

A Comparative Study: The Association of Individual Relationship, Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract

In India, transitioning to adulthood often involves forming long-term romantic relationships, a process complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has disrupted traditional dynamics, leading to increased stress and emotional distance, which has contributed to rising divorce rates both in India and worldwide. This study explores the relationship between perceived emotional intimacy, individual relationships, and relationship satisfaction among adults in romantic partnerships while also examining gender differences in these experiences. Utilizing a correlational design, the study involved 60 married and unmarried participants aged 21 to 60 from Pune, Maharashtra, India, all in committed relationships for over a year. Standardized questionnaires measured the variables, and simple correlation was used for analysis. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between Care (reflecting joyous emotional intimacy) and Relationship Satisfaction. Conversely, Control (indicating negative aspects of intimacy) showed a negative correlation with Relationship Satisfaction. Additionally, Anxious and Avoidant attachment styles were not found to be primary determinants of satisfaction. Notably, there were no significant gender differences in the variables studied, except in perceptions of Control, where distinct differences emerged between genders.

Keywords: Individual relationship, perceived emotional intimacy, relationship satisfaction, romantic relationship

Introduction

There has been a significant rise in divorce rates since the COVID-19 pandemic. As per the statistics in a news article from the Deccan Herald, in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, the divorce rate is more than 30 per cent (Kumar, 2015). Although India has no central registry of divorce data, family court officials say divorce applications have doubled and tripled in cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata and Lucknow in the past ten years (Dutt, 2015).

As far back as Aristotle, humans have been recognised as social animals. This long-standing recognition of our social nature underscores the gravity of the current situation. Loneliness is a bodily function like hunger, where just as hunger makes you pay attention to your physical needs, loneliness makes you pay attention to your social needs. Our bodies have been wired to care about our social needs because millions

of years ago, how 'social' you were as an individual was an indicator of how likely you were to survive – natural selection rewarded our ancestors for collaborations and for forming connections with each other. Being social became part of our biology; eventually, being together meant survival and being alone meant death. Baumeister and Leary (1995) found that people almost universally desire to belong. We naturally tend to form new bonds and connections and avoid breaking them. A wealth of evidence demonstrates that close relationships are essential to various well-being indicators, including happiness, mental health, physical health, and even longevity (Berkman, 1995 & Myers, 1999).

Personal relationships are essential to our lives, but what do we mean by personal relationships? Two classic definitions were used to define personal relationships - According to Kelley et al. (1983), a relationship between two individuals exists if they impact each other and are interdependent. This means that a change in one person affects the other and vice versa. On the other hand, Hinde (1979) defines relationships as a series of interactions between two individuals who know each other. Personal relationships have a more holistic quality and are more than merely isolated interactions between two people. When people are asked about what makes their lives meaningful, what they value or what contributes to their happiness, it is mainly answered with something to do with their close relationships. Relationships involve behavioural, cognitive, and emotional aspects. These aspects can be seen in communication patterns and attachment styles concerning their behavioural front, intimacy, passion, and commitment on the cognitive front, as well as acceptance, trust, respect, emotional control, validation, etc., on the emotional front.

Self-disclosure is crucial for intimacy in romantic relationships. According to Reis and Shaver (1988), intimacy develops when one person shares personal thoughts and feelings, prompting a caring and understanding response from the other. This mutual exchange fosters a deeper emotional connection, with greater disclosure leading to higher perceived responsiveness and intimacy. Romantic relationships significantly influence individuals' emotional lives and personal growth. These partnerships, characterized by deep emotional bonds, mutual care, and often physical attraction, play a vital role in mental health, life satisfaction, and social functioning (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). Unlike other close relationships, romantic ones involve heightened emotional investment and the intention for long-term commitment (Furman & Collins, 2009).

