

Discussion

The investigation of romantic relationship dynamics involved a critical lens through which the study examined the multifaceted interaction of emotional dependency, gender role beliefs, conflicts, satisfaction and overall well-being. The research delved into the functioning of these components within the geographical and cultural contexts of Gujarat and Uttarakhand, with the aim of unraveling the nuanced ways in which emerging adults experience the emotional and behavioral trajectories of romantic relationships.

The chapter discusses the results that highlight the variable impact of different sociocultural and demographic factors on the shaping of gender role beliefs and the experience of emotional dependency. It addresses how emotional dependency manifests differently across genders and across different cultures, and its impact on well-being. Additionally, the chapter also considers the interaction of the two states, Uttarakhand and Gujarat, and gender on gender role beliefs, and the overall well-being of the individuals navigating the transition to adulthood within the context of romantic relationships.

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Exploration as per the Theoretical Framework

The study used the *Cognitive/ Interactionist Model of Interpersonal Dependency* (Bornstein, 2011, p. 126) as the theoretical basis of the study, describing dependency using four components: cognitive, motivational, affective and behavioral. The cognitive aspect involves individuals' perceptions of themselves as powerless and ineffectual, which in turn motivates a desire in the individuals to have a relationship with someone who would protect them. Affective component encompasses the fear of abandonment and negative evaluation. Behavior component comprises using such self-presentation strategies that would strengthen bonds with others, potentially with the protectors and caregivers. The key to dependent personality orientation lies in a self-concept characterized by helplessness. The model asserts

that dependency-related behaviors are proactive, goal-driven, and motivated by self, other, and interaction of self and other.

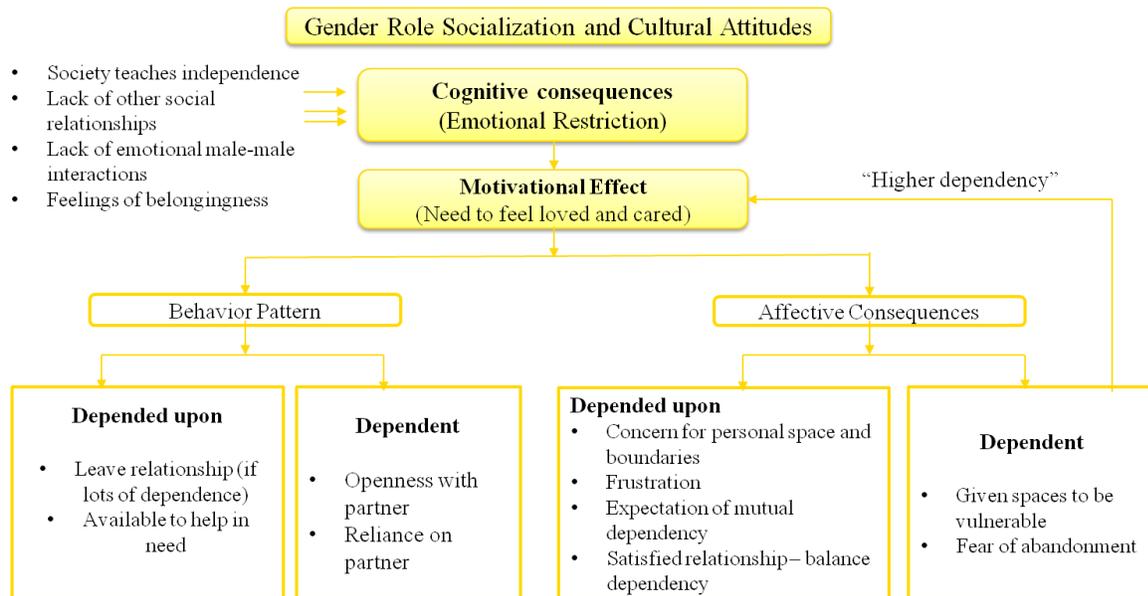
The following section discusses the results of the study as per the theoretical framework. There are two separate frameworks for men and women.

Theoretical Perspective From a Man’s Viewpoint

Figure 9 depicts the theoretical framework used in the study from the standpoint of men.

