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## **“Love is a painful feeling” - Experience of closeness in young women with personality disorder traits**

### **„Miłość to uczucie pełne cierpienia” - doświadczenia bliskości przez młode kobiety z cechami zaburzeń osobowości**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of closeness among young women and its relationship with personality disorder traits. Individuals displaying personality disorders can experience problems in their relationships and perceive love negatively. The study involved a group of 242 young women. Personality disorder traits were assessed using the Structured Clinical Interview for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Axis II Disorders. The experience of love was described through analysis of 242 narratives about love. The results show three main types of love experience in young women: positive, active-negative, and passive-negative. Positive love experience is connected with high dependent personality traits, ‘passive-negative’ experience of love is linked to high personality disorder traits. Lower positive love experience is associated with high state anxiety in young women. The findings portrayed socially determined attitude of femininity that is deeply rooted in mentality of young women.

**Keywords:** anxiety, love, personality disorders

**Abstrakt:** Celem badania było opisanie doświadczenia bliskości i miłości w relacji romantycznej u młodych kobiet z cechami zaburzeń osobowości. Literatura wskazuje, iż osoby przejawiające zaburzenia osobowości doświadczają wiele problemów w ich bliskich relacjach romantycznych oraz postrzegają miłość dość negatywnie. Jednak młode kobiety z takimi cechami dotychczas nie były przedmiotem badań. Dlatego też badaniami objęto grupę 242 młodych kobiet. Cechy zaburzeń osobowości były diagnozowane przy pomocy Ustrukturalizowanego Wywiadu SCID-II na podstawie DSM-IV do oceny na zaburzeń z osi II. Doświadczenie bliskości i miłości analizowano na podstawie badań narracji o miłości napisanych przez kobiety. Rezultaty analizy czynnikowej wskaźników narracyjnych wskazują, iż można wyodrębnić trzy główne style doświadczania bliskości i miłości u młodych kobiet: pozytywny, negatywny aktywny, negatywny pasywny. Wielozmiennowa analiza regresji ukazała, iż pozytywne doświadczanie bliskości jest powiązane wysokim nasileniem cech osobowości zależnej. Ponadto, negatywne pasywne doświadczanie bliskości jest powiązane z wysokim nasileniem wielu cech zaburzeń osobowości. Niskie pozytywne doświadczanie miłości i bliskości wiąże się także z wysokim lękiem jako cechą u młodych kobiet. Wyniki ogólnie wskazują na społecznie zdeterminowaną postawę kobiecości, która jest zakorzeniona w mentalności młodych kobiet.

**Słowa kluczowe:** miłość, lęk, zaburzenia osobowości

## 1. Introduction

Closeness is the same as love - is the principal and basic human emotions playing a key role in interpersonal relationships. The structure of love is determined by a number of different factors (Fehr, Broughton, 2001; Harvey, Wenzel, Sprecher, 2004). In the literature, it is pointed out that love is a complex state of positive valence, yet different from person to person; researchers describe various patterns, forms and components of love (Fehr, 2006; Sternberg, 1986). Love is differently experienced by people and individuals that differ in their attitudes towards love (Hendrick, Hendrick, 2006; Sternberg, Weiss, 2006). The variety of factors such as sex, culture, personality traits influencing love experience and attitudes towards it, have been thoroughly analysed (Dion, Dion, 2006; Schmitt, Yoon, Bond, Brooks, Frye, Johnson, Klesman, Peplinski, Sampias, Sherrill, Stoka, 2009). One of the factors which have not been exhaustively examined includes personality disorders traits (Trzebińska, Jakubiak, Kołakowski, Struś, 2015). Personality disorder traits are of non-adaptive and inflexible nature, they significantly contribute to mental distress and impair functioning (Butcher, Hooley, Mineka, 2017; DSM-5, 2013). These patterns develop over a longer period of time and its occurrence cannot be explained by other impairments, while the observable behaviours are not caused by substances or general neurological damage (Butcher et al., 2017). Such dysfunctional patterns comprise affective functioning which can impact love experience and its perception (Gawda, 2017; Trzebińska et al., 2015).

