

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Dhairya Mohla¹, Dr. Neera^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Boys learn to be men from the men in their lives, from their own experiences navigating our social norms, and from the large social and cultural context. Gender role expectations and gender role conventions have been forced on individuals all around the world for decades. These expectations are especially high in a country like India, where social conventions are rigorous. This study aimed to explore the level of adherence to masculine role norms and its impact on emotional expression among the young adult men and middle-aged men population. The sample size was 50 men in each of the groups. Moreover, focus group discussions were conducted to understand the causes of emotional suppression in men. Independent sample t tests results revealed that there are no significant differences in the emotional expression and level of adherence for the young adult and middle-aged population. Regression analyses revealed that there is a significant relationship between level of emotional expression and adherence to male role norms (16%) in the young adults' population. (If the level of adherence to masculine norms increases, emotional expression decreases). There is no significant relationship between emotional expression and adherence to male role norms (5%) in the middle-aged population. The conduction of focus group discussions gave clarity as to how there are multiple reasons for these results.

Keywords: *Expressive Suppression in Men, Toxic Masculinity, Gender Roles, Male Norms, Cross Generational Study*

“Manliness means perfect manhood, as womanliness implies perfect womanhood. Manliness is the character of a man as he ought to be, as he was meant to be.”

—James Freeman Clarke, American Minister & Author

As the American Psychological Association states, —Boys learn to be men from the men in their lives, from their own experiences navigating our social norms, and from the large social and cultural context.

Social and Gender Norms

In sociology, a society is a collection of people who live in a defined community and share cultural components. Many aspects of our lives are influenced by the type of society we live

¹Undergraduate Student, Psychology, Aryabhata College

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Aryabhata College, University of Delhi.

*Corresponding Author

Received: July 26, 2023; Revision Received: September 27, 2023; Accepted: September 30, 2023

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

in, such as where we grow up, how we are influenced, who we encounter, what we do, and how we experience life.

Social norms are commonly defined as "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group and that guide or constrain social behaviours without the force of law" (Cialdini and Trost, 1998, p. 152). Gender norms are collective beliefs and expectations within a community or society at a particular moment about what behaviours are appropriate for men and women, as well as their relationship and interactions. Particularly in a country like India, where social conventions are rigorous, these expectations are amplified. When males appear to transgress from society's unwritten gender rules, they are questioned about their manhood or masculinity. (Alam, 2016).

Masculine Norms and Conformity

We're all social animals and have an innate desire to belong to a group. We have a tendency to alter our opinions, perceptions, and behaviours in ways that conform to group norms.

Social validation or social proof can be defined as a phenomenon that leads to collective conformity (Cialdini, 2009). The idea is that as individuals, we look to other members of society or a group to provide proof that important decisions have already been made, and their behaviour acts as a signal that what is being done is the accepted behaviour or the standard, and we should do the same. Conformity is the act of altering one's conduct in order to fit in or go along with others around you.

Masculinity norm is a —societal expectation of how a man should think, feel and behave (McDermott et al., 2019). Conformity to masculine norms has been defined as—meeting societal expectations for what constitutes masculinity in one's public or private life (Mahalik, et al., 2003, p. 3). Some men interpret these norms as requiring them to engage in activity that jeopardises their physical and mental well-being. Conformity to male norms has been associated with binge drinking and increased sexually aggressive behaviour in men (Liu & Iwamoto, 2007).

Gender disparity is viewed as a women's issue, something that does not involve men and can be remedied solely by focusing on women. Furthermore, it allows dominant or toxic masculinity to flourish unhindered, masculinity based on simplified norms and understandings of traditionally masculine characteristics such as violence, physical strength, emotion suppression, and devaluation of women (Connell, 2005; Pascoe, 2005). This type of masculinity is considered "toxic" for two reasons. It is harmful to women. It influences sexist and patriarchal behaviours, such as aggressive or violent behaviour toward women. Second, toxic masculinity is harmful to men and boys. Men's physical and emotional health, as well as their relationships with women, other men, and children, are hampered by narrow stereotyped expectations.

