

**Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adults: Emotional Dependency, Gender Role Beliefs,  
Conflict and Well-Being**

**Executive Summary of Ph.D. Thesis submitted to**

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(Human Development and Family Studies)**

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## **Introduction and Review of Literature**

Globalization, rising economy, education and better opportunities have faded the practice of caste-based occupations and provided individuals with a chance to explore various vocational options (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002; Nugent, 2006). Boost in the economy provided more professional opportunities, especially for the middle class (Jodhka & Prakash, 2016). This leads to delay in other roles such as parenthood, career and job allowing a bigger window of freedom to explore and try out new ways of living before giving into any long-term commitments (Arnett, 2006). In response to these numerous factors, “emerging adulthood” as development phase proposed by Arnett (2004), has become evident in many urban parts of the Indian society (Kapadia et al., 2007).

Formation of intimate relationship is an important developmental task and also an integral part of identity formation of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2014). Gala & Kapadia, 2013) have shown that romantic relationships are important developmental milestones and have significant consequences for self-discovery of individuals engaged in them.

Romantic love is conceptualized as a universal emotional phenomenon, existing in various historical eras and across all the world’s culture. It is experienced by majority of people but manifested and expressed in different ways, having various meanings in different cultures, sometimes expressed in multiple forms by people belonging to the same culture. The reason behind this is understood as culture acting as a lens which influences an individual’s idea of love and hence, the associated thoughts, feelings and behavior in a romantic relationship (Karandashev, 2015; Schäfer, 2008).

Indian society is a blend of hierarchical and patriarchal philosophies. Filial bonds are given importance over conjugal ties within an Indian household. (Kakar & Kakar, 2007). Decision of

life partner taken by parents based on the caste system therefore parents pressure the children to repress any romantic feelings before marriage (Hamid et al., 2011) so there is pressure, especially on women to see marriage as the ultimate goal of life. Generally, Indian young adults date in secrecy being apprehensive of betraying their parent's trust and fear that the parents might arrange their marriage somewhere else which they won't be able to refuse owing to the family's pressure and honor (Medora, 2007 (Netting, 2006; Luo, 2008).

Hence, there is a pressure (social, mental, and physical) on the individuals, especially women, to see marriage as the ultimate goal of life. Any open talk regarding relationship before marriage, let alone about one's own relationship with family is difficult. Involvement in relationship before marriage is potentially considered to bring a blot to the reputation of family. Generally, children date in secrecy until they are ready to get married and reveal the same to their families (Netting, 2006; Luo, 2008). Marriage is considered as a holy union in India with well-defined customs and strict cultural penalties for not abiding with those unwritten norms (Netting, 2010). Marriage is viewed as the benchmark of a successful romantic relationship (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Even in upper middle-class families valuing the education of daughter, marriage of the daughter remains the treasured goal of the parents wherein education is viewed as the means to find her an educated and economically affluent suitable match (Kakar & Kakar, 2007). In such a context, love marriages are frowned upon because they are expected to interfere with the highly valued traditional family values. Love marriages in India have a reputation of generally not working out well. This may be ascribed to the social pressure that marriages are put upon in our culture (Kakar & Kakar, 2007).

However, rapid urbanization, exposure to western media (Hindin & Hindin, 2009), increasing focus on education, migration of youth to urban areas (Verma, 2000) are facilitating formation of

romantic relationships. While parents endorse arranged marriages for their children, young Indians are increasingly interested in romantic autonomy and marriages of choice (Ganth, 2017), witnessing the desire to break away from the arranged marriages ritual and search the life partner on their own. (Medora, 2007). Thus, India seems to be adapting a more flexible attitude towards “love”, specifically in the urban areas (Gala & Kapadia, 2014). The results of a study conducted by Dharnidharka (2014) provides evidence that the romantic partner selection criteria by the Indian urban youth is based on personality characteristics and compatibility rather than criteria held ideal by family members such as family background.

Individuals enter a relationship looking for a companion, emotional security, love and intimacy till they reach a stage where they might be ready to make long-term commitment like marriage or cohabitation. The quality of romantic relationships is a significant source of happiness (Diener et al., 2000).

A new relationship along with feelings of intimacy brings its own set of challenges. One such challenge is to maintain a sense of self-identity and independence from the partner. Dealing with the unavoidable dependence associated with close interpersonal relationships is one of the challenges individuals face as they enter in a romantic relationship (Murray et al., 2006).

Emotional Dependency can be defined as a persistent pattern of unsatisfied emotional needs that the individual tries to fulfill maladaptively through other people (Blasco, 2000), and emanates behavior such as manipulation (Del Castillo et al., 2015), loss of identity (Schaeffer, 2012), low self-esteem (Estévez et al., 2017; Castello, 2005), and sacrifices and a deteriorated quality of life (Ferreya et al., 2004) for the sole purpose of not losing the affection of their partner

Several researchers (Bornstein, 1995, 1998; Cross et al., 2000) have distinguished between destructive and healthy dependency.

Emotional distancing in men is considered as normal and expected by society. Women are expected to show more empathy and closeness in relationships whereas men are envisaged to demonstrate autonomy and independent self-image from early years. (Taylor et al., 2000).

Dependency plays a considerably important role in close relationships, with high dependency level yielding positive results in certain situations and negative in others (Bornstein, 2012). On the positive side, dependency is associated with increased sensitivity to interpersonal cues (Masling et al., 1982), high commitment and loyalty in romantic relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). It is also associated with jealousy, possessiveness, and insecurity (Bornstein 2006).

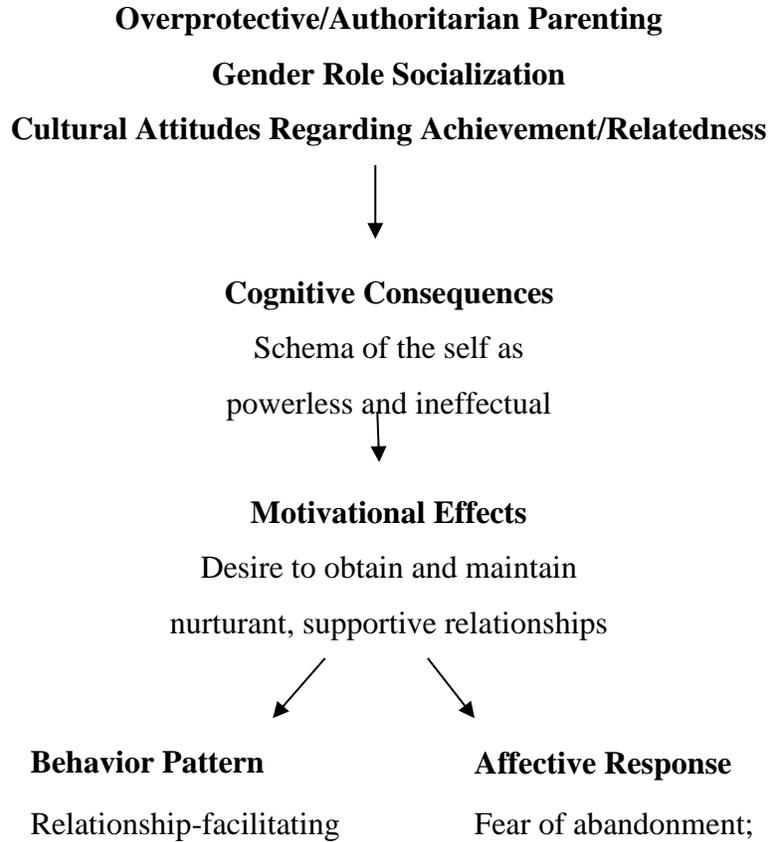
The following section outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework used in the study.