As suggested in the literature, gender is one of the key factors that determine the experience and perception of love (Canary, Emmers-Sommer, Faulkner, 1997; Harvey et al., 2004) and principally by the stereotypical social female and male roles. Women and men display different range of interpersonal skills and might have different expectations and experiences in relationships (Shields, 2002). Research has shown that women express stronger affection than men (Floyd, 1997). Women experience emotions more often, more intensely (with the exception of anger), and also reveal greater sensitivity to the emotions of other people (Brody, 1997; Shaffer, 2000; Wytykowska, Petrides, 2007). They have been found to generally show greater understanding for the emotions of others and they better analyse emotional situations (Shaffer, 2000). Other authors suggest that men, rather than be less emotionally expressive, they tend to perceive their emotions differently (Burns, 2002). Conversely, Shimanoff (1983) demonstrated only minor differences in the ways men and women talk about emotions. Hence, the literature presents varied information on the differences between men and women in their perception of love (Gawda, 2008a). Similarly, literature points out that there are differences between men and women in personality disorder traits and personality disorders occurrence (Gawda, Czubak, 2017; Paris, 2004). Thus, the analyses of relationship between perception of love and personality disorder

should be conducted separately in male and female populations. With regard to sex differences in personality disorders, literature presents data that women more often display dependent, borderline, and histrionic personality disorder traits (Gawda, Czubak, 2017; Klonsky, Jane, Turkheimer, Oltmanns, 2002; Paris, 2004). In the DSM-V (2013) personality disorders are grouped into three clusters. Cluster A comprising odd or eccentric disorders such as schizoid, schizotypal, and paranoid is more frequently identified in men. Schizotypal personality disorder is (3.9% average) more common in men (4.2%) than in women (3.7%) (Pulay, Stinson, Dawson, Goldstein, Chou, Huang, Grant, 2009). As for dramatic or erratic disorders in Cluster B, their prevalence is also related to sex. In particular, antisocial personality disorder is more frequently shown in men. It is estimated to occur on average at a rate of 2% in the overall population, including 1%-2% rates among women in the USA (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). While some disorders, like borderline disorder, are more common in women (6.2% vs 5.95 in men; Paris, 2004), the differences are not always significant (Grant, Chou, Goldstein, Huang, Stinson, Saha, Ruan, 2008). With regard to Cluster C, i.e. anxious or fearful disorders comprising dependent, avoidant and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders, it is shown that they more often occur in women, e.g. dependent personality (Paris, 2004). Importantly, it is suggested that there are fixed sex differences in the prevalence of personality disorder traits in various countries (Gawda, Czubak, 2017). Researchers point out that gender differences related to normal personality traits may affect the personality disorder trait prevalence (Klonsky et al., 2002). Some scientists insist that the varied frequency of personality disorders in men and women may be associated with gender-related prejudices (Jane, Oltmanns, South, Turkheimer, 2007).

The relationship between personality disorder traits and love experience/ perception has been previously analysed in different samples in general terms, i.e. analysed groups were not subdivided into young men and young women groups but analysed as a whole (Gawda, 2017; Trzebińska et al., 2015). It is important to analyse love experience among young generations as they possibly experience it in a particular way. This can be due to personality traits they often reported with in the literature such as immaturity, internet-focused, virtuality, restlessness, and isolation (Twenge, 2017), and preference of digital communication forms over in-person (Venter, 2017).

Regarding relationship between love and personality disorders/personality disorder traits in women, the literature points out that women with dependent personality disorder traits present a propensity for the style of love defined as Mania (Trzebińska et al., 2015). Mania is a kind of obsessive love (Hendricks, Hendrick, 2006). Ludus type (playful love) of love seems to be characteristic in the case of antisocial personality disorders in women (Trzebińska et al., 2015). Furthermore, Pragma style (pragmatic) of love is less common in women but more frequent in men with narcissistic disorder (Rohmann, Neumann, Herner, Bierhoff, 2012). Women seem to pay less attention to their own good. In women histrionic

personality traits are associated with increased romantic fascination with the partner (Eros type (romantic, erotic) of love) (Trzebińska et al., 2015).

Data reported in the literature is mostly on a specified personality disorders/or personality disorder traits and their relationship with love, while other types of personality disorder have been not examined in terms of their associations. Thus, the aim of the current study is to test links between all personality disorder traits and experience of love. Then, considering the data on sex differences in prevalence of personality disorders and sex differences on love experience, we examine this relationship in a sample of young women aged between 18 and 23. We focused on young women because this is a group likely involved in love relationship. Love experience is of utmost importance for them; it related to young women's self-esteem, identity, relationships with others, social adaptation, and potentially with affective problems (Needham, Terrence, 2010). This is based on data indicating that women experience emotions more often, more intensively, and show greater understanding for the emotions in general (Brody, 1997; Shaffer, 2000).

