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Masculinity Norms or Masculinity Ideology: What Predicts Emotional Expressivity in Urban Indian Men?

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ABSTRACT: Emotional expressivity is crucial to understand emotional regulation/ management. Conformity to traditional masculinity norms may influence it through emotional suppression, restriction,stoicism which can be consequential in the context of trauma. Men in India experience substantial pressure to conform to masculinity norms yet the influence of such norms on expressivity remains insufficiently examined within the Indian socio-cultural context. This two phase sequential mixed-methods study with parallel samples,integration at the interpretation stage examined the relationship between conformity to masculinity norms, ideology, emotional expressivity. It explored how men with high/low trauma symptoms defined masculinity and expressivity. Phase 1 focused on MRNI-SF, CMNI-22, BEQ on 160 young adult men aged 18-30 of Delhi-NCR. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation,multiple regression. Phase 2 focused on 10 men from the same population, not exposed to phase 1, to avoid priming were screened using PCL-5, grouped as high/low symptom scorers. They defined the constructs in their own words. Responses were analysed using directed content analysis. Conformity to masculinity norms showed small but significant association with, and moderately predicted emotional expressivity. Ideology is strongly associated with conformity and not expressivity. Phase 2 results found both groups defined masculinity as strength and expressivity as conditional. Low scorers linked masculinity with care, responsibility. equality; and expressivity to connection. High scorers linked masculinity with toughness/confrontation and expressivity with concealment/control. The findings suggest that the relationship between the constructs is more complex, highlighting the value of distinguishing gender role beliefs from gender role behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Gender and Sex are often used interchangeably despite representing distinct constructs. However, gender, unlike sex, is a social and cultural construct that encompasses roles, behaviors, expectations, and identities associated with being male or female, whereas sex is typically binary (male or female). Garofalo and Garvin (2020) conceptualised gender as a multidimensional construct encompassing a spectrum of identities. The present study clarified the critical distinction between biological sex and gender that goes beyond the traditional male and female categories. Every culture has its own societal norms prescribed for a family setting, religious denominations, and so on, and gender is also one such aspect. The allocation of roles by the society to the gender that was assigned to an individual at birth that people are expected to adhere to. Similarly, Gibbons (2012) reviewed empirical studies showing culture specific gender socialisation example differential task assignments (Whiting & Edwards, 1998) vary by society, with some cultures assigning girls more domestic rules early shaping identity via naturally occurring variation.

And that could be one way to understand the concept of assigned roles. Historically, men have been assigned roles such as breadwinner, provider, protector, family head and primary decision maker within many patriarchal societies. As long as they operate their part on the socially acknowledged and advocated timeline, they are fit to be called a 'man'. Cleary's (2012) research directly analysed suicidal actions through a masculine lens that showed how men suppress emotions to perform 'manhood' amid distress avoiding vulnerability and demonstrated emotional restraint as an active performance of masculinity where deviating risks emasculation, men prioritise stoic facades over help seeking which validate manhood through non-expression even fatally.

Thus, understanding why emotional expression is an important factor, along with conforming to the norms of masculinity. Just as femininity resides with womanhood, masculinity is embedded in manhood. There is no doubt that men often find themselves on the edge of the masculinity scale now and then if there is even a slight modification in their attitude or behavior that does not align completely with the conventional idea of masculinity. A tiny variation or a different approach can highlight them as deviant. The deviance is by and large not respected, isn't considered as a mere 'individual difference', but often used for comparisons between the one man who implicitly adheres to the socially sanctioned definition of 'manhood or masculinity' and the other men who either believe, identifies and practices a different ideology of masculinity or simply who does not replicate the socially sanctioned behaviors for men. Conforming to masculinity/norms, and ideology are related but with a distinction. Thompson and Bennett (2015) distinguished between measures designed to assess what an individual believes men should be like, whereas norms/conformity is about how people themselves behave, act or feel and conduct themselves in relation to those standards. Therefore, the present study emphasized on the utilization of Male Role Norm Inventory- short form (MRNI-SF) and Conformity to Masculinity Norms-22 (CMNI-22). MRNI-SF focuses on the agreement to the cultural script about masculinity. It measures the endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology and assesses the extent to which an individual agrees with the prescribed societal statements about how men should behave. CMNI-22 emphasises on the personal alignment with the cultural script about masculinity in one's own actions and feelings. It measures personal conformity and assesses the extent to which the respondents themselves act, feel, and think and live with those norms. It was developed to capture more than pure cognitive endorsement of ideology.

Because of this, a man's masculinity is often threatened and questioned as also indicated by Vandello et al. (2008) whose research argued that manhood, in contrast to womanhood, is often seen as a precarious state requiring continual social proof and validation. One of the prescribed behaviors of a 'masculine man' is emotional restriction. To constrain oneself emotionally as men are not supposed to be expressive and communicative of their feelings, a real man does not share and discuss how he feels. Adhering to these norms is often associated with labeling a man as 'masculine'. Conformity to these norms affect their emotional expressivity and it's not as same as verbalisation. Even if they do express themselves, their mode of expression is highly inclusive of aggression, violence, substance use, etc. In other words, it exclusively consists of non-verbal cues. Prowse et al. (2021) found frequent social media had a more pronounced negative impact on academic performance and stress for female students than male students, though both genders reported experiencing similar negative mental health effects from frequent social media use. While both males and females use substances as coping mechanisms, males who use cannabis report more severe negative impacts on academic outcomes, stress, and mental health compared to females."

