

Volume 72 | Supliment 5 | 2026

ACTA MARISIENSIS SERIA MEDICA

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE

GEORGE EMIL PALADE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, PHARMACY, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY OF TARGU MURES



MENTAL HEALTH AND LOVE IN THE XXI CENTURY

SIGHIȘOARA, Romania
25-27 SEPTEMBER 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

ISSN: 2668-7755 • Online ISSN: 2668-7763 • www.actamedicamarisiensis.ro



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The journal publishes high-quality articles on various subjects related to research and medical practice from the all the medical and pharmaceutical fields, ranging from basic to clinical research and corresponding to different article types such as: reviews, original articles, case reports, case series, letter to editor or brief reports. The journal also publishes short information or editorial notes in relation to different aspects of the medical and academic life.

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- SCOPUS
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- National Library of Medicine
- Sciendo
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BETWEEN LOVE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COUPLES AFFECTED BY PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS.

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Introduction: Romantic love is a universal human experience closely associated with attachment, intimacy, identity, and emotional meaning. However, in psychiatric literature, individuals affected by mental health problems are frequently discussed primarily through the lens of dysfunction and social impairment, while their emotional and relational lives remain underexplored. **Materials and methods:** This presentation proposes a qualitative exploration of romantic relationships among couples affected by schizophrenia, focusing on how love is experienced and maintained in the context of severe psychological vulnerability. The study is based on semi-structured recorded interviews conducted with 2–3 couples in which both partners live with psychotic-spectrum disorders. Participants reflect on how they fell in love, how they define love within their relationships, and how they navigate intimacy, stigma, dependency, and emotional suffering. Fragments of the interviews will be integrated into an audiovisual narrative presentation aimed at preserving the authenticity of participants' lived experiences. **Results:** Preliminary observations suggest that love may function as a source of emotional stability, mutual understanding, identity continuity, and motivation for treatment adherence. **Conclusions:** The novelty of this presentation lies in its phenomenological and person-centered perspective, bringing forward voices and relational dimensions of psychosis that are rarely represented within contemporary psychiatric discourse.

Keywords: love, vulnerability, psychotic, intimacy, emotional stability

SAFE-PSYCH: AI ABSTENTION UNDER DIAGNOSTIC UNCERTAINTY IN PSYCHIATRY

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Introduction: Large language models (LLMs) are increasingly being used to support clinical decision-making. In psychiatric practice, diagnostic information often becomes available incrementally, requiring models to recognize when the available evidence is insufficient and either seek clarification or refrain from making premature diagnostic decisions. **Objective:** To evaluate the ability of LLMs to manage diagnostic uncertainty in psychiatric clinical settings characterized by incomplete information. **Materials and Methods:** Safe-Psych is a sequential benchmark developed using 1,048 psychiatric discharge summaries obtained from routine clinical practice. The documents were segmented to simulate the progressive accumulation of clinically relevant information. At each stage, three independent psychiatrists assigned one of three actions: DIAGNOSE, CLARIFY, or ABSTAIN. Several state-of-the-art LLMs were evaluated under both full-information and sequential evaluation conditions. **Results:** High overall performance was not associated with adequate management of clinical uncertainty. Most models exhibited under-abstention rates exceeding 60% when confronted with incomplete information. Safety-oriented prompting reduced the tendency toward premature diagnosis but increased the frequency of excessive abstention. In the sequential evaluation setting, models frequently issued diagnoses before sufficient evidence was available and rarely requested additional information. Premature diagnoses were less accurate than those made after the relevant information had become available. **Conclusions:** Safe-Psych highlights a key limitation of current LLMs: the inability to reliably recognize when the available clinical evidence is insufficient and when additional information is required before reaching a diagnostic conclusion. This benchmark may support the development of safer artificial intelligence systems for mental health care, with potential future extension to other medical specialties.

Keywords: large language models (LLMs), artificial intelligence, psychiatry, mental health, diagnostic uncertainty, benchmark, AI safety, clinical decision support.

BEYOND THE BLACK BOX: XAI IN 21ST-CENTURY PSYCHIATRY

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Introduction: Artificial intelligence (AI) models applied in psychiatry achieve remarkable diagnostic performance. However, their lack of transparency, commonly referred to as the "black box" phenomenon, limits clinical adoption and reduces clinicians' trust. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) addresses this challenge through techniques such as SHAP, Grad-CAM, and LIME, which make the model's decision-making mechanisms visible and align them with clinical reasoning. **Objective:** To evaluate the potential of the electrocardiogram (ECG) as a digital biomarker in psychiatry by developing explainable artificial intelligence (AI) models capable of distinguishing patients with psychiatric disorders from healthy controls. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate whether integrating XAI into the analytical pipeline can provide not only reliable predictions but also clinically interpretable explanations, thereby paving the way for closed-loop systems of explainable neuromodulation. **Materials and Methods:** An observational parallel-group study was designed to include 1,200 participants (600 patients with a DSM-5 psychiatric diagnosis and 600 healthy controls). Resting-state ECG signals are analyzed using deep learning models enhanced through transfer learning. Heart rate variability (HRV) features and ECG morphological parameters are extracted, while model interpretability is achieved through XAI techniques. Predictive uncertainty is also explicitly quantified. **Results:** The preliminary cohort comprises 92 patients with diagnosed psychiatric disorders (mean age 56.7 years, range 24–94 years; 51.65% women, 48.35% men). Approximately 73% of participants reside in urban areas. The mean number of previous hospitalizations per patient is 10.8. The most prevalent diagnoses are major depressive disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar affective disorder. Training and validation of the XAI models on the full cohort are currently underway. **Conclusions:** The integration of ECG-derived digital biomarkers into psychiatric practice, supported by transparent and clinically accountable XAI models, may facilitate the development of closed-loop systems in which model explainability informs adaptive neuromodulation strategies. Successful implementation will require rigorous attention to data quality, population heterogeneity, model generalizability, and algorithmic fairness. **Keywords:** Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), electrocardiography (ECG), digital biomarkers, precision psychiatry, closed-loop systems, neuromodulation, heart rate variability (HRV), SHAP, Grad-CAM, deep learning.

THE PRIVILEGE OF LOVING IN A HYPERCONNECTED WORLD

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Introduction: Contemporary society is characterized by a paradoxical hyperconnectivity. Although we possess an unprecedented technological infrastructure for interaction, we are facing a veritable epidemic of loneliness. This presentation aims to provide a critical analysis of how the illusion of digital closeness reshapes the architecture of intimacy and fragilizes the mental health of the individual. **Theoretical framework and argumentation:** Drawing on concepts such as "liquid love" (Bauman, 2003), "cold intimacies" (Illouz, 2007), or the "alone together" phenomenon (Turkle, 2011), we will attempt to analyze the transformation of relationships from an experience of profound attachment into a simulation of intimacy. The algorithms of social platforms offer a controllable connection, devoid of the emotional vulnerabilities inherent in genuine human interaction. From a medical sociology perspective, this digital surrogate generates a profound sense of isolation and an increase in reactive anxiety. The cognitive overload imposed by managing social networks leads to an acute form of relational burnout. **Results:** Thus, the capacity to build authentic love, resilient to the mirage of digital isolation, becomes a socio-emotional privilege, accessible particularly to those who possess a high degree of mental health literacy and the necessary resources to disconnect. **Conclusions:** Mental health in the 21st century depends on our capacity to recalibrate technologized intimacy. Increasing the level of mental health literacy and consciously cultivating the "privilege of disconnection" represent crucial strategies to counteract the isolation and alienation specific to the hyperconnected world. **Keywords:** hyperconnectivity, digital isolation, medical sociology, mental health literacy, liquid love.

WHEN LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH...

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Introduction: Romantic love represents a fundamental human concept, witness to the development of the individual and society itself. Love, as an evolutionary resource and as the foundation of interpersonal relationships, can be a protective factor of the psyche, but research in the field of psy shows that affective relationships can become sources of suffering. The purpose of this paper is to analyze love as a biosocial phenomenon and to highlight the relationships between toxic attachment, psychopathology and suicidal risk. **Material and method:** The present paper represents a review of the specialized literature. We used articles indexed in international databases (from Pubmed, Medscape, Google Scholar), as well as books on attachment theory, the neurobiology of love, statistics related to psychiatric pathology and suicidal behavior, as well as the clinical implications of dysfunctional relationships. **Results:** Romantic love involves complex neurobiological mechanisms, including dopaminergic, serotonergic and oxytocin-related systems. The reward mechanism is often mentioned in erotic love. Anxious attachment favors emotional dependence, leading to addictive disorders, increases the risk of depression and maintains suicidal ideation after the loss of the relationship. The phenomenon of suicide associated with love has often been viewed by society as an expression of infinite love, and less as evidence of pre-existing psychopathological vulnerability. From historical representations of toxic love and the figure of Casanova as a symbol of the perpetual search for a sense of belonging, to modern theories of attachment and the neurobiology of love, the concept of "love that is not enough" highlights the limits of an exclusively romantic approach to the evolution of human relationships. **Conclusions:** Love must be understood as a complex biosocial phenomenon, the result of the interaction between biological, psychological and cultural processes. Although it is an important protective factor, love is not sufficient to maintain mental health. A secure attachment and adaptive mechanisms of emotional regulation can reduce the suicidal risk associated with emotional distress, which are important goals of contemporary psychiatric practice.