### Hypotheses

Based on the evidence shown above, we assume that there is relationship between personality disorder traits and love experience in young women. Particularly, we expect that the most prevalent personality disorder traits in women are associated with high negative experience of love and low love positivity. Furthermore, we hypothesize that state/trait anxiety is associated with personality disorder traits in young women and that state/trait anxiety affect experience of love in negative ways. This is due to the data reporting that women often worry, feel anxiety, and express fear (Gawda, 2008a) as well as young generations are focused on the internet, immature, restless, and isolated (Twenge, 2017; Venter, 2017).

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The study group comprised 242 adult heterosexual women. All the subjects reported the same level of education (high education, roughly ten years), they were students of similar age (mean 20.29 years;  $SD = 1.61$ ) and had no neuropsychiatric disorders (as determined based on a screening interview). The study involved a student sample which is a non-clinical population. We assume that this population includes a significant number of subjects with high personality disorder traits. This is based on the data showing that personality disorders or traits of personality disorders occur in non-clinical population at a high rate (Gawda, Czubak, 2017; Torgersen, Kringlen, Cramer, 2001).

## 2.2. Procedure and Measures

The study comprised two stages. The interview carried out in Stage I contained questions related to demographic data and health problems. Subsequently, the subjects completed the STAI (The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) and wrote stories about love; narrative analysis was selected because we aimed to explore the personal view of love, individual experience of love, and the narrative technique is thought to be a good way to such investigation (Bruner, 1991; Gawda, 2008a). During the Stage II, the screening questionnaire of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis II Personality Disorders (SCID-II, First, Gibbon, Spitzer, Williams, Benjamin, Zawadzki, Pragłowska, 2010) was carried out to assess personality disorder traits. All study activities were conducted by a trained psychologist.

Research techniques:

1. The Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis II Personality Disorders (SCID-II, First et al., 2010). The interview enables assessment of twelve personality disorders. We treat the SCID-II scales dimensionally as they allow assessing personality disorder traits in terms of individual differences among women but not as categorical variables. We used a 119-item screening questionnaire corresponding to the interview questions and related to symptoms of personality disorders. Cronbach's Alpha score was calculated for each scale: dependent (.703), avoidant (.712), depressive (.745), schizoid (.732), schizotypal (.705), paranoid (.743), narcissistic (.789), histrionic (.694), borderline (.882), antisocial (.802). Descriptive statistics for personality disorder traits are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics ( $n = 242$ )

Personality disorder traits	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.
Avoidant	3.10	1.71	0	7
Dependent	3.31	1.89	0	8
Obsessive-compulsive	4.21	1.49	0	8
Depressive	3.36	1.88	0	8
Paranoid	3.01	1.66	0	8
Schizotypal	3.99	2.01	0	10
Schizoid	2.68	1.57	0	6
Histrionic	3.41	1.73	0	7
Narcissistic	4.90	2.43	0	15
Borderline	5.36	2.70	0	13
Antisocial	1.49	1.73	0	10
Perception of love				
Positivity	5.25	2.62	1	11
Negativity - passive	4.62	2.86	1	12
Negativity - active	2.67	1.43	1	7
Age	20.29	1.61	18	23
State anxiety	37.68	8.26	22	62
Trait anxiety	41.26	8.94	25	66

2. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) by Spielberger, Strelau, Tysarczyk, Wrześniewski (2011). The inventory measures the intensity of anxiety understood as state anxiety and trait anxiety (Spielberger, 1966). The questionnaire comprises 40 statements, 20 in each subscale (descriptive statistics in Table 1). The psychometric properties of the Polish STAI version are good (Spielberger et al., 2011), Cronbach's Alpha in the performed here study amounts to: trait anxiety .876, state anxiety .878.

