

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCE ON THE AGGRESSOR PARTNER AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL ANXIETY, FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AND DYSFUNCTIONAL PERFECTIONISM

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were to evaluate the relationship between emotional dependence and social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and dysfunctional perfectionism, as well as its mediating role in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences and physical violence received from the partner. A total of 258 people (77.1% female) aged 18-67 years ($M= 32.63$, $SD= 11.66$) participated. The findings suggested that emotional dependence was positively associated with intimate partner violence received, social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and dysfunctional perfectionism. In turn, intimate partner violence received was positively associated with dysfunctional perfectionism. Emotional dependence explained 16.55% of the relationship between perfectionist parental influences, referring to the perception of openly critical parental figures with high expectations, and the permanence in physically violent intimate partner relationships. In conclusion, the need to investigate and include these factors in psychological interventions aimed at treating both problems such as emotional dependence and permanence in violent relationships is mentioned.

KEY WORDS: *emotional dependence, violence, social anxiety, negative evaluation, perfectionism.*

Resumen

Los objetivos del estudio fueron evaluar la relación entre la dependencia emocional y la ansiedad social, el miedo a la evaluación negativa y el perfeccionismo disfuncional, así como su papel mediador en la relación entre las influencias paternas perfeccionistas y la violencia física recibida por parte de la pareja. Participaron 258 personas (77,1% mujeres) de entre 18 y 67 años ($M= 32,63$; $DT= 11,66$). Los hallazgos sugirieron que la dependencia emocional estaba positivamente asociada a la violencia de pareja recibida, ansiedad social, miedo a la evaluación negativa y perfeccionismo disfuncional. A su vez, la violencia de pareja recibida estaba positivamente asociada al perfeccionismo disfuncional. La dependencia emocional explicó el 16,55% de la relación entre las influencias paternas perfeccionistas, referidas a la percepción de las figuras parentales abiertamente críticas y con expectativas elevadas y la permanencia en relaciones de pareja violentas físicamente. En conclusión, se menciona la necesidad de investigar

e incluir estos factores en las intervenciones psicológicas dirigidas a tratar ambas problemáticas como son la dependencia emocional y la permanencia en relaciones violentas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *dependencia emocional, violencia, ansiedad social, evaluación negativa, perfeccionismo.*

Introduction

Emotional dependence is defined as an extreme need for affection and continuous and excessive contact from a partner (Momeñe et al., 2017; Moral et al., 2018) that leads them to establish asphyxiating (Markez, 2015), pathological and severely unbalanced relationships (Castelló, 2012). They are characterised by constant and excessive demands for affection, love (Moral et al., 2018), attention and closeness (Izquierdo & Gómez-Acosta, 2013) that are never enough to calm the anxiety they feel (Lemos & Londoño, 2007). The aetiology lies in early affective deficiencies (Valle & Moral, 2018) that they try to cover or compensate for in a maladaptive way through the partner (Urbiola et al., 2017): lack of support, lack of self-acceptance and low self-esteem (Skvortsova & Shumskiy, 2014). In this way, emotionally dependent people need their partner to face life, feel complete and fill the emotional void they feel (Markez, 2015), which generates an intense and constant fear of abandonment (Castelló, 2019), loneliness (Sirvent & Moral, 2018), rejection, not being loved and feeling less of a priority. Therefore, they place their partner in a priority position in their lives (Castelló, 2019), idealising her and assuming a subordinate and submissive role towards her (Castelló, 2012), which often generates a sense of loss of identity (Urbiola et al., 2014) and freedom, which in turn leads to sudden emotional swings and negative feelings (Skvortsova & Shumskiy, 2014). In order to avoid any kind of distancing, they use a wide range of retentive strategies (Riso, 2014).

Emotional dependence has been mentioned as one of the factors involved in the permanence of violent relationships (Momeñe et al., 2017) as it would make it difficult to break up (Urbiola et al., 2014). Related to this, recent studies have mentioned a greater emotional dependence in people who suffer intimate partner violence (Huerta et al., 2016; Martín & Moral, 2019; Moral et al., 2017). It is common for them to mention that they are still in love despite the severity of the violence they have received (Castelló, 2005). Moreover, they experience greater suffering at the end of the relationship than while remaining in it, which would explain their inability to break it off (Skvortsova & Shumskiy, 2014).

