

Relationship Between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction Among Adults

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Abstract: *This research evaluates the ties between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults. We have used correlational research design. To measure Intimacy, we have used Need for Sexual Intimacy Scale (NSIS) (Murray, 1938) and to measure Relationship Satisfaction we have used Relationship Satisfaction Assessment (RAS) (Hendrick S.S., 1988). Total number of participants were 160 out of which 80 were males and 80 were females from 20 to 40 years. The result of the investigation indicated a prominent association between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults. The study found gender differences, where Intimacy was high in Females and lower in Males and same for Relationship Satisfaction, Females reported high score than Males, this may reflect that there is a tendency for females to feel more gratified in their love relationships, potentially due to stronger emotional connection or differing societal expectations regarding intimacy and relationships. These results highlight the importance of fostering Intimacy in relationships to enhance overall satisfaction, particularly among men who reported lower Intimacy levels. Future studies might look at the fundamental causes of these gender variations, including attachment patterns, communication strategies, and cultural effects. Furthermore, with an eye on meeting gender specific goals, intervention plans meant to increase Intimacy and relationship happiness could be created. Knowing these dynamics enables couples to enhance their relationships and support general well-being.*

Keywords: Intimacy, Relationship Satisfaction, Adults

1. Introduction

Human beings are inherently social creatures, and intimate relationships form one of the most essential aspects of adult life. Among these, romantic partnerships hold a central place, offering not only emotional support but also a foundation for mutual growth, identity formation, and psychological well-being. Two of the most deeply interwoven components of romantic relationships are intimacy and relationship satisfaction. While each construct has been studied extensively on its own, their interrelation—and how this interplay might differ by gender—remains a rich field for further exploration.

Relationship satisfaction is commonly conceptualized as a person's perceived assessment of their romantic partnership, encompassing emotional fulfilment, perceived harmony, communication quality, and physical closeness. High relationship satisfaction is associated with better mental health, stronger communication, and less likelihood of conflict or dissolution. Intimacy, meanwhile, refers to the emotional closeness shared between partners, involving open communication, vulnerability, shared experiences, and often, physical affection. Intimacy is a core emotional element that fosters connection and support within the romantic bond.

Recent psychological literature highlights the deep interconnection between intimacy and relationship satisfaction. For instance, Lyvers et al. (2022) demonstrated that individuals with stronger presence of alexithymia

(difficulty identifying and describing emotions) and fear of intimacy reported lower relationship satisfaction. These outcomes imply that that emotional atonement and comfort with closeness are critical to feeling fulfilled in a relationship (Lyvers et al., 2022). Likewise, Wagner et al. (2020) emphasized the role of physical affection in enhancing marital satisfaction, particularly in the context of adult attachment styles. Secure attachment predicted higher levels of satisfaction through greater intimacy behaviours like affectionate touch (Wagner et al., 2020).

Moreover, relationship satisfaction is not static—it evolves over time and can vary significantly across different stages of a couple relationship. Cassepp-Borges et al. (2023) found that both love and satisfaction changed across romantic stages, such as initial attraction, deepening commitment, and long-term maintenance. Early stages were more influenced by passion and novelty, whereas long-term satisfaction was more closely associated with emotional intimacy and support (Cassepp-Borges et al., 2023). The results bring into focus the evolving role of intimacy in shaping how partners evaluate their relationships.

Cultural context also shapes experiences of intimacy and satisfaction. This is evident in a study led by Shujja et al. (2024) among Pakistani married adults highlighted the bidirectional link between experiences of rejection in marriage and partner satisfaction. As satisfaction decreased, perceived rejection increased, and vice versa. This dynamic points to the fragile balance in emotional exchange that characterizes intimacy in marital relationships (Shujja et al.,

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2024).