## Theoretical Framework

The Cognitive/Interactionist Model of Interpersonal Dependency was used as the theoretical framework for the study.

### Figure 1

*A Cognitive/Interactionist Model of Interpersonal Dependency (Bornstein, 2011, p.126)*

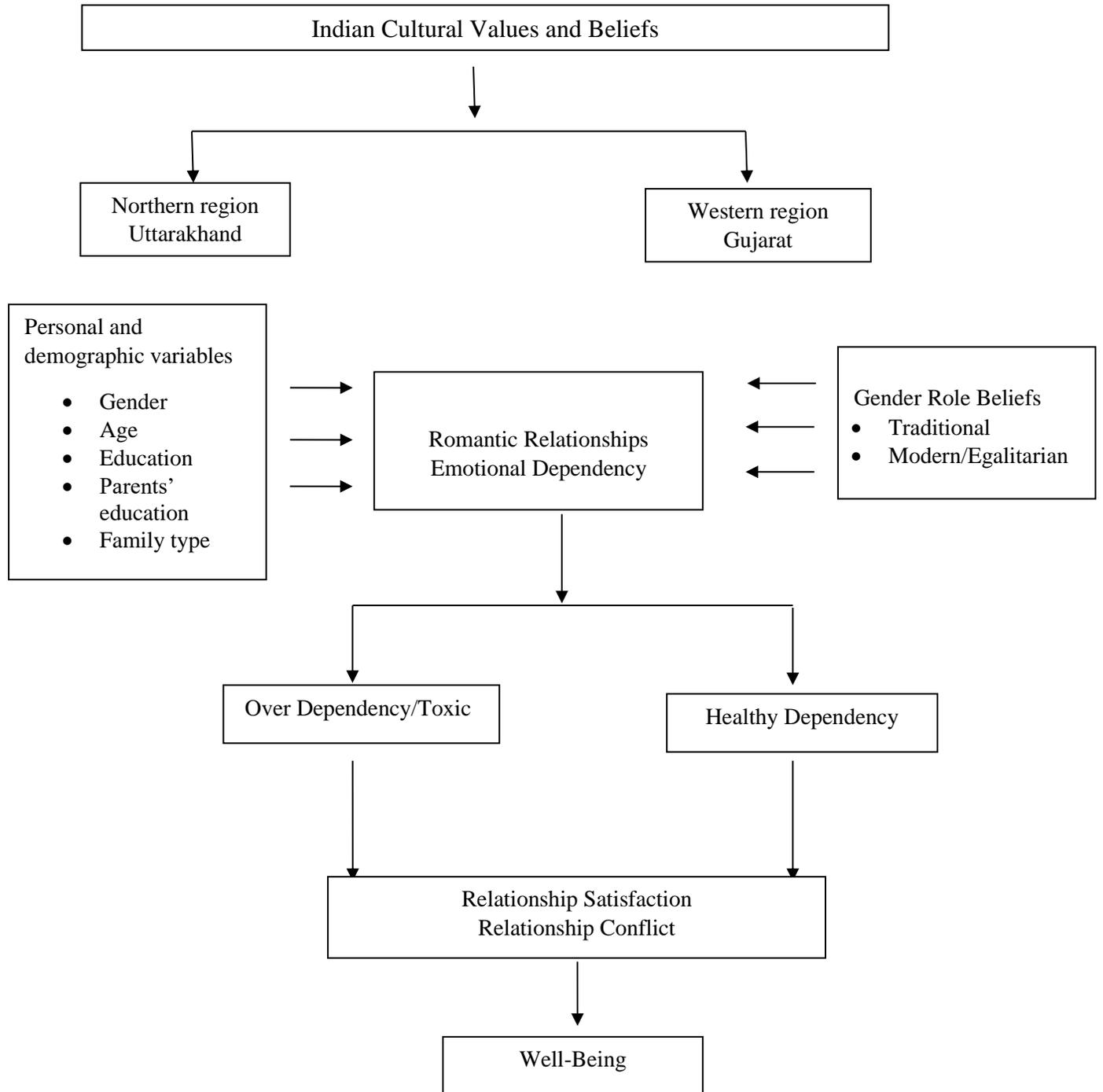


## Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework used in the study.

**Figure 2**

*Conceptual Framework*



## **Research Questions**

The research is designed to address the following research questions:

### **Broad Research Question**

What is the role of emotional dependency in romantic relationships of urban educated emerging adults from Gujarat and Uttarakhand?

### **Specific Research Questions**

1. What is the influence of select personal and demographic variables (gender, age, education, parent's education, family type) on emotional dependency in individuals currently in romantic relationships?
2. How do gender role beliefs influence emotional dependency in romantic relationships?
3. How does emotional dependency influence relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction?
4. How do relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction influence well-being?
5. How are the concepts of emotional dependency, love, relationship conflict, and relationship satisfaction understood by emerging adults?
6. What are the regional differences (Gujarat and Uttarakhand) in all of the above?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A Mixed-Methods Explanatory Sequential Design was adopted including both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The quantitative phase of the study involved establishing a relationship between emotional dependency in romantic relationships and gender role beliefs, relationship conflict, relationship satisfaction and well-being.

The qualitative phase involved eliciting participants' views and feelings toward their current romantic relationship, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions therein, and the experience of emotional dependency.

### **Locale of the study**

The study was conducted in urban Gujarat and urban Uttarakhand regions.

### **Participants**

The total sample of the study was 385 emerging adults aged 18-29 years. Participant characteristics:

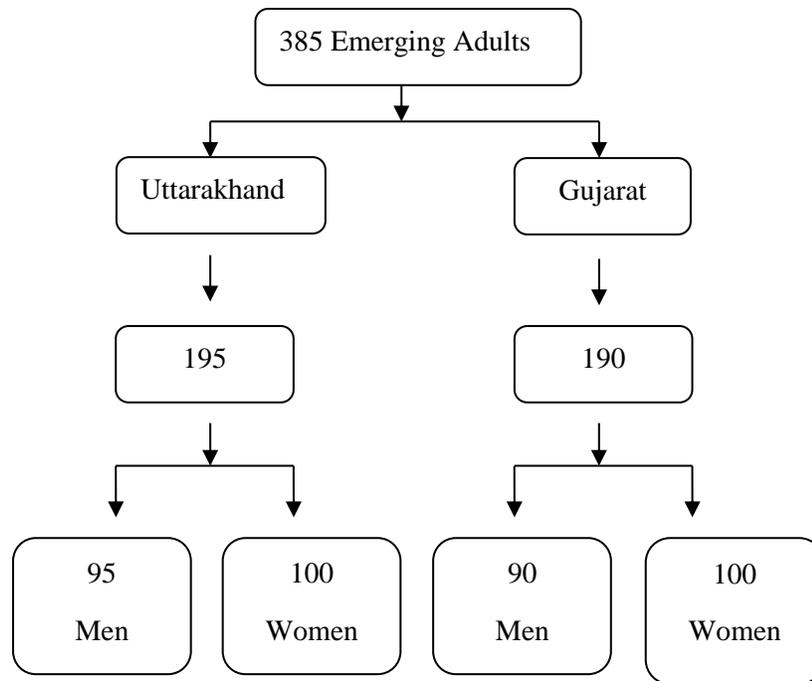
1. Individuals enrolled in college or completed education.
2. Individuals involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship (at least for a year)

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposive Snowball technique was used to find the prospective participants.