Studying these relationships is crucial for several reasons: their quality affects mental health (Proulx et al., 2007), they are central to adult attachment and social support (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), and understanding their dynamics can guide interventions to enhance relationship quality (Bradbury & Lavner, 2012). Romantic relationships progress through stages, from attraction to long-term commitments like marriage. Throughout these stages, emotional intimacy and relationship satisfaction can vary, influenced by personal traits and external factors such as societal norms and economic conditions (Levinger, 1980). This complexity highlights the need for ongoing research into romantic relationships and their impact on well-being. Emotional intimacy, a cornerstone of romantic relationships, is the degree of closeness, mutual understanding, and emotional support experienced between partners (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Its significance in fostering a deep connection, a sense of security, and a feeling of belonging within the partnership is paramount, underscoring its crucial role in the dynamics of romantic relationships. It encompasses several key elements, including (1) Self-disclosure, which is the willingness to share personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences with a partner; (2) Empathy, which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of one's partner; (3) Vulnerability, which is the openness to being emotionally exposed and authentic with a partner; (4) Trust, which is the belief in the reliability and integrity of one's

partner and (5) Emotional Support, which provides comfort, encouragement, and understanding in need. The importance of emotional intimacy in relationships cannot be overstated. It is a foundation for deep connection, fostering a sense of security and belonging within the partnership (Laurenceau et al., 2005). Emotional intimacy has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including increased relationship satisfaction, better conflict resolution, and enhanced individual well-being (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001). Moreover, it acts as a buffer against external stressors, strengthening the resilience of the relationship in the face of challenges (Bodenmann et al., 2011).

Relationship satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality and fulfilment of their romantic partnership (Hendrick, 1988). It is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors, including (1) Communication Quality, which is the effectiveness and positivity of interactions between partners; (2) Conflict Resolution skills, which is the ability to navigate disagreements constructively; (3) Sexual Satisfaction, which is the degree of fulfilment in the physical aspect of the relationship; (4) Shared Activities and Interests, which is the enjoyment derived from spending time together; (5) Perceived Partner Support, which is the belief that one's partner is caring and supportive; and (6) Equity and Fairness, are the perception of balanced contribution and reciprocity in the relationship. Relationship satisfaction is a critical indicator of a romantic partnership's health and stability. High satisfaction levels are associated with numerous positive outcomes, including increased commitment, lower likelihood of relationship dissolution, and improved individual mental and physical health (Robles et al., 2014). Conversely, low relationship satisfaction can lead to emotional distress, decreased well-being, and a higher risk of relationship termination (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

The overall relationship experience encompasses the holistic assessment of a romantic partnership, considering the interplay of various relationship dimensions, including emotional intimacy and satisfaction. This broader perspective considers the following - (1) Relationship quality, which is the overall evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of the relationship; (2) Commitment, which is the dedication and investment in the relationship's future; (3) Passion, which is the intensity of romantic and sexual attraction between partners; (4) Companionship, which is the sense of friendship and shared experiences within the relationship; and (5) Personal Growth, which is the extent to which the relationship facilitates individual development and self-actualisation. Understanding the overall relationship experience provides a comprehensive view of how different aspects of a romantic partnership interact and contribute to its success or failure. It recognises that while emotional intimacy and satisfaction are crucial, they exist within a complex web of factors that collectively shape the relationship's trajectory (Fincham & Beach, 2010).

This research article will discuss perceived emotional intimacy, overall experience, and relationship satisfaction – all within voluntary personal, specifically those of marriage and couples. By 'voluntary personal relations', we refer to relationships that individuals choose to enter into and maintain, such as marriage, where both parties have the freedom to decide and the responsibility to nurture the relationship. This voluntary aspect underscores individuals' freedom and responsibility in shaping romantic relationships.

Literature Review

A study conducted by Madhukullya and Gupta in 2023 aimed to investigate the patterns of divorce cases and the factors contributing to the increase in divorce rates among residents of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Kolkata during the COVID-19 period. The researchers also sought to determine whether significant

issues were leading to divorce beyond economic problems that could influence marital separation among Indian families living in metropolitan areas. The study employed qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyse the reasons for the changing divorce rates in India's urban centres. The methodology utilised a qualitative and quantitative database, including primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered through an online and telephone survey with five lawyers from the four major metropolitan regions. The findings indicated that most lawyers believed the economic crisis and family conflict were the primary causes of the rising divorce rate during the lockdown. Additionally, unsatisfied physical relationships between spouses were reported in several cases, especially in Mumbai and Bengaluru. In Kolkata, a few divorce cases were filed due to domestic violence arising from husbands being constantly at home and experiencing anxiety. Furthermore, only a limited number of cases of remarriage and reunification following the lockdown were documented in these metropolitan cities (Madhukullya & Gupta, 2023).