On a broader level, Righetti et al. (2022) synthesized major factors contributing to the rise or fall of relationship satisfaction, including emotional regulation, sexual fulfillment, responsiveness, and perceived partner support. They concluded that intimacy—particularly emotional intimacy—remained one of the most reliable predictors of satisfaction, even when accounting for stressors and external factors (Righetti et al., 2022).

Interestingly, even non-traditional relationship practices offer insights into the intimacy- satisfaction link. Strizzi et al. (2022) explored the dynamics of BDSM relationships and found that emotional and communicative intimacy often led to higher satisfaction among participants, challenging assumptions that such practices harm relationship quality (Strizzi et al., 2022). Similarly, Veit et al. (2017) revealed that emotional intimacy moderated the behavioral implications of sexually graphic media consumption on relationship satisfaction—individuals with higher emotional intimacy were less negatively impacted by media use (Veit et al., 2017).

Another relevant perspective is attachment theory, which positions intimacy as a key component in the development of secure romantic bonds. Šlosáriková (2020) argued that adult attachment styles—whether secure, avoidant, or anxious— influence the ability to build and sustain intimacy, which in turn predicts relationship satisfaction levels (Šlosáriková, 2020). Securely attached individuals are associated with increased levels of satisfaction due to their comfort with emotional closeness and expression.

Early experiences also shape later relational patterns. Longmore et al. (2016) found that adolescent sexual partnerships were predictive of later relationship satisfaction and susceptibility to partner aggression, highlighting how intimacy and satisfaction patterns are established early in life (Longmore et al., 2016). Godbout et al. (2017) extended this by showing that early-stage encounters with interpersonal violence negatively impacted romantic attachment and, consequently, relationship satisfaction in emerging adults (Godbout et al., 2017).

Gender differences further complicate these dynamics. Young and Curran (2016) examined intimacy behaviours among cohabiting couples and found that intimate sacrifices made by partners were not uniformly beneficial—what one partner viewed as an act of love, the other might perceive as pressure or imbalance (Young & Curran, 2016). Likewise, Bahun and Huić (2017) discussed how stress and perceived relationship efficacy influenced satisfaction differently across genders, with men and women responding differently to emotional and practical support dynamics (Bahun & Huić, 2017).

Finally, the stabilizing role of relationship satisfaction on adult psychological development cannot be overlooked. South et al. (2016) argued that high relationship satisfaction even moderated certain adult personality traits, reinforcing the idea

that fulfilling romantic partnerships contribute positively to individual mental health and interpersonal functioning (South et al., 2016).

2. Research Gap

While numerous studies have independently investigated intimacy and relationship satisfaction, relatively few have examined their direct relationship within diverse adult populations, especially while accounting for gender-based differences. Much of the existing research is context-specific— focused on married couples, Western populations, or adolescents—and lacks generalizability to a broader adult demographic. Furthermore, the cultural contexts in which intimacy is expressed and evaluated are often underexplored, particularly in non-Western and collectivist societies. To address this gap, the current research explores the relationship between emotional closeness and satisfaction in a general adult population, while also analysing whether men and women experience and express intimacy in ways that affect their satisfaction differently. By doing so, it expands the understanding of how emotional closeness functions within romantic relationships today.

3. Methodology

Aim: To study the dynamics between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults.

Objectives

- To study the link between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults
- To analyse differences in intimacy between adult men and women
- To analyze gender-related differences in levels of relationship satisfaction among adults.

Hypothesis

H1- There will be significant relationship between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults.

H2- There will be significant gender difference in Intimacy among Male and Female adults.

H3- There will be significant gender difference in Relationship Satisfaction among Male and Female adults.

Research Design

This study incorporated a correlational research design to determine the connection between intimacy and relationship satisfaction among adults. Both intimacy and relationship satisfaction were quantified using standardized self-administered scales, allowing for statistical analysis of the natural variation in responses.

Sample

The study comprised a total of 160 adult participants, evenly split between 80 males and 80 females, all aged between 20 and 40 years.