In a society like India, where patriarchy has been at its roots, and its existence is seen as an association between normality, tradition and culture, any family that practices patriarchy is not only socially acknowledged but is also considered a 'normal family'. And since men are considered as 'head of the family' according to the patriarchal family structure, there is often an extreme pressure to constantly seek validation and the label of a 'masculine man'. To obtain validation and acceptance, they are brought up in a manner that is aligned with socially sanctioned norms. Therefore, they are not conditioned to emotional expressivity like the women. Dochania and Dochania (2025) findings provided strong evidence documenting how Indian patriarchal families normalise male headship as cultural tradition, imposing extreme validation pressures on men to perform hegemonic masculinity and how as family head, men face constant scrutiny to embodied stoicism, dominance and self-sacrifice with women often co-enforcing norms via traditional roles.

However, it's important to remember that expression or expressivity is beyond verbalization or vocalization, it is also inclusive of non-verbal cues such as actions or acts of service, behavior, facial expressions etc. It can be understood as how women are expected to behave in a certain way to come across as 'feminine', men also have certain expectations to meet to get the label of a 'masculine man'. Therefore, the present study uses Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ) (BEQ; Gross & John, 1995,

1997). Emotional expressivity is often equated with verbalization or vocally communicating the feelings, implying that if someone is expressive they would make themselves be heard or would talk about their feelings. However, BEQ assesses the construct of expressivity more broadly, including both the internal emotional experience and its outward display. It measures both the strength and intensity of the emotional responses along with the extent to which these responses are displayed non-verbally, such as facial expressions, bodily cues and other observable channels such as " what I'm feeling is written all over my face". This broader conceptualization is significant when examining traditional masculinity norms and ideology.

Sloan et al. (2001) emotional expression plays a significant role in psychopathology including depression. It is extremely important to shed light on this issue and promote the articulation of the feelings of men to help them improve with their emotional regulation process as not being able to cope with the emotional experience deteriorates the emotional regulation process. Furthermore, it can also frame and influence the internal framing of ideals of masculinity, how men understand and regulate their emotional repertoire. This process is further complicated by trauma. Although trauma can be understood and defined using objective criteria, the experience, psychological meaning attached to it and impact are somewhat subjective in nature. Therefore, what seems traumatic to someone might not be deemed trauma necessarily. The interaction between the event features and the person in that situation, captures more adequately the individual perception and cognition of the event as trauma Kube, T. (2024). So, if emotional expressivity shapes how stress is regulated, then the way men interpret and carry the distressing experiences becomes equally significant. This is where trauma exerts its influence. Taken together, how men experience distress and whether his masculinity norms allow him to express it may determine their mental health outcomes. Therefore, the present study in phase 2 explores how men with high versus low symptom scores see masculinity and emotional expressivity.

McCusker and Galupo (2011) on the impact of men seeking help for depression on perceptions of masculine and feminine characteristics, found that the traditional masculine ideology and modern homonegativity were related to negative attitudes toward seeking psychological help. Cohn et al. (2010) studied the role of emotional dysregulation in the association between men's restrictive emotionality and use of physical aggression, findings revealed that emotional dysregulation does mediate the association between restrictive emotionality and aggression. Precisely, this relationship appeared to be largely driven by a lack of acceptance and inability to tolerate or withstand emotional experiences, rather than by the overall inability to regulate internal experiences.

Societal expectations dictating adherence to traditional masculinity norms, frequently displayed and reinforced by the portrayal of the "alpha male" imagery in various forms of media, have generated unhealthy outcomes for men's mental well-being. The repercussions of these rigid gender roles goes beyond men, as women are often left burdened with the responsibility of providing emotional support within relationships and communities, further deteriorating the strain on their own well-being. Jackupcak et al. (2002) results showed the role of masculine ideology and masculine gender role stress in men's perpetration of relationship violence, the results indicated that masculine gender role stress accounted for a significant portion of the variance in aggression and violence scores. Additionally, the interaction effect of Ideology and Gender Role Stress came forth as a significant predictor of aggression and violence. Emotions are the responses to the quality of our thinking and central to human beings, therefore it is unfair to dismiss a particular gender for any reason and impose societal norms. Houle et al. (2008) studied about empirical test of a mediation model of the impact of the traditional male gender role on suicidal behavior in men, the results revealed that the traditional male gender role appears to increase the risk of suicidal behavior in men by undermining their mental state and by inhibiting the protective factors of help seeking and social support. Despite establishing that masculinity norms are statistically associated with poor help-seeking, aggression and suicidality, it offers limited understanding of how men themselves make sense of masculinity and emotional expressivity. Particularly, while carrying different levels of distress. The measurements carry conformity and endorsement, but not the meaning men attach to the constructs. Hence, the issue needs to be acknowledged. Therefore, a requirement and research gap in the Indian context seem to emerge to investigate the association between adherence to masculinity norms, ideology and its impact on emotional expressivity among young adult male.

To address these gaps, the present study utilizes a two phase design. Phase 1 examines the association between conformity to masculinity norms (CMNI-22), masculinity ideology (MRNI-SF) and emotional expressivity (BEQ). Phase 2 explores how men with high/low symptom scores perceive masculinity and emotional expressivity. Since the MRNI-SF measures the degree to which a person agrees with the prescribed societal statement about how men should be, and CMNI measures more than pure

cognitive endorsement of ideology, BEQ plays a significant part as it measures both the internal experience and its outward display rather the verbal expression alone. Therefore, it becomes a more sensitive indicator of the emotional responses that masculine ideology and norms are theorized to regulate. This allows the examination of which aspect of masculinity is more closely linked to this multifaceted form of emotional expressivity. Given the subjective nature of trauma, participants in phase 2 were screened using PCL-5 (PTSD checklist for DSM-5) a self-report measure of trauma-related symptom severity. The PCL-5 is used as a screening measure and not as a diagnostic instrument, in order to group participants as high/low scorers categories. The groupings allow their responses to be compared.

The proposed research questions are:

RQ1: How do young Urban Indian men with high/low trauma symptom scores define masculinity in their own words?

RQ2: How do they define Emotional Expressivity in their own words?

RQ3: Do the subjective definitions differ by symptom level and where do they overlap?