**Figure 3**

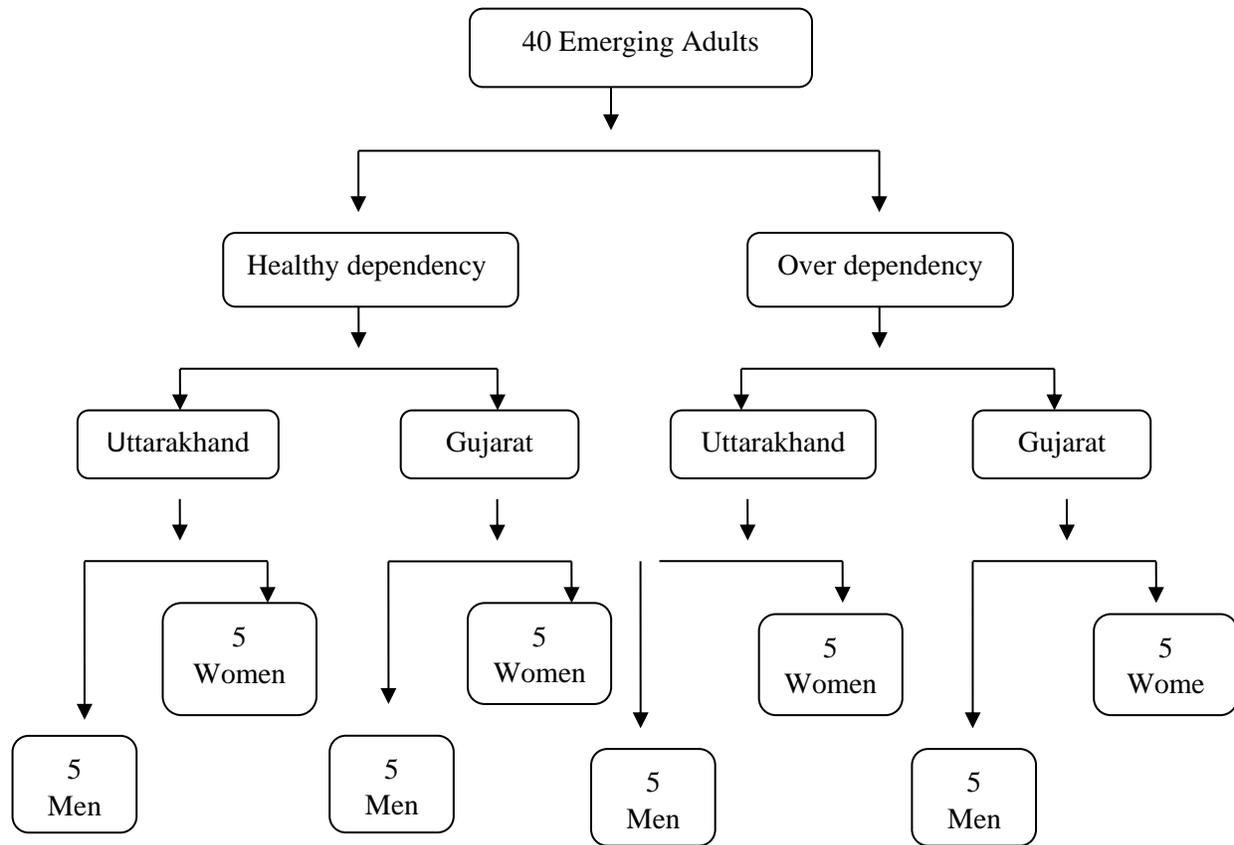
*Sample distribution (Quantitative Phase)*



From this sample, 40 men and women, equally distributed by gender, were selected, including those who manifested healthy and over emotional dependency.

**Figure 4**

*Sample distribution (Qualitative Phase)*



**Assessment Measures**

1. Background Information Form:
2. Emotional Dependency Questionnaire
3. Gender Role Attitude Scale (GRAS)
4. Conflict Scale:
5. The Relationship Assessment Scale
6. PERMA Profiler
7. In-depth Interview

**Data Collection**

The participants were recruited from different colleges and social places using social media, notices, flyers, and word of mouth. The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the study involved data collection through the medium of Google forms. There were a few

validation questions like “please choose option 3 as the answer” to check the attention of the participants and hence, easy screening of the responses. The second phase of the study, that is, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule. Each interview lasted about 30 – 90 minutes and was audio-taped after due permission. Interviews were mostly conducted through zoom calls owing to the aftermaths of the COVID during the time of data collection, but few interviews were conducted in-person.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was entered into the JASP software and was foremost checked for the normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Subsequently, based on the test results, and observations of QQ plots and histogram, decisions were made regarding further statistical analysis. When significant results suggested a deviation from normality, non-parametric statistics like Spearman’s rho were used. Parametric statistics like Student’s t-test, Pearson’s correlation and regression were used when the data followed a normal distribution.

Each interview was the unit of analysis for qualitative content analysis that involved a search for meanings (Graneheim et al., 2017; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis where the interviews were coded and categorized, followed by eliciting salient themes.

### **Ethical Consideration**

A full informed consent was obtained from all the participants for both the phases of the study. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study, if they wished to do so. The study was presented and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research (IECHR), Faculty of Family and Community Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (Ethical Approval # IECHR/FCSc/PhD/2021/1).

## Results

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the research results through descriptive, Inferential analysis and thematic analysis. Jeffrey's's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP), was used to analyze descriptive and inferential statistics. The main findings of the study are organized in sub-sections below:

### Demographic Profile

Table 1 provide comprehensive demographic information of the participants of the study.