3. Assessment of narratives about love. Each person wrote a text after hearing the following instruction: *"Try to think about what love means for you. Recall an event in your life that was or is connected with love. Write a story about it."*

The specific indicators of love experience were rated by competent judges. Every story about love was read and analysed by each judge who then identified, highlighted and counted relevant indicators of love experience. This narrative analysis technique had been used previously in examination of love stories (Gawda, 2008a, 2008b). All of indicators were numeric variables, i.e. the number of statements, words related to a particular indicator was counted for each participant. The inter-rater agreement between the competent judges assessing the stories was high: depending on the indicator, Kendall's W ranged from 0.88 to 0.99. The indicators taken into account in the analysis contained information on recognition of emotional valence, assessment of oneself and the other in the loving relationship, and acknowledgement of the meaning of the situation. The list of indicators of love experience in the narratives comprises:

- positive emotions in the actor (e.g. *I am happy*),
- acknowledgement of positive emotions in the partner (e.g. *He is happy*),
- positive description/evaluation of the partner (e.g. *He is good*),
- positive description/evaluation of the actor (e.g. *I am honest*),
- actor's negative emotions (e.g. *I am sad*),
- negative description of the actor (e.g. *I am stupid*),
- negative emotions of the partner (e.g. *He is worried*),
- negative description of the partner (e.g. *He is mean*),
- activity "towards" (e.g. *I want to kiss her*),
- activity "from" (e.g. *I want to avoid this situation*),
- activity "against" (e.g. *I want to kill this nasty bitch*),
- importance of love (e.g. *This is the most important day in my life*),
- positive ending of the story (e.g. *Everything will be fine*),
- negative ending of the story (e.g. *It will be a disaster*).

Ultimately, 14 indicators were checked for inter-correlation. This approach was adopted in order to avoid analysis of isolated features of narratives, and to take into account some complex patterns of narrative expression. We perform the exploratory factor analysis

and we found that the set of narrative indicators is grouped into three factors. We named them as types of love experience expressed in the narratives: positivity, passive negativity, and active negativity (Table 2).

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis for the narrative indicators ( $n=242$ )  
Rotated Component Matrix

	Factors		
	Positivity	Negativity - active	Negativity - passive
Actor negative emotions	-.713	.604	
Actor positive emotions	.866		
Partner negative	-.497	.527	
Partner positive	.784		
Partner emotions negative		.658	
Partner emotions positive	.820		
Actions towards	.709		
Actions from		.768	
Actions against		.556	
Important	.498		
Positive ending	.865		
Negative ending	-.855		

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

### 2.3. Statistical analyses

The narrative indicators and personality disorder traits were checked whether they are inter-correlated. Two separate exploratory factor analyses were conducted. We found that narrative indicators form three factors and personality disorder traits form three factors too. Next, three multiple regression analyses were performed to check whether the factors including traits of personality disorders, and state/trait anxiety predict narrative factors of love experience, i.e. positivity, active negativity, and passive negativity.

## 3. Results

Exploratory factor analysis identified three factors which explained 71% of the variances (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .829, Bartlett's test of sphericity = 1233.505;  $p < .001$ ). The first factor named 'positivity' comprises positive aspects of love experience, i.e. acknowledgement of the actor's positive emotions and the partner's positive emotions, positive evaluation of the partner, activity 'towards', perception of the importance of love as well as positive ending of love story. The second factor 'active negativity' comprises negative aspects of the experience of love, including the partner's negative emotions, the actor's negative emotions, negative description of the partner, and activity 'from away and against'. The third factor labelled 'passive negativity' comprises negative evaluation of the actor and low positive evaluation of the actor (Table 2). Examination of the narratives about love allow to find that among young women, the most

frequent is positive experience of love which is consistent with notion of love. However, a third part of examined women reported that their experience of love is negative (Fig. 1). Two types of negativity have been identified: named passive and active negativity. 'Passive negativity' relies on focus on self and negative evaluation of self. These women created the stories about love expressing low self-esteem and depreciation of self. They are not satisfied with themselves, they find love as a painful and negative experience, and particularly evaluate themselves as unworthy of love. 'Active negativity' is also perception of love in a negative way. Examined women perceived negative feelings in their partners, negative feelings in themselves, they observed activity 'from away' or even 'against' which means that they try to seek solutions to stop the relationship with their partners. 'Active negativity' means that they attempt to finish their negative relationships.

