

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS REGARDING THE RAISING OF CHILDREN IN NARCISSISTIC FAMILIES. THEORETICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *The paper aims at an integrative review of current knowledge about narcissistic parenting, and the impact of this disorder on the child. A child can experience the most hidden forms of abuse in his or her own family when one or both parents experience narcissistic personality disorders. The pattern of action specific to this family includes practices such as manipulation, non-compliance with barriers, enhancement, triangulation, isolation, hoovering, projection etc. tactfully exercised by the narcissistic parent for the purpose of acquiring the control and power absolutely necessary for his deconstructed self. The child of a narcissistic parent will experience repeated adversity (Crocker, 2009; Monk, 2001) that will affect his mental health, and according to some theories (Menzies, 2010) this unhealthy family dynamic will repeat itself. In this harmful environment, the child will grow up with unrealistic expectations from himself and others against the background of an uncontaminated and negative self, you will encounter difficulties of healthy relationship as well as in privacy. This work aimed at educational professionals in order to become aware of the seriousness of the abuse experience and to familiarize themselves with its less visible symptoms.*

Key words: *parental narcissism; co-narcissism; abuse; co-narcissism; educators; reporting abuse*

Background. Brief introduction to the issue of narcissism

A simple search on the Google Academic engine of the term narcissism indicates 246,000 works, which demonstrates the special interest of specialists for this type of disorder. A brief foray into the history of the concept of narcissism (Raskin and Terry, 1988) shows that it was first used in 1925 when Walder used it to describe a personality totally absorbed by self-admiration associated with the tendency to lose sexual emotions. As the two authors observe, the term is later associated with sexual perversion (Nacke, 1899) and the term is integrated into Freud's research. Narcissistic personality disorder is part of category B of personality disorders, characterized according to DSM V by a very low empathic level, a pattern of behaviour dominated by the need for validation, grandiosity, admiration, with a strong self-centred personality.

Category B personality disorders include: antisocial personality disorder, Borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder. Although distinct as symptoms and manifestations, the common characteristics of the four personality disorders are: the existence of interpersonal conflicts, emotional imbalances and impulsivity (Nioche et al, 2010), an exacerbated egocentrism and lack of empathy, ranked by Baron Cohen (2020) "zero-negative empathy".

Narcissistic disorder presents precise characteristics on the 6 levels of functioning, namely the concept of self, social adaptation, human relationships, standards and ideals, love and sexuality and cognitive style (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982). Literature in the field distinguishes between grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. Grand narcissism includes the exacerbated need for approval and admiration giving rise to the outward search for self enhancement. The vulnerable narcissist experiences anger, lack of empathy, aggression, low self-esteem, shame, avoidance (Akhtar, 2003, Dickinson and Pincus, 2003, sunset Campbell, 2011). Narcissistic personality is distinguished by a grandiose sense of self-importance, exhibitionism, and constant concern for success, brilliance, ideal love, low resistance to stress and criticism, interpersonal exploitation, overridealization and devaluation in relationships, etc.

Methods

The literature review was performed on the Academic, Elsevier and Web of Science platforms. The searches were limited to the years 2003, or later to ensure the inclusion of the most current research in the field, we referred only to 3 older reference works.

Specific features of narcissistic personality disorder.

He has an exaggerated sense of his own importance and manifests a grandiose behavior, always poses and displays an attitude of superiority; has a constant and acute need to be admired and validated by those around him, whom he paradoxically treats with arrogance and contempt. He's persistently seeking this admiration with which he feeds his inner emptiness. His behaviour varies according to the context: kind, charming and seductive on the outside becomes critical, angry and irresponsible within the family. He is not emotionally available until he has a precise purpose, unable to admit his mistake, envious and jealous, unable to show empathy. The need for control is exaggerated, it applies double standards in relationships with others, it feels entitled to receive special treatment, it is perceived as special- it is distinguished by the fact that it humiliates any success or success of other people, minimizing their merits. They have an immature perception of the world, frame people and deeds in black and white; He's a complete manipulator, he's used to challenging people and then blaming them.