Figure 9

Theoretical Framework: Male Perspective



There are certain gender-related expectations and cultural attitudes that are directed towards men. Such attitudes do not exist alone, but are shaped by different sociocultural factors. From a young age, men are conditioned to believe that expressing sadness or crying is a sign of weakness and not a trait of a real man. Male children are taught stereotypical gendered behaviors, and deviation from these norms can often times result in being labeled as “effeminate” by other men and peers (Sivakumar & Manimekalai, 2021), which poses a direct challenge to the traditionally taught concept of masculinity. They further stated that

men in the society are expected become “protectors” and “providers” of the family, and this societal norm requires men to exhibit strength and display fewer emotions. Consequently, the Indian society encourages men to be independent leading to lack of different social interactions and scarcity of male-male interactions, as was evident in the interviews. This can lead of cognitive consequences, resulting in a display of “emotional restriction”

Nevertheless, humans also possess a fundamental yearning to feel a sense of belongingness and connection within different interpersonal relationships. The inability to do so may result in stress and loneliness, potentially culminating in severe repercussions for the psychological well-being of the individual (Afroz & Tiwari, 2019). This leads way to the motivational effect of the “need to feel loved and cared for”.

Additionally, there are certain affective consequences and motivation effects. As per the quantitative and qualitative findings, the affective consequence is divided based on the exhibited behaviors when an individual is dependent on the partner and when men assume the role of the person who is depended upon. The results indicate that men are given spaces to be vulnerable. However, there is also an associated fear of separation and abandonment by the romantic partner. In the case when men play the role of the person being depended upon, there is a concern that their personal spaces and boundaries might be crossed.

Simultaneously, there is also an accompanying feeling of frustration when the romantic partner is dependent on them emotionally. However, these are cases when there is an imbalance of dependency. There were instances in the interviews when the participants expressed their want of mutual dependency from their partners. The relationships tend to be satisfied when there is balanced dependency between partners.

The behavior pattern of men is also explained in relation to whether they are dependent on their partner or when they play the part of being depended upon. When the woman is dependent on their partner and the dependency becomes excessive, they may contemplate leaving the relationship. However, in other cases, men are available for their partners and ready to help them when needed. In instances where men are dependent on their partner, they experience a sense of openness and exhibit reliance on their partner.

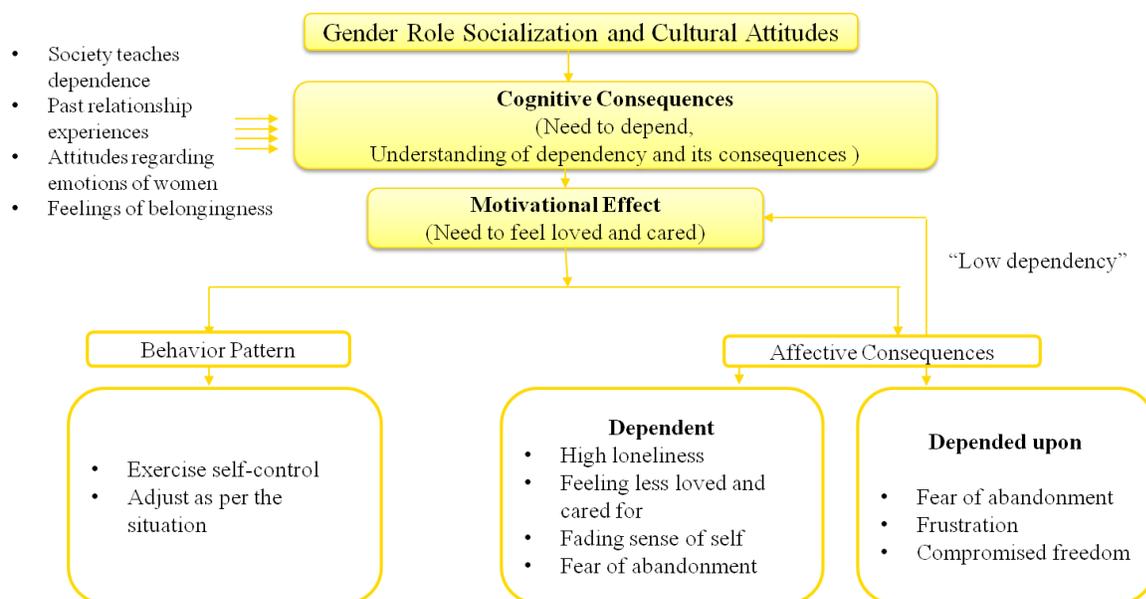
The combinative influence of being provided safe spaces to be vulnerable, emotional support, reliance and the freedom to share feelings without the fear being judged might lead to higher emotional dependence of men on women.

