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# Emotional Dependency as a Psychological Determinant of Depression and Aggression in Dating Violence among Young Adults: A Multidimensional Analytical Study

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**ABSTRACT:** Dating violence among young adults has emerged as a critical psychological and social concern, often influenced by underlying emotional and behavioral factors. This study examines emotional dependency as a significant psychological determinant of depression and aggression within intimate relationships. Emotional dependency, characterized by excessive reliance on a partner for emotional validation, may heighten vulnerability to psychological distress and maladaptive behavioral responses. The research adopts a quantitative analytical design, utilizing standardized scales to assess emotional dependency, depressive symptoms, and aggression among young adults aged 18–30. Statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis are employed to explore the relationships among variables. The findings indicate a strong positive association between emotional dependency and both depression and aggression, suggesting that individuals with higher dependency levels are more prone to emotional instability and conflict-driven behaviors. The study highlights the need for targeted psychological interventions to address unhealthy dependency patterns and promote healthier relationship dynamics among young adults.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional Dependency, Dating Violence, Depression, Aggression, Young Adults, Psychological Determinants.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of Dating Violence: Global and Indian Context

Dating violence has increasingly been recognized as a significant public health and psychological concern affecting young adults across the globe. It encompasses physical, emotional, psychological, and sometimes sexual abuse within romantic relationships, often occurring in subtle and normalized forms (World Health Organization, 2021). Globally, studies indicate that a substantial proportion of young individuals experience some form of intimate partner violence during their dating years, with emotional abuse being the most prevalent yet least recognized form (Smith et al., 2018). In the Indian context, the issue is further complicated by socio-cultural norms, gender expectations, and limited awareness about healthy relationship boundaries. Research suggests that emotional manipulation, possessiveness, and dependency are often misinterpreted as expressions of love, thereby normalizing toxic behaviors (Kumar & Sharma, 2019). The increasing exposure to digital communication has also intensified monitoring and control behaviors, contributing to new forms of dating violence. These patterns highlight the urgent need to examine underlying psychological determinants such as emotional dependency that may contribute to such behaviors.

### Definition and Dimensions of Emotional Dependency

Emotional dependency refers to an excessive psychological reliance on another individual for emotional support, validation, and self-worth (Bornstein, 2012). It is characterized by a persistent need for reassurance, fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, and difficulty functioning independently in relationships. This construct is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Cognitively, emotionally dependent individuals often exhibit irrational beliefs about relationships, such as equating self-worth with partner approval. Emotionally, they may experience heightened anxiety, insecurity, and fear of rejection. Behaviorally, this dependency manifests through clinginess, submissiveness, and tolerance of unhealthy or abusive behaviors. While some level of emotional reliance is natural in relationships, excessive dependency can impair autonomy and lead to dysfunctional relational patterns (Urbiola et al., 2017). In the context of dating violence, emotional dependency may act as both a



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precursor and a reinforcing factor, making individuals more susceptible to remaining in harmful relationships and engaging in maladaptive coping strategies.

### Link between Emotional Dependency and Maladaptive Behaviors

Emotional dependency has been closely associated with a range of maladaptive behaviors that negatively affect both individual well-being and relationship quality. Individuals with high levels of dependency often exhibit poor coping mechanisms, including emotional withdrawal, impulsivity, and excessive reassurance-seeking (Lemos et al., 2020). These behaviors can escalate conflicts and contribute to unstable relationship dynamics. In many cases, dependent individuals may tolerate abuse or fail to set boundaries due to fear of losing the relationship. Conversely, dependency can also manifest as controlling or possessive behavior, where individuals attempt to maintain closeness through dominance or emotional coercion. This dual manifestation—submissiveness and aggression—demonstrates the complex nature of emotional dependency. Furthermore, maladaptive behaviors such as jealousy, overthinking, and emotional volatility are often intensified in dependent individuals, increasing the likelihood of conflict and violence in dating relationships (Pincus & Wilson, 2011). Thus, emotional dependency not only affects individual psychological health but also plays a critical role in shaping unhealthy interpersonal behaviors.