Inclusion criteria required participants to:

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- Be within the age range of 20 to 40 years
- Be capable of understanding the study's purpose and procedures
- Provide informed consent for participation

Exclusion criteria included:

- Individuals younger than 20 or older than 40 years
- Those unable to provide informed consent
- Participants with known psychological or cognitive impairments that could affect their response

Procedure

The study followed a structured procedure to ensure reliability and ethical integrity in data collection. Participants were sourced through personal networks and online platforms. Before participating, each individual was thoroughly briefed on the study's aims and procedures before giving their consent and gave informed consent. Data collection involved the administration of a demographic questionnaire to gather essential background information, including age, gender, and marital status, followed by the completion of standardized instruments measuring intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

Variables

Intimacy refers to the emotional closeness, trust, and connectedness between partners, deepened through the mutual expression of inner experiences and affection. It serves as a key factor in encouraging a secure and fulfilling romantic relationships (Lyvers et al., 2022).

Relationship Satisfaction represents the magnitude to which individuals feel content, fulfilled, and supported in their romantic relationship. It reflects the quality of emotional, communicative, and physical experiences shared between partners (Righetti et al., 2022).

Description of the tools

1) Need for sexual Intimacy scale:

The Need for Sexual Intimacy Scale (NSIS) is a psychological tool designed to measure an individual's desire for emotional closeness and connection through sexual experiences. It typically assesses how much a person values or seeks intimacy, affection, and relational bonding in the context of sexual activity, rather than focusing solely on physical gratification. The scale is often used in research or clinical settings to explore variations in sexual motivation and relationship dynamics.

2) Relationship Satisfaction assessment:

The Relationship Satisfaction Assessment by Hendrick, often referred to as the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), is a concise, widely used tool developed by Susan S. Hendrick in 1988 to measure satisfaction in romantic relationships. It consists of seven items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, evaluating aspects like love, problems, expectations, and overall contentment. The RAS is valued for its simplicity, reliability, and validity, contributing to its widespread use in psychological research and clinical situations to assess how satisfied individuals are in their partnerships.

Tools	Author	Year	Measures	Items	Reliability	Validity
Need for sexual Intimacy scale	Murray	1938	Intimacy: 3 subscales (sex, need for affiliation and need for dominance)	22 item scale divided into 3 subscales	All items loaded adequately onto at least one of the three extracted factors, with a correlation of .39 observed between the Sex and Dominance factors	Construct and criterion validity were assessed.
Relationship Satisfaction assessment	Hendrick, S.S.	1988	Relationship Satisfaction	7 item scale	The scale has also shown stable results over time, with test-retest reliability coefficients often reported above 0.85.	Criterion related validity

4. Results

Table 1: Interplay between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults

Variable	Mean	S.D.	r value	p-value
Intimacy	73.16	9.43	0.02	Sig**
Relationship Satisfaction	23.93	4.37		

Significant at both 0.01** and 0.05* level

At the 0.01 and 0.05 significance levels, the table demonstrates a significant correlation of 0.02 between individuals' degrees of intimacy and their satisfaction with their relationships. Evidently, Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction are significantly related. Additionally, it is evident that when Intimacy levels increase, so did Relationship Satisfaction scores.

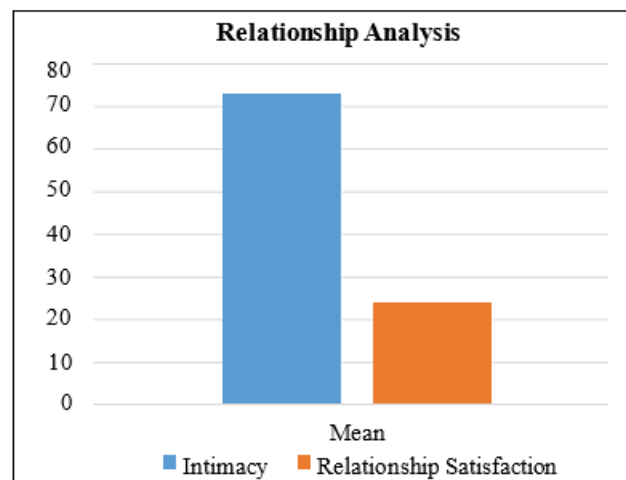


Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 Demonstrates through a visual illustration the mean scores for Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults.