With regard to the social sphere, people with emotional dependence have dysfunctional patterns of emotional and behavioural interaction with others. They frequently decide to isolate themselves socially in order to devote themselves completely to their partner, they are more comfortable in small groups of people and have great difficulty behaving assertively, expressing their thoughts, interests and opinions and dealing with the aggressions they receive from their partner due to their great vulnerability to rejection and intense fear of abandonment (Castelló, 2005, 2019).

In recent years, the study of social anxiety has acquired great relevance due to its high prevalence (Moran et al., 2018) and the negative repercussions and interference that social interaction difficulties entail in all the main areas of daily life and in people's psychological well-being (Alcántara-Jiménez & García-López, 2017; Blöte et al., 2015; Morán et al., 2019). Social anxiety consists of a manifestation of intense, constant and disproportionate fear of specific or general social situations in which the person feels negatively evaluated based on their performance or the anxiety symptoms they show, thus trying to avoid them, ultimately impairing the ability to relate to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Fernández-Sogorb et al., 2018). They tend to present a greater number of negative thoughts and interpretative biases in threatening social contexts (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2016; Schlier et al., 2016) and show a predisposition to be easily persuaded (Castro et al., 2018). Furthermore, two of the key characteristics considered as risk factors for social anxiety are intense fear of being negatively evaluated (Birk et al., 2019; Brook & Willoughby, 2019) and dysfunctional perfectionism (Abdollahi, 2019; Levinson et al., 2015).

Individuals who exhibit maladaptive perfectionistic personality traits are more likely to manifest problems in interpersonal relationships (Dimaggio et al., 2018), social phobia (Papadomarkaki & Portinou, 2012) and sensitivity to interpersonal rejection (Mohammadian et al., 2018). They consider that none of the actions taken are good enough to achieve their high and unrealistic performance standards and personal goals. Therefore, they interpret failure as a sign of personal inadequacy, impacting on their own self-worth and generating negative automatic thoughts and feelings of failure and psychological distress. This extreme need to achieve the highest level of performance could be related to a search for overvaluation, admiration and approval from others that would be aimed at filling emotional gaps related to feelings of self-love and self-worth (Helguera & Oros, 2018; Papadomarkaki & Portinou, 2012). Previous studies have found that dependent people and people who remain in violent relationships employ dysfunctional coping styles based on self-criticism (Momeñe et al., 2021). Moreover, both problems tend to blame themselves for everything negative that happens around them (Echeburúa et al., 2001; Moral-Jiménez & González-Sáez, 2020) and their origin lies in the insecure attachment established in childhood through the interactions carried out with parents, specifically in the anxious-ambivalent attachment that is characterised by perceiving an ambivalence in the behaviour of their parental figures, sometimes showing themselves to be cold, distant, demanding, punitive and authoritarian, while at other times they are warm, close and affectionate (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Related to this, perfectionistic and demanding parents with high standards for their children have been found to influence the perfectionistic traits acquired by their children (Patock-Peckham & Corbin, 2019). In addition, this anxious-ambivalent attachment style acquired in childhood, in turn, generates early dysfunctional schemas or core beliefs based on the need to act in a perfectionistic manner and avoid making mistakes in order to be accepted by others (Huerta et al., 2016).

Consequently, to the authors' knowledge, there are no previous studies that have analysed the relationship between social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation

and dysfunctional perfectionism in people with emotional dependence towards their partner. There are also no studies that have analysed the involvement of emotional dependence in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences and intimate partner physical violence. As can be seen, its study is relevant as it could explain and promote a greater understanding of certain manifestations or behaviours carried out by people with emotional dependence in the social sphere. In addition, it would allow us to know whether it is an underlying mechanism through which perfectionist parental influences lead to the permanence of violent relationships. The underlying hypotheses are, firstly, that social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and dysfunctional perfectionism could explain certain behavioural patterns characteristic of dependent people and, secondly, that emotional dependence towards the partner could explain part of the relationship between perfectionist parental influences and the permanence in physically violent partner relationships. Thus, the aims of the study are to analyse the relationships between the study variables, as well as to assess the mediating role of emotional dependence in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences and physical violence received from the partner.