Yousaf, Popat, and Hunter conducted a study on men's assistance seeking behaviour and discovered that the more men were inclined to embrace traditional masculinity ideals, the greater the barrier to their psychological help seeking (Yousaf et al., 2015). Young men are among the least likely to seek assistance for mental health issues from friends or medical professionals (Biddle et al., 2004). A study found that when men expose a weakness at work, they are seen to have inferior status. (Rosette, Ashleigh Shelby, et al.). According to research, men who are more social and agreeable (e.g., kind, caring, supportive,

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

sympathetic) make much less money than men who are more stereotypically masculine. (Judge, T. A., Livingston, B. A., & Hurst, C. (2012). Men who are more modest in displaying their qualifications are perceived as less pleasant, less agentic, and weaker than modest women. (Moss-Racusin, Corinne A., Phelan, Julie E., Rudman, Laurie A.) Similarly, self-effacing men in the hiring process are rated lower in ability and less desirable to hire by potential employers than self-effacing women. (Rudman, L. A., 1998).

Emotional Suppression

The act of attempting to conceal, prevent, or lessen ongoing displays of emotional expression is known as expressive suppression (Gross and Levenson, 1993; Gross and John, 2003).

When it comes to processing emotions, men and women have distinct expectations. Because women are frequently perceived as "sensitive," it is socially acceptable for them to express their emotions, such as grief or fear. When it comes to emotions, there are two major components to the process: the experience and the expression. Most men fail on the expressive side of the fence, which means they do not communicate their emotions through words, emotional expressions such as crying, or writing one's feelings. According to research, men experience emotions on the same level as women. However, because it is not socially acceptable for a man to cry when he is sad, it may appear that men do not experience melancholy at all.

According to masculinity theories, men retain a "stiff upper lip" at times of emotional stress. Widowhood is a significant emotional challenge for older men. Data from two British studies show how widowers deal with the contrasting emotional sensations of widowhood and hegemonic masculinity's emphasis on emotional suppression. The interviews have emotional content, but masculinity is preserved through the employment of rhetorical tropes such as emotional control, logic, responsibility, and successful action. (Bennett et al., 2007). Males who cry at work are viewed as being more emotional and less competent than women who cry. (Fischer, Agneta H., et al.). According to a research study, men were anticipated to express more wrath, scorn, and disgust, whereas women were expected to show more fear, grief, surprise, and delight. This study also discovered a strong link between perceptions of dominance and affiliation and the likelihood that an individual would exhibit a specific emotion. (Hess et al., 2007)

Even preschoolers have stereotypic ideas regarding sex differences in emotional experience and expression (e.g., Birnbaum & Croll, 1984; Birnbaum, Nosanchuk, & Croll, 1980), and these beliefs persist into adulthood (e.g., Grossman & Wood, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Lutz, 1990; Shields, 1987). Emotional disparities between men and women, like other differences in social conduct, stem from the social roles that men and women play in society (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 1991, 1999).

We also cannot deny the role of education in gender-based ideology. Education is continuously changing. In today's generation, it is more inclusive, practical, and knowledgeable. Furthermore, the value of critical thinking has been emphasised, previously held traditional and stigmatic themes are presented in order to make an acceptable decision, and many myths have been debunked using facts and evidence. This is why one generation of people may not have the same clarity on a particular topic as another generation. As a

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

result, there may be a visible variation in masculinity attitudes between the younger and older generations.

Present Study

After understanding the variables of this study, it is critical to investigate the extent to which people accept or reject specific inflexible gender norms, especially with respect to masculinity. Stereotypes are mostly viewed as negative only for females, because women are seen as inferiors. This research study on the other hand, explores how stereotypes about gender norms can affect men way more than we can fathom.

Although there are a significant number of studies that demonstrate the suppression of emotions and attempt to understand their implications, there are very few that move beyond the single variable. Also, not much has been done with respect to the Indian context. Since emotions form a crucial part of human existence, the researchers wish to understand the reasons for suppression, and the changing views of the young adults' population on the importance of emotions. The focus group discussions will provide an insight into how the society has developed with respect to emotional intelligence. The purpose of this study is to determine whether young and middle-aged adults have different attitudes toward conventional masculinity norms or if they all have comparable attitudes toward masculinity norms as a result of increased awareness from other external sources.