RQ4: How men's subjective definitions confirm, extend or complicate the associations between norms, ideology and expressivity?

The proposed Hypotheses are:

H1: There will be a significant relationship between conformity to masculinity norms and emotional expressivity.

H2: There will be a significant relationship between masculinity ideology and emotional expressivity.

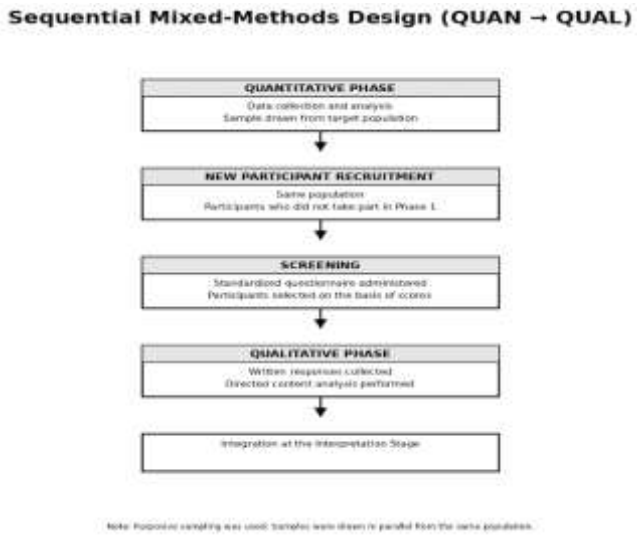
H3: There will be a significant relationship between masculinity ideology and conformity to masculinity norms.

H4: There will be a significant effect of conformity to masculinity norms in predicting emotional expressivity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Informed Consent was obtained from all the participants prior to data collection. A sequential mixed-methods design (Quan to Qual) with parallel samples and integration at the interpretation stage (Onwuegbuzie &Collins, 2007), employing purposive sampling and was conducted in two phases. In phase 1, 160 (men) participants, 18-30 aged residing in Delhi NCR were asked to fill the questionnaires (MRNI-SF, CMNI-22, BEQ) as a self report measure and the participation was voluntary. The participants were informed that the responses will be studied for research purposes and they can withdraw at any time. In phase 2, 10 independent men from the same population who were deliberately not exposed to phase 1, were screened using PCL-5 to avoid measurements priming their definition. After completion of PCL-5, participants were grouped as high and low symptom scorers. They were further asked to define in their own words what masculinity and emotional expressivity is.

Figure.1



Measurements Used:

• *Conformity to Masculinity Norms Inventory (CMNI)*- It is a 22-item self-report questionnaire that measures levels of adherence to perceived masculine gender norms in society among males. CMNI-22 measures conformity to traditional masculinity norms across 11 dimensions which are as follows: Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, and Power over Women, Homophobia and Pursuit of Status. CMNI-22 is a shorter version of the 94-item. Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory Mahalik, Locke, et al., (2003). The total reliability score Cronbach's α is typically .64 to .78 (mean ≈ .72); original Owen (2011) study reported α = .67

• *Masculinity Role Norm Inventory- Short Form*- it is a 21 item questionnaire that incorporates the structure of seven factors while modelling the general ideology of traditional masculinity. It is a seven point like a scale that measures the following dimensions: avoidance of femininity, self-reliance through mechanical skills, negativity towards sexual minorities, dominance, toughness, restrictive emotionality and importance of sex as factors of masculinity. It is the shorter version of male role no inventory which has 57 items. The total reliability score of the scale is Cronbach's α ≈ .92 (men) and .94 (women).

• *Emotional Expressivity Scale*- The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ) is a psychometric instrument used to assess a person's propensity for open and expressive emotional expression. It evaluates how effectively a person expresses their emotional states to others via both verbal and nonverbal cues. The BEQ's reported Cronbach's alpha values typically range from 0.80 and above indicating acceptable reliability. The total reliability score Cronbach's α typically is .82–.86.

The two subdimensions include Positive Expressivity: (assesses how openly someone conveys positive emotions to others, such as happiness and excitement); Negative Expressivity: (gauges how readily a person communicates unpleasant feelings to others, such as grief or anger).

• *PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)*- it is a 20 item questionnaire, self-report, used for screening probable PTSD or to estimate symptom severity of the post traumatic stress disorder using DSM-5 criteria. It covers four clusters from DSM-5, which are intrusion, avoidance, negative changes in cognition/mood, and arousal/reactivity. The total reliability score Cronbach's α typically is .94–.9

Procedure and Ethics:

The process began with recruiting participants using purposive sampling. Participation was voluntary and consent was taken. MRNI-SF, CMNI-22 and BEQ were administered on 160 men, aged 18-30, residing in Delhi-NCR. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and Regression were employed. This was phase 1. Then in phase 2, 10 independent men from the same population who were deliberately not exposed to phase 1, were screened using PCL-5 to avoid measurements priming or contaminating their definition. Participants were informed that they can withdraw at any stage due to the upsetting nature of PCL-5. After the administration of PCL-5, scoring of the responses was done by calculating a total symptom severity score by summing up across all the 20 items. A possible range of 0-80 was yielded. Based on the scores, participants were grouped as high/low symptom scorers. A commonly recommended cutoff score of 33 was followed; Bovin et al., (2016; Weathers et al., (2013). Participants who scored below the baseline were grouped as low scorers and above the baseline as high scorers. Then they were asked to reflect upon: "What is masculinity according to you? " and "what is emotional expressivity according to you?" whatever that resonates with them in hindi, english or hinglish. The handwritten anonymous scripts were collected where participants defined the constructs. The written responses gathered from the participants were analyzed using directed content analysis. The high scorers were given relevant information about support services wherein low scorers were not. Moreover, PCL-5 scores do not independently establish clinical diagnosis of PTSD/any other trauma-related disorder. The construct was used for screening and assessing symptom severity only.