These peculiarities of the person with narcissistic disorder "are justified" by his extremely low esteem, by the huge fear of being known to others as they perceive themselves: weak, unimportant, unvaluable, self-esteems that they formed in their small childhood in the context of emotionally deficient relationships with their parents. Therefore, they learn from a young age that if they seem bright, valuable, important they will receive the love they so badly need; this behavioural pattern becomes an axis of their life, becomes a lifestyle, therefore they become manipulative and seek by any means to make a good impression, to feed on appreciation and praise to maintain their self-esteem.

Due to the fragility of the self-confidence, the very low self-esteem, the narcissist reacts violently to any criticism, or any rejection situation being a victim of the loveless environment in which he grew up. He experienced the "guilt" of not being loved, so he reacts totally inappropriately to guilt and shame. In fact, the entire arsenal of harmful acts that describe narcissist behaviour are nothing but largely unconscious defence mechanisms. Narcissism is about lack of self-worth, where the self is besieged and armed against adversity (Hendrick, 2016).

Looking for the roots of the narcissistic personality disorder

In the etiology of narcissism determinants are genetic and environmental factors - research argues that genetic factors significantly influence the contouring of a particular type/variation of narcissism, the stability of narcissism and its associations with other personalities, Cai (2018). According to the theory of Bronfenbrenner ecological systems (1979 apud Washburn, &Paskar (2011) child development is influenced by the

microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem, respectively by the interaction of caregivers, brothers, school, organizations with which the child comes into direct or indirect contact. The paradoxical characteristics of the narcissist consist in the attitude of superiority over those whose admiration and acceptance is most needed (Thomaes, Brummelman, & Sedikids (2018). Moreover, Menaker (1953) observed that masochist parents compensate for the lack of sufficient positive maternal feelings by spoil and overprotecting their children. Children in such backgrounds are often able to secure their love only through inappropriate behaviour (Berliner, 1947) or physical illness (Panken, 1983), leading them to believe that they are most loved when they suffer. Fernando (1988) presents a different point of view, more precisely contrary to the perspective at that time on the etiology of narcissistic personality disorder: the author presents a clinical material that demonstrates that the narcissistic personality is formed under the conditions of an attitude of overprotection, parental overvaluation, spoiled during childhood, which leads to difficulties in regulating self-esteem and a poor integration of the superego.

Growing up with a narcissistic parent- "Don't be yourself! Be the one I need!!"

According to Golomb (1992) parental narcissism is considered as excessive self-absorption where the needs of the parent are more important than the needs of the children. A childhood in which the child's desires, needs and feelings are less important than those of the primary parental figure can generate an adult "who develops a foul sense of self". The parent with mental health problems will most likely grow a child with psychiatric problems; Berg-Nielsen, T.S., Wichström (2012) identify emotional and behavioural dysfunctions in 922 pre-schoolers with one of the parents with borderline, antisocial or narcissistic disorder. It is recommended to know by specialists in social services the symptoms of these disorders which represent a real risk to the mental health of the child. Another study of 328 young people aged 17-25 shows that overprotection is a specific risk factor in the formation of narcissistic traits (both vulnerable and grandiose) in children rather than neglect or mistreatment behaviour (Van Schie, Huxley, 2020). In general, the narcissistic parental environment can be characterized by physical, emotional or sexual abuse, psychological and physical neglect, violently treated mother, drug use, mental illness, divorce and detention (Felitti et al, 1988). Since 1974, Berkowitz has noticed that in narcissistic families the child responsible for parental self-esteem is systematically devalued. The problems of perception of reality, emotional response and poor adaptation of the narcissistic parent facilitate in turn the formation of dysfunctions of the child Fjelstad, McBride (2020, p.19); the most common are:

- Difficulty trusting their feelings and thoughts

- Emotionally dysfunctional understanding;
- Struggle with appropriate bounces
- Fail to recognize healthy romantic partners
- Fall into a caretaker role and people
- May develop narcissistic behaviours themselves