Objectives

- To find out the relationship between suppression of emotional expression in men and the level of adherence to masculinity norms.
- To understand the causes of suppression in men through the conduction of Focus Group Discussions.
- To explore the similarities and differences in viewpoints of the young adults and middle aged population on emotional expression, and gender roles and norms.
- To explore how other variables come into play when the dynamics of emotional expressivity and masculine norms are studied.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant difference in the level of emotional expression in the young adult and middle aged population.
- There will be a significant difference in the level of adherence to masculine role norms in the young adult and middle aged population.
- There will be a significant relationship between the level of adherence to male role norms and emotional suppression in the young adult population.
- There will be a significant relationship between the level of adherence to male role norms and emotional suppression in the middle aged population.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two phases with a quantitative study consisting of questionnaires filled by 50 participants each of young adults and middle aged population. In the second phase, a qualitative study consisting of two focus group discussions of 8 members each was conducted.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Research Design

A descriptive research design has been used for the quantitative study and an exploratory qualitative study design has been used to understand the opinions of the participants on the chosen topic, with the help of the focus group discussions.

Independent Variable = Level of adherence to masculine role norms

Dependent Variable = Level of emotional expression.

Participants and Sample Size

The study consisted of two groups, young adult men (18-25 years) and middle aged men (35-55 years), with each group consisting of 50 members each.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling method has been used for the research study.

Inclusion criteria - Male, undergraduate and postgraduate young adults aged 18 to 25 years in Delhi NCR; Male, middle-aged adults aged 35 to 55 in Delhi NCR.

Exclusion criteria - Males belonging to age ranges different from the ones mentioned.

Tools and Measures used

Male Role Norms Scale by Edward H. Thompson Jr and Joseph H. Pleck (1986).

The Male Role Norms Scale was developed by Edward H. Thompson Jr and Joseph H. Pleck in 1986. This scale consists of 26 questions on the whole. It is a self-reported questionnaire with responses in the format of 7-point Likert type starting from, 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. It has three subsets namely, Status, Toughness, and Anti Femininity. The higher the score, the more attitude towards male role norms.

Reliability: The Cronbach's alpha for status, toughness and anti femininity were found to be 0.81, 0.74, 0.76 respectively.

Validity: Confirmatory factor analysis shows that the three distinct factors have good intercorrelations and are highly valid. The questionnaire has good construct validity.

Scoring: The responses are made on a 7 point likert scale, where 1→ very strongly disagree and 7→ very strongly agree. The summary scale score is computed as the average of the responses to all the items. Higher scores indicate more traditional attitudes toward male gender norms. Items 19 and 25 were reverse coded. The higher the score, the more prominent the attitude towards male role norms.

Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES)

The 17-item Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES) was developed by Kring et al. (1994) as a self-report measure of how much people express their emotions outwardly. The EES was found to be an internally consistent and stable individual-difference measure in reliability studies. Using both college student and community groups, validation studies revealed early convergent and discriminant validities, a moderate link between self-rated and other-rated expression, and correspondence between self-report and laboratory-measured expressiveness.

Reliability: The 4-week test-retest correlation was .90. Reliability was not significantly affected by gender.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Validity: The convergent and discriminant validities of both the samples tested came out to be 0.93 and 0.90 respectively.

Scoring: The responses are made on a 6 point likert scale, where 1→ never true, 6→ always true. The summary scale score is computed as the average of the responses to all the items. Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16 and 17 are reverse scored.

Procedure

The quantitative data was collected through the questionnaires that were sent online to the participants via google forms to collect individual responses.

For the purpose of FGDs, participants were told about the objective of the research briefly, and the time and venue for the discussion was informed.

Analysis

The statistical techniques used for the quantitative part of the study were independent sample t-test and linear regression. (Using SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 28.0)

For the qualitative part of the study, a comprehensive tabular representation of the main themes, sub themes and codes has been done. Flowcharts have also been added to pictorially understand the major themes.

RESULT TABLES

Findings of Quantitative Analysis

Table 1: Independent sample t-test scores for differences in level of emotional expressivity in the Young Adults and Middle Aged Men Population

Mean Scores (SD)	t-value	P value	Standard Error Difference
Young adults- 53.67 (13.23)	1.53	0.130	2.57
Middle aged men- 57.60 (12.63)			

Table 2: Independent sample t-test scores for differences in level of adherence to masculine role norms in the Young Adults and Middle Aged Men Population

Mean Scores (SD)	t-value	P value	Standard Error Difference
Young adults- 97.76 (28.05)	-0.19	0.850	4.97
Middle aged men- 96.84 (21.51)			

