

Emotional Dependency And Coping Strategies In Dating Relationships In Peruvian University Students

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Summary

In the specialized literature, the relationship of emotional dependence with dating violence in general has been studied, but few studies have been concerned with relating it to coping strategies, especially in university students, in this sense the research aimed to determine to what extent coping strategies predict emotional dependence in dating relationships. It is a basic study with a non-experimental design of causal correlational scope, the sample was 286 university students of both sexes, the Emotional Dependency Inventory and the BriefCope 28 Coping Scale were applied, according to the results an R of 0.580 was obtained, the R-squared is 0.337 and the adjusted R-squared is 0.334, This is interpreted as a low positive causal correlation between the variables, in addition to significant differences of $0.02 < 0.05$ between men and women, being the first to obtain higher scores in emotional dependence. It is concluded that the strategies used by young people to face various situations, specifically in the field of love, do not necessarily predict emotional dependence on their partner, so it is noteworthy that further research investigates the causal relationship between emotional dependence and self-esteem, self-concept or social skills.

Keywords: emotional dependence, coping strategies, emotion, problems.

Introduction

The way in which dating relationships are handled represents a determining social phenomenon for people, especially when it comes to young people (Marcos et al., 2023). Because youth is characterized as a stage where life projects are developed, the desire to have a job, a home, and form a stable relationship with one's partner appears (Morales, 2020; Molina et al., 2016). In dating relationships, a maladaptive and idealized response of the partner can lead the person to extreme vigilance, emotional control and in most cases can cause dating violence (Moral et al., 2017; Estévez et al., 2017).

In this sense, emotional dependency is a pattern of affective and emotional needs that have not been satisfied and that are intended to be covered in a maladaptive way, exacerbated by craving, which is an intense desire or longing for the other and withdrawal, resulting in insomnia, depression, suspicion, suspicion and somatization for not having one's partner or fear of losing them (López & Moral, 2020; Momeñe et al., 2022a). Other studies have also characterized emotional dependency and it has been found that high levels of emotional dependence are as¹ sociated with low self-esteem, anxiety and impulsivity, being a predictor

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of psychological abuse, humiliation and control, as well as social isolation by their partner or vice versa (Valle & Moral, 2018; Amor et al., 2022).

The demanding response to the partner is associated with coping strategies, because they are a set of skills to interact and resolve the various psychological or social situations of an internal or external nature, which are perceived as a threat to the subject, contain a cognitive and/or behavioral component (Barbé, 2023; Palet, 2023). Therefore, inadequate coping strategies explain why some young university students remain in violent relationships and involved in an affective-dependent style, affecting their psychological well-being and integrity (Momeñe et al., 2021; Villa & Gonzalez, 2019; Fonseca et al., 2021).

In the search for antecedents, some research stands out. Granda & Moral (2022) conducted a study with the aim of analyzing the relationship between emotional dependence, jealousy and cyberviolence in young couples, 263 subjects whose ages ranged from 18 to 30 years participated in the study, among their main findings was a direct and significant relationship between < 0.01 between the variables, finding a greater manifestation of emotional dependence in men. Momeñe et al. (2021) designed a study to analyze the relationship between coping styles, dysfunctional schemas and psychopathological symptoms related to emotional dependence on the aggressor partner, in a sample of 657 women, aged between 18 and 66 years, among the main results is the predominance of desiderative, social isolation and self-criticism, psychopathological symptoms of depression, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity, obsession-compulsion and paranoid ideation, as well as patterns of abandonment and subjugation. Moral & Gonzáles (2020) conducted a study with 241 participants between 16 and 26 years old, finding that 24.89% of the participants have emotional dependence whose most used coping strategies are Social Support, Religion, Denial, Self-blame, Disconnection and Relief, it is concluded that cognitive distortions are part of the psychological profile of people with emotional dependence. Martín & Moral (2018) carried out a research that established the relationship between emotional dependence and psychological abuse in the form of victimization and aggression, in a sample of 396 Spanish adolescents and young people whose ages ranged between 15 and 30 years, among their findings it was found that subjects who have been victims of psychological violence, as well as the aggressors of this type of violence, present greater emotional dependence.