The need to feed his de-structured self and to feel superior is so strong that the narcissistic parent always criticizes his child, humiliates him to fulfil his need for superiority. The child of such a parent will feel that he is never good enough, cannot live freely or make his own choices due to the constraints imposed by the narcissistic parent. He will understand that he must deserve the love of his parents, being therefore, under a permanent pressure to do everything perfectly to satisfy his always dissatisfied parent. He does not respect the limits and desires of the child but imposes and projects on him his own dreams; the child represents for him a means to fulfil his selfish needs (positive image, respect, admiration). The child cannot feel the unconditional love of the parent, on the contrary, he represents a danger, a threat to his parent, therefore his successes will be minimized and the child always assured that something is wrong with him.

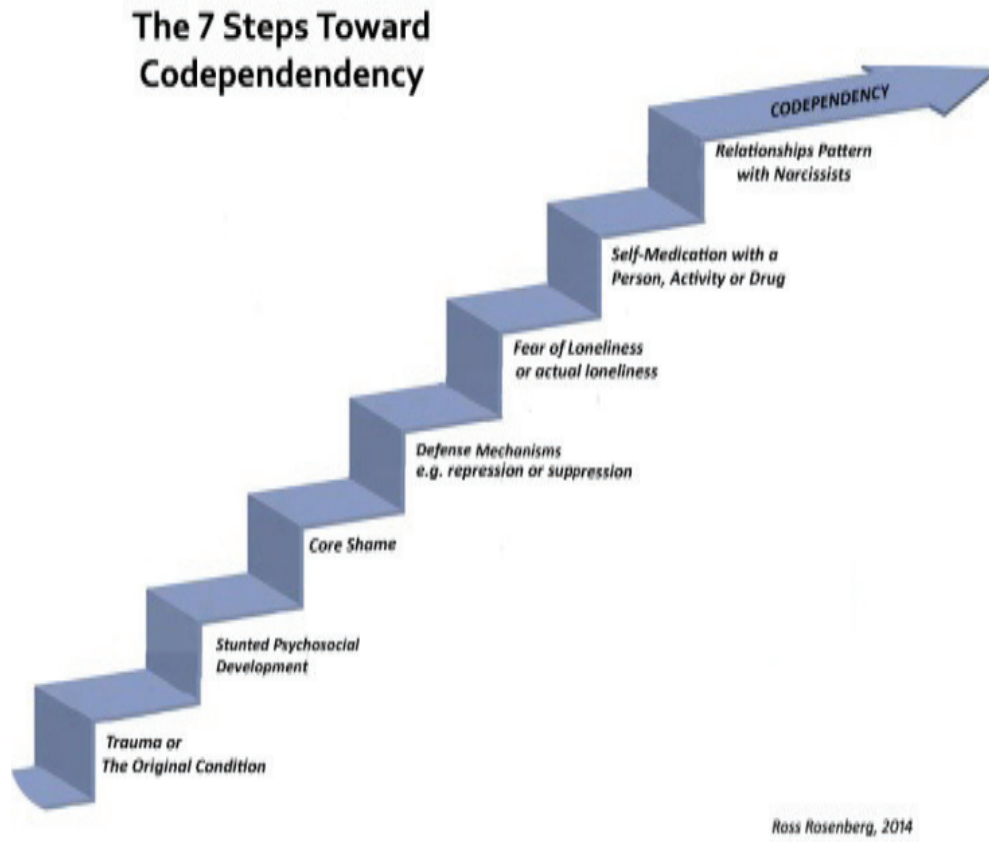
However, the child is invited and taught to believe himself as strong, important and special; however, the narcissistic parent will apply in the relationship with the child or the same well-known manipulative practices: gaslight, inducing guilt, triangulation (permanent comparison with someone perceived better), emotional blackmail. Beliefs and dysfunctional habits, the quality of victim in the relationship with the narcissistic parent, feelings of guilt and a distorted self-image, here are some dimensions of the child's universe with narcissistic parents that are objectives in the process of healing, understanding the context and liberation from under "tyranny" of the parent with narcissistic disorder.

