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Emotional Expressivity Among Young Males: A Qualitative Study

Kriti Vyas

kriti.vyas@thapar.edu

Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences (TSLAS), TIET

Udita Singh Lamba

Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences (TSLAS), TIET

Aastha Khera

Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences (TSLAS), TIET

Swati Saxena

The NorthCap University

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Abstract

Males are often perceived as limiting emotional expression due to traditional notions of masculinity, while the literature suggests that females are generally more expressive. This study explored emotional expressivity among young male college students in metropolitan environments using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Despite growing up in areas with less rigid male norms, many males still restrict their emotional expression. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten males aged 18 to 25 from metropolitan cities like Delhi and Chandigarh (India). Five key themes emerged, including recognizing feelings, expressing positive and negative emotions, factors influencing emotional expression, and emotional regulation techniques. Thus, the findings indicate that men can recognize and express emotions, but various factors impact their decision to express or suppress them.

INTRODUCTION

Humans experience and express a wide range of emotions. Individuals generally express it to others by communicating verbally and through gestures or suppressing, wherein they prefer to keep their sentiments to themselves. The expression of emotions is a system of behaviours that includes facial expression, eye gaze, body movements, tone of voice, vocalisation, gestures, and bodily responses (Keltner et al., 2019). It is worth noting that expressing emotions significantly impacts various aspects of our lives, such as physical and mental well-being, social connections, and personality. Emotional expression can be influenced by a person's age, gender, cultural background, familial values, and various other circumstances. The current study focuses on understanding the role of gender, mainly how being a male affects emotional expression. Over the years, there has been a widespread belief that women are more emotionally expressive than men (Fischer & LaFrance, 2015; Kring & Gordon, 1998). Additionally, some emotions have been stereotyped as belonging to a particular gender. The emotions of joy, sadness, and fear are thought to be more typical of women, whereas the emotion of anger is thought to be more typical of men (Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999). The majority of Indian males have been raised to repress their emotions, even though it is expected of both genders to regulate their emotions. Boys in their early years are socialized to hide their tears, frailty, and fragility (Chaplin, 2015). They are advised that expressing their feelings of sadness or pain makes them appear weak and feminine. It has been said to them that "genuine men" do not cry and that sobbing is a sign of weakness. Males also experience a more comprehensive range of emotions as they develop. However, they are taught to neglect or suppress the weaker emotions from childhood. This happens due to societal norms and expectations (Rice et al., 2021; Skipper et al., 2022). In other words, Men were boxed into a kind that was expected to be "strong," "muscular," "the sole provider for the family," and "successful" in past times when women were put into a category that slapped labels like "timid," "soft," and "suited for being a homemaker" across their foreheads. Because of the belief that a man would not be considered a man by society if he did not fulfill all those requirements also aligns with the theory of Traditional Masculinity Ideology (TMI). Emotionally restrictivity is one of the characteristics of masculinity proposed by TMI. Research suggests that males aligning with TMI are challenging to change and continue to display traditional masculine behavior over a period of time and in different contexts (Borgogna & McDermott,

2022). Theory and studies imply that less emotionally expressive men may be viewed as less vulnerable and may, therefore, more closely resemble the ideal masculine behavior expected by society. These gender stereotypes about emotional expression shape "display rules," or conventions about how, when, and places men and women should show their emotions. Breaking these norms has negative social repercussions (Brody & Hall, 2008).

Current research focuses on understanding the emotional experiences of young college students who are raised in a metropolitan environment. Society has developed, and there have been fewer strict divisions. Research suggests that males' attitudes of masculinity vary according to spatial contexts. Males in urban metropolitan cities will be less likely to endorse the idea of conservative masculinity (Barry, 2018; Silva, 2021). It has lately been suggested that men express their feelings, cry, and be depressed without feeling bad about it. Men's emotional expression is comparatively more widely accepted in society. Men are gaining the ability to express and manage their emotions due to increased social acceptance and the ability to express their feelings more meaningfully. Instead of developing the practice of ignoring painful emotions, they are being encouraged to confront them. Recent movements like “Boys, Do not Cry” by Vinit Mathew also question the thought of males restricting their emotions to demonstrate toughness and dominance over females (NDTV, 2014). However, even if progress is continuously being made, some men still restrict their expression. Society still struggles with addressing the issue of men who cry, as they continue to be questioned and treated differently by certain individuals. Hence, the question arises whether males raised in urban metropolitan areas still restrict their emotions. The current study is an attempt to answer this question qualitatively by exploring the process of emotional expression among urban male college students. Additionally, to know the factors contributing to the emotional expression among urban male college students.