Previous studies (Granda & Moral, 2022; Moral & Gonzales, 2020; Martín & Moral, 2018; Amor et al., 2022; Valler & Moral, 2018) state that emotional dependence and coping strategies are important to understand the mental health of young people, especially in the sentimental field, which presents high levels of emotional dependence predisposes them to get involved in unhealthy and dysfunctional relationships, despite this, few studies have explored the perspective of the university population; However, little is known about how medical students perceive, live and cope with their love relationships, as well as the implications they have on their daily lives. On the other hand, there is limited work on the correlation between coping strategies and emotional dependence in medical students, for this reason the general objective of the research is to determine to what extent coping strategies predict emotional dependence in dating relationships in university students. It was also considered as a specific objective to compare coping strategies and emotional dependence, according to sex.

Theoretical framework

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From the cognitive model of Beck and Freeman in 1995, they refer that the dependent person's conception of himself is helpless, perceiving others as strong and self-confident, has distorted beliefs such as "I am weak and need others" or "I can only function if I have someone by my side", which generates an affect of dysphoria, feeling anxiety about rejection or abandonment, as well as the sadness of losing one's partner (Caro, 2013). Echeburúa and Corral (1999) state that emotional dependence is associated with the first affective experiences, especially with caregivers, which subsequently gives internalized guidelines on how to interact and relate to others throughout life, since from early stages the subject establishes core cognitive schemes about themselves and what surrounds them. Castelló (2005) also adds that emotionally dependent people's early affective experiences have been negative, so they internalize dysfunctional or maladaptive schemes about themselves, so they put into practice in their adult life an extreme affective need for their partner or in their romantic relationships. People who are emotionally dependent are at greater risk of being victims of violence, because they have probably had unmet affective needs in childhood, specifically little care and physical contact with parents and where the maternal figure is inaccessible, indifferent, unavailable and understimulating (Momeñe & Estevéz, 2018). Emotional dependency is an unhealthy demand for affectivity, which seeks through interpersonal bonds the satisfaction of needs or desires for affection with unhealthy devotion, evidencing a pathological attachment to the partner, who becomes their greatest referent, the center of their existence, despite their dissatisfaction with it (Denegri et al., 2022).

People with emotional dependency have a dysfunctional, permanent excessive attachment to their partner, this feeling is related to significant affective deficiencies in childhood and low self-esteem, associated with intolerance to loneliness and a feeling of inner emptiness, which leads to a skewed perception of reality, low self-esteem and difficulty in solving problems autonomously (Amor et al., 2022; Moral & Prieto, 2022). According to a theoretical review, coping strategies aim to deploy cognitive behavioral resources, aimed at emotionally facing an aversive experience and trying to solve a problem (Medina et al., 2023), thus, as long as its strengthening is promoted, the individual will have more opportunities to achieve successful performance in the multiple scenarios of his or her life; on the contrary, their lack represents a risk factor in their development (Molano-Tobar et al., 2021). Coping strategies are categorized under two criteria, problem-centered strategies, which refers to the use of a set of actions to modify or change the situation or try to minimize its effects, and the second, are coping strategies focused on emotions, which fulfill an affective regulatory function, encompassing efforts to deal with or manage discomfort as well as emotional states due to stressful events and that have affected the situation. has been previously evaluated, identifying that nothing can be done to change this situation (Cerquera et al., 2020; Molano-Tobar et al., 2021). Some of them translate into behaviors that represent an imminent risk to people's health and integrity, such as smoking, drinking alcohol excessively, consuming psychoactive substances, or altering sleep and eating cycles (Taborda de Souza, et al., 2020); while others are characterized by assuming attitudes and behaviors oriented towards proactivity, optimism, and reason (Reyes et al., 2020).

Methodology

The study has a quantitative approach, of a basic type that is responsible for providing from the theoretical base the scientific arguments that allow deepening the understanding of the phenomenon of study and with a cross-sectional non-experimental design, so called because its interest is focused on the observation of the variables in their natural state, there is no intervention or manipulation of them. The aim is to study them at a single time. Causal correlational, which is oriented to research that aims to determine the extent to which an independent variable (x) predicts a dependent variable (y) with the support of statistical techniques. In this case, the study looks for the causal relationship between coping

strategies and emotional dependence in dating relationships in a sample of university students.

