



Sense Of Agency And Dependency In Adults

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ABSTRACT

Background: Human behavior is shaped in a way that majorly interplays between emotions and cognitive processes. Emotional dependency refers to the act where an individual puts an excessive amount of Reliance on others for validation, emotional support, reassurance. Whereas on the other hand, the sense of cognitive agency reflects on the view where individual processes on its own perception of being controlled in by their own thoughts, decisions and their mental processes. The individuals who are emotionally dependent on others generally seek their external affirmation rather than trusting their own judgment, therefore we weaken their sense of cognitive autonomy. Despite these both constructs being well established in psychological literature individually, the direct relation between them still remains unexplored. Therefore, the study is going to be grounded in a way that understands how the interpersonal emotional Reliance may shape an individual's cognitive independence and sense of self-authorship.

Methodology: A systematic literature review paper was examined which were relevant for the study, the papers were extracted from peer-reviewed general across psychology, psychiatry, and social work. Studies were selected on the basis of its relevance, emotional dependency and sense of agency and comparative analysis was done.

Results: Based on the theoretical framework reviewed, that includes the work of: including the work of Bowlby (1958), Bandura (2001), Bornstein (1992), Synofzik et al. (2008), and Ryan and Deci (2000), it was analysed that the higher level of emotional dependency will always be negatively correlated with the sense of cognitive agency among adults. Individual who demonstrated the greater emotion Reliance on others were highly expected to report a depleted perception of control over their own thoughts and decision making that highly suggest the emotional over-dependence may compromise cognitive autonomy.

Conclusion: The finding of the study showed that there is a need to contribute to the meaningful understanding of how emotional Reliance on others profoundly shapes, an individual cognitive independence. The study also showcases the importance of addressing emotional dependency which is not merely as an interpersonal pattern, but as a factor that is significantly influenced by one's own cognitive sense of self-authorship. The insights that were carried were practical implication for psychological counselling, mental health promotions, and educational intervention, which highly aims to foster the autonomy and self-regulation in young adults.

Keywords: Emotional Dependency, Sense of Cognitive Agency, Young Adults, Autonomy, Cognitive Control, Self-Regulation, Interpersonal Dependency

INTRODUCTION

How an individual processes their thoughts about their own selves usually depends on the way they perceive themselves when placed in a situation or any event and how they work upon their relationships with others. Humans are said to tend to make social connects with the people around them just to feel belonged to which in turn sometimes make them dependent on their surroundings, both emotionally and psychologically. Therefore, the present study focuses on the impact of Emotional Dependency on the Sense of Cognitive Agency among Young Adults.

Emotional Dependency

The concept of Emotional Dependency commonly referred to as a pattern wherein people rely on others for emotional support, seek validation and constant reassurance from them (Bornstein, 1992). Individuals depicting high levels of emotional dependency often face problems when asked to function and work independently as it is hampered because of the habit formed of seeking constant validation and reassurance from others. Upon which Bowlby argues that (1958) "To be dependent on someone and to be attached to them are not the same thing" which tells that he treated dependence as relying on the mother for physiological needs or gratification, which is different from psychological attachment. According to the attachment theory given by him, individuals having insecure attachment patterns with their parents when they were little might have a harder time being independent when they grow up. This dependency may influence their decision-making processes, self-esteem, as well as their emotional stability.

According to research, mental dependence may have both good and bad effects. Though leaning to others for mental assistance is a normal and desirable aspect of establishing connections, becoming excessively reliant on others may hinder one's development of autonomy and self-esteem (Bornstein, 2012). Those who are emotionally attached on others may be uncertain in their abilities and make choices on their own as they seek approval from others so much. It also may come into play during the phase of transition into adulthood, when people are expected to become more self-reliant and learn to make their own judgments to understand the possible impacts of dependence on others on behavioral health and autonomy, it is crucial to investigate emotional dependence in youths. Psychological science is becoming increasingly aware of how complexly emotional and mental processes combine to shape human behavior. While emotions affect how individuals perceive events, control their reactions, and form opinions, cognitive processes regulate evaluation of data and the exercise of control over thoughts and behaviors. Emotional dependence and the perception of cognitive agency are two concepts that show how these two interact with one another.

