

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The study focused on understanding romantic relationship ideologies, and explored the influence of gender on the understanding and experiences of love and emotional dependency. The results revealed that unlike the predominant social and cultural assumptions of women being more dependent, the study showed opposite findings. Traditionally, many societies have held the assumption that women are dependent, whether it is financially, emotionally, or in other aspects of life. However, the study presented evidence that refutes the prevailing notions. The research findings indicated that women exhibited emotional autonomy that diverged from the expected societal norms, perhaps as the participants in this study were educated. At the same time, it is also important to note that this sense of emotional independence is rooted in an attempt to preserve individual sense of self. Women are socialized in a way that promotes dependence on the male figures in their lives, such as father, brother, or partners, depending on the different life stages. Such conditioning leads to labeling the women as “emotional” or “hysterical” when the same behavior might be considered normal for men. This societal labeling becomes problematic for women outside the household boundaries, potentially permeating the walls of professional and social spheres. So there is a conflict between what society expects from women (dependence) and what women actually want from themselves, that is, to be emotionally independent and express themselves as individuals.

One more noteworthy finding of the study was that men were found to more emotionally dependent on women in romantic relationship. It throws light on the fact that contrary to the conventional sociocultural beliefs, men also have a need to be understood, supported and emotionally connected with their partner. The study highlighted that men are

not very emotionally open with their friends or other male relationships; and they turn back to their closest relationship when in need of emotional reliance. Tendency of men to avoid difficult communication and confrontation came up as one of the reasons for conflict in relationships. Men might face challenges in communicating their emotional needs. Societal expectations or personal barrier might make it difficult for men to openly share their feelings. Despite this, there is an underlying desire for emotional dependence on their partner. Expressing emotions can be difficult, and men may struggle to put their feelings into words, however, it does not diminish the desire of emotional needs. The study also highlighted that men are more emotionally dependent because women understand the needs for emotional support and thus men are given spaces where they feel safe to be themselves and be open and vulnerable.

Emotional Dependency is predominantly shaped by gender, which implies that there are distinct patterns of emotional dependency among men and women. The geographical region that a person belongs to, does not necessarily have a direct and significant impact on the emotional dependency among individuals in romantic relationship. The way individuals express themselves and navigate relationships is influenced by gender and associated factors tied to their gender identity. It is crucial to note that these gendered beliefs are often a product of culture and cultural experiences, which can vary across geographical variations. While the geographical location or the state of residence may not directly influence the emotions of a person in a romantic relationship, it can indirectly shape the overall experiences of individuals based on their gender. Even though, the emotional dynamics of romantic relationship remain largely independent of the geographical state a person belongs to, the sociocultural norms prevalent in the particular region may influence the broader

societal expectations, roles, and experiences associated with being a man or woman in that particular geographical region.

Majorly, literature on emotional dependency is rooted in the western context which essentially views emotional dependency in a negative light. Most of the cultures in which such studies have been conducted bear an individualistic orientation where self-reliance and independence is promoted. The same may not be true for cultures such as India which is essentially a blend of group association and individual orientation. Interdependence is promoted and taught from a very young age in the Indian cultural context of joint families or close knit nuclear families. The emphasis is on interconnected relationships and mutual support, which contends the negative connotation oftentimes associated with emotional dependency. This cultural distinction in the broader sense highlights the importance of considering varied cultural perspectives when examining romantic relationships in the context of emotional dependency.

Additionally, emotional dependency appears to be unique to each individual and influenced by the specific dynamics within a couple, in that the meaning, exhibition and experience of emotional dependency can vary significantly among different people. What one couple or individual may understand as unhealthy behavior, leading to excessive dependence in a relationship, may be seen as a normal or sustaining factor in the relationship by others. Along with considering the cultural context, it is also important to account for individual preferences and personality influences when addressing topics such as emotional dependency. It could be a factor that contributes to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction derived from the relationship, thereby having implications on the well-being of the individual involved.

In a healthy relationship, individuals tend to feel more confident of them, have a good understanding of their own identity, and generally hold a positive view of self. On the other hand, unhealthy or toxic relationships characterized by either excessive dependence or its absence, may result in a feeling of psychological insecurity. Overwhelming reliance on one another or a lack of dependency can lead to emotional instability and a sense of insecurity within the relationship. Such insecurities may lead to harmful behaviors, creating a negative cycle within the relationship.

In conclusion, it is important to perceive emotional dependency within the framework of romantic relationships through a culturally specific lens, recognizing it as a product influenced by various external factors such as gender, culture, geographical location, personal preferences, gender role socialization, among many others. Understanding these diverse influences is the key to gaining comprehensive insights into the nuanced dynamics of romantic relationships.

Implications

The study has implications for educational interventions for developing healthy relationships, particularly strategies for couples' communication. The results can be used in professional settings to offer spaces to communicate and clarify misunderstood emotions and ways of expression.

The research helped shed light on the impact of gender as influenced by various sociocultural factors on emotional dependency in romantic relationships, revealing certain gender-specific patterns and expectations. This could have practical implications for counseling. Gender sensitive emotional understanding may help individuals become better partners because if their ability to understand and manage their own emotions, is coupled

with ability to perceive, manage and handle the emotions of their partner, it would most likely lead to a mutually satisfying and a happy relationship that fosters individual and couple development.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Couples' interviews to understand the interdependency on each other and how the balance of dependency and autonomy is navigated in such a dynamic.
- Studies involving family: What constitutes healthy and unhealthy dependency within the larger context of Indian families? How do relationships that are hidden from family or in knowledge of the family influence emotional dependency, relationship satisfaction and well-being?
- How does emotional dependency play out in the context of marriage? How is dependence and autonomy understood in such an interdependent institution?
- Studies using personality traits and attachment tendencies as the potential predictors of emotional dependency.
- Studies to explore the circumstances under which interpersonal emotional connections take place and how they manifest in diverse couples with varying temperaments and attachment styles. For instance, there may be individuals with low social skills but may desire interpersonal skills. The lack of social skills may leave them socially isolated. Subsequent research could investigate effective strategies employed used by individuals with dependency on romantic partner to maintain healthy relationships.