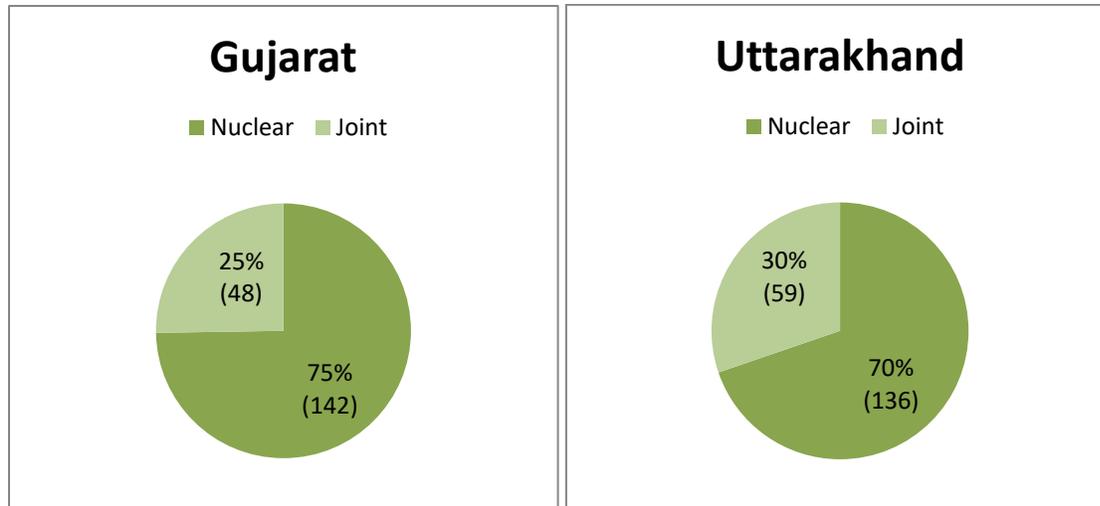
**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N= 385)*

	Gujarat (n=190)		Uttarakhand (n = 195)	
	Male (n = 90)	Female (n = 100)	Male (n = 95)	Female (n = 100)
<b>Educational Qualification</b>				
Up to Under Graduation	52	58	59	54
Post-Graduation/Doctorate	38	42	36	46
	Father (n = 190)	Mother (n = 190)	Father (n = 195)	Mother ( n = 195)
<b>Educational Qualification (Parents)</b>				
High School	23	55	31	51
Senior Secondary	39	35	23	32
Under Graduation	74	63	65	62
Post Graduation	46	33	66	42
Doctorate	7	1	8	5
Not Educated	1	3	2	3

**Figure 5**

*Demographic Profile: Family Type*



There was a total of 385 participants in the study, with 190 from Gujarat and 195 from Uttarakhand. Majority (n = 223) of the participants had an educational qualification up to under graduation. Majority of the parents (n = 137) had completed under graduation whereas only four parents fell into the category of not educated. A total of 278 participants lived in nuclear family.

**Research Question 1: What is the influence of select personal and demographic variables (gender, age, state, education, and family type) on emotional dependency in individuals currently in romantic relationships?**

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to find out the relationship of select personal and demographic variables (gender, age, state, education, and family type) with emotional dependency in individuals currently in romantic relationships.

**Table 2***ANOVA Table of Regression Model of Socio-demographic Variables on Emotional Dependency*

	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	5	10555.84	2111.16	4.86	0.000
Residual	379	164505.60	434.05		
Total	384	175061.44			

**Table 3***Regression Coefficients of Socio-Demographic Variables on Emotional Dependency*

<b>Model</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	$\beta$	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	72.668	1.088		66.779	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	97.749	8.288		11.794	< .001
	Uttarakhand	-2.551	2.137		-1.194	0.233
	Female	-3.703	2.134		-1.735	0.083
	Nuclear	-1.126	2.387		-0.472	0.637
	Post Graduation/ Doctorate	5.974	2.193		2.724	0.007
	Age	-1.004	0.329	-0.155	-3.053	0.002

<sup>a</sup> Standardized coefficients can only be computed for continuous predictors.

The highest B values were observed for post-graduation/doctorate (education level) followed by female (gender), Uttarakhand (state), nuclear (family type) and age.

Women experience emotional dependency less when compared to men as per the mean scores. Since the p-value (.008) is not less than .05, this difference is not statistically significant.

The individuals living in Uttarakhand experienced emotional dependency less than individuals residing in Gujarat. However, the difference is not statistically significant,  $p = 0.23$ . There was a significant gender difference in emotional dependency in the state of Gujarat with men ( $M = 77.42$ ,  $SD = 20.91$ ) scoring high on emotional dependency than women ( $M = 71.34$ ,  $SD = 22.52$ );  $t = -1.92$ ,  $p = 0.050$ . However, there was no significant difference in emotional dependency between men and women in Uttarakhand.

Individuals with post-graduation and higher educational level experienced higher emotional dependency when compared to individuals with under-graduation or lower emotional

backgrounds. Regression analysis also reflected that the difference is statistically significant,  $p = 0.006$ .

Individuals belonging to nuclear families experienced less emotional dependency when compared to individuals from joint families. However, this difference was not statistically significant,  $p = 0.63$

Age emerged as a statistically significant predictor of emotional dependency.

The regression coefficient allows emotional dependency to be predicted using the following regression equation:

$$\text{Emotional Dependency} = 97.74 - 3.73 * (\text{Female}) - 2.55 * (\text{Uttarakhand}) + 5.97 * (\text{Post Graduation/Doctorate}) - 1.12 * (\text{Nuclear}) - 1.003 * (\text{Age})$$

**Research question 2: How do gender role beliefs influence emotional dependency in romantic relationships?**

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between gender role beliefs and emotional dependency. The following Table 4 presents the correlation values between gender role beliefs and emotional dependency.

**Table 4***Pearson's Correlations between Subscales of Gender Role Beliefs and Emotional Dependency*

Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Emotional Dependency	r	—						
	p	—						
2. Gender Role Beliefs	r	-0.158 **	—					
	p	0.002	—					
3. Traditional Gender Roles	r	-0.129 *	0.859 ***	—				
	p	0.011	< .001	—				
4. Male Gender Roles	r	-0.130 *	0.859 ***	0.733 ***	—			
	p	0.011	< .001	< .001	—			
5. Marriage Gender Roles	r	-0.115 *	0.795 ***	0.565 ***	0.617 ***	—		
	p	0.024	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
6. Female Gender Roles	r	-0.188 ***	0.777 ***	0.559 ***	0.564 ***	0.535 ***	—	
	p	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
7. Egalitarian Gender Roles	r	-0.020	0.546 ***	0.331 ***	0.394 ***	0.376 ***	0.240 ***	—
	p	0.703	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Pearson's correlation coefficient showed a small negative correlation between gender role beliefs and emotional dependency,  $r = -0.158$ ,  $p = 0.002$ . There was a small significant negative correlation of traditional gender roles, male gender roles, marriage gender roles, and female gender roles with emotional dependency respectively (Table 4).

Further, regression analysis was conducted to predict the relationship between gender role beliefs and emotional dependency among the different groups within the study. Table 5 presents the regression coefficients of gender role beliefs on emotional dependency across different groups. The details of the groups are presented as note in Table 5. The table also gives information about the respective F and  $R^2$  values.