Emotional addiction is defined by an excessive reliance on someone for psychological comfort, support, and acceptance. People with a high emotional reliance generally search for affirmation from loved ones and may feel uneasy or nervous if such support is not provided. This dependence may influence decision-making processes and restrict the onset of one's own sovereignty. Synofzik et al. (2008) define cognitive power as a private sense of being a creator or master of one's own ideas and mental acts. Individuals with a high sense of cognitive agency see themselves as actively liable for their own decision-making and thought processes, whereas individuals with a lower level of agency might attribute their thoughts or decisions to external factors. Examining how emotional dependency influences the sense of cognitive agency may provide important insights into how interpersonal emotional reliance shapes individuals' perceptions of cognitive autonomy and independence.

Sense of Cognitive Agency

Cognitive agency is an individual's subjective feeling of having control over their own ideas, mental processes, and judgments. Agency is seen as a basic component of human cognition and self-awareness because it enables people to see themselves as active agents capable of shaping their own actions and results. Personal agency, according to Albert Bandura, is essential to human functioning because it allows people to deliberately govern their behavior, make decisions, and pursue objectives (Bandura 2001).

Agency has been defined in cognitive science and philosophy of mind as the sensation of having control over one's mental acts. Synofzik et al. (2008) has claimed that people's feeling of agency grows comes from their ability to closely track and assess their own cognitive processes. When people believe they are the creators of their ideas and decisions, they feel a high feeling of cognitive agency. When this view gets compromised, people may feel less confident in their thinking or believe their ideas are affected by other circumstances.

Cognitive agency is deeply linked to ideas like autonomy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. Those with a strong sense of cognitive initiative are prone to believe in their very own views, take accountability for their actions, and fix problems alone. Individuals with a lower sense of cognitive autonomy, on the other hand, may be dependent on external direction or validation. Understanding those aspects that promote cognitive liberty becomes critical for understanding that how individuals develop independence in cognition and choices, especially throughout life phases that involve greater levels of responsibility.

Emotional reliance and a feeling of cognitive agency are both key traits in psychology that impact one's independent thinking, decision-making, and relationships. Emotional reliance stresses the value of interpersonal interactions for developing attachments and routines, whereas conceptual agency symbolizes how individuals feel of control over their own thoughts and mental operations. Although earlier research has studied these parameters in order independently, barely any attention has been devoted to comprehending how emotional reliance may impact people's perceptions of psychological individuality.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review focuses on the variables, namely Emotional Dependency and Sense of Cognitive Agency, as it is essential for identifying patterns, inconsistencies, and gaps in prior research. This review of literature is divided into three parts:

Studies on Emotional Dependency

Rojas Quispe et al. (2026) the study shows us how myths of romantic love and emotional dependency can very well analyze and predict the gender violence in young couples. The findings highlights that there was a strong support of romantic love myths and higher emotional dependency that significantly estimate a greater risk of gender violence within relationships.

Zhylin et al. (2024) the study highlights the relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and emotional dependency by implementing the Meyer-Salovey-Caruzo Emotional Intelligence Test and the R. Hirshfield Interpersonal Dependency Test. The findings highlighted that the higher levels of emotional intelligence are always linked with lower levels of emotional dependency among the university students.

Niño Tezén et al., (2024) the study showed that emotional dependency and coping strategies in romantic relationships among Peruvian university students and the findings highlighted that the higher emotional dependency was generally associated with less adaptive coping strategies and greater reliance on partners for emotional regulation.

Estévez et al. (2018) this shows the role of emotional dependence in the relationship between attachment and impulsive behavior. the study highlighted that the emotional dependency acts as a mediator between the relationship of insecure attachment style and impulsive behavior, therefore it is also the stated fact that the individuals with insecure attachment patterns are more likely to showcase impulsivity in their behavior because of the presence of high levels of emotional dependency in them.

González-Jiménez and Hernández-Romera (2014) the study included 238 students of Spain to determine if they possess emotional dependency and whether any gender differences were seen among them and it was observed that the emotional dependency is somewhat based on gender.

Arntz, A. (2005) the aim of the study was to distinguish between the functional dependency from the emotional dependency and the results showed that emotional dependency can act as a risk factor for anxiety disorders, therefore the emphasize on the need for it to be differentiated from functional dependency.