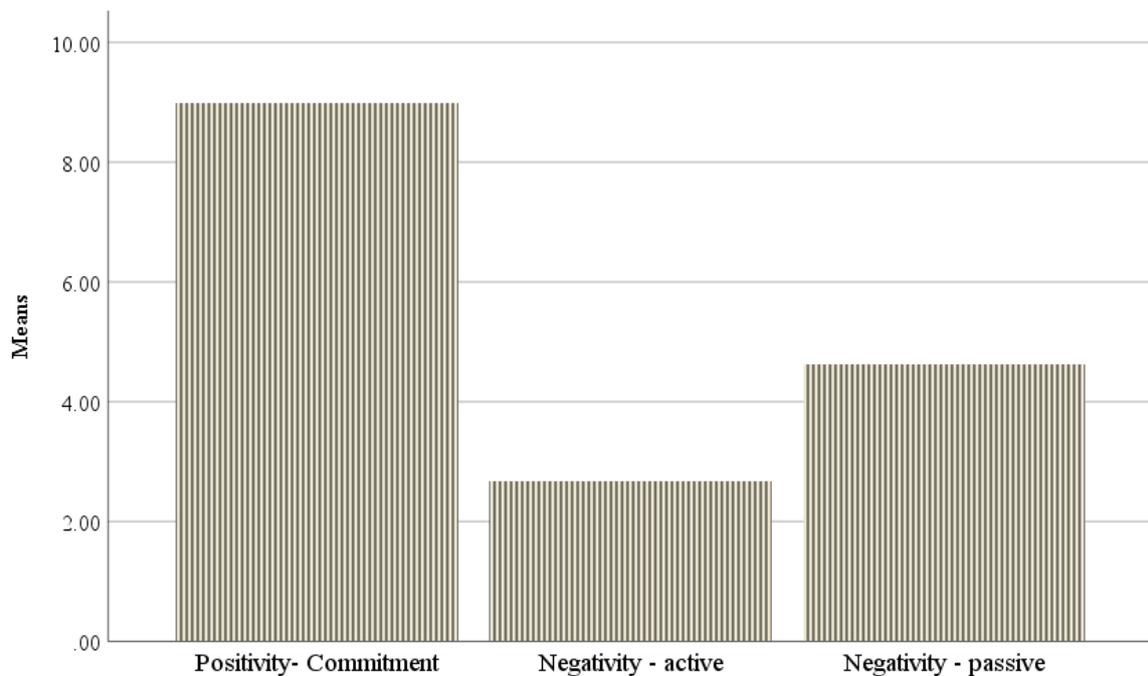


Figure 1. Types of love experience in young women ( $n = 242$ )

Factor analysis for personality disorder traits revealed that they form three factors (Table 3 presents significant factors loadings) which explained 63% of the variances (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .774, Bartlett's test of sphericity = 576.131;  $p < .001$ ). The first factor named "ABC" included a lot of personality disorder traits such as obsessive-compulsive, depressive, paranoid, schizotypal, narcissistic, and borderline. The second factor labelled 'Histrionic' comprised histrionic personality disorder traits and low avoidant traits. Third factor named 'Dependent' comprised dependent personality disorder traits and low level of schizoid and antisocial traits (Table 3).

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis for personality disorder traits (*n*=242)  
Rotated Component Matrix

	Factors		
	1. ABC	2. Histrionic	3. Dependent
Avoidant		-.692	
Dependent			.651
Obs-comp.	.633		
Depressive	.759		
Paranoid	.757		
Schizotypal	.505		
Schizoid			-.636
Histrionic		.843	
Narcissistic	.725		
Borderline	.777		
Antisocial			-.648

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Next, the above personality disorder factors were used in regression analyses as independent variables while the narrative factors were used as dependent variables. The results of the regression analysis in the group of young women suggest that the assumed model explained a significant percentage of the variances in the findings related to their experience of love. Three disorder factors comprising personality disorder traits and state/trait anxiety accounted for 22% of the variances in the results related to the factor ‘positivity’ in love experience (Table 3). Higher results in the personality disorder factor ‘Dependent’ ( $\beta = .19; p < 0,001$ ) is associated with increased love positivity, while state anxiety is associated with a decreased tendency to experience love in a positive way ( $\beta = -.33; p < 0,001$ ). None of the factors comprising personality disorder and state/trait anxiety explained experience of love called ‘active negativity’. On the contrary, 14 % of the variance in love ‘passive negativity’ is explained by higher results in the personality disorder traits. The factor included ABC personality disorder traits is associated with higher ‘passive negativity’ of love while ‘Dependent’ personality is linked to lower experience of love as ‘passive negativity’. The remaining variables do not explain the experience of love.