Statistical Analysis

For phase 1, prior to statistical analysis, the data were screened to examine the assumptions underlying parametric testing. Minor deviations from normal distribution were indicated by the preliminary normality assessment. However, the study employed parametric tests such as Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression due to their robustness against moderate violations of normality assumptions, specifically in studies with substantial sample size. Residual plots were scrutinized and no serious violations of regression assumptions were found. Multicollinearity diagnostics uncovered acceptable tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, corroborating the suitability of the data for regression analysis. The sufficiency of the sample size

and verification of the statistical assumptions further validated the use of parametric statistics. Previous methodological research indicates that parametric tests remain statistically robust when minor deviations from normality are observed, on the condition that assumptions testing procedures are executed appropriately.Phase 2 follows Phase 1. A theory-driven phase 2 after a quantitative first phase is a natural fit. The existing instruments (MRNI-SF, CMNI-22,BEQ) are the source of the codes, before reading the written responses. Therefore, responses were analysed using directed content analysis. Codes began from the instruments , emergent codes were generated after reading the data. Then the two groups of low/high scorers were compared. Codes that never appeared and the codes that emerged both suggest something about the instruments. That is the purpose of the directed content analysis.

Results Phase 1

Descriptive Statistics

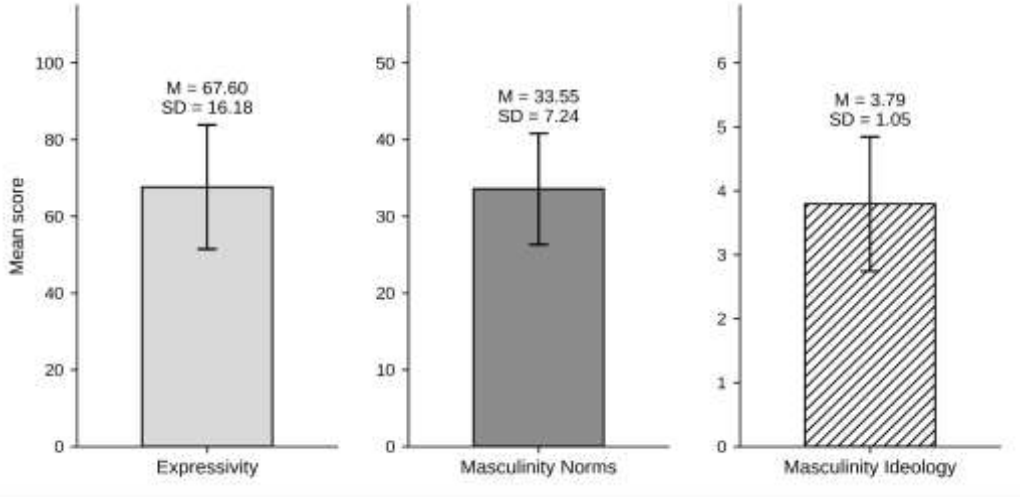


Figure. 2 represents the descriptive data

The participants demonstrated moderate to high levels of emotional expressivity (mean= 67.60, standard deviation = 16.18) with moderate conformity to masculinity norms (mean = 33.55, standard deviation = 7.24) and a moderate endorsement of masculinity ideology (mean = 3.79, standard deviation = 1.05). The following distribution suggests meaningful variability in adherence to traditional masculine role expectations within the sample, consistent with the socio-cultural plurality expected in an urban Delhi-NCR population.

Correlation Analysis

Table 1 demonstrates Pearson's correlation coefficients among the constructs**.**

Variables	Expressivity	Masculinity Norms	Masculinity Ideology
Expressivity	-		
Masculinity Norms	.20*	-	
Masculinity Ideology	.04	.53**	-

*0.05 level; **0.01 level

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient. A significant positive relationship was observed between adherence to masculinity norms and emotional expressivity (r = .20, p= < .05) supporting H1. Masculinity ideology was not significantly associated with emotional expressivity (r = .04, p = > .05) therefore H2 was not supported. A strong positive correlation was found between masculinity ideology and adherence to masculinity norms (r = .53, p = < .01), supporting H3.

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Linear Regression Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of linear regression analysis predicting emotional expressivity.

Predictors	B	S.E.	β	t	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	α	F
Masculinity Norms	.55	.20	.24	2.66**	.21	.04	.03	53.90	3.75*
Masculinity Ideology	-1.2	1.4	-.08	.88					

**0.01 level; *0.05 level

Table 2 presents multiple linear regression predicting emotional expressivity from adherence to masculinity norms and masculinity ideology. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 157) = 3.75$, $p = < .05$, $R = .21$, $R^2 = .04$, adjusted $R^2 = .03$. Conformity to masculinity norms emerged as a significant predictor of emotional expressivity ($B = .55$, $SE = .20$, $\beta = .24$, $p = < .01$). Masculine ideology did not contribute significantly as a predictivity factor. The model accounted for approximately 4% of the variance in emotional expressivity.