The blue bar represents the mean Intimacy score (73.168), which is significantly higher than the orange bar representing the mean Relationship Satisfaction score (23.937). This visual comparison supports the data from Table 1, showing a notable difference between the two variables.

Table 2: Gender differences in Intimacy among Male and Female adults

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	r value	p-value
Intimacy	Male	80	23.58	9.50	42.76	Sig**
	Female	80	73.45	9.42		

Significant at both 0.01** and 0.05* level

Table 2 presents gender differences in Intimacy among Male and Female adults. The study included 80 Males and 80 Females, with mean Intimacy scores of 23.58 (SD = 9.50) for Males and 73.45 (SD= 9.42) for Females. The t-value of 42.76 indicates a strong difference, and the results are statistically significant at both the 0.01 and 0.05 levels (p-value marked as Significant). These findings suggest a considerable disparity in intimacy based on gender, with women scoring higher than men.

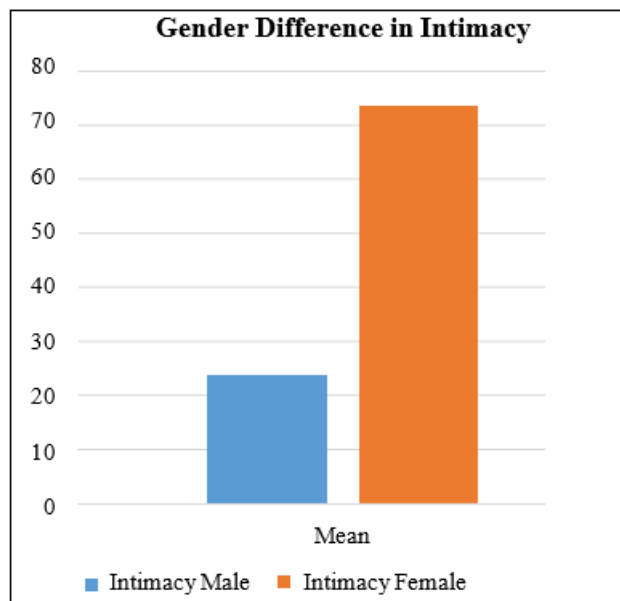


Figure 2.1

Figure 2.1 visually represents the gender differences in Intimacy levels among Male and Female adults, as depicted in Table 2. The orange bar illustrates the mean Intimacy score for Females (73.45), which is significantly higher than the blue bar representing mean levels of intimacy reported by Males (23.58). The graph highlights a notable gender disparity in Intimacy, further supported by the statistically significant t-value (42.76) and p-value marked as significant. This visual clearly emphasizes that Females reported significantly higher Intimacy levels compared to Male

Table 3: Gender differences in Relationship satisfaction among Male and Female adults

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	r value	p-value
Relationship Satisfaction	Male	80	23.58	4.69	1.01	Sig**
	Female	80	24.28	4.03		

Significant at both 0.01** and 0.05* level

The t-test findings in Table 3 compare Relationship Satisfaction among Male and Female adult. A fair comparison was achieved with 80 Male and Female individuals each group. Males had a mean Relationship Satisfaction score of 23.58 with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 4.69, while Females had 24.28 with 4.03. Mean difference t-value was 1.01. This test was "Significant," indicating that the difference in Relationship Satisfaction between men and women is yielded a significant result at both the 0.01 and 0.05 significance levels.