An article titled "Marital Distress during COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown: A Brief Narrative," published in *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* in 2020, discussed various factors that can hinder marital harmony. It identified parameters such as communication, trust, and gender roles, highlighting how these elements influenced marital distress during the COVID-19 period. The article suggested that factors like work overload and anxiety acted as catalysts for disharmony in marital relationships.

Another study by Ahuja and Khurana in 2021 examined the impact the COVID-19 lockdown had on intimate relationships in India, explicitly comparing the experiences of married and dating couples regarding love and relationship satisfaction before and after the lockdown. The aim was to understand the impact of pandemic-induced stress on romantic relationships by drawing on existing literature related to similar life stressors, such as terror attacks and natural disasters, which can disrupt relationship dynamics and satisfaction. Data from a convenience sample of 100 participants (65 dating couples and 35 married couples) was collected in two waves: from January to March and then in May after the lockdown. Participants completed an online survey measuring love, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem, and how they spent time with their partners. The study assessed the data using paired sample t-tests, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis. The researchers hypothesized a significant reduction in both love (particularly intimacy and passion) and relationship satisfaction post-lockdown while expecting no significant change in self-esteem, which is considered a stable personal trait. Results from the study confirmed the hypothesis, indicating reduced intimacy, passion, and relationship satisfaction post-lockdown among both dating and married couples. However, commitment remained stable among dating couples. Married couples, in particular, reported decreased satisfaction, likely due to the pressures of domestic chores and reduced external support from extended family structures, which are typically relied upon in Indian culture.

Methodology

Objectives

Objective 1 – To explore the relationship between perceived emotional intimacy, overall experience within a relationship and relationship satisfaction.

Objective 2 - To explore whether there is any gender difference in the experience of all three variables.

Hypotheses

H1 – There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction.

H2 – There will be a significant relationship between Overall Experience within a relationship and Relationship Satisfaction.

H3 – There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Overall Experience within a relationship.

H4 – There will be a significant difference between males and females concerning Perceived Emotional Intimacy, Overall Relationship Experience and, therefore, Relationship Satisfaction.

Design

A **Correlational Research Design** was used, which involved measuring variables using standardized instruments or scales and then analysing the data to determine the association/strength and direction of the relationship between them.

Three variables, (1) an Individual's Overall Experience, (2) a Perceived Level of Emotional Intimacy, and (3) (perceived) Relationship Satisfaction, were examined, all within romantic long-term adult relationships.

This research utilises simple Correlation as its statistical analysis tool to understand the interplay of Individual Relationships, Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction. It uses the software Jamovi to run its analysis.

Participants and Procedure

The **sample** consisted of individuals from the city of Pune, Maharashtra, India, between the age range of 21 to 60 years of age, who are currently in romantic relationships that have lasted for over a year.

A total sample of 60 participants was obtained using **Convenience Sampling**.

A **Google Form with informed consent and three standardised questionnaires** (Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form (ECR-S), Intimate Bond Measure (IBM) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)) respectively were handed out to the participants, which they were asked to fill out.

Measures (tools/apparatus)

Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form (ECR-S)

The Close Relationship Scale is a **12-item self-report adult attachment-style questionnaire**. Based on Ainsworth's literature on infant attachment styles, this scale measures maladaptive attachment in adults in a romantic relationship. The ECR-S evaluates the two crucial aspects of adult attachment: anxiety and avoidance. The scale is specifically crafted to appraise a broad "trait" pattern of adult attachment while minimizing dependence on respondents' present circumstances as much as possible. It may help conceptualise how clients approach close relationships.

Reliability and Validity

Brennan et al. (1998) found that the extended version of the ECR demonstrated strong internal consistency within its two factors; for undergraduate students, the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales exhibited **coefficient alphas of .91 and .94**, respectively. To sum up, the ECR-S exhibits a reliable factor structure, satisfactory internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity.

Intimate Bond Measure (IBM)

IBM is two subscales, a **12-item scale** with dimensions for and control. The subject has to answer the statements with respect to a 4-point **Likert Scale** where 3- Very True, 2-Moderately True, 1-Somewhat True, , 0-Not True At all.