**Table 5***Regression Coefficients of Gender Role Beliefs on Emotional Dependency*

		B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
1	(Intercept)	105.761	10.593		9.984	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>O</sup>	-0.199	0.063	-0.158	-3.14	0.002
2	(Intercept)	104.971	14.359		7.311	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>G</sup>	-0.192	0.089	-0.155	-2.155	0.032
3	(Intercept)	103.887	18.454		5.629	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>U</sup>	-0.19	0.107	-0.127	-1.779	0.077
4	(Intercept)	94.404	14.893		6.339	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>W</sup>	-0.14	0.089	-0.111	-1.566	0.119
5	(Intercept)	119.461	14.982		7.974	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>M</sup>	-0.272	0.09	-0.219	-3.033	0.003
6	(Intercept)	134.46	20.949		6.418	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>M-G</sup>	-0.355	0.13	-0.28	-2.737	0.008
7	(Intercept)	85.407	19.363		4.411	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>W-G</sup>	-0.088	0.121	-0.074	-0.731	0.466
8	(Intercept)	87.005	24.064		3.616	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>M-U</sup>	-0.092	0.14	-0.068	-0.658	0.512
9	(Intercept)	124.282	28.471		4.365	< .001
	Gender Role Beliefs <sup>W-U</sup>	-0.308	0.164	-0.186	-1.874	0.064

Note. O = Overall Sample, G = Gujarat, U = Uttarakhand, W = Women, M = Men, M-G = Men – Gujarat, W-G = Women – Gujarat, M-U = Men – Uttarakhand, W-U = Women – Uttarakhand

Linear regression showed that 2.5% of the variance in emotional dependency across the overall sample can be accounted for by Gender Role Beliefs,  $F(1, 383) = 9.862$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $R^2 = 0.025$  and Gender Role Beliefs are a significant predictor of Emotional Dependency.

Linear Regression also showed that overall gender role beliefs are a significant predictor of emotional dependency in the state of Gujarat, Men and Men living in the state of Gujarat.

### **Research Question 3**

How does emotional dependency influence relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction?

#### **Relationship of Emotional Dependency and Relationship Satisfaction**

Correlational and Regression analysis was conducted to see the influence of emotional dependency on relationship satisfaction. Spearman's correlation was used after checking the bivariate normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The correlation analysis did not show a significant influence of emotional dependency on relationship satisfaction.

#### **Relationship of Emotional Dependency and Relationship Conflict**

Correlational and Regression analysis was conducted to see the influence of emotional dependency on relationship conflict. Spearman's and Pearson's correlation were used after checking the bivariate normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. There was a positive relationship between emotional dependency and relationship conflict across the overall sample ( $r = .295$ ,  $p < .001$ ), among men ( $r_s = .253$ ,  $p < .001$ ), among women ( $r_s = .297$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in Gujarat ( $r_s = .299$ ,  $p < .001$ ), among women in Uttarakhand ( $r_s = .228$ ,  $p = .022$ ) and among women in the state of Gujarat ( $r = .378$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 6***Regression Coefficients of Emotional Dependency (ED) on Relationship Conflict Across Different Groups*

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	R2	F	p
1	(Intercept)	14.532	1.065		13.641	< .001	0.087	36.572	<.001
	ED <sup>O</sup>	0.085	0.014	0.295	6.047	< .001			
2	(Intercept)	15.029	1.677		8.964	< .001	0.064	12.538	<.001
	ED <sup>M</sup>	0.077	0.022	0.253	3.541	< .001			
3	(Intercept)	14.125	1.377		10.261	< .001	0.111	24.835	<.001
	ED <sup>W</sup>	0.092	0.018	0.334	4.983	< .001			
4	(Intercept)	15.28	1.398		10.932	< .001	0.085	17.473	<.001
	ED <sup>G</sup>	0.076	0.018	0.292	4.18	< .001			
5	(Intercept)	14.303	2.121		6.743	< .001	0.087	9.288	0.003
	ED <sup>W-U</sup>	0.087	0.029	0.294	3.048	0.003			
6	(Intercept)	13.979	1.787		7.821	< .001	0.143	16.33	<.001
	ED <sup>W-G</sup>	0.097	0.024	0.378	4.041	< .001			

Note.

O = Overall Sample

M = Men

W = Women

G = Gujarat

W-U = Women – Uttarakhand

W-G = Women - Gujarat

Linear regression showed that 8.7% of the variance in relationship conflict across the overall sample can be accounted for by Emotional Dependency,  $F(1, 383) = 36.572$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.087$  and emotional dependency is a significant predictor of relationship conflict across the overall sample ( $t = 13.641$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Linear Regression also showed that emotional dependency is a significant predictor of relationship conflict among men, women, in the state of Gujarat, women living in the state of Uttarakhand and women living in the state of Gujarat (Table 6)

#### **Research Question 4**

##### **How do relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction influence well-being?**

Correlations and multiple regression analysis was conducted to understand the influence of relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction on Well-being. Spearman's correlation was used after checking the bivariate normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Correlation analysis revealed that a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being whereas a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being across all the groups.

There was a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .307, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.249, p < .001$ ) across the overall sample; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .323, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.256, p < .001$ ) among women; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .296, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.249, p < .001$ ) among men; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .370, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.329, p < .001$ ) in Gujarat; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .263, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.173, p = .016$ ) In Uttarakhand; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .460, p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.369, p < .001$ ) among men in Gujarat; a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction and well-being ( $r_s = .285, p = .004$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.256, p < .001$ ) among women in Gujarat, and a positive relationship between relationship satisfaction

and well-being ( $r_s = .369$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a negative relationship between relationship conflict and well-being ( $r_s = -.213$ ,  $p = .03$ ) among women in Uttarakhand.

**Table 7**

*Regression coefficients of Relationship Satisfaction (RS) and Relationship Conflict (RC) on Well-being*

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	R2	F	p
1	(Intercept)	97.999	6.575		14.906	< .001	0.136	30.054	< .001
	RS <sup>O</sup>	1.399	0.223	0.298	6.261	< .001			
	RC <sup>O</sup>	-0.701	0.153	-0.219	-4.596	< .001			
2	(Intercept)	87.201	10.632		8.201	< .001	0.167	19.698	< .001
	RS <sup>W</sup>	1.854	0.36	0.336	5.144	< .001			
	RC <sup>W</sup>	-0.681	0.218	-0.204	-3.128	0.002			
3	(Intercept)	103.574	8.338		12.422	< .001	0.114	11.766	< .001
	RS <sup>M</sup>	1.113	0.284	0.274	3.916	< .001			
	RC <sup>M</sup>	-0.678	0.214	-0.221	-3.162	0.002			
4	(Intercept)	101.779	9.678		10.517	< .001	0.208	24.557	< .001
	RS <sup>G</sup>	1.545	0.316	0.32	4.887	< .001			
	RC <sup>G</sup>	-0.949	0.214	-0.29	-4.43	< .001			
5	(Intercept)	94.985	8.988		10.568	< .001	0.099	10.49	< .001
	RS <sup>U</sup>	1.288	0.315	0.281	4.087	< .001			
	RC <sup>U</sup>	-0.524	0.216	-0.167	-2.428	0.016			
6	(Intercept)	97.042	12.533		7.743	< .001	0.304	19.035	< .001
	RS <sup>M-G</sup>	1.877	0.411	0.409	4.563	< .001			
	RC <sup>M-G</sup>	-1.198	0.308	-0.348	-3.888	< .001			
7	(Intercept)	112.589	15.098		7.457	< .001	0.124	6.862	0.002
	RS <sup>W-G</sup>	1.041	0.492	0.205	2.118	0.037			
	RC <sup>W-G</sup>	-0.775	0.297	-0.253	-2.615	0.01			
8	(Intercept)	70.946	14.763		4.806	< .001	0.217	13.464	< .001
	RS <sup>W-U</sup>	2.406	0.518	0.418	4.647	< .001			
	RC <sup>W-U</sup>	-0.692	0.312	-0.199	-2.219	0.029			

Note.