The study population consisted of 1115 students of the human medicine career of a Private University of Piura from cycle I to cycle XII. The sample consisted of 286 students chosen by simple random probability sampling with an estimation error of 5%. The distribution of the study sample is presented below.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample according to gender

	f	%
Sex		
Female	183	64%
Male	103	36%
Total	286	100%

Note. Own elaboration

Data collection instruments

The data collection instruments were the Emotional Dependency Inventory (IDE), authored by Jesús Joél Aiquipa Tello, designed in 2012 in Lima, aimed at 18-year-old students and used to evaluate people with emotional dependency in the context of their relationship. At the regional level, it was adapted in Piura by Girón and Olaya in 2021. It can be applied individually or collectively, with an approximate time of 20 to 25 minutes and can be applied in both genders. This instrument presents 49 items, distributed in 7 dimensions: fear of compound breakup (9 items), fear and intolerance of loneliness (11 items), priority of the couple (8 items), need for access to the partner (6 items), desire for exclusivity (5 items), subordination and submission (5 items), and desire for control and foundation (5 items); with a Likert response style of 1 to 5, represented by "rarely or never my case", "rarely is my case", "regularly it is my case", "many times it is my case" and "very often or always in my case". Regarding its validity at the local level, an Aiken value of 1.0 was obtained, which is interpreted as valid, i.e. the inventory complies with the standards, a Kaiser-Meyer value was also obtained. Olkin (KMO) of 0.966. Reliability was analyzed using Mac Donald's Omega method, which has a reliability of 0.970, indicating that it is significant.

The BriefCope 28 Coping Scale was also applied, created by Carver, C. in 1997, coming from the United States, BriefCope 28 is designed in a short version of the original of 1989, to later be adapted in Spanish by Consuelo Morán and Dionisio Manga in 1999, Claudia Pita and Randhir Quiroz adapted the instrument in Cajamarca. Peru in 2019. Individuals of both sexes aged 17 and over can be employed individually and collectively for 15 to 20 minutes in the questionnaire format.

It has 28 questions with an alternative of 0= never; 1= sometimes; 2= often; 3 = Always, divided into 2 dimensions and each one has 7 sub-dimensions. The first dimension, problem-focused coping strategies, has the following sub-dimensions: Active Coping (2 and 7), Planning (14 and 25), Positive Reformulation (12 and 17), Acceptance (18 and 28), Humor (20 and 24), Seeking Emotional Support (5 and 16) and Seeking Instrumental Support (10 and 23), while the second dimension, Emotion-focused coping strategies are established by: Renunciation (6 and 15), Self-Distraction (1 and 19), Denial (3 and 8), Religion (22 and 27), Substance Use (4 and 11), Self-Blame (13 and 26) and Emotional Discharge (9 and 21). Each of which belongs to a way of dealing with problems; The scoring of the dimensions and subdimensions is achieved according to the rank and category in which they are found. The BriefCope 28 coping scale showed content and construct validity, by means of a factor analysis, with a reported result of 0.750. and reliability using Cronbach's alpha method, it was shown that the credibility of the second instrument obtains a value of 0.914, which is a very good internal consistency.

Procedures

The application for the application of the instrument was submitted, on the day of the application the informed consent was given to the participants, previously the objective of the evaluation was explained. Participants were asked to answer a screening questionnaire where they were asked if they were currently in a dating relationship for at least three months, those who answered affirmative, were applied the two instruments through virtual format (link) whose answers were automatically recorded in a data sheet, for later statistical analysis.

Data analysis

The data were processed through Microsoft Excel 2018 and the SPSS statistical package in its version 29, the responses were transferred to a database, the name of the variable and the measurement scale of each one were assigned. Next, a normality test was applied, finding that the data differ from normality, therefore, non-parametric statistics were applied applying Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient and simple linear regression. The research considered the following ethical aspects: respect for people, provision of informed consent, confidentiality, authenticity, originality and transparency according to the guidelines of APA Standards in its seventh edition.

Results

Next, the results of the research are explained based on the proposed objective. Table 2 shows an analysis of the relationships between the variables coping strategies and emotional dependence, followed by details of the values obtained in the linear regression process of the data obtained.