Method

Participants

258 people participated, of whom 77.1% were female and 22.9% male. The age range was 18 to 67 years ($M= 32.63$, $SD= 11.66$). Spanish-born participants predominated, accounting for 88% of the participants. In terms of educational level, 76.4% were studying or had studied at university, 19.4% at vocational training and 4.3% at primary school. Regarding sexual orientation, 83.7% defined themselves as heterosexual, 13.2% as bisexual, 2.3% as homosexual and .8% as other. In addition, 77.5% had a partner at the time of their participation in the study.

Instruments

- a) *Emotional Dependence Questionnaire* (CDE; Lemos & Londoño, 2006). The CDE assesses emotional dependence towards the partner by means of 23 items divided into 6 factors: *Separation anxiety*, aimed at assessing emotional expressions of the fear produced by the possible break-up of the relationship; *affective expression*, assesses the need to receive constant displays of affection from the partner to reaffirm the love they feel for each other and to calm the feeling of insecurity; *modification of plans*, referring to the change of activities, plans and behaviours due to implicit or explicit desires to satisfy the partner or in order to share more time with them; *fear of loneliness*, referring to the fear of not having a relationship with a partner or not feeling loved; *borderline expression*, assesses impulsive actions or expressions of self-aggression in the face of a possible break-up of a relationship, perceived as catastrophic as it implies a confrontation with loneliness and the loss of meaning in life; *attention seeking*, refers to the active search for attention by the partner to ensure their

permanence in the relationship and to try to be the centre of attention in the partner's life. The response format is Likert-type with 6 response alternatives ranging from 1 ("Completely untrue of me") to 6 ("Describes me perfectly"). In the present study, the global scale of *emotional dependence* will be used. The questionnaire presents good internal consistency, obtaining a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93 (Lemos & Londoño, 2006). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the global scale was .95.

- b) *Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults* (SAQ-A30; Caballo et al., 2010; 2012). The SAQ-A30 assesses social anxiety, i.e., the degree of discomfort, tension or nervousness produced by social interaction in different situations through 30 items grouped into 5 dimensions: *public speaking/interaction with people in authority; interaction with strangers; interaction with attractive person; assertive expression of annoyance, displeasure or anger; being embarrassed or ridiculed*. Each dimension consists of 6 items. The response format is Likert-type with five response alternatives ranging from 1 ("Not at all or very little discomfort, tension or nervousness") to 5 ("A lot or very much discomfort, tension or nervousness"). The overall questionnaire shows good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91 (Caballo et al., 2010). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the global scale was .93.
- c) *Brief version of the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale* (BFNE; Leary, 1983), Spanish version validated by Gallego et al., (2007). The BFNE assesses the degree to which a person fears being negatively evaluated or judged by others. It consists of 12 items with a 5-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 ("Not at all characteristic of me") to 5 ("Extremely characteristic of me"). The overall scale shows good internal consistency, obtaining a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90 (Gallego et al., 2007). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .70.
- d) *Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale* (MPS; Frost et al., 1990), Spanish version by Carrasco et al., (2010). The MPS consists of 35 items grouped into 4 factors: *fear of mistakes*, aimed at assessing excessive concern about mistakes and failure in different areas of life, as well as, the tendency to doubt excessively about the quality of one's own performance; *parental influences*, referring to the perception that one's own parents have high expectations of one and the perception of one's own parents as openly critical; *achievement expectations*, referring to the tendency to set oneself excessively high goals and to give excessive weight to them in self-evaluation; *organisation*, aimed at assessing the emphasis on the importance of order and organisation. The overall scale showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .93 (Carrasco et al., 2010). In the present study Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93 for the global scale.

Procedure

This was a quantitative, cross-sectional study. It was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles set out in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). All participants signed an informed consent form prior to participation in the study.

Data collection was carried out online using the snowball method through different social networks. In order to participate in the study independently, participants were provided with a link that included socio-demographic data and questionnaires selected for the study. This was preceded by a section explaining the general characteristics of the study: objectives, inclusion criteria: being over 18 years old and having had at least one relationship, duration, voluntariness and anonymity, importance of sincerity when answering the questions posed, contact to resolve possible doubts or make comments, etc.