METHODS

Sample & Data Collection

A total of 10 male participants aged 18-25 years were taken for the present study using a convenience sampling method. The participants grew up in different metropolitan cities in Northern India, such as Chandigarh and Delhi. They studied in English-medium private schools and used English as the primary language in the education system.

A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed based on previous literature and standardized tools assessing emotional expression. It also consists of questions that might be missed due to the limitations of quantitative tools. The interview schedule consisted of 16 broad questions to understand the emotional expressions among young male adults. Before the interview, the interviewers prepared a list of several open-ended questions based on the literature. The interview schedule was sent for review to 5 experts in the field, and necessary modifications were made as per their suggestions. The participants were approached and briefed about the process. The participants who gave their consent were further briefed about the interview process and informed about the required time. Initially, the

participants were acclimated to the environment, and any uncertainties were clarified during the first stage. The participants received a collection of instructions to help them prepare for the interview. After the interviews, the results were drawn, and the data were analysed using QDA Miner Lite (free version).

Ethical Considerations

The procedure and protocol used in the present study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee, Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology (TIET), Patiala, Punjab. All participants gave written informed consent before taking part in the present study. They were assured of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. They had the right to withdraw themselves from the study at any point in time. Each participant's interview was anonymised by giving them a number. In the end, participants were acknowledged for their time and efforts.

DATA ANALYSIS

The current study follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis approach to analyze the data. The thematic analysis is comprised of different phases. The first phase is "familiarising oneself with the data." This includes transcribing and reading the data. The second phase comprised "generating initial code." The third phase is "searching for themes." This involves going through each code and collecting relevant codes to form themes. The Fourth Phase is "reviewing the themes," which means going through the codes and entire data set again to check their relation with the themes. The Fifth phase is "defining and naming themes." This indicates refining these themes, giving them clear names, and presenting them for analysis. The Sixth phase is "producing the report," which involves the final thematic analysis and the write-up of the report.

RESULT

The findings revealed the emergence of five predominant themes about males' emotional expression.

Theme 1: Recognising feelings

Humans need to recognize their feelings and bodily changes when they feel certain emotions. Recognizing feelings means a person is aware of their feelings and can accept them. Most of the participants in the current study could acknowledge their feelings (90% cases).

Excerpts

Participant 4 shared, *"I See when I'm feeling happy. I feel more energetic. When I feel sad, I feel very lethargic, and I don't even feel like getting out of bed. When I feel angry, my body starts to shake. So, I have noticed these things."* Similarly, other participants reported, *"Whenever I am angry or happy, my body is jumpy (participant 5)", "I do feet-tapping whenever I am nervous or nail-biting (participant 8)"* and *"I feel goosebumps, shiver down my spine (participant 3)."*

Theme 2: Expressing positive emotions

Positive emotions mean expressing happiness, joy, love, excitement, etc., with people around. It was found that 90% of participants were expressing their positive emotions.

Excerpts

Participant 1 reported, *"Yeah, sure, I think when I am happy, I tend to overact and show it off."*

Participant 4 said, *"If I am happy, I will run around."* Similarly, there are examples where participants showed their happiness, love, and joy using physical gestures.

Participant 3 explained, *"Well, firstly, I will say if I think I express happy feelings by touch, hugging, etc."* Participants would love to share their happy moments with their friends and families. Participant 6 shared, *"When I'm emotionally connected to a person. I never see the time because it is just a moment that the time should still be there. And I want to be there for as long as possible, like, if we are having dinner or lunch, like I love to spend a lot of time and enjoy the moments."*

Theme 3: Expressing Negative Emotions

Negative emotions mean sadness, grief, loneliness, anger, irritation, or frustration. Findings suggest that 70% participants were expressing and 80% were suppressing negative emotions. However, differences were observed in terms of the type of negative emotions. Sadness was usually suppressed, and anger was usually expressed.

Excerpts

Participant 1 shared, *"I don't show my saddest side. I prefer to keep it to myself."* Participant 2 said, "*I don't show it to people. I try to keep myself, but if this is considered as hiding feelings, then yes, I hide my feelings."*

Similarly, participants 5, 6 & 9 try to hide their feelings from others and do not like to show their sad side of life. Findings suggest that many of the participants just ignore those feelings.