Table 2 Relationship Between Coping Strategies and Emotional Dependency

			Coping Strategies	Problem-Focused Strategies	Emotion-Focused Strategies
Spearman's Rho	Emotional dependency	Correlation coefficient	0.527	0.531	0.501
		Follow-up (bilateral)	0.001	0.001	0.001
		N	286	286	286

Note. Own elaboration

As can be seen in Table 1, emotional dependence has a direct relationship with coping strategies at a general level and by dimensions because the significance is less than 0.05; Overall, a moderate intensity ratio of 0.527 was found.

Table 3 Comparison of Gender Means Between Coping Strategies and Emotional Dependency

Variable	Sex	N	Stocking	Standard deviation	p
Coping Strategies	Female	183	70.016	16.907	0.218
	Male	103	67.312	15.628	
Emotional dependency	Female	183	105.858	55.753	0.020
	Male	103	114.660	46.573	

Note. Own elaboration

Table 3 shows that there is a significance value of $0.218 > 0.05$ in coping strategies between the sexes, therefore, there are no significant differences. On the other hand, in emotional

dependence, it is verified that there is a difference of 9 points between the sexes and the significance value is $0.020 < 0.05$, which is interpreted as significant, so it is interpreted that, in the group of respondents, male students present a greater tendency towards emotional dependence.

Table 4 Overview of the model between coping strategies and emotional dependency

Model Overview				
Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted squared	R-Standard Estimation Error
1	0.580A	0.337	0.334	43.01078

a. Predictors: (Constant), Coping Strategies

Table 4 shows the summary of the statistical processes of the R, specifically obtaining an R of 0.580, the R-squared is 0.337 and the adjusted R-squared is 0.334, which is interpreted as a low positive causal correlation between the variables. From the above, coping strategies constitute a moderate predictor of emotional dependence in this group of university students.

Table 5 Data variance

ANOVAa					
Model		Sum of squares	Gl	Quadratic meanF	Gis.
1	Regression	266704.342	1	266704.342	144.170 <.001B
	Residue	525379.435	284	1849.928	
	Total	792083.776	285		

to. Dependent variable: Emotional dependency

b. Predictors: (Constant), Coping Strategies

Table 5 shows the level of significance of the regressions between coping strategies and emotional dependence, showing that the p-value is .001, which is highly significant, lower than the alpha value of 0.05. Based on these linear regression findings, emotional dependence is placed as a dependent variable.

Table 6 Summary of Coping Strategies and Emotional Dependency Coefficients

Coefficienta						
Model		Coefficients no Standardized		Coefficients Standardized	t	p
		Desv. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	10.994	-19.402		-1.765	0.079
	Coping Strategies	0.155	1.857	0.580	12.007	<.001

to. Dependent variable: Emotional dependency

Table 6 shows that the coefficient of the whole constant has values of $0.079 > 0.05$, which does not make it significant, while coping strategies have values of 0.001, which is lower than 0.05, which makes it highly significant. Taking into account the results, it can be said that coping strategies do not significantly predict emotional dependence in this group of

university students. In this way, manipulating the independent variable will not generate modifications in the dependent variable.