Data analysis

First, the associations between the variables were analysed using Pearson's correlation analysis (r). Secondly, once the relationships between the variables were verified, the mediating role of emotional dependence in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences and physical violence received from the partner was analysed. Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013), which estimates direct effects, indirect effects, standard errors and confidence intervals based on the bootstrapped distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The bootstrapping for indirect effects was determined at 5000, the confidence level for the confidence intervals was set at 95% and the significance level used was $p < .05$. The indirect effect is significant when the confidence interval does not include the value 0. According to Hayes (2013), this process is considered appropriate for estimating spillover effects that do not usually have a normal distribution. The data were analysed using SPSS version 22.0.

Results

Correlational analyses (Table 1) revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between emotional dependence and physical and psychological violence received, social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and dysfunctional perfectionism. Regarding the subscales of social anxiety, emotional dependence was most strongly related to difficulty in assertively expressing annoyance, displeasure or anger ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), interaction with strangers ($r = .35$, $p < .001$) and being embarrassed or ridiculed ($r = .34$, $p < .001$). Likewise, in relation to the subscales of dysfunctional perfectionism, the relationship between emotional dependence and fear of making mistakes predominated ($r = .47$; $p < .001$).

Physical and psychological violence received from a partner were positively and statistically significantly related to dysfunctional perfectionism. In physical violence, the relationship with the subscale of parental influences predominated ($r = .28$; $p < .001$), while in psychological violence, fear of making mistakes ($r = .22$; $p < .001$) and parental influences ($r = .22$; $p < .001$).

Next, the mediating role of emotional dependence on the partner (M) in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences (X) and staying in physically violent relationships (Y) was tested.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations between the study variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional dependence	56.59	25.45	--				
2. Social anxiety	90.46	21.63	.35**	--			
3. Fear of negative evaluation	36.83	9.79	.35**	.61**	--		
4. Dysfunctional perfectionism	69.02	22.03	.47**	.42**	.47**	--	
5. Physical violence	4.43	10.72	.36**	.05	.04	.24**	
6. Psychological violence	11.40	11.89	.46**	.04	.06	.24**	.75**

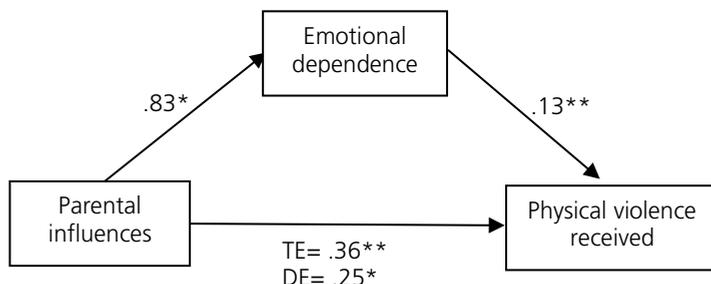
Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$.

As shown in the model (Figure 1), perfectionistic parental influences explained part of the emotional dependence towards the partner ($B = .83$; $t = 4.53$; $p = .00$; $SE = .18$; $LLCI = .47$; $ULCI = 1.19$) and emotional dependence towards the partner explained the physical violence received from the partner ($B = .13$; $t = 5.18$; $p = .00$; $SE = .02$; $LLCI = .08$; $ULCI = .18$). In relation to the total effect, it was found that perfectionistic parental influences explained the physical intimate partner violence received ($B = .36$; $t = 4.65$; $p = .00$; $SE = .08$; $LLCI = .21$; $ULCI = .51$) and as indicated by the direct effect, when emotional dependence was introduced as a mediating variable, this relationship remained significant ($B = .25$; $t = 3.28$; $p = .001$; $SE = .08$; $LLCI = .10$; $ULCI = .40$). The indirect effect test based on the Bootstrap procedure was significant and suggested that perfectionist paternal influences lead through emotional dependence on the partner to physical violence received ($B = .11$; $t = 3.28$; $p = .00$; $SE = .08$; $LLCI = .04$; $ULCI = .19$). Regarding the type of mediation, the results showed that there is no full mediation in the model because the direct effect of perfectionistic parental influences on physical violence received from the partner does not disappear and remains significant after introducing emotional dependence towards the partner into the model as a mediating variable. However, the relationship between the variables is reduced, which is evidence of partial and significant mediation in the model. In addition, indirect and direct effects were significant ($p < .05$), confirming partial mediation. The Sobel test shows that the partial mediation effect described in the model was statistically significant ($z = 3.76$ $p < .00$), which can also be demonstrated by testing the associated confidence interval (.04-.19), confirming that the effect of perfectionistic parental influences on staying in physically violent relationships can be explained by emotional dependence on the partner. This mediation model explains 16.55% of the variance in physical violence received.