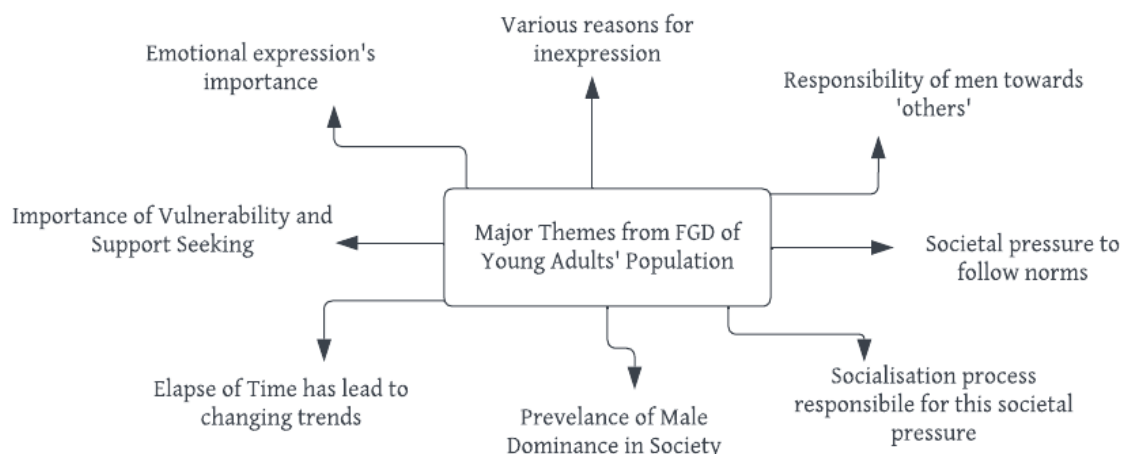
Table 3: Regression Analysis on Predictor Variable- Level of Adherence to Male Role Norms and Criterion Variable - Emotional Expressivity.

	R square value	F value	p- value
Young Adults Population	0.16	9.33	0.004
Middle Aged Men	0.05	2.48	0.122

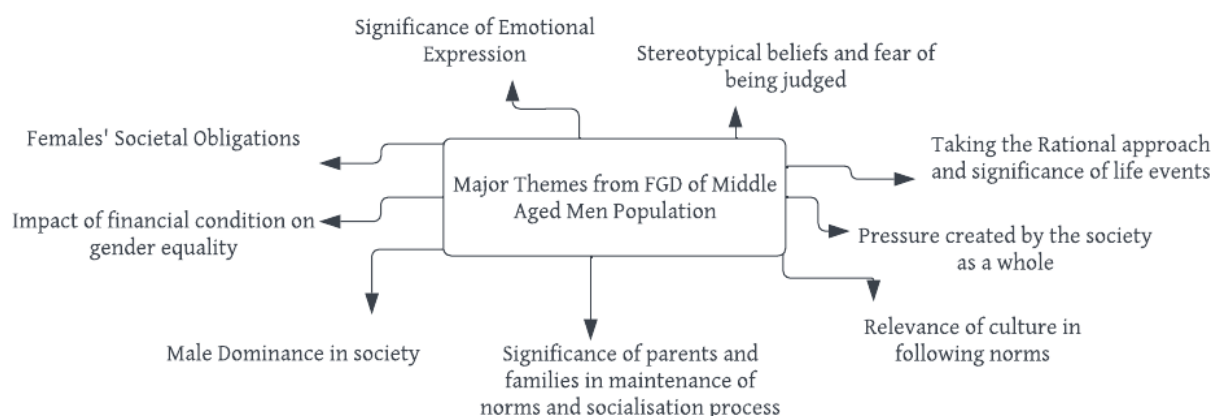
Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Flowcharts Representing Major Themes of FGDs

Findings of Qualitative Analysis



Flowchart 1: Major Themes from FGD of Young Adults' Population



Flowchart 2: Major Themes from FGD of Middle Aged Men Population

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Phase 1: Quantitative Analysis

As evident from the result table 1, the t-score comes out to be 1.53, and the p-value comes out to be 0.130, which signifies that there is no significant differences in the emotional expression for the young adult and middle aged population. Thus, the first hypothesis is rejected.

Research shows a range of negative emotional repercussions, including feelings of guilt, humiliation, and disappointment in oneself. Given that guilt and similar emotions promote compliance, these emotional reactions may help to maintain social norms by discouraging future transgressions. According to studies, people automatically categorise others as norm violators or abiders (Kleef et al., 2015).