Theoretical Perspective From a Woman’s Viewpoint

Figure 10 illustrates the study's theoretical framework as viewed from the perspective of women.

Figure 10

Theoretical Framework: Female Perspective



Cultural expectations and gender role socialization teaches women dependence on male members within both family and community settings. As asserted by Rastogi and Therly (2006) and Abraham (1998), the conventional narrative of Indian culture expects women to be responsible for maintaining home and family, and demonstrate unwavering self-sacrifice and nurturing qualities. The author further stated that the expectations to uphold these facets of female identity still persists, and straying from such beliefs translates into bringing dishonor to the community and family. Exhibiting traits of individualism and self-assertion is seen as manifestation of western influences (Mehta, 2009). This leads to a cognitive consequence where women feel a need to rely on their romantic partner.

In the interviews, women expressed apprehensions regarding the preconceived attitudes society has towards the emotionality of women. The label of being “emotional”, regardless of the person’s actual emotional state, can heighten the doubts concerning their rationality. In simpler words, if a woman is tagged as “emotional”, it is an unspoken implication that she lacks the capacity to think rationally (Frasca et al., 2022). Many women participants also shared their past relationship experiences, and the related adverse consequences of their emotional dependency on their sense of self, self-confidence and insecurity regarding the relationship. These factors lead to a cognitive consequence involving an awareness of dependency and its related negative effects.

Keeping this in mind, it is also important to understand that belongingness is a basic human need and a universally observed trait in human beings (Maslow, 1970), and the desire for connection is a fundamental psychological need (Schlachet, 2000). As a consequence, the women are motivated by a need to experience a sense of belonging. These cognitive

repercussions and motivational effects contribute to certain affective consequences and behavior patterns.

When women play the role of a dependent individual, they often feel high loneliness compared to men, as indicated by the quantitative findings. Additionally, women tend to feel a fading sense of self-identity and self-concept. Even, when women are the ones upon whom the partner is dependent, they still operate from fear of abandonment and rejection. Indian cultural norms and expectations mold women's perception of self (Desai & Andrist, 2010; Dube, 1988; Vlassoff, 2013) and the largely collectivistic orientation of Indian society prioritizes group over individual goals and success (Batra & Reio, 2016), especially for women. The combined impact of these factors results in women having a fear of abandonment if they do not fulfill their socially prescribed roles and be present for their partner's emotional needs.

However, this also gives rise to feelings of frustration, as evident in the interviews where women expressed that their freedom gets compromised. In light of the understanding of being labeled as "emotional" and "hysterical", women endeavor to exercise self-control and adjust their emotions as per the demand of the situation, which was evident in the interviews. To avoid the feelings of insecurity and compromised freedom and preserve a sense of positive self-concept, women tend to exhibit less emotional dependence on men.

Emotional Dependency and Socio-Demographic Variables

Emotional Dependency and Age

Age acts as an influencing factor in emotional dependency. When an individual is younger with fewer experiences and less maturity, one may have more expectations from the partner, which may not be as prominent when the person grows older with more relationship

and life experiences and maturity. There is likely to be more sense of security attached with the relationship and one's self-concept is relatively stronger.

Emotional Dependency and Educational Qualification

Individuals with post graduation and higher educational level experienced higher emotional dependency when compared to individuals with under graduation or lower educational backgrounds. Regression analysis also reflected that the difference is statistically significant, $p = 0.006$. These findings challenge the common notion that individuals with higher educational level are more independent. This could be attributed to various factors during transition from under graduation to higher education such as increased expectations regarding one's future, more pressure from family and society to enter into a long-term relationship, leading to marriage, stress associated with higher education or specific personality traits. Post-graduate students undergo stress linked to alterations in lifestyle, heightened work demands, novel responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, and numerous other factors (Hazarika, 2021). As individual transition from undergraduate to higher education, the numbers of friendships often diminish, accompanied by an escalation in personal responsibilities, encompassing career and relationships. Additionally, the likelihood increases that friends and peers enter into relationships, making it more challenging to maintain connections compared to the undergraduate phase. This shift could potentially lead to an elevated emotional dependence on romantic partners.