O = Overall Sample

W = Women

M = Men

G = Gujarat

U = Uttarakhand

M-G = Men – Gujarat

W-G = Women – Gujarat

W-U = Women – Uttarakhand

Multiple regression showed that 13.6% of the variance in well-being across the overall sample can be accounted for by Relationship Satisfaction (RS) and relationship conflict (RC),  $F(2, 382) = 30.054, p < .001, R^2 = 0.136$  and relationship satisfaction ( $t = 6.261, p < .001$ ) and relationship conflict ( $t = -4.596, p < .001$ ) are significant predictors of well-being across the overall sample.

Multiple Regression also showed that relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction are significant predictors of well-being among men and women, in the state of Gujarat and Uttarakhand, men and women living in the state of Gujarat and women living in the state of Uttarakhand (Table 7)

## **Section II. Qualitative Findings**

The following section presents the qualitative findings. Frequencies of responses are given in parenthesis with each theme.

### **Understanding of Love**

The following themes emerged when participants were asked about their understanding of love.

#### **1. Love is Self-identity (n = 32)**

“Whoever you are with, you can't forget yourself you need to have an identity of your own... your relationship should not affect your normal life. (Woman, 22 years, Gujarat)”

#### **2. Love is Resilience (n = 12)**

The feeling of not staying without that person around...I think for me love is a person who you can't ever get bored of... even in the toughest of times... even in the weirdest of times you want that person around (Man, 19 years, Gujarat)

#### **3. Love is Transcendent (n=14)**

I have never felt this kind of feeling with any other person yet...It heals all your pain and it gives you power to face all the situations in this life...the biggest power in this world is power of love... The true feeling without any hidden motive and without any greed....so for me that is the meaning of love (Man, 25 years, Uttarakhand)

**4. Love is consistent efforts (n = 23)**

Love is basically a continuous labor which you have to do every day. It's not a burdening labor, it comes from you very effortlessly though it demands a serious discipline. Effortlessly doesn't mean you are not putting any discipline into it but it is not burdening. So, love is basically a labor for me and in a very consistent way (Woman, 27 years, Uttarakhand)

**5. Love is Empowering (n = 18)**

Love is something which makes you delightful...which enhances your motivation...which brings the best version of you to present in this world...which encourages you to become a better human...a better person...trying to grow with that person...something like that!. (Man, 28 years, Gujarat)

**6. Love overpowers gender (n = 10)**

At the end of the day, everyone wants to feel loved...feel that he or she is being loved or respected more than anything so that's a basic idea of human emotion or expectation, I think it's regardless of the gender (Woman, 23 years, Uttarakhand)

## **Relationship Conflict**

The understanding of conflicts in a relationship were demonstrated in reference to the “causative factors” and the “consequences”.

Future relationship expectations, communication barrier, dependency, boundaries, and trust issues are a few factors materialized as reason of conflicts in between the romantic partner.

### **1. Future expectations from relationship**

The verbatims in the following section highlights how dissimilar future expectations can lead to recurring arguments in a relationship.

#### **a) Cultural expectations and commitment (n = 12)**

Mostly woman feel that they are ready but men take good time because I have being a man there is also this good responsibility on their shoulders... They have that cultural word, so when things like marriage pops up.... men start thinking that their lives will start revolving around a single thing and the women is not trying to hold the person back but she just wants to take that next step and make the relationship deeper. The women start feeling insecure and the partner is not ready to get married, the disagreements revolve around that she will find someone else to get married to (Woman, 23 years, Uttarakhand)

#### **b. Boundaries and commitment (n = 19)**

Arguments are somewhat along the lines of maybe thinking about the future sometimes... our ideas of the future do not match and we work through it.. that is one of our main reasons for disagreements...when I get into a relationship and there are a particular kind of feeling for that certain someone and if I spend some time understanding that particular person, opening up to that person, letting that

person into my boundaries, whatever my boundaries are then I am looking for that particular relationship to go a little farther... a lot farther (Man, 24 years, Gujarat)

## **2. Dependency – driven conflicts**

### **a. Other relationships (n = 8)**

For me I am not dependent on him totally... personally sometimes I want my mum's support, sometimes I want my dad's support, sometimes i want to talk to my brother and like...I am dependent on many people for different things but for him... it's like he consider me as his everything...but at a time I am...I don't understand what actually he seeks from me... so due to this miscommunication sometimes there are fights

(Woman, 24 years, Gujarat)

### **b. Subjective Dependency (n = 16)**

I think in this situation Eva is the dependor and does not understand the boundaries and the concept of space...she needs to understand that people work in a certain way and have life out of the relationship... if she gives the other person the space, I think Dev and Eva wouldn't be having this many arguments (Man, 23 years, Gujarat)

Eva is a normal personality as in a relationship we want support... Even in little things so she is acting like a normal girl. Actually, the whole thing is that Eva is being very expressive about what she is doing in the day throughout and she wants her partner to be a very active part of it...She also wants that kind of a validation.... So the presence of a partner just validates the security for her.... For me she is having a normal personality which I also have really... She is not very dependent to be honest

(Woman, 24 years, Gujarat)

## **3. Accepting Changes (n = 10)**

Like we are changing and to acknowledge that we are changing and now... Like we were talking for a good amount of time, and we were able to cater each other's talking time but eventually we are not in that same teenager mode right? We are becoming adults... So, one's needs will also change as we become adults (Woman, 28 years, Uttarakhand)

**4. 'Recurring arguments and stagnation' dynamic (n = 25)**

If you are in a relationship, you definitely give an important place for that person. right? And if that itself is every time accusing you of something and that person itself is claiming that you are something wrong or you are something of that type and it happens continuously... it would definitely harm your personality, your confidence, your trait or something that you are good at.. It could all narrow down... again it would be toxic relationship (Man, 25 years, Gujarat)

