

Developing a Model of Codependency Based on Addictive Behaviors Among Women in Families Affected by Addiction

Fatemeh. Masoudinia¹, Hossein. Davoudi^{1*}, Fariba. Arjmandi^{2, 3}

¹ Department of Counseling, Khom.C., Islamic Azad University, Khomein, Iran

² Department of Medicine, Na.C., Islamic Azad University, Najafabad, Iran

³ Clinical Research Development Center, Na.C., Islamic Azad University, Najafabad, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: Ho.Davudi@iau.ac.ir

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Hussein OMAR Alkhozahe Professor, Department of Sociology, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Salt, Jordan huss1960@bau.edu.com	Reviewer 1: Nadereh Saadati Department of Couple and Family therapy, Alliant International University, California, United States of America. mdaneshpour@alliant.edu Reviewer 2: Farideh Dokanehi Fard Associate Professor, Counseling Department, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran. Email: f.dokaneifard@riau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The manuscript states that “Because of their emotional, cultural, and caregiving roles, women are especially exposed to psychological harm and often develop codependent patterns.” This claim is central to the rationale for restricting the study population to women, but it is currently presented too categorically. The authors should distinguish between empirically demonstrated gender differences and culturally contingent expectations concerning caregiving and family preservation. The paragraph should explain whether women are assumed to be at greater risk because of gendered socialization, economic dependency, family-role expectations, differential exposure to partners’ addiction, or some combination of these mechanisms. Without this clarification, the gender-specific focus may appear insufficiently justified and potentially essentialist.

In the paragraph defining codependency, the sentence “Codependency refers to a set of maladaptive beliefs and behaviors that develop in close relationships with people experiencing addiction” requires conceptual refinement. Codependency remains a debated construct with variable definitions across clinical, family, and popular psychology literatures, and the manuscript should acknowledge this definitional heterogeneity. The authors should specify whether they conceptualize codependency as a relational pattern, personality configuration, coping style, family adaptation, or multidimensional syndrome. This clarification

is especially important because the study ultimately proposes a model containing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and contextual components; the operational definition in the Introduction should anticipate this multidimensional conceptualization rather than imply that codependency is merely a collection of maladaptive beliefs and behaviors.

The statement that “Qualitative data were initially extracted from books and articles and were subsequently organized and analyzed using interviews with specialists” introduces a documentary component that is insufficiently described. The Methods should specify how documents were identified, what databases were searched, which search terms and eligibility criteria were used, how many sources were screened and retained, and how documentary evidence was integrated with interview data. At present, Table 1 resembles a narrative literature synthesis, but the method used to generate it is not reproducible. If documentary analysis constituted a formal data source, its search and appraisal procedures must be reported systematically; if it merely informed interview development, it should be presented as preparatory literature review rather than primary qualitative data.

The interview protocol requires stronger methodological justification. Table 2 includes questions such as “In your view, does codependency based on addictive behaviors affect differentiation of self?” and equivalent questions for self-esteem, emotional intimacy, and forgiveness. These are leading questions because they presuppose an effect rather than neutrally exploring participants’ perspectives. Such phrasing may have artificially increased the prominence of these constructs in the final model. The authors should acknowledge this risk and, preferably, explain whether neutral follow-up questions were used to permit contradictory or alternative viewpoints. The interview guide should also distinguish exploratory questions from theory-driven probes to demonstrate that the model was not simply predetermined by the study variables.

The manuscript states that data validity was assessed using “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability,” but the procedural implementation of these criteria is not sufficiently documented. The authors should report concrete trustworthiness strategies rather than naming the criteria alone. For credibility, indicate whether member checking, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, or triangulation was used; for dependability, describe the audit trail or coding documentation; for confirmability, explain reflexive procedures or independent review; and for transferability, provide sufficient contextual and participant description. If multiple coders were involved, inter-coder comparison procedures should be reported; if coding was completed by one researcher, the manuscript should explain how interpretive bias was managed.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The Introduction currently includes several constructs—differentiation of self, self-esteem, emotional intimacy, and interpersonal forgiveness—but the rationale for selecting precisely these constructs is insufficiently developed. For example, the paragraph beginning “One important psychological consequence of codependency is its influence on differentiation of self” introduces differentiation convincingly, but the manuscript does not clearly explain why these four variables, rather than other theoretically plausible variables such as attachment insecurity, emotion regulation, family functioning, self-efficacy, or psychological flexibility, were prioritized. The authors should provide an explicit conceptual selection rationale showing how each variable occupies a distinct position in the proposed theoretical architecture and how together they address the identified gap.

The paragraph stating that “The literature review indicates that no previous study has examined the present study’s variables together” should be revised because this is currently an overly broad novelty claim. Demonstrating that no previous study has simultaneously examined all variables does not itself establish a meaningful theoretical gap. The authors should define the actual gap more rigorously—for example, the absence of an integrated, culturally grounded model explaining the causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening mechanisms, strategies, and consequences of codependency among women in addiction-affected families. The novelty statement should therefore shift from simple variable combination to theoretical integration, process explanation, and culturally contextualized model development.

The Research Method section contains a major design inconsistency. It initially states that “The methodology of this study is based on a qualitative approach,” whereas later sections refer to “the quantitative phase of the study, which validated the

model.” This creates ambiguity about whether the study is qualitative, mixed-methods, exploratory sequential, or a qualitative model-development study followed by quantitative validation. The authors must resolve this inconsistency throughout the manuscript. If a quantitative validation phase was conducted, the design should be explicitly identified as an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, and the quantitative sample, instruments, analytic procedures, fit indices, and validation results must be fully reported. If no quantitative phase belongs to the present article, all references to quantitative validation should be removed.

The sampling description requires reconciliation because the manuscript reports different numbers of interview participants. One passage states that “To collect qualitative data, purposive sampling was used to interview 16 university faculty members,” whereas another states that “semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 university faculty members,” and later the findings again report analysis of “16 interviews.” This numerical inconsistency directly affects the credibility and reproducibility of the methodology. The authors should verify the exact sample size, state whether any participant was excluded after interview completion, and ensure that the same number is used consistently in the Abstract, Methods, Findings, tables, Discussion, and saturation statement.

The inclusion criteria also require greater methodological precision. The manuscript states that participants had to hold “a doctoral degree, specialization in psychology or counseling, and at least five years of professional experience,” but elsewhere the sample is described as including psychiatrists, medical specialists, clinical psychologists, and university faculty members. These descriptions are not fully aligned. The authors should provide a transparent participant profile specifying professional discipline, academic qualification, institutional affiliation, years of experience, and expertise in addiction/codependency. It is also important to explain why medical specialists or psychiatrists met criteria originally framed as specialization in psychology or counseling. A participant-characteristics table would improve methodological transparency.

The manuscript repeatedly uses the term “theoretical saturation,” for example in the sentence “Theoretical saturation was reached with the sixteenth interview, after which no new codes were identified.” However, the analytic method is described primarily as qualitative content analysis while the coding procedure uses open, axial, and selective coding derived from grounded theory. The authors need to clarify the epistemological and methodological framework. Theoretical saturation, selective coding, core category identification, and a paradigmatic model are characteristic of grounded theory, particularly the Strauss and Corbin tradition, whereas conventional qualitative content analysis has a different logic and terminology. The authors should either reframe the methodology as grounded theory or clearly justify the hybrid analytic approach and explain how grounded-theory procedures were incorporated into content analysis.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.