Emotional Dependency: Gender Differences and Gender Role Beliefs

The quantitative results did not show any statistically significant gender differences in the overall sample; however, the descriptive statistics revealed that the men exhibited more emotional dependency than women. Although there is a scarcity of Indian literature on

emotional dependency, nonetheless, the findings align with numerous recent Latin American studies which assert that a higher proportion of men exhibit emotional dependence on women (e.g., Estévez et al., 2018; Urbiola & Estévez, 2015). The current findings are in contradiction to certain studies in South Europe that investigated gender disparities in emotional dependency. For instance, González-Jiménez and Hernández-Romera (2014) argued that emotional dependency was more prevalent in women than in men, attributing this to biological and cultural factors. Women, according to their research, tend to experience greater empathy and maintain emotional connections due to societal expectations associated with femininity. The study also posited that societal norms dictate men to display detachment from affection towards others and a stronger inclination towards individualism. Similarly, Alonso-Arbiol et al. (2002) suggested that women exhibited higher emotional dependence compared to men.

One key finding of the study was that emotional dependency was significantly predicted by gender role beliefs. These results align with the research of Rowell (2011), which emphasized that gender and gender ideology play a crucial role in shaping preferences for mutual emotional dependence. Additionally, Cionea et al. (2019) conducted a cross-cultural study comparing romantic relationship expectations in India and the United States. Their results indicated that women in both cultures adhered to conventional expectations of femininity, valuing emotional closeness and support. The study also highlighted that women are socialized to place greater importance on their romantic expectations than men, influencing their perspectives.

Similarly, Bejanyan et al. (2014) compared the romantic ideals and mate preferences of young adults in India and America. They found that the boundaries of masculinity and

femininity are becoming more permeable, allowing for greater flexibility for individuals to be less strictly defined by gender roles. However, sociocultural discourses continue to prescribe "appropriate" behaviors based on explicit gender scripts (Uberoi, 2006), contributing to the gendered nature of emotional expression. For men, societal norms are constructed around masculinity (Sivakumar & Manimekalai, 2021), emphasizing attributes such as emotional hardiness (Shrestha et al., 2019), emotional control, and the ability to handle challenging situations independently as key aspects of manhood (Manirajah, 2013). Such expectations from the society render men to become emotionally reliant and dependent on the person with whom they feel the closest - their romantic partner, which was evident in the study and is discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

Gender Role Beliefs: Interaction of Gender and State

Men Have Higher Egalitarian Attitudes in the State of Gujarat.

Gujarat is a modernized state with relatively greater balance of resources and opportunities for men and women, particularly in the urban parts of the state. Men in Gujarat have been socialized in a way to expect equality for men and women; therefore there is an expectation of women to be able to take care of their own selves. A study by Pandya and Bhangaokar (2023) that investigated the gendered experiences of individuals in established adulthood exploring the similarities and differences in the potential of men and women of Vadodara, Gujarat, India. The qualitative analysis revealed that both men and women believed in equal potentials for fulfilling a variety of adult roles both within and outside the family. The male participants in the study also believed women and men as equal in terms of potential, capacities and intellect. It was also evident in the interviews that men held women to be responsible for their own expenses. A study conducted among men in Vadodara,

Gujarat revealed the shift from traditional to more progressive views in the gender domain. The study also indicated the desire to break free from the traditional definition of masculinity and highlighted men's perceptions about how stereotypes of masculinity harm them as they are not able to express their feelings and emotions, and in fact are expected to suppress the same. The urban educated men residing in Vadodara were more inclined to be gender-sensitive (Thakar, 2018).

Women Have Higher Egalitarian Attitudes in the State of Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand has witnessed efforts to improve the level of education in the state (Bhatt, 2020). The literacy rates for both males and females in the state are higher than the national average (Kalra, 2021). Access to education can empower women by providing them with skills and knowledge, fostering independence in various aspects of life. Many parts of Uttarakhand are characterized by hilly terrains and agrarian communities. Women in rural areas often actively participate in agricultural activities, contributing significantly to the economic well-being of their families. The state of Uttarakhand faces out-migration, particularly of men, mostly in search of employment opportunities. This could mean increased responsibility on women in terms of agriculture and household. Women play a substantial role in contributing significantly to the economic well-being of their families through agricultural activities, and their active participation has the potential to foster empowerment. A study by Sati (2021) revealed that more than 10% population out-migrated from the three districts of Uttarakhand – Pauri, Tehri and Almora. The study further revealed that the migration is mainly internal – from the mountainous districts of Uttarakhand to the urban plain regions. This migration trend has marginally improved women's access to education, resources, grassroots leadership, and natural resource management. Such changes

give way to social, economic and political empowerment of rural women, enabling them to participate in decision making at various levels (Joshi, 2018). This may act as a good role modeling for following generations of women in Uttarakhand, leading to a more egalitarian way of thinking, in comparison to men.