Participant 10 reported while describing about feeling of sadness, *"You know, then I feel numb. I do not know what to do or how to handle things. It's just mera ek standard answer hota hai bhai kuch nhi hota sab theek hojayega (I believe that will turn normal sooner or later).* The participants' reasons suggest they do not know how to express sadness. Some believe that this phase will pass or just do not want to burden another person with their grief. However, participants were more expressive about their anger, like expressing it with their relationships or sometimes using harsh ways to let it out. They shared experiences of being resentful and using physical forms of aggression.

Excerpts

Participant 10 reported, *"Whenever I'm angry, I just accept the things and move on, but when things are not in my hand, I usually break things."*

Participant 6 shared, *"By showing some expressions if I'm angry, I'm, I will not talk to him, or I will just taunt my friends like he did this thing."*

Participant 4 expressed, *"I am, you know, angry, and I'll just make sure that I'm not offending you in a way. and then I'll live my life. I'll express my feelings in the way I want to because they are mine. It's my way. I go with it, and I'm not hurting or offending you. So I don't give a damn about you."*

Participant 8 expressed, *"Well. I was a very, you know, very quick-temper person before, like, until my 10th class. I was very short-tempered. I used to have such rage issues, but then after some time, it got normal."*

Participant 5 reported while sharing an incident about a scuffle/fight he had, *"So, I try to reason with the person, I try to get angry at the beginning Try to do that. It didn't work out. It made things worse."*

Theme 4: Factors Affecting Emotional Expression

There can be different factors that can affect a male's emotional expression. Findings showed factors like bonds, gender differences, generational differences, socialization process, self-perception, and social media influence emotional expression among males.

All the participants (100% cases) reported that their emotional expression depends on their bond with the people around them. If they share a strong bond with their family and friends, they would only be comfortable sharing their feelings; otherwise, they would keep it to themselves. They believe that only close connections can understand their feelings and would support them. Others would just start advising or discussing their grief story without listening to those seeking support (Participants 1, 6 & 9). Hence, sharing one's feelings with one's close bond is better.

Excerpts

Participant 10 shared, *"It's like, I have also made a parameter for that if I feel like I want to tell those things to my people who are close to me."*

Participant 2 reported, *"I don't think I am very much emotionally close to someone like I told you. I like to keep it to myself. I have an elder brother, and we are quiet about everything if I am having any problems, then I share those problems with my brother."*

Participant 5 expressed, *"Well, actually, that depends on what kind of relation I have with the other person if I have Good relations, then I tend to, you know, reciprocate those feelings. I try to go beyond my means and measures to be there for the person. If I'm not on good terms with people, I try to avoid those people, whoever they are."*

Some participants feel more connected to their friends as they will better understand their feelings because they are in the same age group. While some believe parents or siblings are the best to share their feelings and seek advice.

Excerpts

Participant 8 expressed, *"The best people can do is listen. So I have some friends who listen to me whenever I'm sad whenever I want to talk, and some people like you know help you get out of their way. That's very much what shows them how much they care."*

Participant 5 reported, *"But if it's something like I need, I need another point of view, I need some advice for them, then yeah, they're (parents) the first people or the first point of contact I go to."*

Participant 7 shared, *"But if it gets out of my hands, it starts to get on my mind 24/7. Then I have to talk about it to my parents or some friends. Yeah, very close."*

The next prominent factor that plays a role in emotional expression is gender. Participants (100 % cases) reported that a gender stereotype is related to emotional expression. Society perceives males as strong and tough, and showing emotions shows weakness. They said it is not that males do not feel emotions or cannot express them. Society is more accepting of females being more expressive, and they also receive more emotional support from people around them. Some participants also agreed that females might be better able to articulate and express themselves than males. They also recognized that emotional expression is a natural process, and everyone should express their emotions irrespective of gender. Here are a few excerpts from the participants,

"So I think that males, just because of that stigma that they express their emotions more privately than females, and it's not like it's light on women, but I think it's great that they can express their emotions openly and with core people and I wish men were able to do that I wish I were able to do that but we are not able to because of any conditioning or whatever (Participant 3)."

"Females are over-expressive, and men are under-expressive. Men don't like to express themselves (Participant 2)." "I think girls express more. It's natural. I think it's nothing wrong (Participant 7)."

"I think most of the time, men don't express their feelings because I have seen many egoistic men, and they don't like expressive feelings at all. They are like, why are you sad? You shouldn't be sad. So according to me, I don't think men like expressing their feelings (Participant 9)."