In summary, the results showed that emotional dependence on the partner acted as a mediating variable in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences, referring to the perception of overtly critical parental figures with high expectations, and staying in physically violent relationships.

Figure 1

Analysis of the mediating effect of emotional dependence on the relationship between critical and demanding parental influences and staying in physically violent relationships



Notes: TE= Total effect; DE= Direct effect. Model summary: $R^2 = .27$; $F = 20.50$; $p = .00$; Indirect effect= .11; $SE = .04$; $BootLLCI = .04$; $BootULCI = .19$. ** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$.

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the study variables. The results provided evidence of the relationship between emotional dependence and intimate partner violence. These results are consistent with previous studies (Huerta et al., 2016; Martín & Moral, 2019; Momeñe & Estévez, 2018). Likewise, the results found a relationship between emotional dependence and social anxiety, with a predominance of difficulties in assertively expressing annoyance, displeasure or anger, interacting with strangers and being embarrassed or ridiculed. In this regard, previous studies, although not focused on couples, have pointed out that high dependence and self-criticism and low self-esteem and self-efficacy were present in social anxiety disorder (Caballo et al., 2018; lancu et al., 2015). In relation to this, it has been mentioned that people with emotional dependence manifest desires for exclusivity towards partners and significant others. Because of this, the social sphere is often quite affected due to the fact that they tend to isolate themselves from their surroundings when they establish a relationship in order to devote themselves completely to it and demand that their partner does the same. In this sense, social relationships are very limited, and they may even relate on many occasions only with the person on whom they depend. They also tend to avoid relating to large groups of friends, feeling more comfortable interacting with only one person. Consequently, they show excessive absorption and feelings of possession towards their partner. They also show deficits in social skills and lack of assertiveness, which translates into difficulties in expressing their opinions or needs, asserting their rights and dealing with humiliation and contempt exercised by their partners (Castelló, 2005).

On the other hand, the present study found a relationship between emotional dependence and fear of negative evaluation. These results could be explained by the need for approval and guidance from others that people with emotional dependence show. This is because they perceive themselves as incapable, ineffective and helpless. Thus, they feel great anxiety and fear in situations that require

evaluation by others (Bornstein, 2005) and fear of being rejected (Castelló, 2019). In addition, people with emotional dependence show a great need to be liked and to obtain the approval of others (Castelló, 2012). This could be due to the fact that people with emotional dependence are dominated by an early dysfunctional schema of seeking recognition and approval originating in childhood and maintained into adulthood. People with this schema have an excessive search for approval, attention, recognition and admiration from others, as well as hypersensitivity to rejection and criticism because their self-esteem is determined by the opinions of others (Young et al., 2013). Another explanation could be based on attachment theory, which stipulates that insecure attachment is implicated in the development of emotional dependence (Hernández, 2017; Momeñe & Estévez, 2018) and in the development of the need for approval and fear of rejection (Melero & Cantero, 2008). In criterion 3 of the DSM 5 (APA, 2014) on dependent personality disorders, it mentions difficulties in expressing disagreement, especially to people on whom they depend due to fear of losing their support or approval. Thus, they tend to agree even with situations that they do not consider to be right.