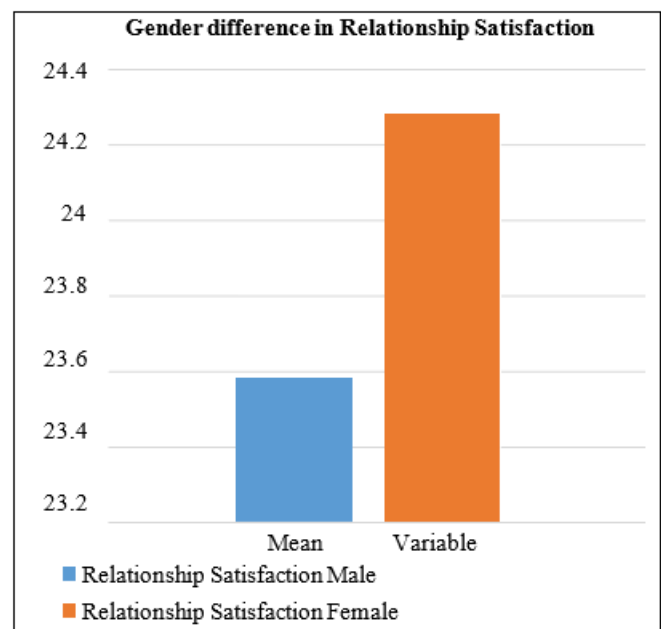


Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1 visually represents the gender differences in Relationship Satisfaction among Male and Female adults, as reported in Table 3. The orange bar represents the mean Relationship Satisfaction score for Females (24.28), which is slightly higher than the blue bar representing the mean score for Males (23.58). Although the difference in means is small, it is statistically significant with a p-value marked as significant. The figure effectively highlights this gender difference, indicating that Females reported marginally higher Relationship Satisfaction than Males.

The present study focuses on the relationship between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among Adults. The variable Intimacy was measured using Need for sexual Intimacy scale and Relationship Satisfaction was measured by Relationship Satisfaction Assessment. Here, The Need for sexual Intimacy scale had 5 options (Disagree Definitely, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Agree Definitely) whereas Relationship Satisfaction Assessment also had 5 options as [1 (low), 2, 3, 4, 5 (high)] the answers and the measurements that

examined were Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among adults.

Statistical tool for the social sciences, more commonly known as SPSS, was used to calculate the findings of this research (version 23). Data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet following collection. The data was verified for accuracy. To investigate the linkage between intimacy and relationship satisfaction, we used SPSS to analyse the scores. We also looked for any differences in the scores between males and females on these measures. We computed means and standard deviations for each variables to look at how they relate to one another. The next step was to calculate the link and determine its statistical significance using the p-value. Afterwards, an independent sample t test was used to investigate any differences in Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction based on gender. The average Intimacy scores of the male and female participants were compared in the test. For Relationship Satisfaction, we did the same thing by comparing the gender-specific means and then calculating t-values and p-values to see whether there was a statistically significant difference. A notable gender-based variation was observed in the corresponding variables when the p-value is less than 0.05. At the 0.01% and 0.05 significance levels, the table demonstrates a significant correlation of 0.02 between individuals' degrees of intimacy and their satisfaction with their relationships. Evidently, Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction are significantly related. Additionally, it is evident that when Intimacy levels rose, so did Relationship Satisfaction scores.

5. Discussion

This study examined the dynamic between intimacy and relationship satisfaction among adults, with a particular focus on gender differences. The results support all three proposed hypotheses.

Relationship Between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction Among Adults Findings revealed there was a meaningful positive linkage between intimacy and relationship satisfaction, affirming Hypothesis 1. Adults who reported elevated intimacy levels in their bond also tended to report greater satisfaction. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of emotional closeness, self-disclosure, and shared emotional experiences in fostering satisfaction within romantic relationships (Reis & Shaver, 1988; Patrick et al., 2007). These findings suggest that intimacy functions as a core emotional mechanism underpinning relationship quality. However, intimacy alone does not wholly account for satisfaction—additional factors such as conflict resolution styles, long-term commitment, and external stressors also contribute significantly (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Thus, while intimacy is crucial, it operates within a broader matrix of relational and contextual factors influencing satisfaction.