Participants' self-perception also contributed to emotional expression (90 % cases). This means how they view, describe, and judge themselves. Participants shared that their emotional expression also depends on their self-perception. They would be more expressive if they believed they were extroverted or jovial. Similarly, if they believe they are reserved and introverted, they are likelier to keep their feelings to themselves or share with only close ones. Hence, personality plays a role in emotional expression.

Excerpts

Participant 1 shared, *"That is a jolly side of myself which I show everybody. When I surround myself with people, I feel it is my job to make everybody laugh. I find it my duty to make people laugh and dance because people expect that from me. I am that kind of a person who can make a sad person smile."*

Participant 10 reported, *"I don't feel like I'm connected to somebody emotionally."*

Participant 5 expressed, *"I'm not expressive about my feelings as if I'm Happy or sad. I guess my face doesn't show it. I guess I have a very neutral face regarding what people say."*

Similarly, Participant 4 believed he was happy-go-lucky and didn't get angry much.

Another factor that played a role in emotional expression is generational differences (70% cases). Generation difference means that emotional expression among males has changed over the generations. Participants in the current study reported that they could see a generational shift in males expressing their emotions. Many of them shared that hardly older males (grandfather, father, and uncles) in the families would share their feelings or emotions. They could even see differences between their grandfathers and their fathers. The participants believe this shift is necessary and will strengthen the relationships. Here are the excerpts from the participants,

Excerpts

"My grandfather used not to share things with his wife, but my father shared the things with my mother and my grandfather, and my father used not to share them. They were not supposed to share the things among them, but my father and I shared them. So, yes, that upliftment is in that (Participant, 10)."

"I've never really seen my dad or Uncle express emotions. (Participant 7)."

"If I take the example of my father and if I take the example of my cousin sister's son in that generation, there's a huge difference in expressing the emotions, like our fathers, don't get so much share emotions or something feelings with their parents or with anyone. But yeah, our younger generation or even like me. We share more emotions (Participant 6)."

A few participants also emphasised the role of social media (40% cases) and the socialisation process (40% cases) as other factors that contribute to emotional expression. Regarding social media, participants reported that nowadays, it plays a vital role in spreading awareness about males' emotional health. Also, through social media posts and Instagram reels, people learn that it is ok for males to express their emotions (Participants - 2, 4 & 6). Similarly, participants (2, 4, 7 & 10) believed that socialization processes like parenting and familial interactions groomed males to restrict their emotions and females to express them. They said males are conditioned to be emotionally tough and less expressive.

Theme 5: Emotional Regulation Techniques

The capacity to control or channel one's emotional state is known as emotion regulation. It could entail evaluating a stressful situation to lessen anger or anxiety, covering up apparent signs of fear or grief, or concentrating on things that make you joyful or peaceful. Emotional self-regulation, or emotion regulation, is the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with a range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions and the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed. There are different techniques for regulating one's emotions. Some are adaptive, and some are maladaptive techniques. In the study, the participants mostly used maladaptive techniques like distraction (90% cases) and avoidance/escapism (80% cases) and some adaptive techniques like reappraisal (60% cases). Participants tend to distract themselves from negative emotions by dealing with other tasks (hobbies, music, gymming, or meditation).

Excerpts

Participant 10 reported, *"I'm feeling low, I just Go on a drive, or I just have good food, and even if I'm not able to do such things because, you know, those kinds are a bit expensive for students, but if I'm not able to do that, so I just open my laptop, and I play video games."*

Participant 3 shared. *Let's try to order something to eat, watch something, and relax."*

Participant 4 mentioned, *"I will try I'll run fast home. I'll just be in my. And I'll try to listen to some songs, maybe."* Similarly, many participants shared how they avoid dealing with difficult emotions.

Participant 2 shared, *"Um, I try to neglect it, you know, I try to stay happy if there's any reason to be sad, I just ignore it."*

Participant 3 reported, *"Um, pause I will just go back home and try not to think about it much."*

Participant 5 expressed, *"Well, there are times when you, you know, face yourself with that question, but I usually carry on with whatever I am doing, and so I tend to put aside that question and move on."*

Participant 8 shared, *"Wait for the day to pass. Like, you can't do anything."*

It was seen that while dealing with more significant problems like relationship issues, they would tend to use reappraisal as a way to deal with troublesome emotions.

Excerpts

Participant 1 shared, *"I sit alone for um, maybe 20 minutes 15 minutes I want to sit alone I want to be alone at that time when I am feeling sad, and after sitting alone for 15-20 minutes, I think my emotions come*

down I think I am back to basics so yeah. because when I am sitting alone, I try to think through what is happening, why am I feeling sad, why am I crying, why am I like this right now."