Emotional Dependency and Well-Being

The results of the study indicated that emotional dependency is a significant predictor of different aspects of well-being such as negative emotions and loneliness. On similar lines, studies have revealed that emotional dependency could lead to a range of adverse emotional effects encompassing symptoms like anxiety, disruptions and withdrawal from social connection (Bornstein, 2006; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2008). Such dependency is also characterized by an inability to tolerate solitude and an internal sense of emptiness (May, 2000). Emotional dependency implies a strong reliance on partner for fulfillment of emotional needs and if one partner excessively depends on the other partner for validation, reassurances, comfort, and happiness, it can cause an imbalance in the relationship, as was evident in the findings of the study. When emotional dependency is high, there might be an increased possibility of having unrealistic expectations from the partner which could lead to pressure and stress in the relationship and on the partner. Gala and Ghadiyali (2020) in their study noted that striving to meet the ideal expectation from partner in a romantic relationship can result in negative outcomes, impacting mental well-being and self-esteem.

Gender-Specific Effect of Emotional Dependency on Well-Being.

Emotional dependency did not emerge as a significant predictor of well-being among men, both in the overall sample and within specific states. However, it was a significant predictor of well-being for women. One of the possible reasons for this, which has been

recurring in the literature and study findings, is the influence of the socialization process and gender roles. The socialization process plays a pivotal role in shaping the different norms for emotional expression of men and women.

Traditionally taught gender roles encourage women to be more expressive and open about their emotions, whereas men are socialized to be more self-reliant and emotionally restrictive. This conditioning could account for different coping strategies in response to emotional challenges. As observed in the interviews, women tend to seek and share social support with individuals other than their partners. The relational identities of women (Kapadia, 1999) are formed in connection with others and influenced by societal perspectives (Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). Getting praises and love even make them feel better about themselves and adds to the sense of self-worth and self-fulfillment (Jackson, 2008). Consequently, emotional dependence could become crucial in shaping and maintaining their overall sense of well-being.

The quality of relationships matters significantly. While emotional dependency alone may not predict well-being, the nature of the support received, the level of trust, and overall satisfaction derived from the relationship can significantly influence the well-being. As per the results of the study, men are given more opportunities within the premise of their relationship to express their feelings and emotions, receiving considerable support from their partner. This could substantially add to well-being. Supporting this, the results also indicate that the relationship satisfaction of men is higher than women in the overall sample.

The fact that emotional dependence is not strongly associated with well-being among men shows that well-being is a complex and a multifaceted construct. It depends on different factors like having people around for support, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, and different

life circumstances. Moreover, for men, their well-being could be tied to their role of being a provider. Men have often been expected to provide for their families financially and the implication of the same could be that men may derive their sense of well-being and fulfillment from this role of a provider. While emotional dependency may be one aspect of interpersonal relationships, it may not be the sole determinant of an individual's overall well-being.

Romantic Relationship: A Safe Space for Men to Express.

As evidenced from the quantitative and qualitative findings, men found relationships as spaces to emote without the fear of feeling judged. The understanding of romantic relationships as a space of expression, particularly in the context of emotional dependency, throws light on how the participants, particularly men, navigate and express their deepest emotions with their romantic partner. This has been mirrored in a study conducted by Dougall et al. (2022) in Delhi, India. The study observed that majority of the participants, mostly men, vocalized their preference for emotional dedication and commitment exclusively towards their romantic partner. The responses from male participants highlighted the importance of the romantic partner where they feel free to emote in ways that might be reserved in other social settings. The theme highlights emotional dependency of men on women in a positive way as a medium to articulate profound feelings without the fear of judgment and to receive validation for those emotions. Men cited stereotypical gendered and the associated societal expectations as the reason for the hesitance of men to be emotionally expressive with their friends, male members of the family or in any other social relationship. This is in line with the findings of the study by Manirajah (2013) where the responses of the male participants shed light on the social constructivist perspective which suggested that

social conditioning from young age was one of the reasons for their reluctance to express emotions. The participants noted that gendered role and expectation creates an environment of restriction where men refrain from having emotional conversation with other men. A study conducted by Gough et al. (2021) revealed that the male participants were more inclined to discuss their anxieties and fears most readily with the most significant women in their lives, such as partners or mother. This underscores the difficulty that men experience in talking to other men and the hesitance to share their problems with their male friends. However, the study also pointed out the gradual shift in the understanding and expression of masculinities by men, quoting instances where they felt safe and comfortable in opening up at workplaces or confiding with their closest friends. In addition to this, men who underwent therapeutic process over extended periods were more comfortable talking about their mental health, both with men or women.