Reliability and Validity

The initial study evaluated the test-retest reliability of the self-report instrument, known as the Intimate Bond Measure (IBM). A non-clinical sample provided data on two occasions within three to six weeks, resulting in highly favourable **reliability coefficients of 0.80 and 0.89**. Since IBM is intended to gauge perceived characteristics, it was deemed crucial to examine its validity, particularly as a subjective measure. Consequently, a diverse sample comprising 33 participants, including non-clinical volunteers and psychiatric patients, was obtained for this purpose. After the interview, subjects completed the measure and scale scores and interview scores were then intercorrelated to assess the **concurrent validity** of the measure. **'Care' scale scores correlated 0.68 (P < 0.001)** with the level of 'care' judged by rater 'A' **and 0.43 (P < 0-001)** with the 'care' judged by rater 'B'. **'Control' scale scores correlated 0.74 (P < 0-001) with rater 'A' and 0.55 (P < 0.001)** with rater 'B' judgements of control at the interview.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The RAS (Relationship Assessment Scale) is a 7-item scale created to assess overall relationship satisfaction. Participants rate each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (indicating low satisfaction) to 5 (indicating high satisfaction).

Reliability and Validity

Higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction. The first version of this scale was found to be moderately correlated ($r = .48$) with the Marriage Adjustment Inventory (Hendrick, 1981; Manson & Lerner, 1962). **Internal consistency of the current version of the RAS is high ($\alpha = .86$)** and best represented by a one-factor model (Hendrick, 1988). An earlier study of undergraduate dating couples found high correlations between the RAS and the DAS total scores and subscale scores. **Correlation coefficients ranged from .83 to .51, and all were significant ($p < .05$; Hendrick, 1988).**

Results

This study had two main objectives: firstly, to see whether there was a relationship between Perceived Emotional Intimacy, Overall Experience within a relationship and Relationship Satisfaction. Second, to see whether there was a gender difference in the way both genders experienced Perceived Emotional Intimacy, Overall Relationship Experience and, therefore, the level of Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 1 - Analysis of the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant relationship between Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction.

		ControlTotal	CareTotal	PtotalRAS
ControlTotal	Spearman's rho	—		
	p-value	—		
CareTotal	Spearman's rho	-0.499	—	
	p-value	< .001	—	

		ControlTotal	CareTotal	PtotalRAS
PtotalRAS	Spearman's rho	-0.270	0.465	—
	p-value	0.037	< .001	—

The table above indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Care (emotional intimacy dimension) and Relationship Satisfaction (RAS) with a Spearman’s rho value of 0.465 (p-value: < .001). This implies that relationship satisfaction also tends to increase as perceived care increases. Hence proving our first hypothesis.

The table also indicates a weak but significant negative relationship between Control (a less desirable aspect of intimacy) and Relationship Satisfaction with a Spearman’s rho value of -0.270 (p-value = 0.037). This suggests that higher control behaviours are associated with slightly lower relationship satisfaction. Finally, there is a strong negative relationship between the Care and Control dimensions with a Spearman’s rho value of -0.499 (p-value < .001). This indicates that as one partner perceives higher care, controlling behaviours in the relationship tend to decrease.

Table 2 – Analysis of the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant relationship between Overall Experience within a relationship and Relationship Satisfaction

		PtotalRAS	AnxietyTotal	AvoidanceTotal
PtotalRAS	Spearman's rho	—		
	p-value	—		
AnxietyTotal	Spearman's rho	-0.069	—	
	p-value	0.599	—	
AvoidanceTotal	Spearman's rho	0.184	0.520	—
	p-value	0.159	< .001	—

The table above indicates that there is no significant relationship between Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction with a Spearman’s rho value of -0.069 (p > 0.05). This indicates that the level of anxiety in attachment does not seem to directly affect relationship satisfaction in this sample. It also indicates that the relationship between Avoidance Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction is not statistically significant, with a Spearman’s value of 0.184 (p > 0.05). While the positive correlation is unexpected, it does not reach significance, suggesting that avoidance does not substantially influence relationship satisfaction in this context. Finally, it indicates that there is a strong, significant positive relationship between Anxiety and Avoidance dimensions of attachment with a Spearman’s rho value of

0.520 ($p < .001$). This implies that individuals who score high on anxious attachment tend to also score high on avoidant attachment. Hence, H2 was rejected.