Keywords: romantic love; psychopathology of love; toxic attachment; suicide in the name of love; Casanova, neurobiology of love, vulnerability

RELATIONAL DYSFUNCTIONS IN COUPLES AND FAMILIES IN THE CONTEXT OF PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

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Introduction: Psychiatric disorders influence the individual functioning within the family and couple system. The scientific literature highlights a bidirectional association between mental disorders and the quality of interpersonal relationships, whereby psychiatric symptomatology may generate conflicts, communication difficulties, and significantly impact family cohesion. In turn, intrafamilial dysfunction may contribute to the persistence or exacerbation of psychopathological symptoms. **Materials and methods:** The present study consists of a narrative review of the literature, including articles published within the last ten years in the fields of community psychiatry, clinical psychiatry, addiction medicine, and psychotherapy. Review articles, observational studies, and scientific papers investigating the relationship between affective disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, and substance use-related mental disorders and relational dysfunction within couples and family systems were analyzed.

Results: The literature review revealed a significant association between the presence of psychiatric disorders and impaired relational functioning within couples and families. Depressive disorders were associated with reduced marital satisfaction, diminished mutual emotional support, and an increased frequency of conflicts. Anxiety disorders were linked to major communication difficulties, avoidance behaviors, and emotional dependency. Psychotic disorders and bipolar disorder were correlated with significant disruption of family roles, increased caregiver burden, and reduced family cohesion and adaptability. Furthermore, studies have shown that personality disorders, particularly Cluster B disorders, are associated with relational instability, difficulties in emotional regulation, and recurrent conflicts in intimate relationships. Numerous studies also reported that high levels of criticism, hostility, aggression,

and excessive emotional involvement among family members were associated with higher relapse rates and less favorable clinical outcomes. Conclusions: The findings support the view that mental health and family functioning exert a reciprocal influence on one another. Couple and family-oriented interventions contribute to symptom reduction, improved communication, and enhanced treatment adherence. Relational dysfunctions represent an important component of the impact of psychiatric disorders on both individuals and their families. Integrating family- and couple-based approaches into the management of mental disorders may improve therapeutic outcomes and enhance the quality of life of patients and their caregivers.

Keywords: psychiatric disorders, family, couple, influence

LOVE IN AN ARTIFICIAL SOCIETY: EFFICIENCY VERSUS AUTHENTICITY

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Hypothesis: Modern society (especially in western cultures) encourages people to value personal freedom, independence, self-expression; however, deep interpersonal connections require stability, sacrifice, patience, compromise, endurance. The way in which interpersonal relationships and love are perceived today is based on this conflict previously mentioned, so modern relationships exist between two competing ideologies, namely: on the one hand - individual autonomy and on the other hand - the innate desire to experience deep connections with fellow peers. A significant part of the difficulties or confusion surrounding love and relationships is due to the desire to satisfy both ideologies equally. Materials and method: We analyzed multiple studies investigating associations between relationship status and mental status within the general population, and we synthesized the information that we obtained. Results: There are multiple instances of evidence that support the fact that more and more individuals report feelings of loneliness and how this influences the incidence of symptoms in the spectrum of depression and anxiety; data that supports the fact that many communities are affected. Conclusions: Technology acts as a double-edged sword in the evolution of interpersonal relationships. Although digital tools facilitate long-distance connection and rapid communication with loved ones, their excessive use can lead to interference in relationships - eroding emotional intimacy, reducing face-to-face interaction and encouraging feelings of loneliness and of neglect.

Future research could: explore the perception of interpersonal relationships at the level of different populations, look for other psychiatric symptoms, or the psychosocial mechanisms that determined the appearance of symptoms in the first phase

Keywords: relationships; technology; loneliness; anxiety; depression; addiction

SPECIFICS OF OBJECT INVESTMENT IN THE ONLINE THERAPEUTIC COUPLE: VOCAL RESONANCE AS AN INDICATOR OF INTERSUBJECTIVE PRESENCE

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Introduction: This paper investigates the specific ways in which the "therapeutic couple" entity is constituted and manifests within online communication when mediated exclusively through an audio channel. Materials and Methods: Based on the premise that the therapeutic relationship constitutes an autonomous intersubjective space, the study explores how affective object investment is sustained and circulates in the absence of visual feedback. From a theoretical perspective, the paper proposes the concept of "vocal resonance" as the primary driver of the "third" analytic element, exploring how this vocal holding framework becomes the main gateway to the couple's unconscious dynamics in this specific setting. Results: The methodology employs a qualitative study of clinical situations revealing distinct dynamics. The analysis highlights that the therapeutic couple entity is not diminished by sensory restriction; rather, it recalibrates its presence through micro-dynamics of tone, rhythm, and silence. Conclusions: The findings suggest that object investment and the authenticity of the bond in the 21st century can be validated independently of visual imagery, with the vocal space offering a specific means of exploring the intersubjective essence of the relationship within the therapeutic couple.

Keywords: therapeutic couple, intersubjective space, object investment, vocal resonance, presence.

LOVE AS A NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE: POLYVAGAL THEORY AND THE ROLE OF CO-REGULATION IN ADULT RELATIONSHIPS AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Background: In recent decades, research in relational neuroscience has highlighted the central role of the autonomic nervous system in emotional regulation and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Through polyvagal theory, Stephen Porges proposes that psychological safety and the capacity for social connection are neurophysiologically grounded, being strongly influenced by co-regulation processes. In this context, love can be conceptualized not merely as a psychological experience but also as a neurophysiological process emerging from secure relational interactions. **Hypothesis:** Stable and satisfying adult relationships are associated with the activation of the ventral-vagal state and efficient co-regulation processes, whereas relational dysfunctions reflect the predominance of sympathetic activation or dorsal-vagal collapse states. **Material and Method:** This paper presents an integrative theoretical-clinical synthesis based on current literature regarding polyvagal theory, attachment theory, and somatic psychotherapy. Conceptual models concerning the neuroception of safety and interpersonal regulation mechanisms are analyzed, incorporating clinical observations from individual and couples psychotherapy practice. **Results:** The analysis indicates that co-regulation processes constitute an essential mechanism through which the autonomic nervous system stabilizes its state of safety. Relational interactions characterized by presence, emotional attunement, and predictability facilitate autonomic flexibility and the capacity for self-regulation. In contrast, a lack of co-regulation is associated with sympathetic hyperarousal, dissociation, or emotional withdrawal. **Conclusions:** Love can be understood as a neurophysiological experience emerging from processes of interpersonal co-regulation. Through the therapeutic relationship, psychotherapy becomes a privileged space for restoring autonomic safety and reorganizing the nervous system.

Keywords: polyvagal theory, co-regulation, attachment, autonomic nervous system, somatic psychotherapy, adult relationships, neuroception.

LOVE AS A CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMANS AND DIVINITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

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Introduction: The relationship between spirituality and mental health is an important topic in psychology and psychiatry. Faith and love for God can provide emotional support, hope, and meaning during difficult moments in life. In many cases, spirituality helps reduce anxiety and feelings of loneliness. However, in some mental disorders, religious experiences may become pathological and appear as mystical delusions. **Materials and Methods:** This paper is based on the analysis of psychological and psychiatric literature regarding the connection between spirituality and mental illness. Scientific articles and clinical studies about mystical delusions and their impact on mental health were reviewed. In addition, a case study of a patient with psychotic symptoms and religious themes is presented in order to highlight clinical manifestations and therapeutic intervention. **Results and Discussions:** The results show that spirituality can have both positive and negative effects on mental health. In healthy forms, faith offers emotional balance, hope, and psychological support. However, in schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or acute psychosis, religious themes may become part of delusional thinking. Mystical delusions may include false religious beliefs, auditory hallucinations, the belief of having a divine mission, and loss of contact with reality. The presented case study highlights the importance of multidisciplinary intervention through psychiatric treatment, psychotherapy, and family support. Family and community play an essential role in recognizing early symptoms, supporting treatment, and preventing social isolation. **Conclusions:** Spirituality and love for God can be important sources of emotional balance for people experiencing psychological suffering. However, in certain mental illnesses, religious experiences may become pathological and require specialized evaluation. A balanced approach is necessary, one that respects faith while also protecting mental health, with emphasis on empathy, prevention, and social reintegration.