This theme also highlights women as the emotional pillars of the relationship. For example, a participant in this study used the term “pillow” to refer to the emotional support men get from their partners in the relationship. It shows the reliance of men, particularly on their partners in romantic relationships to meet their emotional needs. The pressure on men to conform to the societal expectations as well as the reliance on their romantic partner for emotional support is very evident throughout the interviews. In such a context, romantic spaces becomes a safe haven to let go of this pressure of conforming to sociocultural expectations of hegemonic masculinities, allowing men to break free from such stereotypes.

Such a scenario illuminates the complex relationship between the internal experiences of emotions and the external societal expectations. There is a dynamic interplay of sociocultural expectations, gender role and the intrinsic need of belongingness and emotional

connectedness. This also underscores the importance of supportive and nurturing environment, both within and outside romantic relationships. Failing to do so may result in dependence of men on women for emotional needs fulfillment. This could also place the onus of men's well-being solely on the shoulders of women, which may not be sustainable in the long term. Therefore, it is of immense importance to cultivate a supportive environment that encourages vulnerability and eventually contributes to the well-being of both men and women.

Balance- Imbalance Paradigm

Desirability of emotional dependency in romantic relationship is mainly viewed in terms of degree of dependence. Individuals' opinion regarding this dependency can vary based on the balance and imbalance of the said dependence. Majorly, participants were of the opinion that finding the right equilibrium between dependence and autonomy is crucial for a healthy romantic relationship. This resonates with the ideas discussed in the paper by Lavy et al. (2009) who summarized different theories related to dependence and autonomy. They stated the significance of finding the right balance of connectedness and closeness with the romantic partner, while simultaneously maintaining a sense of autonomy and individual identity. They further mentioned that consistent disruption of the balance between independence and dependence by restraining partner's autonomy can render a relationship weak, possibly leading to its eventual breakdown. This is in line with the findings of the study where there was general consensus that imbalance of emotions often leads to feelings of frustration, space invasion, and feelings of control, lack of boundaries and low sense of well-being in the relationship.

Participants believed that some level of dependency is desired for a healthy romantic relationship. Individuals often look up to their partner for emotional support, love, intimacy, and companionship. It is very normal for couples to form emotional connection with the partner and to depend on them for emotional well-being. Although, there was some hesitation around making someone central to your own happiness, there was also a need for mutual dependence. This is a reflection of the larger Indian cultural context which promotes cohesion and interdependence on each other (Chaddha & Deb, 2013). Emotional intimacy and dependence are imbibed through the in-family socialization process. “Emotional connectedness” is expected in all forms of relationships. Even with the decrease in financial and economic dependence owing to social development in India, emotional dependence continues to stand strong (Panda & Gupta, 2012). A study was conducted by Li et al. (2006) to explore the levels of independence and interdependence in relationships among Indians, Canadians and Chinese. Indian participants showed significantly higher levels of connectedness with family and friends compared to the Canadian group; however, there was no significant difference in connectedness with the Chinese group. Moreover, they also found that gender differences among the Indian group. Indian women were more likely to be closer to their close friends and other relationships when compared to Indian men. Similarly, in relatively socio-centric cultures such as India and Japan, adults tended to display higher levels of interpersonal dependency when compared to regions like Great Britain and America. With the progression of time, as such conventional socio-centric cultures integrate self-centric “Westernized” values and standards, self-reported levels of dependency declines. Adults in such cultures, particularly men, faces dilemma regarding how to merge dependency urges with pursuit for autonomy and self-reliance (Yamaguchi, 2004).

Varying and Nuanced Understanding of Dependency

Emotional dependency in a romantic relationship is perceived very subjectively, thus a relatively complex concept to understand. It is important to note that gender played a very important role in shaping the perceptions around emotional dependency, as evident in the interviews. Men and women perceive emotional dependency differently which can be attributed to societal norms, cultural expectations and to an extent, individual preferences. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) conducted a cross-cultural and multi-methods study to assess gender differences in the importance of basic values as guiding principles across 19 European countries (N = 33,866). The findings revealed that men gave more significance to social status and reputation, control and authority over individuals and resources, indulgence in own gratification, personal success, independent thought and self-direction when compared to women. On the other hand, women viewed safety, harmony, and stability of relationships, acts of benevolence, understanding and tolerance, and acceptance of traditions as most important values. This was reflected in the perceptions around understating of emotional dependency in the interviews, particularly in the responses of women. When asked about the understanding of dependency, men specifically discussed financial and functional (daily life decisions) aspects of dependency. Women mostly shared about the emotional aspects of dependency without the need for any probes. Women's ideas of dependency revolved around emotions, self-identity, and sustenance of relationship. It was interesting to observe that not a single man out of the 20 interviewed discussed dependency in emotional terms until specifically probed. There was an expectation to be dependent in certain aspects (functional and financial), but there were mixed expectations with regard to emotional dependency.

