

Have you experienced codependency?

Can You help?

Research Project: Exploring the lived experiences of the sense self in codependency

A term that covers problems and difficulties faced by people in different areas of their lives (such as mental health, physical health, addiction) under one umbrella is codependency. There is a lot of debate in the academic, clinical and self-help literature in attempts made to define codependency.

The purpose of this research is to raise awareness in public, academic and professional settings about how people who have experienced codependency describe their perceptions about themselves.

The aim of this research project is to explore the following:

- **to explore how people who have experienced codependency view themselves, and feel about themselves**
- **to explore how this way of feeling about themselves has impacted on their relationships, work, actions and behaviours**
- **To identify interventions and support they have accessed that impacted positively on their view of self**

Definitions of codependency:

- Dysfunctional behaviours in intimate relationships in adulthood (especially in relationships with an alcoholic partner)
- Personality disorder
- Addiction (and the root of all addictions)

Theories in the codependency literature: => (they all have the 'self' at their core:

- Attachment theory (Bowlby)
- Intergenerational Family System (Bowen)
- Developmental theories (Erickson and Mahler)

Research on self = gaps: -

Irvine (2000, USA) – self within intimate relationships, ethnographic research (very limited definitions of codependency)

Colcester (2010, Ireland) – phenomenological (thematic analysis) study looking at attachment difficulties in childhood and relational difficulties in adulthood (a MA degree study, codependency defined in relationships)

Bacon (2014, UK) – Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study (self seen as an area of a person's life that codependency is played in)

==> This study: how people perceive themselves is the core of codependency, a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology

Preliminary themes:

Intergenerational trauma (family systems theory)

Adverse childhood experiences linked to codependency

Relationship problems (marriage breakdown, domestic violence)

Addiction (workaholism, food, 'love addiction' drugs and alcohol) – coping strategies

Mental health problems (C-PTSD, PTSD, anxiety, dissociation, depression)

Viewing of self: only in relationship with another (attachment), inner child, identity, parts (Internal family systems)

Not all participants attended 12 steps group →

idea of a JOURNEY in understanding and recovering from codependency?

Different views around interventions around codependency (12 steps and different therapeutic modalities)



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