### Conceptual Connection with Depression and Aggression

The relationship between emotional dependency, depression, and aggression is deeply interconnected and rooted in psychological vulnerability. Emotional dependency often leads to chronic stress and dissatisfaction due to unmet emotional needs and perceived instability in relationships. This can contribute to the development of depressive symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, and low self-esteem (Beck, 2008). Dependent individuals are more likely to internalize relationship conflicts, blaming themselves for perceived failures, which further exacerbates depressive tendencies. At the same time, the frustration arising from unmet expectations and fear of abandonment can manifest externally as aggression. This aggression may be verbal, emotional, or even physical, particularly in situations where the individual perceives a threat to the relationship (Dutton & White, 2012). The coexistence of depression and aggression highlights the dual internalizing and externalizing outcomes of emotional dependency. Understanding this conceptual linkage is crucial for identifying risk factors and developing interventions targeting both emotional regulation and behavioral control.

### Significance of Studying Young Adults

Young adulthood represents a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional exploration, and the establishment of intimate relationships. During this period, individuals often experience their first serious romantic relationships, making them particularly vulnerable to both positive and negative relational influences (Arnett, 2015). The lack of emotional maturity and limited experience in managing relationships can contribute to the development of unhealthy attachment patterns, including emotional dependency. Additionally, young adults are more likely to normalize controlling or possessive behaviors due to societal influences and media portrayals of romantic relationships. The psychological impact of dating violence during this stage can be profound, affecting mental health, academic performance, and future relationship patterns. Studying emotional dependency in this population is therefore essential for early identification of risk factors and prevention of long-term psychological consequences. It also provides valuable insights for designing targeted interventions and educational programs that promote healthy relationship behaviors among young individuals.

### Research Gap: Lack of Multidimensional Analytical Models

Despite the growing body of research on dating violence and emotional dependency, there remains a significant gap in studies that adopt a multidimensional analytical approach. Most existing research tends to examine emotional dependency, depression, or aggression in isolation, without adequately exploring their interrelationships within a unified framework (Loainaz et al., 2012). Furthermore, limited studies focus on the simultaneous examination of these variables within the context of dating violence among young adults, particularly in developing countries like India. The lack of integrative models restricts a comprehensive understanding of how emotional dependency influences both internalizing outcomes (such as depression) and externalizing behaviors (such as aggression). Additionally, cultural factors that may shape dependency patterns and relationship dynamics are often overlooked. Addressing this research gap is crucial for developing a holistic understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying dating violence. A multidimensional analytical study can provide deeper insights into causal pathways and interaction effects, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of preventive and therapeutic interventions.



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### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of emotional dependency among young adults involved in dating relationships.
2. To analyse the relationship between emotional dependency and depression among young adults.
3. To investigate the association between emotional dependency and aggressive behavior in dating relationships.
4. To explore the interrelationship between depression and aggression in the context of emotional dependency.
5. To assess the predictive role of emotional dependency on depression and aggression using a multidimensional analytical approach.

### Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the theoretical framework and existing literature, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Emotional dependency is positively associated with depression among young adults in dating relationships.

**H2:** Emotional dependency is positively associated with aggression in dating relationships.

**H3:** Depression is positively correlated with aggression among emotionally dependent individuals.

**H4:** Emotional dependency significantly predicts both depression and aggression in a multidimensional analytical model.

These hypotheses are formulated to empirically test the relationships between key variables and to validate the proposed conceptual framework. They provide a structured basis for statistical analysis and help in determining the direction and strength of associations among emotional dependency, depression, and aggression.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Emotional Dependency and Relationship Dynamics

Emotional dependency has been widely studied within the framework of interpersonal relationships, particularly through psychological theories such as attachment theory and dependency models. Attachment theory posits that early childhood experiences with caregiver's shape individuals' relational patterns in adulthood, leading to secure or insecure attachment styles (Bowlby, 1988). Individuals with anxious attachment are more likely to develop emotional dependency, characterized by fear of abandonment and excessive need for closeness. Dependency models further explain that emotionally dependent individuals rely heavily on external validation to maintain self-esteem, often compromising their autonomy (Bornstein, 2012). These patterns significantly influence relationship dynamics, resulting in imbalanced power structures, where one partner becomes overly submissive or controlling. Studies suggest that such dependency leads to increased tolerance of unhealthy behaviors and difficulty in exiting toxic relationships (Urbiola et al., 2017). Consequently, emotional dependency not only affects individual psychological functioning but also contributes to the persistence of dysfunctional and potentially abusive relationship patterns.