Keywords: love, divinity, religion, mental health, psychiatric illness.

ATTACHMENT INSECURITY AND RELATIONAL DYNAMICS IN CLUSTER B PERSONALITY DISORDERS – A CASE PRESENTATION

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Introduction: Attachment and the experience of love are fundamental dimensions of psychological development, with a major impact on emotional regulation and the quality of interpersonal relationships. In Cluster B personality disorders, the intense need for emotional closeness frequently coexists with hypersensitivity to rejection and fear of abandonment, leading to unstable relational patterns marked by impulsivity, ambivalence, and difficulties with emotional regulation. **Purpose:** This paper aims to highlight how the need for secure attachment can manifest dysfunctionally in an adolescent female patient with mixed Cluster B personality traits, within the context of a complex history of trauma and psychosocial vulnerability. **Materials and Methods:** The present study describes the case of a patient evaluated clinically, including an analysis of psychosocial functioning, emotional regulation mechanisms, and personality traits. The psychodiagnostic evaluation included a structured clinical interview, the SCID for the categorical assessment of personality disorders, and the DECAS personality inventory for the dimensional assessment of personality traits. **Results:** The 18-year-old female patient has a complex medical history: bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, delayed language development, a history of severe bullying, chronic childhood sexual abuse, and a significant family history of psychiatric disorders. Her clinical course was marked by severe emotional instability, heteroaggression, self-harm, a suicide attempt, and episodes of discontinuity in contact, suggestive of dissociative mechanisms. The SCID assessment revealed predominant traits from Cluster B, with a dominant borderline pattern, associated with significant histrionic traits, characterized by heightened emotional expressiveness, a search for emotional validation, and a tendency toward interpersonal dramatization. When analyzing the relational level it was observed a pattern of spontaneous disclosures with traumatic content, used as a strategy to obtain emotional validation, emotional closeness, and to maintain interpersonal contact. The most illustrative clinical element regarding the theme of attachment is the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship: the patient rapidly develops an intense idealized attachment toward the physician who admitted her, expressed through repetitive behaviors seeking contact. **Conclusions:** This case illustrates how complex trauma and attachment insecurity can shape the development of dysfunctional relational patterns, with a significant impact on the therapeutic relationship. **Keywords:** attachment, Cluster B, complex trauma, adolescence, interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation.

UNREQUITED LOVE – HUMAN-AI RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLUSION AND LEGAL VOID

Catrinoiu Andrada¹

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Introduction: The emergence of conversational artificial intelligence has generated an unprecedented phenomenon: profound emotional attachments toward entities incapable of genuine reciprocity. Virtual companion partners—permanently available, designed to validate and respond empathetically—redefine the boundaries of love in the 21st century within a space devoid of specific legal protection. **Purpose:** The paper examines two main areas: the neurobiological mechanisms through which the human brain does not differentiate between attachment to an artificial companion and to a real person, and the lack of legal accountability on the part of the companies developing these systems. **Materials and methods:** The analysis integrates research from the field of attachment neuroscience and clinical psychology regarding parasocial relationships, studies on the architecture of large language models and human feedback reinforcement learning (HFRL) mechanisms, and the analysis of the federal case *Garcia v. Character.AI*—the first litigation involving the civil liability of an AI company for the death of a minor. **Results:** The results indicate that attachment to AI activates the same dopaminergic circuits and the same oxytocinergic system involved in authentic human relationships. The brain does not make an ontological distinction between real and simulated empathy when responses are coherent and consistent. LLMs (large language models) are trained through reinforcement learning precisely to maximize emotional engagement—love for AI is not an unforeseen side effect, but a result of design. The case of *Garcia v. Character.AI*, involving the 14-year-old adolescent who committed suicide

after months of romantic interactions with a Character.AI avatar, illustrates the consequences: the company was aware of this minor's vulnerability, failed to intervene—and no existing legal framework required it to do so. Conclusions: Love toward AI is a predictable consequence of human neurobiology exploited through deliberate algorithmic design. Society faces a double urgency: the clinical recognition of this phenomenon and the construction of legal frameworks that hold companies accountable for harm caused to vulnerable users.

Keywords human-AI attachment; neuroscience of attachment; parasocial relationships; LLM; legal liability;

LOVE AS A PROCESS OF INTERPERSONAL VALIDATION: CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS IN EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONAL FUNCTIONING

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Background: Love can be conceptualized from a clinical perspective as a process of interpersonal validation through which individuals confirm their personal worth, emotional experiences, and belief systems within meaningful relationships. This process contributes to the development of emotional regulation, self-esteem, and the capacity for secure attachment. In the specialized literature, emotional validation is considered a central mechanism in the formation and maintenance of affective bonds. **Hypothesis:** It is assumed that love, understood as a process of interpersonal validation, represents an essential factor in the healthy development of attachment, while a deficit or excess of validation may contribute to relational dysfunctions and psychopathological vulnerability. **Materials and Methods:** This paper represents a narrative theoretical synthesis based on specialized literature in the fields of clinical psychology, psychotherapy, and attachment theory. Concepts regarding emotional validation, internal working models of attachment, and the role of the family environment in the development of self-esteem were analyzed. **Results:** The literature analysis highlights that early emotional validation, especially within parental relationships, contributes to the development of secure attachment and stable self-esteem. In adult relationships, reciprocal validation behaviors (active listening, empathy, affective affirmation) support relational stability. At the same time, an excessive need for external validation is associated with emotional dependency, attachment anxiety, and difficulties in affective self-regulation. **Conclusions:** Love, as a process of interpersonal validation, represents a fundamental mechanism for psychological development and adaptive relational functioning. The balance between received validation and emotional autonomy is essential for the health of interpersonal relationships and the prevention of attachment-related dysfunctions.

Keywords: love, emotional validation, attachment, emotional regulation, clinical psychology, interpersonal relationships

NEUROBIOLOGY OF FALLING IN LOVE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE PROCESSING OF ATTACHMENT AND AFFECTIVE REWARD

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Background: Falling in love is a complex neurobiological phenomenon situated at the intersection of reward systems, emotional regulation, and attachment mechanisms. Scientific literature highlights the involvement of meso-limbic dopaminergic circuits, particularly the ventral tegmental area, caudate nucleus, and medial prefrontal cortex—structures essential for motivation, reward anticipation, and the processing of social decisions. **Hypothesis:** It is assumed that falling in love involves the activation of neurobiological circuits common to both sexes, but with differences in the modulation and integration of emotional and social stimuli between men and women. **Materials and Methods:** This paper is a narrative review of the scientific literature in the fields of affective neuroscience, psychiatry, and neuropsychology. Functional neuroimaging (fMRI) studies, neuroendocrinological research, and theoretical models concerning attachment and romantic love were analyzed. **Results:** Evidence from the literature indicates consistent activation of dopaminergic reward systems during romantic love in both men and women. In men, neural responses appear to be more strongly associated with visual stimuli and attraction-related behaviors, whereas in women there is greater involvement of structures responsible for emotional processing and contextual evaluation,

such as the amygdala and insula. Oxytocin and vasopressin contribute significantly to attachment formation and relationship stability, while sociocultural factors modulate the behavioral expression of love. Conclusions: Falling in love can be conceptualized as an emergent neurobiological process in which gender differences reflect variations in the processing and integration of affective information rather than fundamentally distinct mechanisms. These particularities are relevant for understanding attachment-related psychopathology and for optimizing couple psychotherapy interventions.

Keywords: Falling in love, neurobiology, attachment, dopamine, oxytocin, gender differences, reward system, neuroimaging.

SUBSTITUTIONS OF MATERNAL LOVE IN BEREAVEMENT: BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RIGIDITY

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Introduction: Attachment and caregiving systems are fundamental components of human affective organization and are susceptible to reorganization following major life events. The loss of a partner may lead to significant changes in emotional functioning, including the redirection of affiliative and caregiving behaviors toward substitute objects, animals, or individuals. Although the role of companion animals in emotional regulation and adaptation to bereavement is increasingly recognized, the psychopathological implications of excessive emotional investment in the human–animal relationship remain insufficiently explored. **Methods:** We present the case of a widow who, following the death of her husband, developed an intense attachment to the family dog. This attachment was characterized by attributing a filial status to the animal, excessive concern for its well-being, and a substantial reorganization of daily functioning around the relationship with the pet. **Results:** Clinical analysis revealed the activation and redirection of caregiving behaviors toward the companion animal, accompanied by a progressive reduction in interpersonal engagement and social activities. Initially, the relationship functioned as a compensatory mechanism for emotional regulation and alleviation of bereavement-related distress. Over time, however, it acquired features of relational exclusivity, becoming associated with persistent difficulties in integrating the loss experience and maintaining a symbolic connection with the deceased spouse. **Discussion:** The particularities of this case are discussed in relation to contemporary attachment models, caregiving system theory, and the literature addressing human–animal relationships in the context of psychological vulnerability. Available evidence suggests that companion animals may facilitate adaptation to loss by providing emotional security and relational continuity. However, when they become the primary or sole recipient of affective investment, substitution mechanisms may emerge that interfere with grief processing and the adaptive reorganization of relational identity. **Conclusions:** The clinical assessment of emotional bonds developed with companion animals during bereavement requires the integration of psychodynamic and psychopathological perspectives. Distinguishing between adaptive compensatory mechanisms and rigid affective investments may have important implications for the early identification and management of persistent grief and associated adjustment difficulties.