Phase 2 Results

Table 3.1 represents the codebook for research question 1 addressing masculinity

CODE	SOURCE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
M1 Self-reliance	CMNI-22,MRNI-SF	Masculinity involves getting tasks done, not asking for help, fixing things, solving.	If participants mention emotional self-management,or a skill/job with no link to being a man.
M2 Homophobia/negative attitude towards minority sex	CMNI-22,MRNI-SF	Masculinity involves being seen as a straight man/ having a negative attitude towards minority sex.	If the participant mentions neutrality towards sexual orientation/general dislike of feminine behaviour.
M3 Emotional control/restriction	CMNI-22,MRNI-SF	Masculinity involves hiding, controlling, suppressing,concealing emotions.	If the participant mentions careful/cautious or selective or conditional sharing.
M4 Toughness/risk-taking	MRNI-SF,CMNI-22	Masculinity involves mental/physical toughness, not being vulnerable, doing risky things.	If a participant mentions physical aggression/fighting or hiding emotions/ courage in facing problems.
M5 Dominance/power over women	MRNI-SF,CMNI-22	Masculinity includes having dominion over women, including gender hierarchy or being in-charge of others.	If the participants mention leading/responsibility out of care/duty with no control/hierarchy. Being neutral towards women.
M6 Importance of sex/playboy	MRNI-SF,CMNI-22	Masculinity defined as always being ready for sex or a strong sexual desire/having multiple partners.	If the participant neutral mentions relationships, marriage or romance with no emphasis on sexual desire or number of partners.
M7 Avoidance of feminity	MRNI-SF	Masculinity involves not doing	If the participant mentions

		things that are associated with femininity.	homophobia/emotional restriction.
M8 Winning	CMNI-22	Masculinity defined as being driven to succeed and win, competing and beating others.	If the participant mentions career/material success/ physical fighting/being capable or strong.
M9 Pursuit of status	CMNI-22	Masculinity involves being respected, recognised and significant/having wealth or status.	If the participant mentions being in charge/beating a rival or simply working long hours for recognition.
M10 Primacy of work	CMNI-22	Masculinity involves putting work/career above all. Work being the most important part.	If a participant describes work solely as a duty to support family/ career success for recognition.
M11 Violence	CMNI-22	Masculinity involves physical aggression/fighting when necessary.	If the participant mentions being strong without aggression or endurance.
M12 Dominance rejected (egalitarian)	Emergent	Participant explicitly rejected gender hierarchy or male dominance.	Neutral mention of women or treating everyone equally with no link to being men or in charge.
M13 Responsibility, care, protection	Emergent	Masculinity is described as a duty to look after, take care, protect and provide for family.	Being in charge, in control of others or dominance. Facing problems bravely, physical or mental strength.
M14 Courage / confronting adversity	Emergent	Masculinity is described as bravery, being courageous and facing problems instead of avoiding.	Mental/physical strength described as a trait/handling problems alone.
M15 Social role / expectation	Emergent	Masculinity is described as a social role/set of expectations set by the society rather than a personal trait.	Personal/individual traits that the participant holds themselves are not coded here. Social expectations are.

Table 3.2 represents the codebook for research question 2 addressing emotional expressivity**.**

CODE	SOURCE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
E1 Positive expressivity	BEQ	If the participant mentions sharing or showing emotions such as joy, laughter, affection or excitement.	Feeling happy with no mention of showing/emotional concealment
E2 Open verbal expressivity	BEQ	If the participants described expression as telling others how one feels or sharing problems	Conditional

E3 Negative expressivity	BEQ	If the participant mentions showing/ sharing negative emotions such as sadness, crying, fear or problems.	Sharing with selective people or under selective conditions/hiding or suppressing
E4 Impulse strength	BEQ	If the participant mentions emotions as intense, overwhelming, strong or hard to hold back.	Hiding with no mention of how strong/intense or overwhelming emotions are.
E5 Emotional concealment / restriction	CMNI-22,MRNI-SF	If the participants mention hiding, suppressing, concealing or controlling their emotions/ to not let others know what they are feeling.	Openly sharing either positive/negative or even careful/conditional sharing.
E6 Selective People/ cautious disclosure	Emergent	If the participant describes sharing feelings only with certain/selective people, in specific/certain situations, or in a careful way.	Open sharing with anyone, hiding feelings completely goes to emotional concealment. Neutral caution with no link to feelings is not coded.
E7 Emotion as weakness/losing control	Emergent (adjacent to CMNI-22/MRNI-SF)	If the participant frames expressing emotion as weak/losing control/as not a sign of strength.	Describing emotions as intense/hard to hold back but with no judgement of weakness or hiding emotion with no mention of weakness.
E8 rationalisation/cognitive management	Emergent	If the participant describes handling emotions by thinking through or reasoning out or solving the problem internally.	Hiding feelings without any reasoning. Talking the feelings over with another person. Describing emotions as intense.
E9 Relational/ supportive function	Emergent	If the participant links expressivity to friends, trusted people/ support or describe it as a way of connecting.	Disclosing to anyone, with no link to support or relationship. Sharing only under conditions, with the focus on who or how.
E10 Autonomy over disclosure	Emergent	If the participant describes sharing feelings as an individual choice, with no duty to explain.	Hiding feelings because of fear/ pressure. Careful sharing based on who the person is.
E11 a more broad definition- internal experience plus outward display	BEQ (internal experience and its display)	If the participant defines expressivity as having a feeling,a reaction, response, or belief about it, so that emotional expressivity covers both the inner experience and how it shows.	Describing only how they show their own feelings (without defining emotional expressivity). Describing emotional expressivity only as outward display or only as an inner feeling.

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Table 4.1 represents a coding sheet for masculinity (result). Only the codes emerged from participants' responses are mentioned below.

CODES	LOW SCORER GROUP	HIGH SCORER GROUP
M1 self-reliance	L5 (partial)	H2
M3 emotional control	L3	H3 (partial)
M4 toughness	L2, L5	H1, H3
M12 Dominance rejection	L1, L4	none
M13 Responsibility/care	L1, L2, L3	H5
M14 Courage	L3	H1, H2
M15 Social role	L2	H4