It is ingrained in children due to the socialisation process that they have to follow certain norms to be accepted as part of the society. Families are very close-knit and going against what parents have taught can have detrimental consequences. Hence, even young adults have probably adapted this ideology and refrain from expressing emotions.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

In addition, the influence of social media has resulted in an overwhelming amount of information, particularly among young adults. They are well aware of the concept of conformity and how to adhere to societal norms. It is highly likely that the young adults were merely projecting a certain image to their peers and conforming to the established norms that have been instilled in them through the process of socialisation.

The role of responsibility that the men of the family have restricts them from expressing their emotion in front of family members. Even in situations where grieving is an accepted response, like, a family member has passed away, they act —tough, because that is the expected expression.

As evident from the result table 2, the t-score comes out to be -0.19, and the p-value comes out to be 0.850, which signifies that there are no significant differences in the level of adherence to masculine norms for the young adult and middle aged population. Thus, the second hypothesis is also rejected.

Gender construction in society develops various patterns of expectation for men and women, resulting in diverse behaviours (Zahra, 2013, Stibbe, 2004, Van Hoven and Hopkins, 2009). Historically, men were defined by their strength and capacity to finish physical tasks, whilst women were supposed to perform household duties (Ayenibiowo, 2010). Traditional duties assigned to women include non-egalitarian accountabilities such as being responsible for family issues and not being engaged in professional life. Traditional responsibilities given to men, on the other hand, include accountabilities such as being the head of the house and also accountable for bread winning.

Since norms are passed from generation to generation, even the young adult population is more or less very similar to their previous generations with respect to their mindset.

Men and boys are active agents in the construction and reconstruction of prevailing masculinity norms (Will, 2000). According to Pyke (1996), masculine behaviours are social practices that are developed not only in regard to the feminine, but also in relation to one another, such as dominance over the lower social and economic groups. Some argue that acceptance of traditional hegemonic masculinity norms (e.g., being strong and invulnerable, not expressing emotions, being resilient, and being independent) has a significant impact on men's psychological help-seeking (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). For example, males may have humiliation and worry about requesting help if they believe that they should bear the discomfort or solve the situation on their own because they are men.

From the result table 3, we can see that there is a significant relationship (16%) between the adherence to male role norms and level of emotional expression in the young adults' population. Thus, the third hypothesis is accepted.

As we've already extensively discussed, the socialisation process that begins early on in childhood is the reason why young adults follow norms implicitly and explicitly. The fear of judgement from others is something that stops them from expressing emotions, especially negative emotions such as 'crying'. They've been taught to act —tough and have always been told that they are the breadwinners of the family. The roles of responsibility have been instilled in them to such a great extent that they think twice before expressing themselves, even when it is necessary.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

The extent of collectivism in the country, close-knit family structures, fear of judgement, consequences of breaking social norms, can also be seen as reasons why the two variables seem to be related to each other.

From the result table 4, we can see that there is no significant relationship between emotional expression and adherence to male role norms in the middle aged population. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

The sample size of the current study was only 50 people as part of the middle aged population, so the results are not generalisable. It is very much possible that if the sample size is increased, we see that these two variables are very much correlated.

In this study, adherence to masculine role norms was the independent variable and level of emotional expression was the dependent variable. Since there are many other factors that could contribute to emotional expression, apart from just adherence to norms, it can be a somewhat valid result with respect to this population. These dynamics can be explored in future studies on this topic.

It is also seen from the themes produced by the FGDs that middle aged men are more 'rational' than 'emotional' in their approach. This shows that emotionality does not govern all aspects of middle aged men's lives. Life's experiences and responsibilities are significant factors for realising what is important and what is not. Young adults, on the other hand, do not have as many life experiences and responsibilities to cater to, to answer these questions authentically. Most of their answers could have been based on other people's life experiences, consumption and the direct and indirect influence of social media.

Phase 2: Qualitative Analysis

Major Findings of Young Adults' Focus Group Discussion

The major themes derived from the FGD of young adults can be seen in Flowchart 1. They believe that social norms are passed on from generation to generation and the surroundings and the socialisation process play a major role in the maintenance of norms. Families and peer groups provide social validation when the required norms are followed.

Participants also mentioned that —society ko chalane ke liye norms toh chahiye hee, which clearly indicates how their survival and happiness in the society is dependent on norms. The participants continued their conversation by highlighting the ongoing evolution of societal norms. They pointed out that practices like Sati pratha, which were followed for numerous years, no longer exist today. This exemplified how norms are shaped by the specific time period and social context. When questioned about the perception of women in modern society, they emphasised that women are capable of pursuing any endeavour and that the prevailing societal norms favouring male dominance are unjust.