Men needed encouragement on the part of the interviewer to talk about the emotional aspect of dependency whereas women expressed the same more spontaneously and intuitively. This reinforces the general consensus that women are more open to initiate and engage in emotional conversations compared to men. Two inter-cultural studies were conducted by Singh (2000) with adolescents focusing on Indian, immigrant Indian and English cultures to investigate the influence of gender differences on emotional processes. The results suggested that women were more likely to initiate sharing and express feelings as well as understood the importance of sharing feelings.

Gender is a determining factor in the way dependency is interpreted and understood by men and women. The conception of dependency is inherently subjective, so what one perceives as dependency could be normal for the other. Therefore, there is a very fine distinction of expectations in terms of dependence and independence, and the way it is perceived and experienced by men and women.

Self-identity and Relationship (for Women): Men are Given Spaces to Emote Whereas Women are Labeled as Emotional.

The way women view themselves in the context of emotional dependency in a romantic relationship is highly related to their sense of self and self-identity. It was evident in the interviews that the way women viewed their emotional needs and dependence on their partner strongly determined their sense of individualism and self-identity. In a study with Spanish women, Alcázar and Gómez-Jarabo, (2001) acknowledged that women's traditional and passive social role in relationships significantly influences their feelings of dependence on their male partners. In the context of women in Ghana, Adjei (2015) stated that women are often in subordinate position to men which reflects the gendered-role dichotomy. This

determines their identity and status in society which in turn contributes to their dependency. The author further suggested that women's dependency is not just a personal choice or an inherent trait, but it is a construct which is influenced by social standards and expectations. Like Ghana, there are many societies with distinct and oftentimes, unequal gender role divisions for men and women. The conventional expectation of women's dependency stems from this unequal expectation from men and women. Lack of self-esteem adds to the feelings related with submission and dependence on partner (Miguel Cañete-Lairla & Marta Gil-Lacruz, 2018). The desire of dependence in a woman is related to loneliness, feelings of abandonment, feeling less loved and cared for which leads to women controlling their emotions and exhibiting less dependence to avoid such feelings.

In contrast, men feel safer to emote with their partners. This can be interpreted as men being given more spaces to share their emotions and also reflects the accommodating nature of women. As cited in Das et al. (2014), studies conducted across the globe have suggested that it is an expectation from women to accommodate the needs and desires of men (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Cleveland et al., 2003; Foshee et al., 2001; Tolman et al., 2003). On the other hand, women fear being labeled as "emotional" or "hysterical". So, the emotional dynamics works in different ways for men and women.

Belief Conflicts and Identity

Radhakrishnan (2009) has coined the term "respectable femininity" for the growing urban class middle-class Indian woman which constitutes the ability of women to maintain a healthy work-life balance. A woman's sense of self is linked to their relationships (Bhattacharya et al., 2019) and as evident in the present study, women are often torn between a need to focus on their own goals as well as focus on the relationship. Most women

interviewed experienced a change in themselves after they entered a relationship and feared a loss of their identity. This could lead to a dilemma in terms of beliefs and practices and the person could start questioning her self-worth. Along similar lines, Chawla and Sharma (2016) in their study noted that Indian women are socialized and raised to play the role of a “nurturer”. With them entering the workforce, the aspiration to succeed in career often conflicts with the ingrained nature of prioritising others.

Contemporary globalization has produced numerous sociocultural and economic changes in India (Ghosh, 2012; Varma, 2007). However, the resulting impact is not uniform on Indian society as it experiences an amalgamation of mixed value systems of western and traditional values (Ramasubramanian & Jain, 2009). Therefore, with the changes in family structures, technological advancement, and increment in women’s participation in the workforce, India is experiencing sociocultural transformations, but the underlying cultural values are entrenched deeply with the idea of self. Relationships in India remain strongly embedded in social prescriptions around gender and family, and expression of love through gender performances is tied to later life intimacies in marriages and relationships (Samanta & Varghese, 2019). As evident in the interviews, a woman could be independent but will continue to carry those collectivistic values whereupon she feels the need to reach out, be submissive, emotionally driven, and take upon the “affective” responsibility of the relationship. This could lead to a conflict between personally held beliefs and practices with implications for how women perceive themselves.

