых гендерных различий созависимости у студентов.

**Ключевые слова:** созависимость, образовательное пространство, субъект-субъектные отношения, драматический треугольник Карпмана, нарушение психологической территории, культурное влияние.



**Milushina M.A. Peculiarities of codependency among college students: trends, problems and results of the research**

The article considers the role of the codependency phenomenon in the educational space which requires active subjects who are capable of continuing education. Because the continuing education will be a means of protecting people in case of unemployment and other changes in their working lives. One of the reasons that impede the formation of such an “adult” position is the impact of the phenomenon of codependency. This phenomenon is a personal deformation of representatives of the helping professions (teachers, doctors, educators, psychologists, etc.).

The principal causes of codependency among students were mentioned. Among them: a violation of the child’s psychological territory at an early age, cultural influence and attitudes of teachers. Teachers’ behavior is often subordinated to the Karpman Drama Triangle. The triangle includes such three roles as: Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim which are acquired during childhood. The teacher often uses the role of Persecutor when he or she considers himself better, stronger, smarter than others (students). Using such roles in the pedagogical activity involves of students automatically into the role of the Victims.

These results confirm the presence of codependency among students. The majority of them have a high level of codependency, which will have a negative impact on their professional activity and interpersonal relationships in the future. The research hasn’t found significant gender differences in codependency in college students.

**Keywords:** *codependency, educational space, subject-subject interactions, the Karpman Drama Triangle, violation of the psychological territory, cultural influence.*