Many also mentioned how males have traditionally been viewed as heroic figures and when a boy child is born into a family, we can hear the parents saying —yeh humein sahara degal. A participant interestingly mentioned that gender roles are driven by two main factors: the education of the individual and the economic strata they belong to. If these two things fall in place, there is nothing that a woman can't accomplish.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

When queried about emotional expression, the majority of participants believed that the act of expressing or suppressing emotions is contingent upon both the circumstances and the individual with whom one is sharing their feelings. —If a person is crying in front of me, unhe dilaasa dene ke liye mai khud nahi roungal is something a participant mentioned. They did unanimously agree that expressing is important and it relaxes the mind, but they also said that they feel hesitant in expressing negative emotions like ‘crying’ because people usually do not care what others are going through.

They also mentioned that they have been ingrained with the belief that men should not cry and must constantly display strength. When questioned about expressing their emotions to close friends, they emphasised the importance of a "trust factor." Additionally, one participant expressed that if they were to cry in public, they would be subject to judgement, indicating that they would prefer to share their problems with a non-biased individual such as a therapist. Furthermore, when asked about seeking professional assistance, all participants unanimously agreed that it is acceptable to be vulnerable at times. Seeking help was viewed as a sign of strength because a man who can recognize his vulnerabilities and seek support is worthy of admiration.

Major Findings of Middle Aged Mens’ Focus Group Discussion

The major themes derived from the FGD of middle aged men can be seen in flowchart 2. They believed that if norms have been developed, they are for the betterment of the society. They stated that society expects us to follow norms, and we are compelled to do so. Without the existence of norms, we will be walking into the wilderness.

Some participants also stated that —hamari sanskriti hee hamari dharohar hai. If we leave that behind, then our country will be no different than other western countries. In the past, joint families held significant importance, but now nuclear families are valued due to shifting trends and job requirements. Despite these changes, emotional attachment to our families remains a key distinction between our country and others. In Western countries, it is common for children to move out of their parents' homes as soon as they reach the age of 18. This practice is now being adopted by young individuals in our country as well, whether it be for educational reasons or work opportunities. Participants also believed that globalisation has a major role to play in the evolution of norms of our country. Although many participants believed that it has played a positive role for the betterment of our society and country, a participant stated: —kadar ki kabr khud chuki hai, jo pehle aadar satkaar dekhke thhe, it has changed. The overall decline of the society is very evident. He believed that because there is an ease of accessibility now, children get easily distracted by social media.

When talking about gender roles and discrimination, they stated that women play a pivotal role in the society and can be considered as its backbone. The ground reality remains that gender differences still exist and the main aim of a woman’s life is considered to be getting married. A participant stated that —I have a friend who belongs to a village in Rajasthan, and is from a well to do family. He was telling me that my daughter has turned 21, ab shaadi karni hai. Hamare samaj mei toh yahi hota hail. Another participant replied that —if the girl is not studying, then they should get her married kyun ki 21 pe shaadi ho jaani chahiyell. Another participant responded by saying that things are now changing and till 21, children only complete their graduation. Studying further, doing a job or getting married are decisions that should depend upon the individual.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Females are obligated to perform household chores despite being financially independent and earning money. Even if they do a job, they are still expected to be the homemaker. Participants also unanimously agreed that now men of the family also help in household chores, saying that —All this adds value not just to the woman's life but also in the man's life because they learn a lot. Fathers should also get time to bond with their babies.

Mothers usually get that time to bond because of maternity leave, but fathers don't.

The financial condition of the family also impacts how sons and daughters are treated. Families that are financially well-off are giving the required education to their daughters, but where there is poverty, females are not getting that opportunity.

Talking about emotional expression, all participants agreed that it is essential to express, and bottling up of emotions can get problematic. But, they also stated that —kabhi kabhi emotions ko rok dena chahiye. There are times when I have felt like crying but haven't, mai alag se jaake roya hun. A participant said that —parents raise their children in such a way that ladke rote nahi hain and it is a very common statement. I was once watching a movie and it was so emotional, but because I was with my family, I did not cry. When asked about why they do not express, one participant said —I don't wanna be seen as someone who expresses.