Differences in Cultural Context

“Every culture has guidelines for human conduct that carry associated anticipations for how others will behave” (Burgoon & Ebesu, 2005, p. 149). There are cultural differences

in the way emotions, gender and romantic relationship dynamics function within a particular context (Cionea et al., 2019; Riela et al., 2010).

The quantitative data did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the states of Gujarat and Uttarakhand. However, the data collected through the qualitative interviews presented certain trends. One on one conversation and probes pointed out the differences in the language used in Gujarat and Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand men's idea of dependency, emotional expressions, and expectations from women aligned more with the traditionally held gendered notions of code and conduct. In the state of Uttarakhand, men tend to conform to the long standing socially approved behavior for both genders and adhere to traditional gender role norms and behaviors in terms of dependency, emotional expressions, and expectations from women. These expectations are rooted in geographical, cultural and historical context, resulting in the continuation of traditionally defined gender norms in the community. Respondents in Gujarat men and women were more open to discuss their experiences compared to the participants in Uttarakhand. There was a difference in the length of interviews with longer interviews conducted in the state of Gujarat. More probing was required with the participants belonging to Uttarakhand, and yet the responses were restricted. Women from both the states were more expressive and elaborative with their responses.

Language also emerged as one of the factors affecting the response pattern of the participants. Although it was an effort to break beyond the language barrier and the participants were given a choice to respond in Hindi or English, it was observed that people answering in English were more expressive and confident, and took smaller pauses in between their responses.

Influence of Geographical Regions on Affective Expression (Emotional Dependency)

A distinct finding emerged related to the predictor of well-being among men in the state of Uttarakhand where affective expression exclusively emerged as the predictor of well-being for men. Affective expression is a sub-scale of emotional dependency and was evaluated using four statements which focused on assessing individual's emotional needs and expectations from their partner and relationship, with a specific emphasis on their need for exclusive attention and the emotional impact of their partner's lack of consistent affection.

As mentioned in the literature review, the underlying concept behind affective expression is that individuals in a relationship seek reassurance of their love and affection for the partner through constant expressions of affection, thereby helping them calm their insecurities in the relationship (Lynch et al., 2001, cited in Lemos & Londoño, 2006). This finding underscores the cultural and regional nuances that shape individuals' perceptions of well-being. In the case of men in Uttarakhand, this need for constant affective expressions of love for reassurances stood out as the significant predictor of well-being. This suggests that in Uttarakhand, the affectionate and emotional dimension of romantic relationship play a crucial role in contributing to men's overall well-being, distinguishing them from men and women in Gujarat and Uttarakhand, for whom different factors such as economic conditions, sociocultural environment, personal values, and social support networks, among others may take precedence. It is very interesting to note that although men in Uttarakhand hold a somewhat gendered understanding of dependency where they see women as their responsibility in the relationship; this finding also reveals their need for reassurance of love and care from their partner. The fact that men in Uttarakhand view women as their responsibility could stem from certain beliefs ingrained in the social and cultural fabric of the

state. However, the finding also highlights the inherent human need for reassurance in terms of love and care. Despite the traditional gendered understanding of dependency, there exists a universal desire for emotional connection and reciprocity of love and care, which surpasses societal expectations and roles.

It is crucial to recognize that societal perceptions and gender expectations could be very complex and diverse within a specific region. While some people may adhere to the traditional views, others might challenge or reassess them. It is also important to acknowledge that the definition of traditional and contemporary can vary significantly for different people in different cultures. For instance, taking financial responsibility of women could be interpreted as being “traditional” or “not-modern” in some cultures, while in others, it could be a way of life and mutually understood aspect of life between two people. Healthy relationships often involve open communication and negotiation between partners, enabling them to shape a dynamic that aligns with their shared values and individual preferences. Moreover, within any given culture, individuals may have different perspectives on what is considered traditional or modern based on their personal experiences, values, and beliefs. For some, the idea of men taking financial responsibility for women might be a cherished tradition, while for others; it might be seen as outdated or restrictive.

The next chapter finally concludes the study with future research recommendation.