**Figure 6**

*Thematic Representation of Relationship Satisfaction*

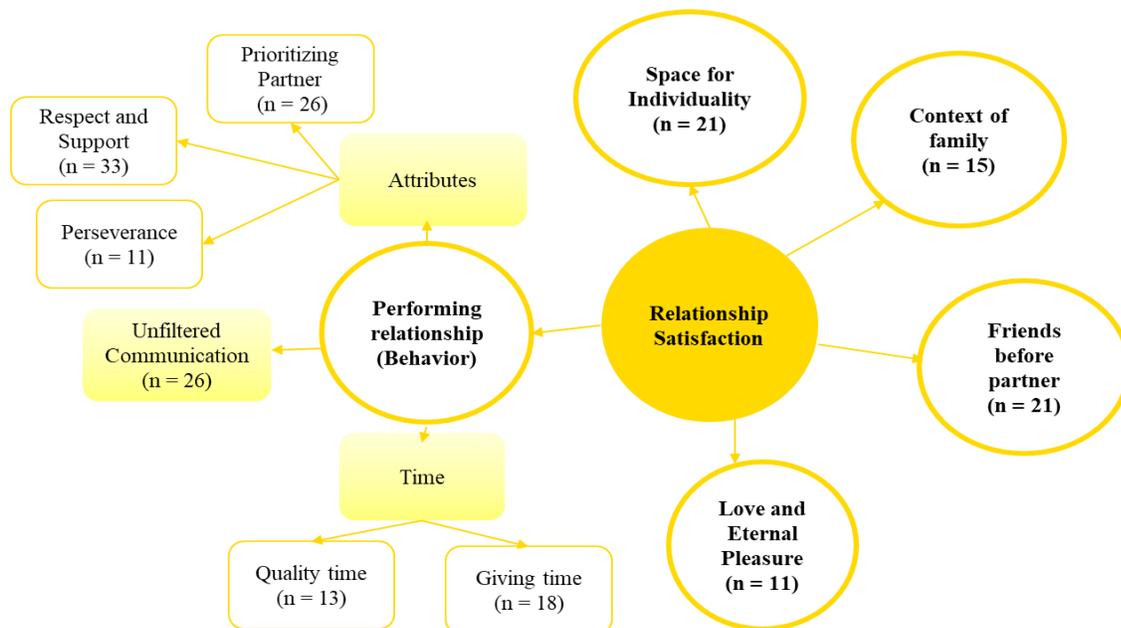
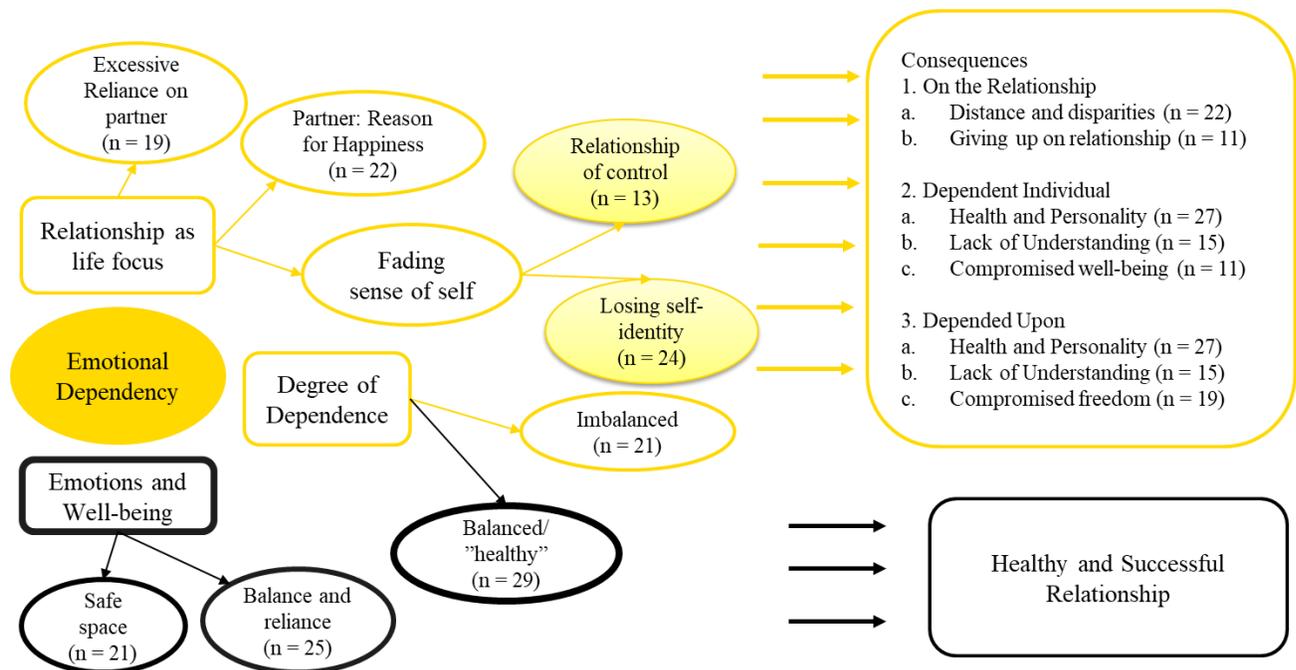


Figure 6 gives a visual representation of themes and sub-themes that emerged as a result of various responses when asked about the participants' understanding of relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was accounted for in terms of Performing relationship (behavior), Space for individuality, Context of family, Friends before Partner, and Love and Eternal Pleasure.

**Figure 7**

*Thematic Representation of Emotional Dependency*

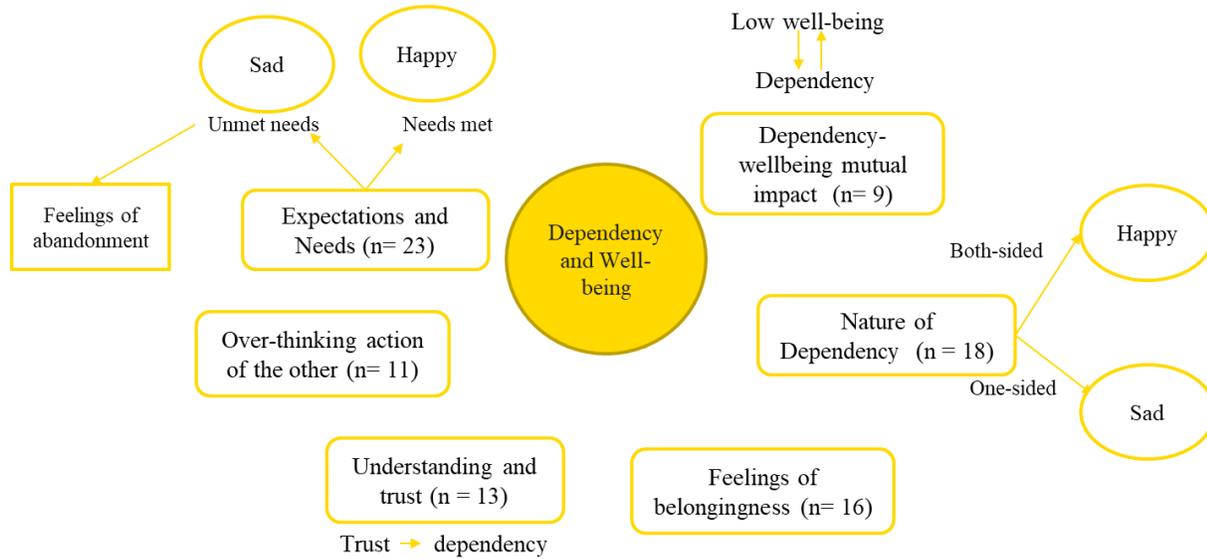


Emotional Dependency as a concept was discussed regarding its “desirability”, “meaning”, and the “consequences”. The desirability of the dependency was decided according to the meaning people associated with the idea of emotional dependency and the consequences attached to it.

The desired traits are in the black color boxes and the undesired ones are in the yellow color boxes. Figure 7 presents the themes that emerged as a response to the understanding of emotional dependency.

**Figure 8**

*Thematic Representation of Relationship between Dependency and Well-being*



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Figure 8 gives a thematic representation of the influence of emotional dependency on well-being.