Likewise, the data obtained suggest that emotional dependence and physical and psychological violence received from the partner increase in parallel with dysfunctional perfectionism, highlighting the fear of making mistakes and perfectionist parental influences. These results could be explained by the fact that, in a study carried out by Huerta et al., (2016), they found the presence of early dysfunctional schemas of negativity or pessimism, unattainable standards or goals and self-punishing in people with emotional dependence and in people who remained in violent relationships. The first schema refers to an exaggerated fear of making mistakes because of the negative consequences, such as loss, humiliation or being trapped in an unwanted situation. The second schema involves the belief that it is necessary to work hard in order to achieve great accomplishments that meet their high internal standards. Therefore, they consider it important to behave in a way that is considered perfect and they set very high goals for themselves and others. Also, people with this schema have difficulties in slowing down, a need to achieve higher and higher goals, a tendency towards perfectionism and very rigid rules and shoulds in various areas of life. The third schema encompasses beliefs that mistakes should be punished harshly. This would be related to their great inability to allow imperfection (Young et al., 2013). In this line, it has been mentioned how people with emotional dependence adopt a submissive or complacent role in the relationship, are excessively obedient and try by all means to avoid arguments or making mistakes as this could threaten the stability of the relationship (Izquierdo & Gómez-Acosta, 2013; Markez, 2015; Riso, 2014). This gives them a great sense of security as they feel they can control the continuity of the relationship (Castelló, 2005, 2012). In addition, they tend to blame and criticise themselves for everything that happens around them (Moral-Jiménez & González-Sáez, 2020). For their part, Lemos and Londoño (2007) found beliefs based on "shoulds" in people with emotional dependence towards their partner. This belief implies the maintenance of rigid and demanding rules or norms about how events should occur, with any deviation being unbearable.

The second aim of the study was to analyse the mediating role of emotional dependence in the relationship between perfectionistic parental influences and staying in physically violent relationships. The results showed that the perception of one's own parents as overly critical and with high expectations was statistically significantly related to the physical violence received by the partner and the emotional dependence explained by the relationship. These results could be explained by the fact that the interactions and the quality and type of bond established during the first years of life with parents is internalised and will influence the construction of the personality, the way we relate to others, the choice, quality and type of partner relationship established in adulthood (Alonso-Arbiol et al., 2002; Barroso, 2014; Feeney & Noller, 2001). In this regard, it has been mentioned that parents of people with emotional dependence tend to exercise controlling behaviours (Mestre, 2014) and to employ rigid or authoritarian parenting styles (Agudelo & Gómez, 2010). This parenting style would give rise to feelings of ineffectiveness, weakness (Bornstein, 2005) and low self-esteem (Glozah, 2014). Another explanation could again be based on early dysfunctional schemas present in emotionally dependent people and in people who remain in violent relationships related to the need to achieve success in order to be accepted by others. In addition, they believe that it is necessary to satisfy their own goals and expectations in a rigid way and to behave in a way they consider ethical and perfect at the expense of their own happiness or health. Families of origin tend to be demanding and punitive in relation to non-achievement and place excessive value on perfectionism and the avoidance of mistakes (Young et al., 2013). In relation to staying in violent relationships, previous studies have found a greater presence of irrational ideas associated with the need to be perfect in everything (Jurado & Rascón, 2011). Amor et al., (2006), for their part, state that these beliefs together with family pressures, feelings of low self-esteem and emotional dependence would explain the permanence in violent relationships. Along these lines, the beliefs transmitted by parents are related to their personal value and what they can or cannot expect from others. They may be based on the idea that love is forever and on the need to behave in a demanding way and as one considers perfect, so that acknowledging that they are being mistreated means assuming a failure in their relationship that would lead to greater humiliation, more external censure and disapproval from the environment, especially on the part of perfectionist, demanding and critical parents. This reinforces isolation and reduces the possibility of receiving the necessary support to confront the process of violence, which maintains the abusive situation (Miracco et al., 2010). In addition, it has been found that people who remain in violent relationships have beliefs related to being deserving of criticism by feeling incompetent, guilty for everything that happens around them (Navarro & Albán, 2014) and provoking violent acts. These feelings of guilt are induced by their partners to get them to adopt a submissive role in the relationship and to motivate them to repair the damage caused. Thus, they hide the problem by following the belief that love should be eternal and the family myth of harmony that is often present: "the problems of the home should not go outside" (Echeburúa et al., 2001).