Figure 3 represents masculinity codes

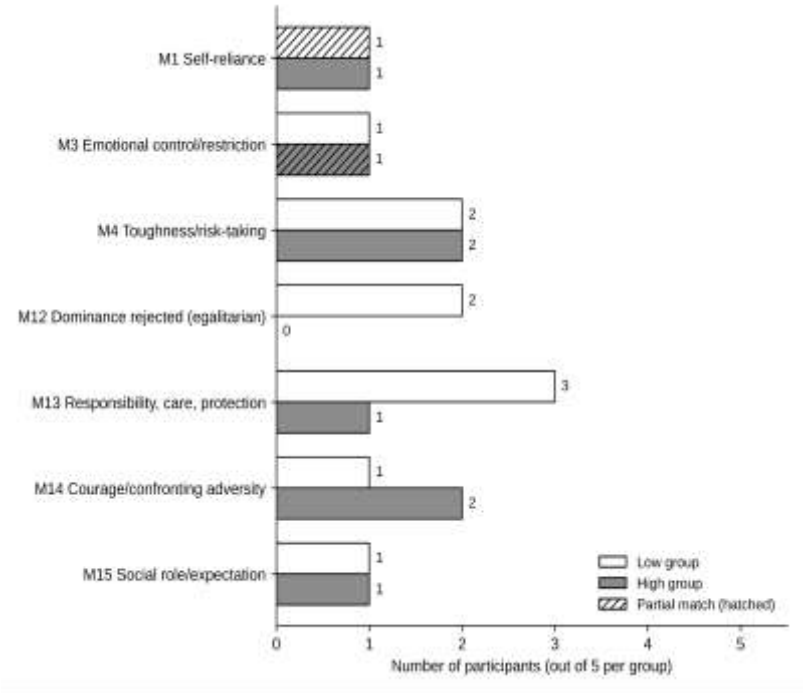

Table 4.2 represents a coding sheet for Expressivity (result). Only the codes emerged from participants' responses are mentioned below.

CODES	LOW SCORER GROUP	HIGH SCORER GROUP
E2 Open/verbal	**L1, L2, L5, (L4 partial)**	**H2, H4 (both partial)**
E4 Impulse strength	**none**	**H3 (H1, H2 partial)**

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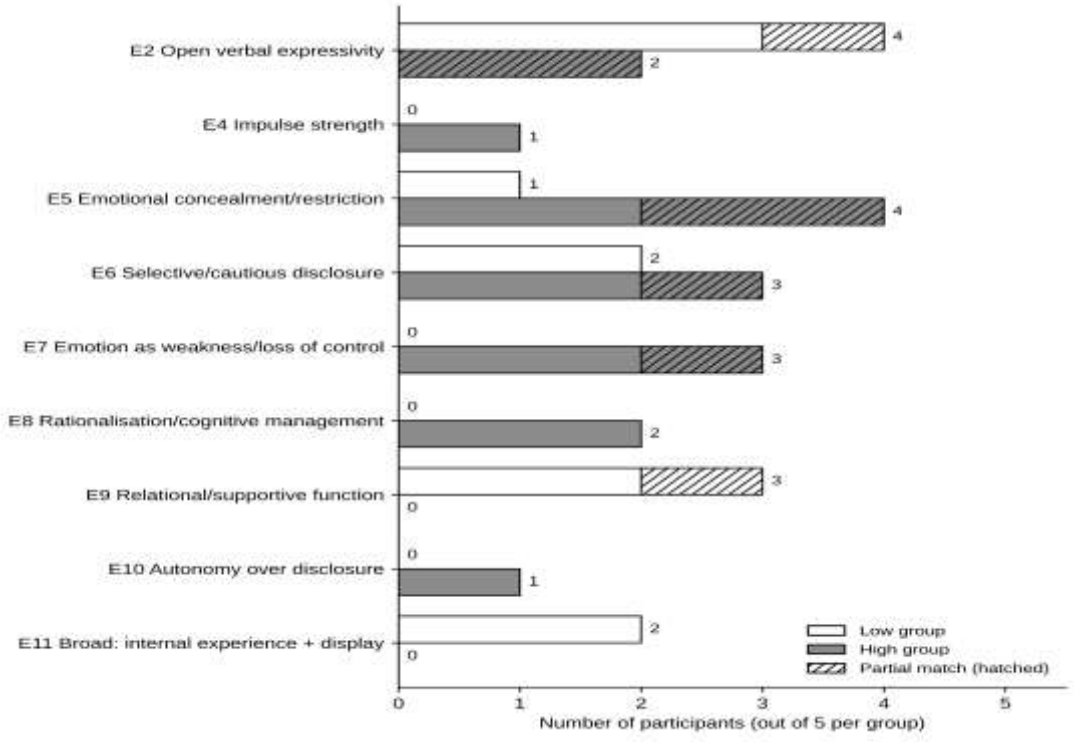
E5 Concealment	**L3**	**H1, H2 (H3, H5 partial)**
E6 Selective sharing	**L4, L5**	**H1, H2 (H4 partial)**
E7 Emotion as weakness	**none**	**H3, H4 (H5 partial)**
E8 Rationalisation	**none**	**H2, H3**
E9 Supportive/relational	**L1, L4 (L2 partial)**	**none**
E10 Autonomy	**none**	**H5**
E11 Broad definition	**L3, L4**	**none**

Figure 4 *represents code for expressivity*



RESULTS

In phase 1, the findings revealed that participants, on average were emotionally expressive with a mean of 67.60, and standard deviation 16.18, moderately strict about masculinity norms M = 33.55, SD = 7.24 and moderately supportive of endorsing masculinity ideology M = 3.79, SD = 1.05. Participants who conformed to masculinity norms also showed higher emotional expressivity, $r = .20$, $p < .05$. Participants who endorsed masculinity ideology also reported higher conformity to masculinity norms $r = .53$, $p < .01$. However, endorsing traditional masculinity ideology was not found related to emotional expressivity or = .04, ns. Therefore, having traditional masculinity beliefs and adhering to the masculinity norms go quite strongly together. Conclusively, higher conformity to masculinity norms emerged as a predictor for emotional expressivity ($\beta = .24$, $t = 2.66$, $p < .01$). Although endorsing masculinity ideology itself did not predict emotional expressivity ($\beta = -.08$, $t = 0.88$, $p > .05$).