Participant 3 expressed, *"Um, just, you know, Self-reflection. And going over. What happened, how do I feel about it, and what does it mean? I was going to reflect on my life.*"

Participant 4 reported, *"But now I sit and try to feel all this stuff, and I try to validate myself that Whatever I'm feeling is good, but just don't pick up the phone and call the person again.*"

Participant 8 expressed, *"I would feel, like, Why is this anger towards me? First of all, What is the reason behind it? If it's something I have done, I'll think about it. If it's my fault, I'll apologize to them.*"

Interestingly, males reported using crying as a medium to channel their emotions (70% cases). They reported using it to let their emotions out of their system and feel relaxed.

Excerpts

Participant 3 shared, *"Yeah, so it was with my sister, and she also started crying, so I started crying. She just hugged me, and I just let go. And you know I just kept crying, and she was there, and it felt good.*"

Participant 4 expressed, *"I try to cope with it because mostly what happens is when I get angry, I start crying. I start crying because mostly the anger has been caused by miscommunication, and the other person is not actually understanding or even trying to understand my point of view when I have been very accommodating.*"

However, they will cry only when they have experienced tough events like a massive fight with loved ones (participant 7), losing/ending a relationship (participant 8), or committing big mistakes (participant 5). On these occasions, they have cried their heart out. A few participants, like 6 & 9, felt accepted that they had cried. However, felt that it is not a boyish thing to cry (*"I left crying. Because as the boy, we feel that we don't cry. But yeah, I cried At my heart only. Once. at my first breakup I cried, after that never")* or be embarrassed for expressing it ("*it's embarrassing (laughs) once you cry people are like oh my god what happened panni leker aao (bring him a glass of water)"*). This suggests that few male participants still believe it is congruent with traditional masculine norms.

DISCUSSION

It can be inferred from the findings that males in the current study could recognize their feelings, which contradicts the previous findings that males tend not to identify their feelings (Levant et al., 2014). Coming to the expression of emotions, literature suggests that men tend to express less positive emotions than females (Fischer & LaFrance 2015; Weber & Wiedig-Allison, 2007). However, present findings suggest that males are expressing their joy & happiness with their family and friends. This shift and new form of masculinity in literature is identified as inclusive masculine theory (Anderson, 2010). It states that young males share emotional moments with their family and friends (Pearson, 2023).

The literature suggests that males usually suppress negative emotions (Cai et al., 2016; Gross & John, 2003; Parkins, 2012). However, findings suggest that males' emotional expression varied with the type of negative emotions. Most of the participants were suppressing their sadness & grief and expressing their anger. Thus, it is essential to understand the type of emotion and to withhold the general idea that women are more emotional or quickly impacted by emotions than men (Deng et al., 2016). Sadness perceives them as weak, and anger is strongly associated with male gender stereotypes. Research suggests that males resort to aggression because they transform their internal painful and negative emotions into aggression (Jakupcak et al., 2005). Men's mental health may be adversely impacted by ignorance, avoidance and suppression, which can result in depressive and socially isolated sentiments. It is quite common for men who actively pursue traditional masculinity and independence to suppress sadness and refrain from talking to others about their problems despite personal struggles (McKenzie et al., 2018).

There could be many factors influencing the male's emotional expressivity. One of the factors is the role that gender stereotypes. However, that doesn't mean that males don't feel emotions. Yes, men may feel intense emotions, but they may be reluctant to express them honestly due to gender preconceptions. Research has indicated that gender stereotypes are likely to be the cause of false findings about gender differences in emotional reactions. Men are prone to judging feelings based on what society expects of them. Men are expected to be courageous and composed, especially when confronted with feelings of terror and rage. Because of this, males may not report feeling significantly affected and may provide comparatively cautious assessments, leading others to believe they have not been substantially impacted, even while experiencing extremely high physiological arousal (Deng et al., 2016). Another contributing factor to low emotional expressivity could be the socialisation process, where males are taught at home to be tougher and resilient (Chaplin, 2015; Rice et al., 2021; Skipper et al., 2022). However, findings suggest that change is happening within the families. Emotional expression in men is not the same from generation to generation. Research suggests that previous generations believed in traditional forms of masculinity and thus displayed emotional stoicism. Conversely, today's generation is more open to expressing love and feelings toward others (Anderson, 2017; McCormack, 2017; Robinson et al., 2017). Another change in men's emotional expressivity is due to social media influence, which is portraying and motivating men to show their vulnerable emotions and have discussions around it. Steinert and Dennis (2022) suggested that social media is helping males to get a medium of expression.