Table 4a. Multiple regression analyses: factors of personality disorder traits, trait anxiety, and state anxiety as predictors of love experience

Predictors	Positivity			t	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F(5,236)
	B	SE	Beta				
ABC PD traits	-.060	.090	-.060	-.66	.47	.22	8.40***
Histrionic PD traits	.098	.074	.098	1.32			
Dependent PD traits	.192	.076	.192	2.54**			
Trait anxiety	-.009	.014	-.084	-.69			

Table 4b. Multiple regression analyses: factors of personality disorder traits, trait anxiety, and state anxiety as predictors of love experience

		Positivity					
State anxiety	-.039	.015	-.325	-2.68**			
		Active negativity					
ABC PDs traits	-.204	.100	-.204	-2.05*	.20	.04	1.26
Histrionic PD traits	.046	.082	.046	.55			
Dependent PD traits	.002	.084	.002	.02			
Trait anxiety	.020	.015	.180	1.33			
State anxiety	.005	.016	.043	.31			
		Passive negativity					
ABC PDs traits	.244	.095	.244	2.57**	.37	.14	4.65***
Histrionic PD traits	-.013	.078	-.013	-.16			
Dependent PD traits	-.267	.080	-.267	-3.34***			
Trait anxiety	.005	.014	.047	.37			
State anxiety	-.015	.015	-.128	-1.00			

\*\* -  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* -  $p < .001$

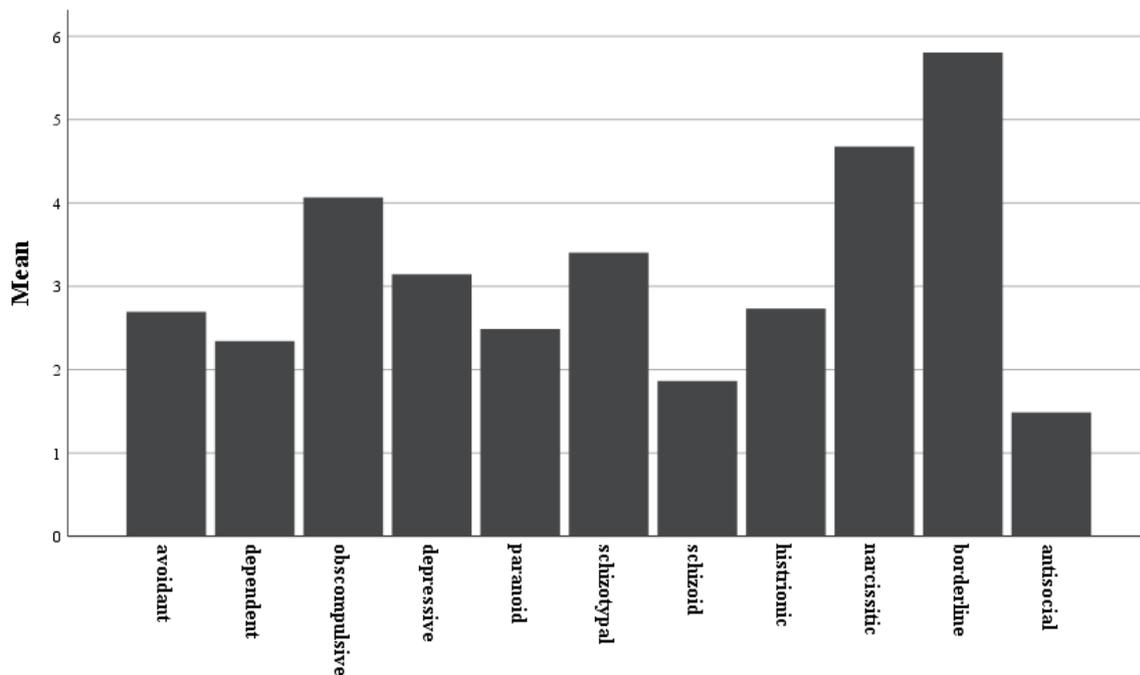


Figure 2. Mean scores of personality disorder traits in young women (n=242)

#### 4. Discussion

As for personality disorder traits, young women more often present traits of obsessive-compulsive, borderline, and narcissistic personality (Fig. 2). These results are in line with the previous finding showing the tendencies of increased obsessive-compulsive personality traits in general populations (Gawda, Czubak, 2017) and that younger people are more likely to be screened positively for borderline personality (Moran, Rooney, Tyrer, Coid, 2016). Potentially, this can be interpreted as a reflection of the modern society. Western societies and high income countries are thought as to be individualist cultures (Triandis, 2018). High prevalence of obsessive-compulsive and narcissistic personalities are identified in such modern societies (McGilloway, Hall, Lee, Bhui, 2010; Twenge, 2017).