Table 3 – Analysis of the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant relationship between Overall Experience within a relationship and Perceived Emotional Intimacy.

Correlation Matrix

		PtotalIBM	ECR-SPTotal
PtotalIBM	Spearman's rho	—	
	p-value	—	
ECR-SPTotal	Spearman's rho	0.121	—
	p-value	0.357	—

The table above indicates Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient between PtotalIBM and ECR-SPTotal is 0.121, with a p-value of 0.357.

This indicates a positive but non-significant correlation, suggesting that overall attachment insecurity (as measured by the ECR-S Total) is weakly associated with perceived emotional intimacy. However, this relationship is not statistically significant, indicating insufficient evidence to claim a meaningful connection between the two constructs in this sample.

The weak positive correlation suggests that individuals with higher levels of attachment insecurities, whether anxious or avoidant, may perceive slightly greater emotional intimacy, though this trend lacks significant robustness. This could indicate variability in how attachment insecurities play out in relationships; for example, anxious individuals may seek closeness, potentially fostering intimacy, while avoidant individuals might suppress intimacy, diminishing this effect.

The lack of significance might also point to the influence of other unmeasured factors, such as communication styles, relationship duration, or external stressors, that could mediate the relationship between attachment insecurities and emotional intimacy. Hence, H3 was rejected.

Table 4 – Analysis of the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant difference in how both genders experience Perceived Emotional Intimacy, Overall Experience within a relationship and Relationship Satisfaction.

		Statistic	p
ECR-SPTotal	Student's t	0.802	0.426
	Mann-Whitney U	404	0.496
ControlTotal	Student's t	-2.358	0.022
	Mann-Whitney U	263	0.006
CareTotal	Student's t	0.434	0.666

		Statistic	p
	Mann-Whitney U	418	0.633
PtotalRAS	Student's t	-0.671	0.505
	Mann-Whitney U	438	0.856

The table above indicates that there is no significant difference between males and females regarding their attachment styles as measured by ECR-SP ($p > 0.05$).

A significant difference is observed between males and females for Control scores, with females likely scoring lower on control than males. This suggests a gender difference in perceived controlling behaviours in intimate bonds.

There is no significant difference between males and females regarding Care scores ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that both genders perceive emotional care similarly.

No significant difference is found between males and females in their levels of relationship satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). Hence, H4 was also rejected.

Discussion

The study aimed to accomplish three things. First, it sought to investigate how perceived emotional intimacy affects relationship satisfaction. Second, it aimed to explore how the overall experience in a romantic relationship influences relationship satisfaction. Finally, it sought to investigate whether there was a gender difference in the way both genders experienced perceived emotional intimacy, overall experience within a relationship and relationship satisfaction. The study tested three hypotheses: 1) There would be a significant relationship between Perceived Emotional Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction, 2) There would be a significant relationship between Overall Relationship Experience and Relationship Satisfaction, and 3) There would be a significant gender difference in how both genders experience Perceived Emotional Intimacy, Overall Experience within a relationship and Relationship Satisfaction.

The findings partly supported the hypotheses. Firstly, a strong positive correlation was discovered between Care (a measure of positive emotional intimacy) and Relationship Satisfaction, while Control (a measure of negative aspects of intimacy) was negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. These results align with previous research indicating that higher levels of emotional support and lower levels of controlling behaviours are linked to greater relationship satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2019; Reis & Shaver, 1988). The strong correlation between Care and Relationship Satisfaction underscores the significance of positive emotional intimacy in nurturing Relationship Satisfaction. This reinforces the theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of emotional support and care in maintaining healthy relationships (Collins & Feeney, 2000). The negative association between Control and relationship satisfaction highlights the potential for controlling behaviours to undermine relationship quality, consistent with attachment theory (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Secondly, the lack of a significant relationship between Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction aligns with previous research indicating that high levels of anxiety in attachment often lead to hypervigilance and emotional instability within relationships, which may inhibit the development of satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Anxiously attached individuals frequently seek excessive reassurance, which can strain relational dynamics (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Despite this theoretical