1. Expectations and needs

This deals with the expectations and needs of the dependent individual from the partner and the relationship. Majority of the participants were of the view that if the needs and expectations of the dependent individual in the relationship are met, the relationship will be healthy and aid to the well-being. It is interesting to note that the onus of well-being of the dependent individual lies on the reaction and responses of the other partner.

2. Dependency – Well-being mutual impact

This outlines the mutual impact of emotional dependency and well-being on each other. It represents a cyclic pattern of low well-being leading to dependency propensities which in turn again contributes to low sense of well-being.

### 3. Nature of dependency

This category discusses the one-sided and both-sided nature of dependency on the partner. If emotional dependency is one-sided, it would negatively influence the well-being of the partner compared to when it is both-sided. It was a consensus that both-sided dependency could positively influence the well-being.

### 4. Feelings of belongingness

This discusses the need of people to dependent on each other as the basic nature of human being is to feel belonged.

### 5. Understanding and trust

This reflects the way understanding and trust between partners holds more power than the dependencies within the relationships, which is viewed as being degrading to the well-being by many individuals interviewed. The thoughtfulness and consideration of each other's emotions were thought to stimulate emotional dependency between the partners which subsequently adds to the well-being. it also indicates that because you have trust in someone, you are choosing to depend on that person for your needs.

### 6. Over-thinking partner's action

Few interviewees also pointed out how dependent individuals can overthink every little action of their partner which could potentially harm their sense of self-concept and confidence.

Participants were also of the opinion that the tendency of the dependent individual to revolve their life around their partner renders the dependent individual to overthink every little action of their partner.

## Discussion

The results of the quantitative part of the study did not find overall statistically significant gender differences but on conducting further analysis, gender differences were found in the state of Gujarat with men more emotionally dependent on women. The results are consistent with the finding of few Latin American studies which also suggested that men are more emotionally dependent on women (Estévez et al., 2018; Urbiola & Estévez, 2015).

As per the results of the study, gender role beliefs are significant predictor of emotional dependency. This is consistent with the findings of Rowell (2011) who found that gender role ideology has a considerable impact on the preferences of emotional dependency. Benjanyan et al. (2014) in their study compared the romantic ideals of young adults in India and The United States and stated that the boundaries of masculinity and femininity are becoming very fluid which in turn has allowed men and women more spaces to be less gender definite. For men, gender norms are constructed around masculinity (Sivakumar & Manimekalai, 2021), and emotional hardiness (Shrestha et al., 2019), controlling emotions, and handling difficult situations independently are the important attributes of being a man (Manirajah, 2013).

The results of the study suggested that higher is the emotional dependency on the partner, higher are the conflicts in a relationship. This agrees with Cupach and Canary (2000) who established that high dependence of partners on each other in close intimate relationships makes romantic relationships very much liable to conflicts.

The following themes emerged as the result of qualitative analysis and are discussed as below:

### 1. Balance – Imbalance Paradigm

Desirability of emotional dependency in romantic relationship is mainly viewed in terms of degree of dependence. The meaning people associated with dependency varied according to the balance and imbalance of the dependence. Dependency in a relationship ranges on a continuum

of balance and imbalance where healthy relationship lies towards the balanced side. 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. This is in agreement to the finding of Birtchnell (1988) who explained that extreme dependency can threaten individual's well-being and harm close relationships (cited in Ulusoy & Durmus, 2013).

2. Self-identity and Relationship (for women) - Men are given spaces to emote whereas women are labeled as emotional.

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. Women's understanding of themselves in context of emotional dependency is highly intertwined with their sense of self and self-identity. 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 reflects the accommodating nature of women.

3. Varying and nuanced understanding of dependency

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 individuals. 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.

#### 4. Age as an influencing factor

Age could act as influencing factors of emotional dependency. When an individual is younger with less 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.

#### 5. Interdependency encouraged and reinforced within Indian cultural context.

Although there were many negative sides to emotional dependency, it still emerged as one of the more important reasons of entering a relationship. Although, the need for emotional reliance is a pan-cultural phenomenon. This reflects the way interdependency is encouraged and reinforced within the Indian cultural context (Chaddha & Deb, 2013). The Indian culture typically follows the interdependent pathway of development which is reinforced across relationships.

#### 6. Differences in cultural context

The quantitative data did not reveal any statistically significant overall state difference, but the qualitative interviews presented certain trends in the state of Gujarat and Uttarakhand. One on one conversations and probes pointed out the differences in Uttarakhand men's idea of emotional dependency and expectations from women which largely aligned with the conventional gendered notions of code and conduct. Gujarati participants were more willing to share and discuss their romantic experiences however considerable probing was required for respondents in Uttarakhand, and yet the answers were restricted. Women from both the states were expressive with their responses.

## 7. Socialization of men

Indian men are more socialized to be expressive with their mothers, but not fathers or other male relationships. When getting into a relationship, there is an expectation of transference of those needs from mothers to partner. Kakar and Kakar (2009) has described this as the “conscious idealization of mother as a paragon of unconditional love” (pp. 99). “Friends before partners” was one of the themes aiding to high relationship satisfaction. So, this could mean a shift from a relationship of equality (friendship) to a relationship of nurturer and nurturant – which might not work for some people.

## 8. Relationship Dynamics

The kind of relationship dynamics i.e., what works between two people could be more powerful than different definitions and understanding of healthy and unhealthy dependency by different people.

## Conclusion

Unlike the predominant social and cultural assumptions of women being more emotionally dependent on men (González-Jiménez, & Del Mar Hernández-Romera, M., 2014; Martínez et al. 2008), the study showed that men are more emotionally dependent than women. This reflects men's need for emotional dependency. They may not be very articulate about it but the need is present.

The present study provides insights into the emerging adult's emotional dependency tendencies that are guided by the interaction of state and gender. The study confirmed that women in Uttarakhand had higher egalitarian beliefs and men in Gujarat had higher egalitarian beliefs.

Cultural traditions are more strongly enforced in Uttarakhand, particularly rural Uttarakhand which is marked by patriarchal dominance (Moller, 2003; Rangan & Jewitt, 2001). The population in the urban areas of Uttarakhand is in part contributed by the migration from the hills and mountains (Mamgain & Reddy, 2015). Therefore, many women migrate from the rural parts of Uttarakhand for better educational and career opportunities and women in mountains are very self-sufficient- particularly physically and emotionally. Therefore, coming from scarcity and moving to more resources and opportunities could lead to acculturation and feelings of empowerment.

On, the other hand Gujarat is recognized as an economically and infrastructurally developed state (Khanna et al., 2022), fastest – growing state in the Indian economy with the highest level of women's empowerment (Bhatt & Shastri, 2018). Being a fairly modernized state, it has equality of resources and opportunities for men and women, particularly in the urban parts of the state. Men in Gujarat have been socialized to expect equality for men and women. A

recent study conducted in Gujarat revealed the shift from traditional to more progressive views in gender domain. The study also indicated a desire to break free from the traditional definitions of masculinity and how stereotypes of masculinity harms men as they are not able to express their feelings and emotions and are expected to suppress the same. Hence, urban educated men are more inclined to be more gender sensitive.

### **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.

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