Gender Difference in Intimacy Among Male and Female Adults The results demonstrated a significant gender difference in reported intimacy levels, supporting Hypothesis

2. Women consistently reported higher levels of intimacy compared to men. This finding corroborates previous literature indicating that women are more emotionally expressive and value emotional connection more deeply than men (Collins & Miller, 1994; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Gender socialization appears to play a vital role in shaping these patterns—women are typically encouraged to cultivate emotional openness and interpersonal sensitivity, whereas men are often socialized toward autonomy and emotional restraint (Levant et al., 2009). Attachment theory further supports this, suggesting that women are more likely to exhibit secure attachment styles that facilitate intimacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Neurobiological differences may also contribute, as research suggests women generally exhibit stronger emotional processing capabilities (Baron-Cohen et al., 2005).

Gender Difference in Relationship Satisfaction Among Male And Female Adults

In hypothesis 3 was also supported, though the gender difference in relationship satisfaction was relatively modest. Women reported slightly higher satisfaction levels than men. This may be attributed to women's greater emotional intelligence, stronger expectations for emotional connection, and possibly greater investment in the relational domain (Fletcher et al., 2015; Gottman & Levenson, 2000). Interestingly, the sources of satisfaction may differ by gender—while women emphasize emotional closeness and communication, men may derive satisfaction from physical intimacy and a lack of interpersonal conflict (Luo et al., 2008). These differing emphases may balance each other out in many relationships, thereby explaining the relatively small gender gap in overall satisfaction levels.

Comparison with Previous Research and Cultural Considerations

The outcome is in agreement with prior literature on the intimacy-satisfaction link and gendered patterns of emotional expression (Collins & Miller, 1994; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Notably, while intimacy serves as a key indicator of satisfaction, other relational constructs such as shared goals, partner responsiveness, and effective communication also matter (Schmitt et al., 2003). Cultural factors may further moderate these dynamics. In collectivist societies, for example, emotional intimacy might be expressed more through actions than verbal disclosure (Diener & Suh, 2000), which could influence both perceived intimacy and satisfaction levels. Therefore, future research should explore how cultural norms and values shape gendered experiences of intimacy and satisfaction in relationships.

6. Limitations of the study

While the study yields important findings, it is constrained by a number of limitations. Firstly, the use of self-reported measures introduces the possibility of socially desirable responses, particularly given the sensitive nature of topics like intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the sample may lack sufficient diversity concerning age distribution, cultural background, and relationship types,

which restricts the broader applicability of the findings. The use of a cross-sectional approach limits the extent to which causal inferences, as it captures data at only one point in time rather than across a developmental trajectory. Moreover, by focusing exclusively on male and female gender categories, the study excludes non-binary and gender-diverse individuals, thereby reducing its inclusivity and representativeness.

7. Conclusion

This study, titled “Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among Adults,” aimed to examine their correlation and gender-based differences. A sample of 160 adults (80 males, 80 females) aged 20–40 participated. The Need for Sexual Intimacy Scale and the Relationship Assessment Scale were used. Gender Differences in Intimacy: Females reported significantly higher intimacy than males, likely due to socialization and emotional expressiveness, consistent with Collins & Miller (1994). Gender Differences in Satisfaction: Both genders reported similar satisfaction, with women showing slightly higher levels, possibly due to emotional intelligence and stronger focus on emotional connection. Correlation Between Intimacy and Satisfaction: A significant relationship was found—higher intimacy corresponded with higher satisfaction, affirming its role in relationship well-being (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Though intimacy is a key determinant of satisfaction in satisfaction, elements such as trust and mutual respect, commitment, and stress also influence relationship outcomes (Fincham & Beach, 2010). A holistic understanding of relationship dynamics is needed.

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