In Phase 2, responses were analysed using directed Content Analysis. In directed Content analysis, (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) initial codes and categories are derived from existing theories or prior research. It is a theory-driven qualitative method that begins with predetermined concepts, variables and theory. It is then followed by reading participants' responses and coding the text into existing categories. The process began with preparation and familiarization of the data by reading the transcripts carefully. It enabled a comprehensive understanding of the responses. It was then coded as per predetermined categories derived from constructs. Existing codes were developed for the responses that did not fit into the existing codes. Codes were then organized in categories in tabular form and responses from participants were put against the respective categories. It was then interpreted in relation to the research questions.

Participants were grouped as high/low symptom scorers (n=10). They provided the written perspective of the constructs; what masculinity and expressivity means to them. Codes were generated from MRNI-SF,CMNI-22 and BEQ. MRNI-SF and BEQ codes were taken from the subscales provided in the questionnaire itself. CMNI-22 codes were generated by subscales as mentioned by Mancini et al. (2026) in their study. Emergent codes from the participant's responses captured the rest.

While describing masculinity, strength was named in both the groups but the meaning differed. Four out of five low scorers described masculinity through responsibility,equality and care. For them, being responsible, caring and treating everyone equally is how they viewed masculinity whereas two explicitly rejected dominance. Contrastingly, three out of five high scorers emphasised masculinity through toughness, bravery and confronting the problem. Whereas two high scorers deviated from this pattern with a protective definition and a social expectation oriented definition. One low symptom scorer also included hiding emotions as part of masculinity.

While describing emotional expressivity, caution about disclosing appeared in both the groups. Selective sharing was focused on. "We should express to very closed ones' or 'express but be careful who you express to' etc. The difference in both the groups existed in how expressivity was framed. Low scorers framed it as connection and support.High scorers framed it as something to manage or contain. One high scorer mentioned it as a matter of choice. No participant referred to positive emotions and one low scorer reported hiding emotions. Both the groups defined masculinity as 'strength' and expressivity as 'conditional'.

DISCUSSION

The research aimed to explore the association between conformity to masculinity norms, masculinity ideology and emotional expressivity of young adult Indian men and how men with high/ low trauma symptoms define these constructs in their own words. Phase 1 found participants reported moderate levels of adherence to masculinity norms and masculinity ideology alongside moderate to high emotional expressivity, indicating variability in conformity to traditional masculine role expectations. Kulandai Raj and Vijayalakshmi (2026) found urban Indian men scored moderately on masculinity norms (65.6% in "Low on Both Factors" profile) while demonstrating moderate-to-high emotional expressivity through cognitive reappraisal strategies, matching the findings of the present study.

A significant positive relationship was observed between conformity to masculinity norms and emotional expressivity ($r = .20$, $p < .05$). The positive correlation between conformity to masculinity norms and emotional expression appears to be unconventional as traditional masculinity has frequently been associated with emotional restriction in previous literature. A possible explanation is that emotional expression encompasses both verbal and non-verbal expressions of emotions rather than emotional disclosure alone. Individuals who adhere to traditional masculinity norms may continue to express emotions in socially and culturally acceptable ways which are socially sanctioned, which may be reflected in overall emotional expressivity scores. The findings highlight the significance of differentiating between emotional expression and emotional suppression suggesting that conformity to masculinity norms does not necessarily imply a complete absence of emotional expression. No significant relationship was observed between masculinity ideology and emotional expressivity ($r = .04$, $p > .05$).

One of the possible explanations is that conformity to masculinity norms reflects behaviours that are enacted and are more closely linked to how emotions are expressed, whereas masculinity ideology represents broader beliefs that may not necessarily translate into observable emotional behavior. Moreover, since the CMNI assesses how individuals themselves behave and feel in relation to masculine standards, the positive correlation makes sense considering BEQ's nature. The questionnaire captures both the internal experience and its outward display, CMNI seems to be closer to the lived emotional response whereas ideology which reflects the agreement with the cultural script, is a more abstract evaluation. The absence of association between

masculinity ideology and emotional expressivity further supports the point that they are not interchangeable. Gados (2026) studied high adherence to masculine norms emphasizing emotional control, work-oriented identity, and independence. Though students rejected hypermasculine ideals related to dominance and promiscuity, they continued to adhere to emotionally restrictive expectations with a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.783$, $p < .001$) being found between conformity to masculinity norm and emotional suppression, indicating that higher adherence is associated with reduced emotional expression. A strong positive relationship was found between masculinity ideology and conformity to masculinity norms ($r = .53$, $p < .01$). The findings support the theoretical differentiation between gender role ideology and behavioral conformity that individuals who do endorse traditional masculine beliefs may also be more probable to adhere to socially prescribed masculine behavior. Masculinity Norms and Masculinity Ideology are related but not the same thing. The correlation at .53 indicates a solid moderate relationship, consistent with the literature that agreeing with the norms and living that way are different. Scores of MRNI and CMNI are moderately to strongly correlated. It indicates that the constructs are related Levant et. al., (2010). However, they are not interchangeable. MRNI-SF and CMNI-46 measures distinct aspects of masculinity with evidence of discriminant validity between their subscales Levant et. al., (2015).

Likhitha and Sutar (2026) in their conducted study among 305 Indian men, found a significant moderate positive relationship between conformity to traditional masculinity and alexithymia ($r = 0.299$, $p < .001$), with conformity to masculine norms serving as a significant predictor of emotional difficulties suggesting that internalization of traditional masculinity standards may be associated with behavioural conformity among Indian men. The regression model demonstrated a statistically significant fit. Conformity to masculinity norms emerged as a significant predictor of emotional expressivity ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$). Consistent with the present findings Gados (2026) has demonstrated that conformity to traditional masculinity norms is strongly associated with patterns of emotional restriction and suppression. The regression model explained approximately 4% of the variance in emotional expression, indicating that though conformity to masculinity norms contributed significantly, much of the variability in emotional expression is likely influenced by additional interpersonal, psychological and sociocultural factors, not examined in the present study. The relatively small effect size suggests that emotional expression is a multifactorial construct that cannot be explained solely by masculinity norms. This aligns with Wong et al. (2017) research indicating that adherence to masculinity norms is associated with emotional outcomes, but typically with small to moderate effect sizes rather than strong predictive power.