On the contrary, it was also seen how middle aged men are very rational in their approach. When asked about what they will do for a friend who shares his problems with them, they said —guide karenge, advice karenge, alag cheezein try karenge. Agar baar baar wahi baat kar raha hai, toh it will get annoying. I will think rationally and respond. In the initial week, you will listen to them, but later you will not. Your priorities will change and you'd rather listen to a person who makes you feel better. They also had a positive view about seeking help when in need. Most of them stated that seeking support means you are able to identify where you need help.

The differences that emerged were with respect to the factor of responsibility that is more so in middle aged men. Because of this reason, rationality is also seen in middle aged men. Experiences of the middle aged men have also shaped them into what they are today but the statements of most young adults weren't derived from experiences but based on hearsay. Hence, young adults were more 'emotional' in their approach. Moreover, the viewpoints of both the groups were based more on what the other members thought was true. The examples given by the groups were in stark contrast. While young adults talked about the acceptance of live-in relationships while discussing changing times and trends, middle aged men still talked about marriage being a woman's priority. Middle aged men also talked more about the importance of joint families and the financial and socio-economic conditions of families.

Social validation and conformity were two major elements that emerged out of both the FGDs. Most members of both the groups were answering the questions in a socially desirable manner, and were conforming to the already established norms of society, and the implicit norms of the focus group.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

Limitations of the Study

The study is not free from limitations, despite all proper measures that were taken by the researchers.

- The study is based on self-report questionnaires, which has the risk of being biased with social desirability.
- The factor of social validation and conformity comes into play when the FGD dynamics are considered. Most participants fear that they will be judged by others if they share opinions that are different from the ones that are acceptable.
- Generalisation of results is not possible because the study was limited to sample groups from one city and the sample size is relatively small.

CONCLUSION

As evident from the result tables, the t-score for differences in level of emotional expressivity in the Young Adults and Middle Aged Men Population comes out to be 1.53, and the p-value comes out to be 0.130, which signifies that there is no significant differences in the emotional expression for the young adult and middle aged population. The t-score for differences in level of adherence to masculine role norms in the Young Adults and Middle Aged Men Population comes out to be -0.19, and the p value comes out to be 0.850.

There is a significant relationship between the level of emotional expression and level of adherence to male role norms (16%) in the young adults' population. There is no significant relationship between emotional expression and adherence to male role norms (5%) in the middle aged population. The reason behind these findings have been deliberated.

The major themes that emerged from both the FGD focus on social norms' evolution, maintenance, gender stereotypes in existence, the conformity of men to social norms and its impact on their emotional expressivity. The participants also talked about their views on toxic masculinity norms. All in all, the findings were very novel and intriguing and make way for future research to be done on this topic, with various other variables.

Implications for Future Research

There are a few limitations of the study that can be overcome by future research on this topic.

- The same study can be done between male and female groups to study the differences between genders with respect to emotional expression and adherence to masculine norms.
- The impact of the Internet and social media can be studied to understand how expression of emotions may be influenced in the young adults population.
- Larger samples and larger target areas can be chosen for getting better generalizability.
- Sampling frames could be drawn from a list of potential respondents, and samples can be chosen on random selection basis to avoid any kind of bias in selection of sample.
- Probability sampling techniques can be used to get more accurate and unbiased results for the study.
- Different localities, cultures and religions can be studied on their attitude and their influence on gender norms.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

- Future research can study the factors apart from masculine norms that influence the expression of emotions among the two groups, young and middle-aged adults.