framework, the absence of a statistically significant correlation in this study suggests that other mediating variables, such as partner dynamics or relationship duration, may buffer the adverse effects of anxious attachment on satisfaction. Future research could examine these moderating factors. Interestingly, Avoidance Attachment was positively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. This result contrasts with the established literature, which generally associates avoidance with diminished relationship satisfaction due to emotional withdrawal and fear of intimacy (Collins & Feeney, 2000). However, the positive correlation found here might reflect cultural or situational factors where emotional independence or self-reliance is valued within romantic relationships. For instance, Harwood et al. (2012) noted that individuals with avoidant tendencies in collectivistic societies might adaptively manage relational conflict by maintaining emotional distance, thereby sustaining perceived satisfaction. Such interpretations warrant further investigation, especially in diverse cultural contexts. Overall, these findings suggest a nuanced relationship between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. While anxious attachment appears to have minimal impact in this sample, avoidance might play an unexpectedly positive role, challenging traditional assumptions. These results underscore the importance of considering cultural, contextual, and relational factors when examining attachment and satisfaction.

Finally, the findings in the last hypothesis align partially with existing research on gendered experiences in relationships. The absence of significant gender differences in Care and Relationship Satisfaction supports previous evidence suggesting that both males and females value emotional support and relational satisfaction equally, though they may express these needs differently (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The absence of gender-based differences in satisfaction could also reflect a shift in modern relationship dynamics, where mutual emotional investment is increasingly emphasized (Ackerman et al., 2011). The significant difference in the Control dimension, with males scoring higher, suggests that males may perceive or experience greater relational control than females. Previous studies have indicated that relational control dynamics are often influenced by societal gender norms, where men may assert or perceive dominance in decision-making, even in emotionally supportive relationships (Overall et al., 2009). Males and females also differed significantly in their perceptions of controlling behaviours within relationships, which may reflect gender differences in expectations and experiences of power dynamics in relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Such dynamics might create power imbalances that, over time, could negatively influence relationship satisfaction, particularly for females. Interestingly, no significant differences were found in Overall Relationship Experience, as measured by avoidance and anxiety attachment scores. This finding diverges from earlier research, suggesting that females tend to report higher levels of anxious attachment, while males report greater avoidance (Del Giudice, 2011). The lack of significant differences in the present study could reflect sample-specific factors, such as homogeneity in relational expectations or shared cultural norms about attachment behaviours. In conclusion, while gender differences in relationship dynamics were minimal in this sample, the significant finding for Control highlights the need to further explore how power and control influence relationship experiences across genders.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, there has been a significant uptick in the divorce rates post-COVID-19 for a number of reasons we have already discussed earlier. Engaging in research directed towards understanding the mechanisms of romantic relationships is one way to help understand the whys of these divorce rates. Future studies should explore the specific mechanisms through which individual experiences shape

perceptions of emotional intimacy. This could involve longitudinal studies tracking individuals from adolescence through various romantic relationships.

Relationship counsellors and therapists should incorporate strategies to enhance emotional intimacy in their interventions, recognizing its pivotal role in relationship satisfaction.

Education programs focusing on emotional intelligence and communication skills could be developed to help individuals better understand and express their emotional needs within relationships.

Further research should investigate how cultural differences may influence the perception of emotional intimacy and its impact on relationship satisfaction. Couples should be encouraged to openly discuss their emotional needs and past experiences that may influence their current relationship dynamics. Future studies could also examine how technology and social media impact perceived emotional intimacy in modern relationships, as well as the interplay of gender roles, attachment dynamics, and cultural expectations in shaping emotional intimacy and satisfaction.

Limitations

This study has two primary limitations. One is the fact that the entire sample is from one city, which could bring down its generalizability to a great extent. Second, the sample size is too small, which brings down its generalizability and representativeness.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Informed consent entails the researcher providing information about the study, including its content and any other details that could influence an individual's decision to participate, before the study begins. This would enable prospective participants to make a free and informed decision about whether or not to enter the study. An informed consent form consisting of (1) a description of the study's procedures, (2) an explanation of its risks and potential benefits, (3) the statement that participants may withdraw their consent at any time during the study without prejudice and (4) a space at the end of the form for the potential participant to sign in acknowledgement that they understand what the study involves.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The participants must also be informed that all their responses and participation in the research will be kept strictly confidential and used for academic purposes only.

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