It is essential to note that while understanding the factors leading to emotional expression among males, one can't always rely only on prevailing gender beliefs or notions. Findings suggest that there are other factors, such as a person's bond. If males feel connected to another person, like a family member or friend, then they do share all kinds of emotions. Another factor that might lead to the differences is men's self-perception. In the study, males reported that their emotional expression also centered around how they view themselves, i.e. a jovial or a reserved person. Research suggests that dispositional expressivity plays a role in emotional expression. Individuals high on positive dispositional expressivity tend to laugh more when they experience something pleasurable. Meanwhile, people with high negative dispositional expressivity cry more when sad (Bono & Vey, 2007; Gross et al., 2000).

To have a complete picture of the emotional experiences of males, it is essential to understand the emotion regulation strategies they use. According to the theories of emotion regulation, both emotional expression and suppression are important indicators of how people manage their emotions (Cameron & Overall, 2018). Results suggest that some males, apart from using avoidance and distraction, which have short-term benefits, reported that sitting calmly and dealing with their emotions immensely helped them. They used reappraisal, which means re-evaluating the situation differently to reduce its emotional impact (Gross, 2015; Troy et al., 2018). It is evident from the current study that males use avoidance and distraction as a habitual or general way of dealing with difficult emotions. This finding aligns with the literature suggesting that males tend to use maladaptive emotional coping strategies like suppression or distraction more because they tend to align with their traditional masculine role (Snow et al., 2022). However, the findings also suggest that while understanding the emotion regulation technique, one needs to consider the context of the stressor, as when faced with more significant life problems, males also opt for adaptive coping methods (reappraisal). Hence, it is essential to consider context sensitivity while making inferences about emotional regulation techniques (Goubet & Chrysikou, 2019).

The current research also tried to answer the long-standing debate about whether men cry or not, and findings suggest that men do cry. Looking at the participants' excerpts, when men experienced unfortunate events, they vented out their emotions through crying. Yes, it may be true that they won't cry so frequently or may not cry the way females would do. Thus, suggesting crying is a natural behaviour and not associated with stereotypical gendered belief. There can be differences in terms of how and when people resort to crying.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings indicate that one should not assume that males lack expressiveness. They are capable of recognizing, articulating, and managing their emotions. However, how they express and manage these emotions is influenced by various factors, such as the nature of their feelings (e.g., sadness, anger, joy), the context or event, the type of relationships involved, and their self-perception. The results highlight a difference in emotional expression and management between males and females, attributed to gender and socialization. Nevertheless, researchers should look beyond these differences and examine additional factors at play. Future studies could quantitatively assess the various elements influencing emotional expression and determine which factors are most significant. Additionally, more research could be conducted to compare how males and females express their emotions.

There appears to be a shift in the belief systems surrounding emotional expression among males. The majority acknowledged the importance of expressing their feelings for their well-being; however, some younger males still adhere to traditional masculine beliefs. Future longitudinal studies with larger sample sizes could provide further insight into this ongoing change.

Every study has its limitations; the current research did not examine how young males relate to traditional versus contemporary forms of masculinity. Future studies could quantitatively assess this

identification and explore its relationship with emotional expression variables.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest:

No conflict of interest

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Institute Ethical Committee of Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology (TIET), Patiala, Punjab. All the procedures and protocols were followed in accordance with relevant guidelines. The review Letter Number is TIET/EC/2024-06.

Consent to Participate:

All participants gave written informed consent before taking part in the present study.

Consent for Publication:

Participants were informed that data collected would be used for research and publication purposes. They were assured of anonymity and the confidentiality of the information shared.

Clinical Trial Declaration

No, the present study does not involve any clinical samples and cannot fall into the clinical category.

Funding Declaration:

The authors declare that the current research was not supported by any external or internal funding.

Author Contribution

Conceptualization - KVData curation – UL, AK & KVFormal analysis – KV & SSFunding acquisition - NAInvestigation – UL & AKMethodology – UL, AK & KVProject administration – KV Resources - UL, AK, KV & SSSoftware - KVSupervision – KV Validation – KV & SSVisualization – KV & SSWriting – original draft – UL, AK, KV & SSWriting – review & editing – KV & SS

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We acknowledge the participants for sharing their experiences with us. We appreciate their time and effort.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are not publicly available as the participants have shared their own personal lived experiences, and they were assured of maintaining privacy and confidentiality, but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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