REFERENCES

- Addis, M. E., & Mahalik, J. R. (2003). Men, masculinity, and the context of help seeking. *American Psychologist*, 58, 5-14.
- Alam, S. M. (2016). Gender stereotypes among university students towards masculinity and femininity. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 7(3), 271- 281
- Ayenibiowo, K. (2010). Culture and gender as predictors of undergraduates' perception of gender roles. *Gender & Behaviour*, 8, 2929-2947
- Bennett, Kate M. _No Sissy Stuff: Towards a Theory of Masculinity and Emotional Expression in Older Widowed Men'. *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4, Dec. 2007, pp. 347–56. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2007.05.002>.
- Biddle, L., Gunnell, D., Sharp, D., & Donovan, J. L. (2004). Factors influencing help seeking in mentally distressed young adults: a cross-sectional survey. *British Journal of General Practice*, 54(501), 248-253.
- Birnbaum, D. W., & Croll, W. L. (1984). The etiology of children's stereotypes about sex differences in emotionality. *Sex Roles*, 10.
- Birnbaum, D. W., Nosanchuk, T. A., & Croll, W. L. (1980). Children's stereotypes about sex differences in emotionality. *Sex Roles*, 6, 435-443.
- Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511499838.003> Hochschild, A. (1983). Comment on Kemper's " Social Constructionist and Positivist Approaches to the Sociology of Emotions". *American Journal of Sociology*, 89(2), 432- 434.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2009). Social proof: Truths are us. *Influence: Science and practice*, 98- 142.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). Reporting sex differences.
- Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (1999). The origins of sex differences in human behavior: Evolved dispositions versus social roles. *American psychologist*, 54(6), 408.
- Fischer, Agneta H., et al. _The Meaning of Tears: Which Sex Seems Emotional Depends on the Social Context: The Meaning of Tears'. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Aug. 2013, p. n/a-n/a. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1974>.
- Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(2), 348.
- Gross, J. J., & Levenson, R. W. (1993). Emotional suppression: physiology, self-report, and expressive behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 64(6), 970.
- Grossman, M., & Wood, W. (1993). Sex differences in intensity of emotional experience: a social role interpretation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 65(5), 1010
- Hess, U., Adams, R. B., Jr., & Kleck, R. E. (2007). When Two Do the Same, It Might Not Mean the Same: The Perception of Emotional Expressions Shown by Men and Women. In U. Hess & P. Philippot (Eds.), *Group dynamics and emotional expression* (pp. 33–50).
- Judge, T. A., Livingston, B. A., & Hurst, C. (2012). Do nice guys—and gals—really finish last? The joint effects of sex and agreeableness on income. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(2), 390–407. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026021>
- Liu, W. M., & Iwamoto, D. K. (2007). Conformity to masculine norms, Asian values, coping strategies, peer group influences and substance use among Asian American men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 8(1), 25.

Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms

- Lutz, C. A., & Abu-Lughod, L. E. (1990). Language and the politics of emotion. In *This book grew out of a session at the 1987 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association called "Emotion and Discourse."*. Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- McDermott, R. C., Pietrantonio, K. R., Browning, B. R., McKelvey, D. K., Jones, Z. K., Booth, N. R., & Sevig, T. D. (2019). In search of positive masculine role norms: Testing the positive psychology positive masculinity paradigm. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 20(1), 12
- Moss-Racusin, C. A., Phelan, J. E., & Rudman, L. A. (2010). When men break the gender rules: Status incongruity and backlash against modest men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 11(2), 140–151. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018093>
- Pascoe, C. J. (2005). _Dude, you're a fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 329-346.
- Pyke, K. D., (1996). Class-based masculinities: The interdependence of gender, class and interpersonal power. *Gender and Society*, 10, 527-549.
- Rosette, Ashleigh Shelby, et al. _Are Male Leaders Penalized for Seeking Help? The Influence of Gender and Asking Behaviors on Competence Perceptions'. *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 5, Oct. 2015, pp. 749–62. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.02.001>.
- Rudman, L. A. (1998). Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: The costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(3), 629–645. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.3.629>
- Shields, S. A. (1987). Women, men, and the dilemma of emotion. In *Meeting of the Association for Women in Psychology, Mar, 1983, Seattle, WA, US*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Stibbe A. (2004). Health and the social construction of masculinity in men's health magazine. *Men Masculinities*, 7(1):31–51.
- Van Hoven B, Hopkins P. (2009). Masculinities. In Rob K, Nigel T., *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Oxford: Elsevier. 2009:492–496.
- Van Kleef, G. A., Wanders, F., Stamkou, E., & Homan, A. C. (2015). The social dynamics of breaking the rules: Antecedents and consequences of norm-violating behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 6, 25-31.
- Will, H. C. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: A theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50, 1385-1401.
- Yousaf, O., Popat, A., & Hunter, M. S. (2015). An investigation of masculinity attitudes, gender, and attitudes toward psychological help-seeking. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 16(2), 234
- Zahra F, K, Wah, Y, L1, Behzad G, & Effat, M K. (2013). Perception of masculinity amongst young Malaysian men: a qualitative study of university students. *BMC Public Health*, 13:1062

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Mohla, D. & Neera (2023). Men Are Stoic, or Are They?: Emotional Suppression in Men and its Relation with Masculinity Norms. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 4289-4302. DIP:18.01.399.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.399