Phase 2 suggested that men in both groups used similar language but filled it with different meanings. For RQ1 (masculinity), both groups described masculinity as strength, though the content differed. Most high symptom scorers described masculinity through toughness, bravery and confrontation. Most low scorers emphasised on care, responsibility and equality. Some even rejected the idea of dominance. This suggests that low symptom scorers did not abandon masculinity, rather reframed it around relational duties. However, not every response fits the pattern. One high symptom scorer gave a protective definition of masculinity and one low scorer included hiding emotions. For RQ2 (expressivity), both the groups emphasised cautiousness regarding disclosure of emotions, and sharing selectively with the closed ones. The difference showed in the framing. The high scorers described expression through control/concealment or managing. Low scorers described through connection and support. One high symptom scorer described lack of expressivity as a choice instead of a deficit. It indicates that restraint is not always suppression. No participant mentioned positive emotions. It indicates that men conceptualise expressivity mainly around negative or difficult emotions. RQ3, the overlapping was evident in vocabulary, the difference lay in what the vocabulary was being referred to. So the label is shared, but the meaning differs, highlighting that the same endorsement can carry different meanings. While the pattern is consistent with, it cannot show the idea that trauma symptoms such as numbing and avoidance may overlap conceptually with emotional restriction and shape how men talk about expression.

RQ4, As phase 1 results showed, masculine ideology is not associated with expressivity, phase 2 results stays consistent with it. Both groups endorsed masculinity as strength, but orientation towards expressivity differed. Endorsement of the belief did not determine how expressivity was understood. Phase 1 found a small significant association between masculinity norms and expressivity. Phase 2 described expressivity as selective and conditional. It suggests that men may express to their close ones, while still conforming to the norms. So the scores may reflect selective sharing rather than open expressivity. However, the complication is that some high scorer men described expressivity through control/concealment. This fits the idea that masculinity leads to suppression of emotions. But phase 1 results did not find that conformity to masculinity norms was linked with less expressivity. In fact, the link was slightly positive. Though, trauma symptoms were not measured in phase 1 so the

groups cannot be directly compared. The lack of positive emotions in the definitions also raises the question of whether expressivity scales that include positive expressivity match how men understand the construct.

Limitations of the Study

The Study used purposive sampling which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Occupation was not examined as a variable in the present analysis, limiting insight into how socioeconomic or occupational context may shape masculine norm adherence and emotional expressivity. While the focus on the specific age group allowed homogeneity, the findings may not be transferable to older or younger population.The study was limited to the Delhi-NCR region. This geographic area was deliberately chosen as the researchers are based in this area. They sought to understand the social and cultural conditions of this urban context. However, the findings may not be transferable to other geographic or rural regions. Self-report methods were used which may have been driven by social desirability and the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. Phase 2 involved only 10 participants (5 per group), therefore it makes the second half findings more illustrative/ or hypothesis generating rather than representative. The written definitions are brief and cannot be probed or clarified. The two phases used different participants. Trauma symptoms were not measured in Phase 1, so integration is interpretive. Phase 2 cannot be taken in account to explain the Phase 1 associations. PCL-5 was used to screen out and identify symptom levels and not as a clinical diagnosis. So 'high-symptom' should not be read as an indicator for PTSD. While the findings provide valuable insights into the participant experience, they might not be representative of the wider population due to the small sample size. Future research should measure trauma symptoms alongside masculinity norms and expressivity for a larger and diverse sample. Using longitudinal designs, adding interviews or focus groups to explore meanings in depth, and including positive as well as negative emotional expression.

Strength of the study

The study makes a meaningful contribution by exploring adherence to masculinity norms, masculinity ideology and emotional expression simultaneously using three validated psychometric instruments within an insufficiently examined Indian socio-cultural context. The positive direction and association between norms-expressivity is noteworthy and indicates a personal alignment with masculine norms co-occurred with somewhat higher expressivity. This may indicate the multifaceted emotional expressivity that BEQ measures.

The findings offer implications for gender-sensitive psychoeducational and community based interventions aimed at promoting healthy emotional expression among Indian young adult males.

CONCLUSION

The study contributes to a growing body of masculinity research by showing that conformity to masculinity norms rather than broader masculine ideology is the factor more closely tied to emotional expressivity. The findings contribute to the growing literature on masculinity by demonstrating that adherence to masculinity norms is associated with emotional expression young adult Indian men within a sociocultural context that remains underrepresented in psychological research thus enhancing the understanding of gender role expectations and their theoretical and practical implications in the Indian socio-cultural context. The qualitative findings add a nuance. Even though the vocabulary used by both groups overlapped, their implied and derived meanings differed. The two phases suggest that the relationship between the constructs is more complex than a simple notion of masculinity norms is negatively linked with expressivity, and distinguishing gender role beliefs from gender role behaviour. Thus, placing importance on attending to the meanings men attach to masculine ideals.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Sarah Richard[1]

- conceptualized, designed, collected and analysed the data, prepared the figures and tables, and wrote the original draft of the manuscript under the supervision of Dr. Shikha Srivastava.

Dr. Shikha Srivastava[2]

- supervised the overall research, contributed to the study design and interpretation of results, critically revised the manuscript for intellectual content, and provided resources and guidance throughout the work. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no competing interests.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data cannot be made publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality restrictions. It may be available upon reasonable request by the corresponding author.

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