Growing up with a narcissistic parent Rappoport (2005) frames the adaptive responses to the behaviour or abuse of the narcissistic person in the term co-narcissism. The author shows that a significant segment of people fail to develop healthy means of self-expression. The child of the narcissistic parent learns to respond to the demands of the parent who punishes his need for freedom, or any inappropriate expression.

The prospect of the withdrawal of the affection places the child in the posterity to build a false self- he does not have the necessary maturity to counteract the blame, unjustifiable anger or humiliation of his parent, so he adapts, but in an unhealthy manner, becoming the child who deserves to be loved according to the parents' criteria. The emotional development of the child is threatened in a narcissistic family, so his or her childhood is an atraumatic (Määttä et al, 2020). The child gradually learns to respond appropriately, i.e. according to the needs of parents, and will become dependant on it in relations with others. Rosenberg (2018) is developing a

linear progress on Trauma scheme. Starting from the abuse of the narcissist father, the development of the child's psychosocial development

The 7 Steps Toward Codependency



The dynamics of the child's relationship with the parent, that is, of the narcissist with the co-narcissist, includes co-dependency: the narcissist is at the forefront seeking appreciation, attention and confirmation and the co-narcissist makes sure that he can provide these things Rappoport (2005). The author differentiates between what is meant by the relationship naturally and the narcissistic encounter in which there is only one person, namely the narcissist. Gardner (2006) speaks of a false self-conformity of the child who sacrifices himself for the narcissistic parent. Later, the child experiences a strong conflict determined by the need to abandon the malignant identity taken from the narcissistic parent and the need to absorb it. The Self Absorbed Parent (Brown, 2008) focused on himself in any circumstance

defines the narcissistic parent who manifests the following symptoms: grandiosity, entitlement attitude, envy, arrogance, lack of empathy, intolerance of the child's needs, etc. The most powerful feelings of the child are betrayal (because he is not loved for himself but for the submissive role of the parent), shame (because he does not have the courage to be himself), the need to please others (to be able to gain the acceptance, love and respect he needs), guilt, fear, frustration. McBride (2019, p.41) identifies ten clues to the relationship dynamics between the child and the narcissistic parent: repeated attempts by the child to gain the love, attention and approval of his parent, the parent was more concerned with appearances than what the child feels, envy or the jealousy of the parent on his own child, the parent does not support the free and authentic expression of the child's self if it contradicted his needs, everything is organized according to the needs of the narcissistic parent, healthy boundaries are not respected, the child does not enjoy privacy, the narcissistic parent is critical, empathetic and unable to manage his emotions. Of course, the child correctly receives the emotional vacuum of the narcissistic parent (Frans de Waal, 2012).

In a narrative research, Määttä&Uusiautti (2020) describes the perception of the investigated subjects regarding their narcissistic childhood: incompetent childhood, isolated childhood, and denied childhood. If my own mother can't love me, who can? The narcissistic mother creates the connection with her child only when she needs that connection, the child learns that he is valuable and worthy of love only when he is useful, so he will try to be useful and please everyone (Mc Bride, 2008). In the mother-daughter relationship, the author describes some consequences of the narcissistic relationship between the two: difficulties in experiencing and trusting one's feelings, difficulty in living one's own life authentically, difficulty in perceiving oneself as a person independent of one's mother. and so on It seems that this rejection of the eastern mother is perceived as a physical pain, being activated the same areas of the brain, the damage being extremely high depending on the intensity and frequency of these traumatic events. (Kross et al. 2011) The child does not allow himself the freedom to be who he is, he must be the extension of the parent, to be the one that the parents need (Haller, 2013).

In the narcissistic family, the circle of trauma continues from parents to children, from one generation to another; the roles given to each member depend, among other things, on gender, however, a parent's narcissistic traits leave deep imprints on each member of the Wilson family (2020). Menzies (2010), in a broader context on the conditions that favor the transmission of intergenerational trauma, identifies with the individual and the family, the community and the nation. He proposes a scheme of these factors among which Child welfare, family violence and mental health are vulnerable points in narcissistic families.