Keywords: attachment, bereavement, substitution, human–animal relationship, companion animals

RELATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, PERCEIVED CAPABILITIES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD AI PARTNERS

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Introduction: The development of conversational artificial intelligence has brought to the forefront the possibility of affective relationships between humans and AI systems, raising important questions about the nature and limits of artificial intimacy. **Aim:** The present study aimed to investigate participants' relational expectations toward a roman-

tic partner, the perceived capabilities of artificial intelligence to satisfy different relational needs, and the association of these perceptions with attitudes toward AI partners.

Methods and Materials: We conducted a cross-sectional study using an online questionnaire on a sample of 57 adult participants. The instrument assessed relational expectations, attitudes toward AI partners, dimensions perceived as deficient in a relationship with AI, and the use of conversational artificial intelligence.

Results: The results showed that participants particularly valued respect, loyalty, communication, safety, and stability in a romantic relationship. Overall, attitudes toward AI partners were cautious and ambivalent. Participants attributed to AI a significantly greater capacity to satisfy functional relational needs, such as companionship, availability, and predictability, than deeply human dimensions of a relationship, such as real love, authentic reciprocity, physical presence, and profound intimacy. In addition, more favorable perceptions of AI's functional relational capabilities were associated with more positive attitudes toward AI partners and higher anticipated satisfaction in such a relationship.

Conclusions: Artificial intelligence is perceived more as a potential source of functional relational support than as the equivalent of an authentic human romantic partner. Acceptance of relationships with AI appears to depend not only on openness toward technology, but also on how individuals define the essence of love, reciprocity, and human intimacy.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; AI partners; romantic relationships; artificial intimacy; relational expectations; attitudes toward AI

THE IDEA OF A GREAT LOVE: PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY OR NARRATIVE CONSTRUCT? IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Introduction: The concept of a “great love” occupies a central place in both human experience and cultural narratives, often describing relationships perceived as unique, defining, and enduring over time. Although it frequently emerges in patients' narratives and significantly influences relationship choices, grief processes, and self-representations, the concept remains insufficiently defined from both psychological and psychiatric perspectives. **Methods:** This paper explores whether the idea of a great love can be understood as a distinct psychological reality or whether it represents, at least in part, a narrative construct arising from the interaction between attachment processes, emotional memory, and cognitive meaning-making. Drawing on an illustrative clinical vignette and an integrative review of both classical and contemporary literature, the paper examines contributions from attachment theory, cognitive-behavioral models, and recent findings in affective neuroscience. **Results:** Current evidence suggests that the persistence of significant emotional bonds may be explained by the maintenance of internal representations of attachment figures, the consolidation of emotional memory, and the attribution of identity-related meaning to relational experiences. The paper also addresses the psychiatric implications of this construct by examining phenomena located at the extremes of the affective continuum. **Discussions:** Particular attention is given to psychological distress and suicidal risk associated with the loss of a relationship invested with existential significance, as well as to erotomanic delusional disorder, in which the conviction of a special reciprocal bond persists despite the absence of an actual relationship and despite repeated contradictory evidence. These manifestations support the conceptualization of great love as a continuum encompassing both normative and adaptive experiences, as well as psychopathological forms of functioning. **Conclusion:** From a clinical perspective, distinguishing between the intensity of emotional experience and relational functioning is essential for assessment and therapeutic intervention. Rather than attempting to determine whether great love truly exists, the paper proposes a potentially more clinically relevant question: what exactly persists over time—the relationship, the person, or the narrative constructed around them?

Keywords: great love; attachment; narrative construct; mental health; erotomania.

THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTING STYLES ON EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT AND THE CAPACITY TO LOVE

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Introduction: Parenting styles are theoretically linked to emotional and relational development through patterns of parental responsiveness, demandingness, and control. Baumrind's typology, later expanded by Maccoby and Martin, classifies parenting into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles. These styles may influence the formation of internal working models, emotional regulation, and expectations of intimacy, as described in attachment theory. Parenting practices characterized by warmth, consistency, and support for autonomy are generally associated with secure attachment, whereas harsh, inconsistent, or emotionally unavailable parenting may contribute to insecure attachment patterns. **Hypothesis:** It is hypothesized that parenting styles characterized by high responsiveness and appropriate behavioral control, particularly authoritative parenting, are associated with secure emotional attachment and greater capacity to love, whereas parenting styles characterized by low responsiveness, excessive control, inconsistency, or emotional unavailability are associated with insecure attachment patterns and reduced capacity for emotional intimacy and love. **Material and Methods:** This study is a narrative literature review based on peer-reviewed sources from PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. Literature will be selected using keywords related to parenting styles, attachment, emotional intimacy, and capacity to love, and analyzed thematically according to the study objectives. **Results:** The literature indicates that authoritative parenting is associated with secure attachment, better emotion regulation, and healthier relational functioning. In contrast, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting are more often linked to insecure attachment patterns, emotional dysregulation, and reduced capacity for intimacy. Overall, the findings suggest that parental warmth, consistency, and emotional availability support the development of emotional attachment and the capacity to love. **Conclusions:** Parenting styles play an important role in shaping emotional attachment and the capacity to love, with warm and consistent parenting supporting healthier relational development.

Keywords: parenting styles; capacity to love; emotional intimacy; relational development; emotion regulation.

THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUALITY ON MENTAL HEALTH: PROTECTIVE FACTOR AND/OR VULNERABILITY?

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Introduction: Spirituality and religion play an important role in the lives of many patients, influencing the way they understand mental illness, relationships, and emotional suffering. They may positively influence mental health by providing a sense of hope, belonging, meaning, and emotional support. At the same time, certain spiritual beliefs or experiences may be associated with anxiety, feelings of guilt, family conflicts, or ideas of divine punishment. In psychiatric practice, the spiritual dimension is frequently present but often not fully explored. **Aim:** The aim of this paper is to highlight the impact of spirituality on mental health and the importance of assessing the religious dimension in psychiatric clinical practice. **Materials:** This paper presents a series of cases observed over the course of a single week, between May 10–15, 2026, in a psychiatric service. **Results:** We analyzed cases of patients with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, manic episode, and depressive episode, where spirituality significantly influenced symptomatology, family relationships, and coping mechanisms. We observed both beneficial effects, such as providing hope, emotional comfort, and reducing suicidal risk, and negative effects, including anxiety, family conflicts, persecutory ideas, and fear related to divine punishment or the loss of loved ones following spiritual experiences. **Conclusions:** Spirituality can represent a protective factor for mental health by providing a sense of meaning, hope, and belonging. At the same time, when associated with fear, guilt, or the idea of divine punishment, it can become a source of emotional vulnerability. A balanced understanding of spiritual experiences is important in approaching mental health in contemporary society.

Keywords: spirituality, mental health, anxiety, belonging, religion, emotional vulnerability.

LIKES, VALIDATION AND IDENTITY. THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN NARCISSISM AND SELF-LOVE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Introduction: Of all forms of love, self-love can be considered one of the most important for an individual's balance and development. It can serve as a source of motivation and resilience, and it gives the individual a sense of worth and uniqueness. In contemporary society, however, the concept of self-love sometimes seems exaggerated and is even misjudged at times. A possible determining factor in this phenomenon is the rapid increase in the use of social media and online activity, illustrated by constant posts and updates. The constant feedback, conveyed through likes and comments via social media, ensures validation from one's social circle and beyond. This phenomenon raises two essential questions: would individuals exhibit the same level of self-love in the absence of these instant and inexhaustible sources of validation, and, at the same time, do heavy social media users truly value themselves to the extent that they demonstrate? **Methods:** In this narrative analysis, we aim to examine the negative effects of social media on mental health, with a focus on self-image and self-love. **Results:** Research shows that problematic internet use can significantly affect self-esteem. Traits such as superficial relationships, low empathy, a constant need for validation, and heightened sensitivity to criticism are associated not only with heavy social media users but also with the narcissistic profile; thus, the line between recreational online activity and potentially psychopathological manifestations is becoming increasingly difficult to draw. Narcissistic individuals are often perceived as symbols of self-love and self-confidence, yet this behavior stems precisely from insecurity and low self-esteem. **Conclusion:** Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the authenticity of the image of "self-obsession" promoted online and the causes of this phenomenon.