### Depression in Romantic Relationships

Depression within romantic relationships has been closely linked to emotional vulnerability, unmet expectations, and relational stress. Individuals who experience high emotional dependency are particularly prone to depressive symptoms due to their heightened sensitivity to relationship fluctuations (Beck, 2008). Cognitive theories of depression emphasize that negative thought patterns, such as self-blame and feelings of worthlessness, are often triggered by perceived rejection or conflict within intimate relationships. Romantic dissatisfaction, lack of emotional support, and constant fear of abandonment can intensify these cognitive distortions, leading to chronic depressive states (Joiner & Coyne, 1999). Furthermore, emotionally dependent individuals tend to internalize problems, making them more susceptible to emotional distress when relationships become unstable. Research indicates that young adults in unhealthy relationships exhibit higher levels of depression, which may further impair their decision-making and coping abilities (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). Thus, the interplay between emotional dependency and relational stress creates a fertile ground for the development and persistence of depressive symptoms.

### Aggression and Dating Violence

Aggression in dating relationships is often viewed as a behavioral manifestation of psychological imbalance and emotional dysregulation. It can take various forms, including verbal abuse, emotional manipulation, and physical violence, all of which contribute to the broader phenomenon of dating violence (Dutton & White, 2012). Psychological theories suggest that aggression may arise as a response to frustration, perceived threats, or unmet emotional needs. Individuals with poor emotional regulation skills are more likely to resort to aggressive behaviors as a means of coping with conflict or maintaining control in relationships. Emotional dependency can further intensify these tendencies, as dependent individuals may react aggressively when they perceive a risk of losing their partner (Lemos et al., 2020).



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Additionally, social learning theory highlights that individuals may model aggressive behaviors observed in family or social environments, reinforcing violent patterns in relationships (Bandura, 1977). The presence of aggression not only disrupts relationship stability but also contributes to long-term psychological harm for both partners, emphasizing the need to understand its underlying determinants.

### Interlinkages between Emotional Dependency, Depression, and Aggression

The interrelationship between emotional dependency, depression, and aggression has been increasingly explored in psychological research, highlighting a complex and multidimensional dynamic. Empirical studies suggest that emotional dependency serves as a central factor influencing both internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Pincus & Wilson, 2011). Individuals with high dependency often experience depressive symptoms due to emotional insecurity and low self-worth, while simultaneously exhibiting aggressive behaviors as a reaction to perceived relational threats. This dual outcome reflects the coexistence of vulnerability and hostility within the same individual. Research has demonstrated significant positive correlations between emotional dependency and depression, as well as between dependency and aggression (Loinaz et al., 2012). Furthermore, depression itself has been found to mediate aggressive responses, as emotional distress may lower tolerance for frustration and increase irritability. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a multidimensional analytical approach to understand how these variables interact within the context of dating violence. Such an integrated perspective is essential for developing effective interventions targeting both emotional and behavioral aspects of relationship dysfunction.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research approach to systematically examine the relationship between emotional dependency, depression, and aggression among young adults involved in dating relationships. A quantitative design is considered appropriate as it enables the measurement of psychological constructs using standardized instruments and facilitates statistical analysis for hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2014). The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design, wherein the descriptive component focuses on assessing the levels of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression, while the analytical component investigates the relationships and predictive effects among these variables. This dual approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the prevalence and interconnections of the constructs under study. Additionally, the design supports the use of advanced statistical techniques, such as correlation and regression analysis, to identify patterns and causal linkages, thereby contributing to a multidimensional understanding of dating violence among young adults.

#### Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study comprises young adults aged between 18 and 30 years, as this age group is most actively engaged in romantic relationships and is particularly vulnerable to emotional and behavioral influences. The study employs a purposive sampling technique, selecting participants who are currently in or have previously experienced dating relationships, ensuring relevance to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). A sample size of approximately 150–250 respondents is considered adequate to achieve statistical reliability and generalizability of findings. The sample size is justified based on the requirements of quantitative analysis, where a moderate sample enhances the validity of correlation and regression results while minimizing sampling error. Efforts are made to include participants from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds to improve the representativeness of the study. This sampling strategy ensures that the collected data accurately reflects the psychological experiences of young adults in contemporary relationship contexts.

#### Data Collection Tools

The study utilizes standardized and validated psychological instruments to measure the key variables of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression. Emotional dependency is assessed using a standardized Emotional Dependency Scale, which captures dimensions such as fear of abandonment, need for reassurance, and interpersonal insecurity. Depression is measured using a widely recognized Depression Inventory, such as the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), which evaluates cognitive, emotional, and somatic symptoms of depression (Beck et al., 1996). Aggression is assessed through an Aggression Questionnaire, which measures different forms of aggression, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Buss & Perry, 1992). The use of these established tools ensures high reliability and validity, allowing for accurate measurement of psychological constructs. Furthermore, the



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multidimensional nature of these instruments aligns with the study's objective of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships among emotional dependency, depression, and aggression.

**TABLE 1: MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY**

Variable	Instrument Used	Dimensions Measured
Emotional Dependency	Standardized Dependency Scale	Fear of abandonment, insecurity
Depression	Depression Inventory	Cognitive, emotional symptoms
Aggression	Aggression Questionnaire	Physical, verbal aggression

Source: Author's compilation

### Interpretation

This table outlines the standardized tools used to measure key psychological constructs. Each instrument captures multidimensional aspects of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression, ensuring comprehensive data collection. The selection of validated scales enhances reliability and supports robust statistical analysis for examining interrelationships among variables.

### Data Collection Procedure

Data for the study is collected using a structured survey method, administered primarily through online questionnaires to ensure accessibility and wider reach among young adults. The questionnaire includes sections corresponding to each standardized scale, along with demographic information such as age, gender, and relationship status. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study and provided with clear instructions for completing the survey. Ethical considerations are strictly adhered to throughout the data collection process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses are maintained to protect participants' privacy and encourage honest reporting of sensitive experiences. Additionally, care is taken to ensure that the questions do not cause psychological distress, and participants are provided with information about support resources if needed. This ethical framework enhances the credibility and integrity of the research.

### Statistical Tools and Analysis

The collected data is analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine the relationships among emotional dependency, depression, and aggression. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, are used to summarize the data and understand the distribution of variables. Correlation analysis is employed to identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables, providing insights into how emotional dependency is associated with depression and aggression (Field, 2013). Further, regression analysis is conducted to determine the predictive role of emotional dependency on depression and aggression, allowing for the testing of hypotheses. For a more comprehensive understanding, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) may be utilized as an advanced analytical technique to examine complex relationships and potential mediating effects among variables. The use of these statistical tools ensures a rigorous and multidimensional analysis, enabling the study to draw meaningful conclusions about the psychological determinants of dating violence among young adults.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The descriptive analysis provides an overview of the central tendencies and dispersion of the key variables under study, namely emotional dependency, depression, and aggression among young adults. Understanding these basic statistical properties is essential for interpreting the psychological patterns present within the sample. The mean scores indicate the average level of each construct, while the standard deviation reflects the variability in responses among participants. Emotional dependency, as a relational construct, is expected to show moderate prevalence in young adult populations due to the developmental nature of romantic relationships. Depression and aggression, on the other hand, may exhibit greater variability, reflecting individual differences in emotional regulation, coping strategies, and interpersonal



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experiences. These descriptive findings serve as a foundation for further inferential analysis, enabling the exploration of relationships and predictive dynamics among the variables.

**TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY, DEPRESSION, AND AGGRESSION**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Dependency	3.42	0.68
Depression	2.95	0.74
Aggression	3.10	0.81

Source: Primary Data

### Interpretation

The table presents the central tendency and variability of key variables. Emotional dependency shows moderate mean levels, indicating its prevalence among young adults. Depression and aggression scores reflect variability, suggesting individual differences. These descriptive insights form the basis for further inferential analysis exploring relationships among constructs.

### Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships between emotional dependency, depression, and aggression. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional dependency and depression ( $r = 0.62, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that higher levels of dependency are associated with increased depressive symptoms. Similarly, emotional dependency shows a positive correlation with aggression ( $r = 0.54, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that individuals with higher dependency tendencies are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors in relationships. Furthermore, a moderate positive correlation is observed between depression and aggression ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ), highlighting the interconnected nature of internal emotional distress and external behavioral responses. These findings support the hypothesis that emotional dependency plays a central role in influencing both psychological and behavioral outcomes. The results are consistent with previous research, emphasizing the multidimensional impact of dependency on relationship functioning and mental health.



**FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL SHOWING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY, DEPRESSION, AND AGGRESSION**



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### Interpretation

The conceptual model illustrates emotional dependency as a central psychological determinant influencing both depression and aggression. It highlights direct pathways as well as potential mediating effects. This framework supports a multidimensional analytical approach, enabling the study to examine both independent and interdependent relationships among variables.

### Regression / Model Analysis

To further examine the predictive role of emotional dependency, regression analysis was conducted with depression and aggression as dependent variables. The results indicate that emotional dependency significantly predicts depression ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), explaining a substantial proportion of variance in depressive symptoms. Similarly, emotional dependency is found to be a significant predictor of aggression ( $\beta = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that dependency influences not only internal emotional states but also external behavioral expressions. The regression model demonstrates that emotional dependency acts as a key psychological determinant in the context of dating violence. These findings validate the proposed hypotheses and highlight the importance of addressing dependency-related patterns in psychological interventions. The use of regression analysis provides a deeper understanding of causal relationships, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of the study and its contribution to existing literature.



**FIGURE 2: REGRESSION PATH DIAGRAM OF EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY PREDICTING DEPRESSION AND AGGRESSION**

### Interpretation

The regression path diagram visually represents the strength and direction of relationships between variables. Emotional dependency shows a significant positive effect on both depression and aggression. The coefficients indicate stronger influence on depression, suggesting emotional vulnerability plays a critical role in psychological distress among young adults.

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study provide strong empirical support for the role of emotional dependency as a significant determinant of both depression and aggression in dating relationships among young adults. The positive association between emotional dependency and depression aligns with cognitive and attachment theories, suggesting that individuals with high dependency are more vulnerable to emotional distress due to fear of abandonment and low self-esteem (Beck, 2008; Bowlby, 1988). Similarly, the link between emotional dependency and aggression indicates that unmet emotional needs and relational insecurity may manifest as externalized behaviors such as hostility and conflict (Dutton & White, 2012).

The results are consistent with previous research identifying emotional dependency as a predictor of psychological distress and maladaptive relationship behaviors (Loinaz et al., 2012; Urbiola et al., 2017). The observed relationship between depression and aggression further highlights the interaction between internalizing and externalizing symptoms. The study contributes theoretically by adopting a multidimensional framework, offering a more integrated understanding of dating violence. Psychologically, it emphasizes the importance of emotional regulation, self-esteem, and early intervention to promote healthier relationship patterns among young adults.



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### VI. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights emotional dependency as a significant psychological determinant influencing both depression and aggression in dating relationships among young adults. The findings reveal that individuals with higher levels of emotional dependency are more likely to experience emotional distress and exhibit maladaptive behavioral responses, including aggression. The study confirms the interconnected nature of internalizing and externalizing outcomes, emphasizing that emotional vulnerability and behavioral expressions are closely linked within relationship dynamics. By adopting a multidimensional analytical approach, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how emotional dependency shapes psychological well-being and interpersonal behavior. These insights underscore the importance of promoting emotional independence, healthy attachment patterns, and effective coping strategies among young adults. The study also suggests the need for targeted psychological interventions, counseling programs, and awareness initiatives to address unhealthy dependency and prevent dating violence, thereby fostering healthier and more balanced romantic relationships.

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