Cameron, H. (1967) the systematic review and investigation of emotional dependency among the Negro Youth and showed that emotional dependency among youth is significantly affected by the environment of the family and how they are socially interacting and available, thereby shaping their resilience on others for seeking approvals as well as emotional support.

b) Studies on Sense of Cognitive Agency

Dewey, J. A. (2023) this particular study investigates how cognitive load influences an individual's sense of agency during its continuous actions. The study found that higher cognitive load surely and significantly reduces the individuals perceived sense of control over their actions and reactions, suggesting that when mental resources are heavily loaded, the people experience a faded feeling of agency over their behavior and outcomes.

Nunes et al. (2022) the author of this study preliminary showcased the model for assessing the sense of personal agency among adolescents and young adults, the study focused on how individual's beliefs and their ability influence life outcomes and hence they make their independent choices. The findings suggested that personal agency is a multidimensional concept that is linked with the autonomy, goal-directed behavior, and self-beliefs. The study further highlights its role in supporting positive developmental and its outcome during the adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Nobusako, S. et al. (2020) the study highlights the difference between the sense of agency of school-age children and young adults, which focuses on the temporal that processes through individuals and notices the control over

their actions. The study found out that the children have a broader and less precise time window for experiencing agency compared to young adults, that highly suggest that the sense of agency becomes more refined with cognitive and developmental maturation.

van Elk, M et al. (2015) this study examines the development of the illusion of control and sense of agency among children aged from 7–12 years compared to adults. The study found that both children and adults often experience an illusion of control, but the sense of agency becomes more refined with age as cognitive development improves individuals' ability that helps them accurately judge their influence over outcomes.

Munford, R. and Sanders, J. (2015) the aim of the study was to explore how young people usually develop a sense of agency while mapping their personal and social challenges in their life. The study found that youth construct agency by interpreting their life experiences, drawing on supportive relationships, and actively engaging in decisions which allows them to regain a major sense of control over their lives.

Sharp, R. (2014) the study explores the factors which suggest young people to perceive themselves as active and main agents in their own lives, basically focusing on how personal beliefs, supportive relationships, and opportunities, all these things influence their sense of agency. The study revealed that supportive social environments, encouragement from adults, and opportunities for meaningful participation help strengthen young people's perceptions of personal agency and their ability to take initiative in shaping their life outcomes and building their own path.

Beaumont, E. (2010) the study shows how determinant young adults are and how they develop political agency and a sense of political efficacy through civic engagement and empowerment processes. The study highlights that participation in civic activities, supportive educational environments, and opportunities for political discussion help young adults to build and boost their confidence and their ability to influence political and social outcomes.

Evans, K. (2002) the study highlights the role of personal agency in young adults' that get transitioned to adulthood in England and Germany, basically in areas such as education, employment, and life planning. The study found out that while young people attempt to exercise agency in shaping their life, their ability to do so is majorly influenced by social, economic, and institutional structures.

c) Studies on Emotional Dependency and Cognitive Agency

Arntz (2005) the study focused on the emotional dependency, a deep need for connection due to loneliness, that should be distinguished from functional dependency, that rely on others due to its perceived incompetence. Results highlights that high emotional dependency functions as a distinct risk factor for anxiety disorders, requiring special therapeutic approaches compared to functional dependency.

Bandura (2001) the study basically defined the human agency as the capacity to intentionally make things happen through self-reflection, self-regulation, and forethought, rather than recklessly reacting to environmental stimuli. This perspective often emphasized on the individual's way of self-organizing and proactive contributors to their circumstances, using these cognitive processes to exercise control over their thoughts, motivations, and actions.

Zimmerman (2000) the study highlights self-regulated learning (SRL) as a proactive, cyclical process where learners manage their cognition, motivation, and behavior which help them improve their academic performance. It is done by setting goals and monitoring progress, these individuals exhibit greater autonomy, better problem-solving, and increased self-efficacy.

Ryan and Deci (2000) they found out that when behaviors are intrinsically motivated or well-internalized, individuals act from their "integrated sense of self". They are then less reliant on external rewards or pressures (controlling, external validation) to regulate their behavior.

Hirschfeld et al. (1977) developed the *Interpersonal Dependency Inventory* to measure emotional reliance on others. It issued the three dimensions of interpersonal dependency emerged, which are as follows: emotional reliance on another person, lack of social self-confidence, and assertion of autonomy. The relationship of these three dimensions with normals and patients was discussed, as well as it was also discussed with the concepts of attachment and dependency.