Keywords: self-love, narcissism, social media, mental health, validation

1984 AND BRAVE NEW WORLD: LOVE IN DYSTOPIA

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Background: Mental health is strongly influenced by the social and political environment in which individuals live. Dystopian literature offers important perspectives on the psychological consequences of emotional repression, loss of individuality, and the restriction of authentic human relationships. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* portray totalitarian societies in which love and intimacy are manipulated in order to maintain social control. These novels remain relevant in understanding the relationship between emotional freedom and psychological well-being. **Hypothesis:** Totalitarian systems negatively affect mental health by altering the natural expression of love, attachment, and emotional identity through repression, conditioning, and social control. **Material and Method:** The presentation is based on a comparative literary analysis of the novels *1984* and *Brave New World*, focusing on the representation of love, intimacy, and emotional relationships in dystopian societies. **Results:** In *1984*, emotional attachment is perceived as a threat to political authority, while fear and surveillance contribute to isolation, anxiety, and the destruction of personal identity. In *Brave New World*, emotional bonds are replaced by superficial pleasure and conditioning, leading to emotional detachment and loss of authentic interpersonal connection. Both novels illustrate psychological suffering generated by the suppression of genuine human emotions. **Conclusions:** The analyzed dystopian models suggest that the absence of emotional freedom may have significant consequences on mental health and personal identity. The study highlights the importance of authentic human connection in maintaining psychological balance and individuality.

Key words: dystopia, mental health, love, totalitarianism

FRAGILITY OF SELF-LOVE IN BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER: THE ROLE OF ATTACHMENT, IDENTITY, AND FEAR OF ABANDONMENT

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Background: Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by emotional instability, impulsivity, and persistent disturbances in self-image, with self-love and self-worth often becoming profoundly fragile. Existing literature highlights the association of BPD with insecure attachment styles, predominantly anxious and disorganized, as well as with identity instability, factors that significantly influence how individuals perceive themselves, value themselves, and regulate their self-esteem. **Hypothesis:** The fragility of self-love in BPD derives from the interaction between attachment insecurity, identity instability, and hypersensitivity to abandonment, leading to fluctuating self-evaluation dependent on external validation. **Material and Methods:** This paper consists of a narrative review of the relevant literature examining the relationship between attachment styles, the development of self-image, and emotional regulation mechanisms in BPD. **Results:** Existing data suggest that individuals with BPD frequently exhibit unstable self-image, an increased need for external validation, and difficulties maintaining a consistent sense of self-worth. Fear of abandonment and heightened interpersonal sensitivity contribute to the perception of personal value through interpersonal relationships, being associated with chronic feelings of emptiness, shame, self-criticism, and emotional dependency. The fragility of self-love thus becomes the clinical expression of a vulnerable and poorly integrated sense of self, profoundly influenced by relational insecurity. **Conclusions:** In BPD, self-love is often unstable, oscillating between the desperate pursuit of validation and profound self-devaluation. Understanding this fragility through the interaction of attachment, identity, and emotional regulation offers an essential perspective for clinical understanding and for the development of therapeutic interventions focused on strengthening the self, self-compassion, and emotional stability.

Keywords: borderline personality disorder, self-love, self-worth, identity, attachment, fear of abandonment, self-image.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND VIRTUAL INTIMACY: THE AMPLIFICATION OF VULNERABILITIES IN PERSONALITY DISORDERS

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Introduction: The increasing use of artificial intelligence systems (chatbots, digital agents) has generated new forms of interpersonal interaction characterized by constant availability, emotional validation, the absence of objective interpersonal feedback, and a tendency to mirror and reinforce the user's cognitive and emotional content. The impact of these interactions on individuals with psychopathological vulnerabilities remains insufficiently explored in light of emerging technological trends. **Objective:** The present paper aims to analyze the feedback mechanisms involved in the interaction between individuals and artificial intelligence systems, as well as their role in amplifying vulnerabilities specific to personality disorders. **Method:** Narrative theoretical analysis based on the existing literature in psychiatry and attachment theory. **Results:** The paper proposes a conceptual model in which artificial intelligence functions as a "reinforcing mirror," validating and reflecting the user's beliefs, emotions, and self-image. This mechanism may contribute to the strengthening of maladaptive patterns, particularly in personality disorders characterized by unstable self-image, emotional lability, attachment disturbances, and distortions in reality perception. The impact varies depending on personality structure, including intensified attachment dynamics in borderline personality disorder, increased grandiosity in narcissistic personality disorder, consolidation of distorted reality representations in schizotypal and paranoid personality disorders, and reinforcement of avoidance or dependency patterns in avoidant and dependent personality disorders. **Conclusions:** AI-mediated interactions may represent a factor that amplifies psychopathological vulnerabilities in personality disorders. These observations highlight the need to evaluate the role of artificial intelligence within psychiatric practice and to develop adapted theoretical models and intervention strategies.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, personality disorders, emotional regulation, attachment, psychopathology, human-AI interaction

WE LOVE THE WAY WE WERE LOVED: THE ROLE OF ATTACHMENT TO PARENTAL FIGURES IN ROMANTIC PARTNER SELECTION

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Introduction: This paper is based on John Bowlby's attachment theory and explores how interactions with attachment figures during early childhood are internalized and become an internal frame of reference through which individuals evaluate a potential romantic partner, emotional availability, levels of intimacy, and relational security. **Aim:** The following hypothesis was formulated: it is assumed that there is an association between the quality of the relationship with parental figures and the selection of a romantic partner. **Methods:** This paper represents a narrative review of the literature on attachment styles and their influence on romantic partner selection. The review includes theoretical and empirical studies exploring relationships with parental figures, the development of adult attachment, and its association with partner selection and couple relationship dynamics. **Results:** Evidence from the literature suggests that a secure attachment style in caregivers is associated with a tendency to choose emotionally available partners and with higher levels of relationship satisfaction. In contrast, insecure attachment is associated with difficulties in forming and maintaining intimate relationships, as well as with a tendency to choose partners characterized by emotional unavailability or affective distance. Although romantic partner selection is perceived as a conscious and deliberative process, findings from the literature highlight the existence of unconscious psychological mechanisms that act as a filter in this process. **Conclusions:** These observations contribute to understanding how early attachment experiences influence relationships in adulthood and may have relevant implications for both research and psychotherapeutic practice.

Keywords: attachment style; romantic relationships; parental relationships.

BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER AND THE FAILURE OF SELF-LOVE

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Background. Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a systematically underdiagnosed psychiatric condition, with a prevalence of 1.7–2.9% in the general population and 13–24% among patients seeking cosmetic surgery. Lifetime suicidal ideation rates reach 78–80%, and completed suicide occurs at rates 22–36 times higher than in the general population. Patients reach psychiatric care, on average, after 10–15 years of illness, having first navigated dermatology and surgical offices. **Hypothesis.** The psychopathological root of BDD is not vanity but the failure of self-love in the Frommian sense — the structural inability to establish a relationship of care, respect, and knowledge toward one's own body, mediated by an internalized external gaze that abolishes warm self-perception. **Material and methods.** Narrative review of peer-reviewed literature published between 1997 and 2026, integrating DSM-5-TR and ICD-11 criteria, Feusner fMRI studies (UCLA), Phillips cohorts, Wilhelm-Phillips-Steketee randomized trials for CBT-BDD, foundational works by Fredrickson & Roberts, Fromm, Neff, Gilbert, and recent data (2020–2026) on Snapchat and Zoom dysmorphia. **Results.** BDD patients show a local visual processing bias, with abnormal activation in the occipital cortex and fusiform face area. Comorbidity with major depression reaches 75–83%. Pharmacological treatment requires SSRIs at doses substantially higher than in depression (fluoxetine 80–120 mg/day, escitalopram 30–60 mg/day), with a 12-week latency. BDD-specific CBT achieves response rates of 50–80%. Cosmetic procedures fail to produce remission and worsen symptoms in a minority. Compassion-focused interventions (CFT, ACT-with-Compassion) show preliminary efficacy by targeting internalized shame. **Conclusions.** BDD is not a problem of appearance but a problem of the mirror — of an intrapsychic structure that has learned to regard itself through the eyes of a severe stranger. Integrative treatment must include, alongside symptomatic reduction, the reconstruction of the patient's capacity for self-compassion.

Keywords: body dysmorphic disorder; self-objectification; self-compassion; muscle dysmorphia; CBT-BDD; SSRI; Snapchat dysmorphia.