Another important finding is that young women have positive experiences of love and they perceive love in a positive way. This is consistent with the relevant literature, which presents love as a positive feeling and an emotion of positive valence (Sternberg, Weis, 2006). This also corresponds to the data on more intense female expressiveness; women express greater intensity of positive emotions as love, sympathy, joy and satisfaction than men, which may be associated with the differences in the affective schema (Floyd, 1997). On the other hand, we found that lower positivity of love is associated with high state anxiety in young women. This finding can be interpreted in line with typical influence state anxiety on human's behaviour. Anxiety mechanism plays an important role in females who more frequently present fearful-anxious personality traits (Paris, 2004). Research has shown that excessive anxiety in women's experience contributes to a peculiar way of experiencing the emotion of love; relationships with others are experienced in a more stormy and confrontational way (Hatfield, Rapson, 1996). The current findings confirm that higher anxiety corresponds to less positive perception and experience of love. Highly-anxious women are less satisfied with themselves, they experience negative emotions, perceive negative emotions in partners, and use strategies of self-blame and self-deprecation (Öhman, Flykt, Lundqvist, 2000). State anxiety can be associated with emotional dysregulation, which affects experience of emotions, social relationship, and behaviours (Crawford, Livesley, Jang, Shaver, Cohen, Ganiban, 2007). Anxiety also disrupts the processes of attention and perception, as well as information processing, communication with the environment and physiological reactions (Boals, Klein, 2005). Furthermore, anxiety contributes to a dysfunctional perception of situations as more threatening; those affected attribute negative emotional valence to stimuli or focus on negative stimuli (Öhman et al., 2000). Higher level of anxiety reported in women is potentially related to two aspects. The first one is linked with a greater number of dangers subjectively experienced by women, and the other one with burdens resulting from traditional women's roles (Canary et al., 1997; Klonsky et al.,

2002). Some researchers evidenced that women have more care-related traits, while men present more qualities related to dominance (Fehr, Broughton, 2001). Anxious responses are socially accepted, particularly in women, which allow them to obtain attention and support from those around (Gove, 1984). Furthermore, young generations are thought as to be restless and isolated because of the preferred virtual communication forms (Twenge, 2017; Venter, 2017). This is why their experience of love can be partly affected by these fearful emotional states.

Another important finding corresponds with result indicating that increased 'passive negativity' in love is associated with low level of dependent personality traits and high level of ABC personality traits in young women. Passive and negative love experiencing includes negative perception and evaluation of the self and low-self-esteem. We found that about a third of examined women experience love in this way. Among two types of negativity identified in this research, one type named 'active negativity' has been found as not connected to personality disorder traits. This potentially means that women who are not satisfied with the relationships tend to finish their relationship. Conversely, 'passive negativity' is found as associated with personality disorder traits. This means that young women displaying obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, schizotypal, narcissistic, and borderline personality traits experience love as negative, they evaluate themselves negatively, and they have low self-esteem. Their relationships can be explained in term of emotional problems among persons with personality disorders (Campbell, Baumeister, 2001). Personality disorder traits are associated with not appropriate emotional regulation, thus, individuals may experience conflicts, interpersonal problems, and problems with identity (Trzebińska et al., 2015). We may explain the negative associations between the ABC personality disorder traits and low positivity of love referring to the characteristics of behaviours of persons with personality disorders. These persons are thought as, in general, experiencing love as negative, unclear or ambivalent which is due to their emotional impairments (Campbell, Baumeister, 2001; Gawda, 2017). For instance, individuals with borderline personality disorder experience highly intense interpersonal relations oscillating from extreme idealisation to devaluation, between love and hate or animosity (Daley, Burge, Hammen, 2000; Selby, Braithwaite, Joiner, Fincham, 2008). Women with borderline personality disorder display a tendency for self-harm, high level of aggression, difficulties in communication and low understanding of other people's emotions (Clifton, Pilkonis, McCarty, 2007; Whipple, Fowler, 2011). Furthermore, borderline personality disorder in women is associated with high level of impulsivity, anxiety, sensitivity, and depression (Corbitt, Widiger, 1995). These personality traits may cause in particular impulsivity in love relationship (Sophia, Tavares, Berti, Pereira, Lorena, Mello, Gorenstein, Zilberman, 2009). On the other hand, narcissistic individuals manipulate and cheat their partners, and are not committed to the relationships in any way (Rohmann et al., 2012). Due to their imagined sense of self-esteem, they are