Discussion

Through the results, the main objective was achieved, to determine to what extent the coping strategies predict emotional dependence in dating relationships in university students, finding that among the variables there is a statistical relationship with moderate intensity $\rho = 0.52$ with a $p < 0.01$ that is very significant, however, the linear regression shows that the coping strategies explain only 0.33 of the emotional dependence. interpreting that although both variables are related, at a predictive level, inadequate coping strategies only explain part of emotional dependence, now, although there is no literature that analyzes the causal relationship between coping strategies and emotional dependence in young medical students, the findings are similar to the study by Moral & Gonzáles (2020) that determined a significant relationship between emotional dependence where Emotionally people tend to employ coping strategies, such as social support, self-denial, religion, venting, and disconnection. Also with the work of Granda & Moral (2022) who found a relationship between emotional dependence and jealousy in young people between 18 and 30 years old. As a final background, Moral et al. (2017) determined that dependency is related to dating violence, as well as low self-esteem, which is linked to the perception of oneself and the image one projects of oneself to others. All these antecedents agree that there are three factors that predispose a person to develop emotional dependence, among them are coping strategies, dysfunctional schemes and psychopathological symptomatology, this is supported by Beck and Freeman that the emotionally dependent person, their affective need is rooted in dysfunctional beliefs that they have in relation to their ability to face various problems of a personal and social nature, but this weak conception of oneself does not only depend on the core cognitive schemes, but also on facts that marked the first experiences of care, internalized in childhood and that are transferred to the person in adult life, coming to feel handicapped with affective need for protection by their caregiver, which in this case the partner (Echeburúa and Corral, 1999). Therefore, emotionally dependent people have incorporated dysfunctional and maladaptive schemes about their abilities and their assertive response in their sentimental relationships, they have a dysfunctional, permanent excessive attachment to the partner, this feeling is related to significant affective deficiencies in childhood that have affected self-esteem, associated with intolerance to loneliness and a feeling of inner emptiness. which leads to a skewed perception of reality, low self-esteem, and difficulty solving problems autonomously (Amor et al., 2022; Moral & Prieto, 2022).

It has been found that from the perception of young people, the high levels of emotional dependence in dating relationships is not necessarily caused by their coping strategies and although they have low self-esteem, anxiety and impulsivity, all these situations expose them to being victims of violence, their unhealthy demand for affectivity, they seek it through interpersonal bonds, the satisfaction of needs or desires for affection with unhealthy devotion, evidencing a pathological attachment to the partner, who becomes their greatest reference, the center of their existence, despite their dissatisfaction with them (Denegri et al., 2022, Momeñe & Estevéz, 2018; Valle & Moral, 2018; Amor et al., 2022). Affective dependent relationships are related to coping strategies, but they are not necessarily the only cause, this may be the product of a deficit in the set of skills to interact and resolve the various psychological or social situations of an internal or external nature, which are perceived as a threat to the subject, contain a cognitive and/or behavioral component, that does not lead them to emotionally face an aversive experience and try to solve a problem, since young people with more coping strategies can emotionally face an aversive experience and try to solve a problem satisfactorily (Ilmi et al., 2023; Medina et al., 2023, Barbé, 2023; Palet, 2023). In this way, young university students may have emotional dependence, but this will not necessarily affect their opportunities to achieve successful performance in the multiple scenarios of their lives, including the academic field (Molano-Tobar et al., 2021). Under the above, coping strategies are behaviors associated with health and integrity at a global level, which are characterized by assuming attitudes

and behaviors oriented to reason and are linked to various scenarios of a psychological and social nature, on the other hand, emotional dependence, is a pattern of affective and emotional needs that have not been satisfied and that are wanted to be covered in a maladaptive way. limited exclusively to the sphere of the couple or sentimental relationships, which is why it does not necessarily make it a variable dependent on coping strategies.

Conclusions

Significant relationships with moderate intensity were found between emotional dependence and coping strategies, as well as problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies, and males had a higher score in emotional dependence. However, the strategies that young people use to deal with various situations, specifically in the field of love, do not necessarily predict emotional dependence on their partner. Similar studies are not evident in the regional literature, therefore, the usefulness lies in the demystification that coping strategies are the cause of emotional dependence in dating relationships in young people, so it is presumed that it can be explained by other problems such as low self-esteem, poor self-concept or deficit in the development of their social skills.

Although the research used simple random probability sampling, some of the limitations of this study are raised, among them is the unequal sample distribution of men and women. In addition, data such as age, educational cycle and sexual orientation were not considered, so we must be cautious in relation to the interpretation of the conclusions that can be drawn. In short, despite the limitations, the study is useful because it has been able to understand that emotional dependence is not necessarily associated with coping strategies, since the cognitive and behavioral component used by young people favors adaptation to various contexts and demands of the environment, and is not exclusive to their dating relationships.

Based on the results obtained, in which it is confirmed that emotional dependence is not the cause of coping strategies, it is advocated that future works in the national context implement more studies of this nature with university students including other variables such as self-esteem, attachment, self-concept, social skills and assertiveness, as well as universities to include socio-educational actions. both individually and as a group, through which assertive communication styles, problem solving and critical thinking about healthy dating relationships with the couple are enhanced.

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