VIRTUAL VALIDATION DEPENDENCE AND THE EROSION OF AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

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Background. Widespread use of social media platforms based on quantifiable feedback — likes, followers, comments — has reshaped the psychological economy of self-esteem in an entire generation. Recent epidemiological data show a parallel increase in adolescent loneliness in 36 of 37 countries between 2012 and 2018, and the 2023 U.S. Surgeon General Advisory marks the threshold at which psychiatry can no longer disregard the phenomenon. **Hypothesis.** Virtual validation activates the same mesocorticolimbic circuits implicated in classical behavioral addictions, and problematic use erodes the capacity for authentic relating through parasocial substitution, structurally upward social comparison, and algorithmically homogenized exposure. **Material and methods.** Narrative review of PubMed-indexed literature published between 2014 and 2026, integrating fMRI studies (Sherman et al., ABCD cohort), meta-analyses on social comparison (Wirtz et al., 2023), longitudinal Twenge cohorts, public health advisories, and foundational sources (Festinger, Skinner, Kraut). **Results.** Positive digital social stimuli activate the ventral tegmental area and nucleus accumbens with intensity correlated to the number of likes displayed. Skinner’s variable-ratio reinforcement schedule is fully replicated in notification design. Problematic social media use is dimensionally associated with connectivity changes comparable to those in substance use disorders. Structurally upward comparison on image-based platforms predicts lower self-esteem and increased depressive symptoms, mediated by envy and FOMO. Parasocial connection offers the comfort of presence without the cost of vulnerability, becoming an addictive substitute in patients with avoidant attachment. **Conclusions.** The concept of “virtual validation dependence” is clinically useful but requires dimensional assessment across three axes — frequency, subjective distress, functional impairment — to avoid normative pathologization of adolescence. Interventions with documented efficacy include CBT for problematic internet use, mindfulness, and selective digital detox. **Keywords:** virtual validation; reward circuit; upward social comparison; FOMO; problematic internet use; CBT.

LOVE LANGUAGES – A PATH TOWARD HEALING

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Introduction: Close relationships represent one of the most important protective factors for psychological well-being; however, many relational difficulties arise not from the absence of love, but from differences in the ways love is expressed and received. The Five Love Languages model, developed by Gary Chapman, provides an accessible framework for understanding emotional needs and relational dynamics. The proposed workshop explores the therapeutic value of this model in facilitating emotional connection, enhancing empathy, and improving interpersonal communication. **Aim:** The working hypothesis is that identifying and consciously using love languages can contribute to reducing emotional distance and increasing feelings of safety, validation, and connection in close relationships. **Methods:** The workshop methodology is experiential and interactive, including psychoeducational interventions, self-awareness exercises, guided reflection, dyadic activities, and practical applications inspired by couple and family relationship dynamics. Participants will explore their dominant ways of expressing and receiving love, as well as the impact of relational differences on emotional connection. **Results:** The expected outcomes include increased emotional awareness, the development of empathic communication skills, and the identification of practical ways to improve relational connection. The workshop also aims to highlight how unmet emotional needs may contribute to conflict, resentment, and emotional disconnection. **Conclusion:** The conclusions emphasize that the conscious use of love languages may become a valuable tool in promoting relational and emotional well-being, both in personal life and therapeutic settings. **Keywords:** love languages, relationships, emotional connection, communication, relational healing, self-awareness, empathy.

THE ROLE OF SELF-LOVE IN THE PROGNOSIS OF MENTAL DISORDERS – CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

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Background: Deficits in self-relating represent an important factor in the evolution and prognosis of mental disorders. The motivation of the study is to evaluate the role of self-love (through self-esteem and self-compassion) according to psychiatric diagnosis and to highlight the implications for their prognosis. **Hypothesis :** By monitoring and comparing the scores of the RSES (Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale), SSES (State Self Esteem Scale), SCS-SF (Self-Compassion Scale – short form), FSCRS (Forms of Self-Criticizing/Reassuring Scale) in three psychiatric areas (depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, borderline personality disorder), the lowest scores can be observed in patients with depressive disorder, while in patients with borderline personality disorder there will be increased variability of the obtained values. **Material and Method:** This observational and cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample consisting of adult patients, diagnosed according to ICD/DSM criteria with depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and borderline personality disorder. Self-love assessment was carried out using 4 standardized instruments: RSES, SSES, SCS-SF, FSCRS. The scores obtained were analyzed based on diagnosis, and the statistical analysis included descriptive statistics and correlations between variables. **Results:** Analyzing the scores obtained, a markedly low level of self-love is detected in patients with depressive disorder and a moderately low level in patients with anxiety disorder, while patients with borderline personality disorder show variability in the assessment results. **Conclusion:** Self-love, evaluated through self-esteem and self-compassion, represents a relevant clinical indicator, with important prognostic implications. Integrating the assessment of these dimensions into psychiatric practice is feasible through the use of short and accessible instruments and can contribute to the individualization of therapeutic interventions.

Keywords: Love, compassion, esteem, self, depression, anxiety, borderline.

DEFENCE MECHANISMS IN EMIGRATION AND RETURN

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Introduction: Our identity is shaped by experiences within the family and social context, which are in turn influenced by the cultural context. The “self” develops in relationship with others and with the culture in which we develop. Romania is among the countries with one of the largest diasporas: over 4 million citizens live outside its borders. Although migration has been extensively studied, the psychology of return and its impact on identity remain insufficiently explored. **Hypothesis:** Leaving a country is not a purely logistical act, but a profound psychological rupture, a separation from everything that constitutes “home.” The central hypothesis of this paper is that both emigration and return activate specific psychological defence mechanisms, and that failing to recognise and process these can impact on identity integration and functional adaptation. **Material and Method:** The presentation draws on a theoretical synthesis integrating psychoanalytic concepts, cross-cultural psychology, and attachment theory, correlated with observations from experience within the Romanian diaspora. Two distinct phases are analysed: emigration and return, with the defence mechanisms specific to each. **Results:** In the emigration phase, mechanisms such as idealisation of the adoptive country, devaluation of Romania, intellectualisation, and denial of difficulties facilitate survival through cultural shock. In the return phase, the picture grows more complex: identity confusion, regression, projection of frustrations, splitting, and feelings of omnipotence appear frequently. Most often, the person faces an unacknowledged grief - the loss of a “home” that no longer exists in the form preserved in memory. **Conclusion:** Both migration and return represent a process of exploring and integrating personal identity within the cultural context. Love of one’s country is, at its core, a process of cultural identity integration - the journey from idealisation and devaluation toward a conscious, integrated acceptance of one’s place of origin, with all its contradictions.

Keywords: migration, patriotism, cultural identity

ROOTS AND WINGS: MY SPACE WITHIN THE MACRO-SYSTEM

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BACKGROUND: In clinical practice, physicians and psychotherapists constantly manage their clients' micro-systems, often becoming emotional containers for their suffering. However, these specialists rarely have the opportunity to look at their own macro-system: the Homeland – viewed as a geographical, cultural, and identity space that hosts and shapes them. This workshop offers a safe space for self-reflection, shifting the focus from the professional role of "expert" to the human dimension of the therapist and the space they occupy within the broader systemic framework. **HYPOTHESES:** The workshop is based on the hypothesis that the subjective relationship with one's homeland directly influences the professional's well-being through the degree of satisfaction of their fundamental human needs. A second hypothesis argues that by becoming aware of their own feelings (without labeling or clinical diagnosis), participants can transition from a position of helplessness or frustration regarding the macro-system to an active stance of autonomy (agency), identifying concrete actions they can take within their own micro-system to fulfill these needs. **MATERIAL AND METHOD:** The approach is experiential and systemic-phenomenological. The work is structured around a two-step algorithm for each fundamental need: (1) a subjective evaluation of its level of satisfaction in relation to the homeland, and (2) mapping accessible actions within one's own micro-system. The process explores four essential needs: The need for safety and stability, viewing the homeland as a Amacroscopic "secure base" that activates bodily calm or alertness, the need for belonging, becoming aware of the invisible threads, loyalties, and transgenerational legacies of one's lineage, the need for meaning and purpose, questioning interdependence and how individual actions influence the whole, the need for validation and recognition of cultural identity as the foundation of an integrated self.

Techniques based on somatic awareness, metaphor, and guided reflection in dyads will be utilized. **RESULTS:** Participants will gain greater clarity regarding their own emotional dynamics. The primary result consists of shifting the locus of control from the outside (what I cannot change about my country) to the inside (what I can build within my sphere of influence), thereby reclaiming a deep sense of personal power (agency). **CONCLUSIONS:** Fulfilling fundamental needs does not depend exclusively on the macro-system. By assuming responsibility within the micro-system (family, practice, personal routine), specialists honor their "roots" while simultaneously expanding their "wings" of autonomy and professional resilience.