Furthermore, it has been shown that as authoritarian parenting increases, especially maternal parenting, so does dysfunctional perfectionism in children (Patock-Peckham & Corbin, 2019). Therefore, continuous criticism, demands and high standards imposed by parents can foster the same behaviours in their children and generate a high preoccupation with making mistakes (Aguilar & Castellanos, 2016; Enns et al, 2002; McArddle & Duda, 2004), continuous self-evaluations, a relentless pursuit of meeting parent-imposed stereotypes (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Hewitt & Flett, 2002; Shafran et al., 2002) and criticism when they do not meet these standards or there is a divergence between what is achieved and what is desired. At the core of perfectionism is a view of oneself as weak, flawed and easily rejected (Overholser & Dimaggio, 2020). All this leads to the appearance of psychopathological symptoms, chronification of negative emotions (Malivoire et al., 2019; Robinson & Abramovitch, 2020), feelings of inferiority, constant questioning of one's own abilities and self-worth (Cox et al., 2002) and increased vulnerability as one feels that one has no control over one's life (Shahar, 2001, cited in Iancu et al., 2015). In this line, it has been mentioned that excessive self-criticism and feelings of guilt would explain the permanence in violent relationships (Pueyo & Redondo, 2007). Moreover, emotionally dependent individuals who remain in violent relationships have been found to employ dysfunctional coping styles based on self-criticism and self-blame (Momeñe et al., 2021).

The present study has limitations. First, a larger sample size is recommended for future studies. Second, the study design is cross-sectional, making it impossible to obtain causal relationships. It would be of interest in future studies to test the causality of the results longitudinally. Third, self-reports may be subject to recall bias and may be associated with difficulties in judging one's own behaviour and social desirability bias as respondents know what they are trying to measure (Markez, 2015). Fourth, people with emotional dependence tend to hide it and deny or misinterpret it, making it difficult to detect (Moral-Jiménez & González-Sáez, 2020). The same happens with people who suffer intimate partner violence (Echeburúa et al., 2001). Fifth, the sample is not representative of the population in terms of gender and educational level of the participants because most of them were university women. In future studies, it is recommended to equalise the samples in terms of gender and educational styles.

In conclusion, the findings obtained are of great clinical relevance by proving the presence of social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and dysfunctional perfectionism in people with emotional dependence towards their partner, the latter being considered a precursor to remaining in violent relationships. Therefore, the findings of the present study contribute to a better understanding of the difficulties manifested by emotionally dependent people towards their partners in the social sphere. This is relevant because emotional dependence towards partners is highly prevalent in society and causes serious negative consequences, yet it is little studied and little known (Santamaría et al., 2015). Along these lines, several authors have pointed out that it is a pathology that is not adequately defined conceptually. Furthermore, it is not included in the current and most internationally recognised and accepted diagnostic classification manuals, such as the DSM-5 and ICD 11. This lack of knowledge interferes with the effectiveness of treatments not only for

emotional dependence towards a partner, but also for various pathologies that concur with it (Cabello, 2017; Gómez-Llano, 2013). Therefore, the inclusion of social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and dysfunctional perfectionism could optimise the results of any programme focused on treating emotional dependence. Future studies could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of including these factors in intervention programmes. In general, the need to promote studies that analyse the factors linked to emotional dependence is highlighted, given their complexity and significance in the permanence of violent relationships. Furthermore, the results obtained have also suggested the importance of analysing and working on emotional dependence towards the partner in people who perceive perfectionist parental influences based on criticism and high demands in order to prevent it from leading to the permanence of physically violent relationships. Therefore, emotional dependence could be an important element in the prevention and treatment of staying in violent relationships. In this sense, due to the relationship of both problems with dysfunctional perfectionism, cognitive behavioural therapy for perfectionism (CBT-P) could be very useful due to its reported efficacy (Mahmoodi et al., 2020). Its intervention is of great relevance because it is a risk and maintenance factor for certain emotional disorders and predicts treatment outcome (Egan et al., 2010). Furthermore, dysfunctional perfectionism negatively impacts the therapeutic alliance (Hewitt et al., 2021). This shows the need to include interventions to assess, improve and decrease dysfunctional perfectionism and perfectionistic parental influences based on criticism and demands.

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