Figure 2. Intergenerational Trauma Scheme

The category of family factors includes: episodes of violence, abuse, poor child-parent ties, irregular contact or absence with the caregiver / mother. The literature shows that in narcissistic families with several children, one of them will bear the burden of being the golden child, designated by the narcissistic parent to represent his perfect, idealized image. The role of the golden child is to be perfect in everything, he does not apply the rules that other members follow (Johnson, 2017). In this situation, the child becomes a property, an extension of his parent who projects on him all the grandeur and perfection, as his images. The personality of the parent cancels the personality of the child who will represent the narcissistic parent in the format he needs. This merging that no longer allows the child to build a separate identity is called enmeshment. The overestimation of the golden child contradicts the denigrating, humiliating treatment applied to the child called the scapegoat who is permanently triangulated, ie compared, placed in the shadow of the golden child to accentuate his self-doubt and discourage him from any attempt to threaten this pathological model. Two parental models of care have emerged that may constitute aetiologies of narcissistic personality disorder: overprotection and neglect. In the first case, the child does not have the opportunity to face adversity, does not have the opportunity to activate his resources; develops as an adult, lacking problem-solving strategies, feels like insult, insult, offense, every contradictory opinion. His constant focus on his childhood needs limits his empathic development. He outlines a fragile personality, but being accustomed to

pampering will develop a demanding, arrogant attitude and will live an illusory reality. Too little emotional attention also leads to the development of narcissistic traits. The child without love, looks for her in every person around her, "shouts" for affection and approval in all his relationships; " the narcissistic wound "gives him a" narcissistic power "to be charming, seductive, bright in order to receive in return the love he so desperately needs. So the narcissistic wound has its origin in the huge pressure to be successful in the individual's family; the lack of parental empathy awakens an "insatiable hunger" for valorisation (Haller, 2013, pp73-75.)

The fundamental role of the educator in recognizing Indicators of emotional abuse

The educator has a fundamental role in the early recognition of possible cases of abuse, although some studies argue their reluctance to report them (Goebbels, 2008). Emotional abuse has been recognized in the mental health and legal professions, although legislating measures to report these cases is difficult due to the difficulty of recognizing indicators of this type of hidden abuse. In some states, licensing of professionals is conditional on taking a 2-hour course to identify and report child abuse (Reiniger et al, 1995). It is unanimously accepted that a child raised by a narcissistic parent experiences emotional abuse, at least if not physical or sexual. Emotional abuse is a mark of narcissism and includes accusation, minimization or refusal, unequal treatment of siblings.

The effects are most often behaviorally visible but often translate into psychosomatic symptoms, speech disorders, or developmental delays. The most visible indicators are Deep bruises or broken bones malnutrition (as psychic signs), aggression, lack of self-confidence, radical changes in behavior, reduced availability of cooperation and dialogue, poor relationships with others, more mature or immature behavior compared to biological age, destructive behavior with oneself and others, lying, discomfort at the physical approach of other people, etc. (Tower, 2003). Beck et al (1994) report the reluctance of professionals to report cases of abuse: the authors argue a tendency to report more strongly cases of sexual abuse and less likely cases of emotional abuse.

Conclusion

Various studies (Monk, 2001, Crocker, 2009) have found correlations between parental narcissism and adverse mental health and relationship outcomes. Righteous people create conflict and hostility in their relationships (Moeller, Crocker, Bushman, 2009), this type of relationship being associated with high scores of depressions and lower scores of self-esteems (Leggio, 2018). In the narcissistic family, the child is systematically

devalued, the parent's priority being to restore his own balance (Berkowitz, 1974); Shaw (2010) identifies among the effects of exposure to narcissistic pathology, the loss of intersubjective functioning in relationships of adult children. A variety of behavioral, physical, and developmental indicators can be identified by educators.

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