KEYWORDS: Systemic approach, Fundamental needs, Agency, Micro-system, Self-reflection

WHEN THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP BECOMES A RISK FACTOR - ATTACHMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN THE CHILD

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Introduction: The development of a secure attachment is based on two essential components of the parent-child relationship: the parent's emotional availability and the predictability of their behavior. On one hand, the child needs to receive affection, acceptance, and appropriate emotional responses. On the other hand, they need to be able to understand and anticipate the parent's reactions, thereby developing a sense of safety and consistency in the relationship. **Methods:** These different ways of organizing affective and cognitive experiences can influence a person's later development and can be vulnerability factors for the emergence of psychopathology. **Results:** When parental affection is low or inconsistent, the child may develop an avoidant attachment style, characterized by a focus on cognitive processes and a tendency to minimize emotional expression and needs for closeness. On the other hand, when the parent's behavior is unpredictable and hard to anticipate, an anxious attachment style may develop, where the child becomes hypervigilant to danger signals and places increased importance on bodily sensations and emotional reactions. **Conclusion:** Understanding the relationship between parental affection, the predictability of parental behavior, and attachment styles provides a useful framework for prevention and early intervention in health. **Keywords:** attachment, parent-child relationship, psychopathology

A PROSPECTIVE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF TYPE D PERSONALITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE SEVERITY OF CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE AND SURVIVAL AMONG PATIENTS WITH ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE

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Introduction: Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the general population. Relatively recently, depression has been recognized as an independent risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease. Furthermore, stable psychological factors, such as personality type, have attracted even greater interest in relation to the risk of developing coronary artery disease. **Objectives:** To determine the contribution of Type D personality and certain contextual psychological factors, such as levels of anxiety, depression, and hostility, to the survival duration of patients diagnosed with coronary artery disease. **Methods:** In this prospective study, patients with confirmed CAD were enrolled and followed for a mean of 1,026 days. Anatomical disease complexity was measured using the SYNTAX Score (SS). Psychological profiling comprised assessment of Type D personality (TDP) with the DS14 questionnaire and evaluation of depression, anxiety, and hostility symptoms using the SCL-90. Mortality risk was analyzed through multivariable Cox proportional hazards regression. **Results:** TDP was present in one-third of patients and was significantly associated with greater severity of coronary artery disease, as determined by the Syntax score. While social inhibition showed a borderline protective trend in the clinical model (HR = 0.943; $p = 0.068$), the integrated psychological model identified anxiety as a significant independent predictor of survival (HR = 0.941; $p = 0.049$), suggesting an “anxiety paradox” in which proactive vigilance may improve outcomes. **Discussion:** TDP emerged as a strong marker of biological vulnerability and accelerated vascular aging. The “Anxiety Paradox” suggests that moderate distress may improve treatment adherence. Strong correlations between SS and psychological distress, especially depression ($r = 0.493$), highlight the importance of behavioral cardiology in cardiovascular care. **Conclusions:** TDP and contextual psychological symptoms are robust, independent determinants of mortality that transcend anatomical severity. Integrating systematic psychological screening into routine care is essential for refining risk stratification and improving long-term survival.

Keywords: type D personality, coronary heart disease, long-term survival

FROM EARLY ATTACHMENT TO CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIPS: THE ROLE OF FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN EXPERIENCES IN SHAPING INTIMACY, JEALOUSY, AND RELATIONAL SECURITY: A SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction: Consensual non-monogamous (CNM) relationships have become an increasingly visible expression of contemporary relational diversity, challenging traditional assumptions regarding intimacy, exclusivity, and commitment. Within systemic psychotherapy, these relationships are conceptualized as relational systems whose functioning is determined by interactional patterns, communication processes, and negotiated relational rules rather than by prevailing social norms. **Objectives:** This study aims to examine how attachment experiences within the family of origin shape the construction of relational boundaries, the negotiation of intimacy, the regulation of jealousy, and the maintenance of emotional security in consensual non-monogamous relationships. **Methodology:** A qualitative design was employed, combining a narrative review of the literature with two clinical case studies derived from systemic couple psychotherapy practice. The analysis focused on attachment patterns, trans-generational processes, boundary negotiation, and emotional regulation strategies within intimate relationships. **Results:** The findings suggest that relational stability and adaptive functioning in consensual non-monogamous relationships depend primarily on the flexibility of relational rules, effective communication, and partners' capacity to negotiate explicit, mutually agreed boundaries. The principal vulnerabilities identified include attachment-related abandonment anxiety, difficulties in self-differentiation, and challenges in the regulation of jealousy. **Conclusions:** A systemic perspective provides a comprehensive framework for understanding consensual non-monogamous relationships as complex relational

systems. The findings underscore the relevance of family-of-origin experiences, attachment patterns, boundary negotiation, and relational security in informing psychotherapeutic assessment and intervention with individuals and couples involved in consensual non-monogamous relationships.

Keywords: attachment theory; consensual non-monogamous relationships; couple dynamics; systemic psychotherapy.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF PSYCHOSIS

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Introduction: The relationship between love and psychosis is complex, involving both the potential of romantic love to trigger psychotic episodes and the challenges faced by patients in initiating and maintaining romantic relationships. **Methods:** Romantic love may induce a state resembling psychosis, characterized by obsession, fixation, and a diminished connection with reality. Thus, in individuals whose personality becomes transformed within a psychotic context, the intense experience of falling in love may threaten personal boundaries and psychological equilibrium, potentially leading to psychotic decompensation. **Results:** Individuals whose lives are profoundly transformed by psychosis often desire love and intimate relationships, yet they face numerous obstacles, including reduced confidence in their own perceptions and in others, social stigma, and socioeconomic difficulties. Research suggests that, although patients experience complex and nuanced emotions, the illness itself may exert an “alienating effect” on interpersonal relationships, ultimately contributing to social isolation. Regarding functioning and social connectedness, findings are mixed. Having a romantic partner may be associated with fewer positive and negative symptoms, possibly due to increased social support, improved self-esteem, and reduced feelings of loneliness. At the same time, however, romantic relationships may also act as triggers for relapse, particularly when they are stressful, conflictual, or abusive. Support and psychoeducation groups provide a controlled and stimulating microenvironment in which individuals can experience and explore life in its multiple dimensions. Within such a setting, love emerges as a natural and ubiquitous aspect of human experience and may serve as a resource for both personal and group psychological balance. **Conclusions:** The relationship between love and psychosis is complex. Support and psychoeducation groups may provide a protective and supportive framework for learning about, experiencing, and managing different forms of love, including self-love, affection toward peers, and romantic love.

Keywords: love, psychosis, rehabilitation, group

PARENTAL LOVE: FOUNDATION OF ATTACHMENT AND FACTOR OF PROTECTION OR PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY

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Introduction: In most psychological models, parental love is the starting point of relational safety, the foundation on which early attachment is built. The transgenerational perspective, however, proposes a necessary addition to this model: parental love is never a neutral or purely present phenomenon, but is structured by the unprocessed history of the parent and, beyond the parent, of the extended family. **Methods:** This paper examines parental love through the concept of the archaic basic conflict (Sabine Lück, Ingrid Alexander), the structural tension between the child's survival instinct and its impulse toward individuation, and proposes a twofold reading of this phenomenon: parental love as a protective factor when it supports the child's autonomy, and as a factor of psycho-emotional vulnerability when it is conditioned by the parent's unmet needs. **Results:** The central mechanism producing this dual function is the loyalty contract, developed within transgenerational systemic therapy by Sabine Lück (Institut für Transgenerative Prozesse, Wendeburg) through the Generation-Code® method. The child, unable to tolerate the insufficiency of parental support, enters an unconscious pact through which it sacrifices parts of its own self in order to contribute to the parent's emotional maturation. The love received thus becomes conditioned by the child's capacity to fulfil this transgenerational task, a mechanism that continues in the concept of the introjected introject (Ingrid Alexander), through which the unprocessed contents of previous generations are internalised as part of one's own identity. The

paper documents the operationalisation of this theoretical framework through two applied instruments developed within the Generation-Code® method: the systemic board Poarta (The Gate), a visual and experiential instrument for exploring relationships, conflicts and resources in therapeutic, educational and social-intervention contexts; and the transgenerational diagnostic and therapy game Rădăcini Puternice® (Strong Roots, Sabine Lück), which allows the decoding of attachment and loyalty patterns transmitted transgenerationally. Both instruments translate the theoretical concepts, the archaic basic conflict and the loyalty contract, into direct experience, accessible both in clinical settings and in the professional training of specialists in the psychosocial and educational fields. Conclusion: The paper offers a twofold contribution: theoretical, through the extension of the concepts of archaic basic conflict and loyalty contract to the analysis of parental love as an axis of early attachment; and practical, through the documentation of two experiential instruments, Poarta and Rădăcini Puternice®, which make possible, beyond the clinical setting, the methodological transfer to the practice of professionals in mental health, social work and education. The theme is proposed for presentation at the conference as a paper, while the two instruments mentioned, Poarta and Rădăcini Puternice®, will be presented separately, within two distinct experiential workshops.