completely disinterested in their partners' needs (Campbell et al., 2002; Hogan, Sinclair, 1997). They enter relationships with others only to gain respect and authority, and to satisfy their sexual needs (Campbell, Baumeister, 2001). Therefore, they prefer short-term, highly intense relationships, experience passion, and do not increase their commitment (Scollon, Diener, 2006). Similarly, women with obsessive-compulsive personality may experience problems in love relationships. Although they understand the importance of close relations with others, they tend to value reserve over spontaneity, and finally their sense of duty prevails (Dobbert, 2010). Hence, individuals with obsessive-compulsive personality traits experience frigidity in their relations, which increases with high level of anxiety (Gawda, Bernacka, Gawda, 2016).

The correlation of low 'passive negativity' of love and high positivity of love with dependent personality traits seems to be in opposite to modern society characteristics and not at all typical for young generations (Triandis, 2018; Venter, 2017). Dependent attitude towards love represent traditional definition of marital relationships. Individualistic and modern society define women as independent and self-sufficient (Nielsen, Rudberg, 2000; Triandis, 2017). Young female generations identify with independence and control in love, for instance, this generation's ideal of love is the notion of 'controlled devotion' (Nielsen, Rudberg, 2000). On the contrary, our results suggest that traditional female roles are deeply incorporated in women's mentality. Although young women live in individualistic society (Polish society was described as individualistic by e.g. Boski, 2010; Tychmanowicz, Filipiak, Sprynska, 2019), they identify positivity of love with the traditional female role which means dependence on the partner. This type of attitude towards love improves their self-esteem and ensures their appropriateness. Dependent attitude towards love can be associated with femininity. This is incorporated in socio-cultural gender which includes cognitive structures and can determine emotional functioning, the way the information is processed as well as a specific behaviour of an individual (Markus, Crane, Bernstein, Siladi, 1982). Another explanation of this finding can refer to characteristics of young Polish generation, i.e. students. Researchers found higher scores on Agreeableness in this population. This can be interpreted as they manifest a higher tendency for compassion, empathy, and cooperation (Laursen, Pulkkinen, Adams, 2002). Agreeableness is an important personality trait that plays a crucial role for psychological well-being, satisfactory relationships with others, and having a positive affect (Laursen et al., 2002). This personality trait can be partly linked to the dependent attitude and results in a positive love experience among women. Despite social mobility and cultural changes in modern individualistic society, young women perceive love in terms of traditional roles. This is in line with findings related to Norwegian girls who associate love with compromise (Nielsen, 2016; Nielsen, Rudberg, 2000).

## Conclusion

The results of the study show that there is a relationship between personality disorder traits and experience of love in young women. A third of young women experience love negatively which is associated with dominant personality disorder traits such as obsessive-compulsive, borderline, and narcissistic. Three styles of love experience in this group have been identified: positive, active negative and passive negative. Low positivity of love is associated with high state anxiety and high level of dependent personality disorder traits. Active negativity is not associated with personality, while passive negativity is linked to high ABC personality disorder traits and low dependent personality traits. 'Passive negative' experience of love resulted in low self-esteem and negative perception of self. It has been interpreted in terms of deeply rooted traditional schema/notion of femininity in the minds of young women. Such a schema consists of a traditional i.e. dependent position of woman in close relationships. Femininity is socially and culturally determined. Although the modern societies are thought to be individualistic and tend to change the position of women, young women present strongly incorporated in their mentality traditional schema of female role in love, and this is experienced by them as positive.

**Limitations.** The current findings may be affected by certain limitations, for example the sample size. However, it is important to note that narrative techniques are labour-intensive methods and examination of a large amount of narratives is demanding. Moreover, the method of assessment of state/trait anxiety used here is a self-measure.

**Future directions.** In further studies, personality disorder traits should be assessed using the DSM-5 tool, and study groups of women different in terms of age and education should be included in the research.

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