

Abstract

Formation of intimate relationship is an important developmental task and the quality of romantic relationships is a significant source of happiness for emerging adults. Norms of romantic relationships are dictated by cultural settings where regional differences translate into different sociocultural mentalities. In a patriarchal culture like India, gender based socialization is firmly entrenched with clear prescriptions regarding appropriate and desirable gender roles and behavior. The study adopted a mixed-methods design focused on understanding emotional dependency and the influence of gender, gender role beliefs and culture on well-being. The participants included emerging adult men and women involved in a heterosexual relationship in two states, Gujarat (n=190) and Uttarakhand (n=195). The participants completed quantitative assessment measures: emotional dependency questionnaire, gender role attitude scale, PERMA profiler, relationship assessment scale and relationship conflict scale, followed by qualitative interviews with a select sample (n=40). Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical tests such as t-test, ANOVA, correlation and regression, and thematic analysis was done for the qualitative interview data. The results showed that emotional dependency is significantly higher among men compared to women in the state of Gujarat. As per the mean score trends, emotional dependency is higher among men than women. The results suggested a negative correlation between emotional dependency and well-being. The quantitative results also indicated that gender role beliefs are a significant predictor of emotional dependency. Qualitative interviews highlight the impact of cultural context on the experiences around well-being, dependency and relationship ideologies. The results of the qualitative analysis revealed that there are differences in the way emotional dependency is understood and manifested by men and women. Women's practice of dependency is guided by the consequential influences of their understanding of self and identity. Men predominantly view romantic relationship as a safe space for expressing their emotions to their partner, which they usually hide from the society. The findings on understanding different concepts related to love and relationship, emotional dependency – its experiences and manifestation – and the relationship between dependency and well-being can be used in professional settings to develop healthy romantic relationships.

Keywords: Emotional Dependency, Romantic Relationships, Culture, Well-being