Keywords: parental love, attachement, roots

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF LOVE AND ITS MISSING LANGUAGE IN PSYCHIATRY

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Introduction: Love remains a clinical category without a language in standard psychiatric assessment, although phenomenology has described it systematically for over a century. The paper starts from two clinical vignettes: two women admitted with severe depressive episodes, one after a suicide attempt, the other with active suicidal ideation. The diagnosis was correct and the treatment appropriate, yet incomplete: exploration of the lived world revealed, behind the symptoms, a suffering in love, namely a grief denied social recognition and the collapse of the only space in which the patient had existed as a subject of desire. Objective: To propose a rigorous phenomenological language for suffering in love, suitable for integration into psychiatric assessment. Method: Conceptual phenomenological analysis grounded in Heidegger's structural account (intentional object, temporality, agency), in Kolnai's asymmetry thesis, and the volume *Phenomenologies of Love* (2025). Results: The central thesis, love as the originary ontological structure of being-with-others, is developed in five steps: love precedes value and opens access to the irreducible person (Scheler, Husserl); it has a constitutive bodily structure (Merleau-Ponty, Depraz); it has a temporal structure in which finitude is internal (Perrin, de Warren); it constitutes the relation that precedes its terms (Buber, Levinas, Patočka); it grounds an engaged epistemology of encounter (Lavelle, Ó Murchadha). Four confusions (fusion, idealization, possession, regulative dependency) and the spectrum of psychopathological distortions (mania, depression, anxiety, erotomania, personality disorders) are delineated. Conclusions: No psychiatric assessment is complete without a language for love; phenomenology provides it with clinical rigor.

Keywords: clinical phenomenology; love; depression; suicide risk; psychopathology.

LOVE AND MENTAL HEALTH – MEANINGS AND DIMENSIONS

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Introduction: Love is a broad construct that includes emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and neurobiological processes. Classical conceptualizations distinguish four fundamental forms of love: storge (familial affection), philia (friendship and companionate love), eros (romantic and passionate love), and agape (altruistic, unconditional love). Each form addresses distinct psychological needs and contributes differently to emotional regulation, resilience, identity formation, and interpersonal adaptation. Methods: A narrative review of the literature was conducted between 2020-2026 using publications indexed in medical and psychological journals. Studies addressing attachment, romantic relationships, family bonds, social connectedness, neurobiology of love, and psychiatric outcomes were examined, together with theoretical and empirical research exploring the interaction between love and psychopathology. Results: The literature shows that secure, reciprocal, and emotionally supportive relationships are

associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, suicidality, substance use, and stress-related disorders, while promoting psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. Alternatively, dysfunctional, traumatic, or unrequited forms of love may contribute to emotional dysregulation, pathological jealousy, dependency, interpersonal violence, and increased vulnerability to mood, anxiety, personality, and psychotic disorders. New type of love towards AI were also explored. Conclusions: Love represents far more than a social or cultural phenomenon; it is a significant psychological and neurobiological factor influencing mental health throughout life. Understanding the multiple dimensions of love—from familial attachment and friendship to romantic and altruistic love—may improve the conceptualization of psychiatric disorders and support more comprehensive, person-centered approaches to prevention, treatment, and psychosocial rehabilitation.

Keywords: love, mental health, attachment, psychopathology, romantic relationships.

LONG TERM TEXT BASED ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: AN ATTACHEMENT BASED PERSPECTIVE ON PARTNER IDEALIZATION AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Introduction: To critically synthesize current psychological literature on long-term text-based romantic relationships, emphasizing attachment processes, partner idealization, emotional intimacy, and clinical implications within digitally mediated romantic contexts. As exclusively text-based communication increasingly shapes interpersonal relationships, understanding its underlying psychological mechanisms has become relevant for research and clinical practice. **Methods:** A narrative review of peer-reviewed literature from attachment theory, interpersonal psychology, cyberpsychology, psychotherapy, and computer-mediated communication research was conducted, integrating seminal theoretical models with contemporary empirical evidence to examine emotional bonding, selective self-disclosure, interpersonal trust, partner idealization, and psychological vulnerability in long-term text-based romantic relationships. **Results:** Current evidence indicates that long-term text-based romantic relationships may foster heightened perceived emotional intimacy while facilitating selective self-presentation, cognitive idealization, and increased emotional investment. Individual differences in attachment anxiety and avoidance may shape the development and maintenance of emotionally significant relationships despite minimal or absent physical interaction. Limited availability of nonverbal cues may promote idealized interpersonal representations of a partner, increasing discrepancies between perceived compatibility within the textual medium and actual compatibility, often observable only in face-to-face interaction, with impact on emotional regulation, reassurance seeking, relationship satisfaction, and vulnerability to anxiety or relational distress following dissolution. **Conclusions:** Long-term text-based romantic relationships represent an increasingly important interpersonal phenomenon deserving greater attention within clinical psychology and psychiatry. Integrating attachment theory with contemporary models of computer-mediated communication may improve psychological assessment, case formulation, and individualized psychotherapeutic interventions, while expanding current conceptualizations of intimacy in the digital era. Future research should clarify attachment-related mechanisms underlying adaptive and maladaptive patterns of digital intimacy and their implications for long-term psychological well-being.

Keywords: attachment theory, digital intimacy, text-based relationships, partner idealization, cyberpsychology

MENTAL HEALTH AND UPROOTING

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Introduction: Migration is a major socio-demographic phenomenon with significant implications for mental health, particularly in countries with high emigration rates such as Romania. The process of uprooting involves profound social and identity-related transformations that may affect psychological adjustment. **Hypothesis:** It is assumed that acculturative stress is associated with an increased risk of mental health disorders, while sense of belonging and the preservation of cultural identity act as protective factors. **Material and Methods:** This paper represents a literature

review based on the critical analysis of international and European studies addressing migrant mental health. The review integrates research on acculturative stress, social identity theory, and cultural adaptation models. Results: The reviewed literature consistently shows an association between acculturative stress and higher levels of depression and anxiety. Cultural adaptation strategies significantly influence psychological outcomes, with integration being associated with better adjustment, whereas marginalization is linked to poorer mental health. Social identity and belongingness are identified as key protective factors enhancing psychological resilience. Conclusions: Migrant mental health is shaped by the complex interaction of individual, social, and cultural determinants. Psychological interventions and public policies should incorporate culturally sensitive approaches that support identity and belonging in migrant populations.

Keywords: migration, mental health, acculturative stress, social identity, belonging

LOVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: RELATIONSHIPS DYNAMICS AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES

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Introduction: The accelerated changes in the digital environment have profoundly altered the way people start, develop, and end romantic relationships. Over the past two decades, dating apps, social networks, and more recently AI-based conversational agents have created new forms of emotional interaction, with significant implications for mental health and psychiatric practice. Methods: This paper reviews recent literature on: (1) the neurobiology of attachment in a digital context and its peculiarities compared to face-to-face relationships; (2) the psychological impact of dating apps, including relationship burnout, ghosting, and the influence of attachment styles; (3) psychopathological vulnerabilities associated with relationships with AI, such as digital emotional dependency, the illusion of intimacy, and risks for vulnerable individuals; and (4) implications for psychiatric practice, focusing on medical history, risk assessment, and therapeutic intervention. Results: Recent literature highlights a clinically relevant paradox: tools designed to facilitate interpersonal connection can, for some users, promote isolation, emotional burnout, and psychological vulnerability. A meta-analysis published in 2025 (Bowman et al.), which included 23 studies and over 26,000 participants, showed that dating app users have significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and psychological distress compared to non-users. Among the mechanisms involved are repeated exposure to implicit rejection, gamification of the partner selection process, and the erosion of self-esteem through continuous social evaluation. An emerging area is romantic relationships developed with AI agents. Available data suggest that users can develop emotional attachments comparable, from certain psychological perspectives, to those in human relationships, which can promote digital affective dependency, reduce investment in real-life relationships, and, in particular cases, lead to psychopathological manifestations associated with changes or interruptions in access to AI platforms. Conclusion, digital technologies do not reduce the fundamental need for attachment and connection, but they change the ways it is expressed, creating new opportunities as well as new psychopathological vulnerabilities. Understanding these phenomena becomes essential for the contemporary psychiatrist, who must integrate the digital dimension of relationships into the clinical evaluation and management of patients.

Keywords: AI, digital, love, relationships, vulnerability

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