Bornstein (1992) the study highlights the interpersonal dependency and found out that individuals with high emotional dependency are tend to rely on heavily on others for emotional support and decision-making. The study concluded with the fact that excessive dependency could affect autonomy and the individual is at a high risk of the increase of anxiety and depressive symptoms.

RESEARCH GAP

The present review literature highlights that while emotional dependency and sense of cognitive agency are always studied as an independent construct, but their lack in a significant amount of empirical research, which directly examines the correlation between these two variables with the context of adults. Study shows that emotional dependency with the context of romantic relationship, (Niño Tezén et al., 2024; Rojas Quispe et al., 2026), attachment styles (Estévez et al., 2018), in section A, but it rarely addresses the issue of emotional Reliance that shows an individual internal sense of cognitive control.

Similarly, on the other hand, the studies discussed in section B tells us about cognitive urgency which tend to explore the developmental pathway from childhood to adulthood (van Elk et al., 2015; Nobusako et al., 2020) or basically the influence of our society, and institutional structures (Evans, 2002; Munford & Sanders, 2015) without even justifying the need for emotional relational pattern that has strengthened these Cognitive perception.

The studies in section C reviewed the theoretical framework which is closer to the present work or study, but it is still insufficient. Bandura (2001) and Ryan & Deci (2000) Foundational theoretical framework for the understanding of agency and self-regulation and Bornstein (1992) and Hirschfeld et al. (1977), On the other hand, this study provides psychometric groundwork for measuring dependency, but we can say that there is no study among these which directly measures the correlation between the two variables.

Furthermore, a notable research Gap exists- The majority of the studies conducted are in Western or Latin American context, leaving the adults from Asian or Indian background unaddressed. Keeping in mind the collectivist culture, values, family endorsement, and societal expectation in these settings. Setting how uniquely it would shape both emotional Reliance and perception of personal autonomy, the Gap is particularly significant.

Additionally, we can add that gender differences in the relationship between these two variables are unexplored. In the light of these gaps, the present study aims to investigate the correlation between emotional dependency and sense of cognitive agency among adults, therefore contributing by the original insight to a relatively unexplored section in psychological research.

CONCLUSION

The present review of literature highlights the complex relationship between emotional dependency and sense of agency, these two variables are well recognized individually and well established in psychological research, but these are rarely studied in direct relation to each other.

Emotion dependency is the excessive Reliance on others validation, support and reassurance that showcase the insecure attachment style and it is also associated with reduced autonomy in an individual which sometimes heightens the anxiety. On the other hand, cognitive agency is an individual awareness of its own thought and decision and the control over it.

A careful review of literature suggests that the individual who are emotionally dependent on others often experience a diminished sense of ownership over their own cognitions and decision- making process, their internal locus of control, therefore is often interrupted by the habit often needs reassurance from others and others approval. When an individual is continuously emotional reassurance from others, their capacity to judge their own judgment and initiate something independently gradually gets depleted.

The theoretical model, therefore states that the idea of autonomy, intrinsic motivation and cognitive self-regulation are deeply interconnected, and the disturbance in any one of the two men is likely to affect the other domain. Individuals who rely heavily on external validation always struggle to develop the sense of self or sense of autonomy which state that they are not capable of trusting its own gut feeling. Therefore, persons self-regulated learning also highlights that individuals who inhabit the goal directed behavior and cognitively autonomous individuals tend to demonstrate greater problem- solving abilities and self-efficacy which can be compromised if a person is ally seeking emotional dependency.

Furthermore, the review draws a full attention on the relatively unexplored role of gender and culture as these two variables have rarely been just culturally and on the basis of gender as emotion,

dependency is partially influenced by general. Yet how this translates into differences in cognitive agency remains an open question. In collectivist culture, particularly in the Indian context, societal expectations surround an individual with the hint of family roles, which further more complicates the expressions of both emotional dependency and personal agency, making these all the necessary studies, these variables within culture are specific population is a much-needed study.

Taking together these reviews under the consideration of the need for empirical investigation with the direct relation to the emotional dependency and cognitive agency, especially in adults, how it navigates complex societal demands. Understanding the relationship between these two carries outstanding meaningful implications for counselling and mental health prevention is very much needed, particularly for those who are highly dependent on others. The implications are needed for the individual so that they can aim at fostering autonomy, resilience and psychological well-being as we can say as in whole individual can shape its sense of cognitive cell phone that represents an important step in his life, which is also needed in both research and clinical practice.

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