

## **Intimacy in marriage: A qualitative analysis of Indian married couples**

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### **Abstract:**

Intimacy influences marriage satisfaction, marriage sustainability, and marriage efficiency. Despite widespread interest in marital intimacy, most study has concentrated on the roles or components of the construct in marriage happiness. Couple intimacy factors are sometimes disregarded. Existing research has primarily relied on transverse study data. There is very little information available on intimate elements in many cultures. There hasn't been a research study that studied intimacy through the perspective of intimate partners. As a result, this qualitative research aims to examine and introduce culturally sensitive aspects that increase marital intimacy in Indian couples.. Using selective sampling, 16 women and men (eight intimate pairs) were chosen to participate in the current study, and information gleaned through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the consensual qualitative research approach. The findings revealed that the following elements improved marital intimacy: i)Interaction with family members (ii) Duration of time spent in marriage/Length of marriage (iii) Selflessness, Compassion and devotion(iv) Appreciation (v) Working together and participating in activities (vi) Parenting, Child care and Child Rearing(vii) Socializing together/Mutual friendships (viii) Culture and belief systems This study emphasizes the significance of two new characteristics in Indian collectivist culture: selflessness and appreciation. The data are used to examine the implications for program architects, marriage counselors, and clinicians.

**Keywords:** Marital intimacy; qualitative analysis; Indian married couples;

### **Introduction:**

Intimacy in marriage is extremely important as it helps in keeping the the marriage bond strong. Intimate relationships require regular, diversified, and long-term contact. An intimate connection is one in which personal interactions occur on a regular and predictable basis. There is a history of recurrent personal encounters, and each partner in the relationship may depend on and expect intimate interactions with the other at reasonable intervals. Intimate encounters are divided into two categories: intimate behavior and intimate experience. An intimate interaction is one in which partners disclose personal, private information, feel good about one other and themselves, and sense mutual understanding. An intimate relationship is one in which the partners have regular intimate contacts, feel affection for one another, trust one another, and are cohesive. Affection, trust, and cohesion appear to be crucial prerequisites for maintaining intimacy in a partnership. They are also byproducts of personal relationships. Of fact, most intimate partnerships have many additional traits that contribute to closeness and are unavoidably the outcome of personal encounters. Relationships that lack love, cohesiveness, or trust are unlikely to continue close encounters. Intimacy is a never-ending process that requires ongoing attention to both history and the future. A partnership that is not expanding is contracting. There is no such thing as standing still in life. After emotional closeness fades,

physical intimacy takes its place, and soon just the conversation about daily routine remains," which may be followed by divorce. To keep a close relationship, on the other hand, requires "a dialectic between personal, interpersonal, and social orientations to the relationship, as well as a dialectic between internalization and externalization." Despite the importance of closeness in marital satisfaction, a comprehensive work review reveals that prior research has employed cross-sectional survey data to explore the factors that influence couples' levels of proximity. In many cultures, there is virtually little information available about intimate components. As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine components that increase marital intimacy in Indian couples through the perspective of intimate partners, while also including culturally appropriate elements. By filling a research gap, the current study contributes to conceptual and empirical knowledge on spousal closeness by exploring the views of Indian couples about intimacy. In addition to adding to the empirical research foundation, the current study's findings may benefit couples, producers of marital relationship education programs, marital therapists, and psychiatrists.

### **Literature review**

The fundamental reason individuals marry is for the sake of intimacy. Intimacy is also important stress reliever and is essential for marital efficiency, longevity, solidity, and mental and physical well-being. Given the importance of interpersonal intimacy in marital fulfillment, the lack of closeness in marriage can lead to separation and weaken trust and understanding. Couples lose trust and love, that results in emotional imbalance, loneliness, disturbance in marriage, and discontent. Understanding the elements that drive pair intimacy is critical to the creation of successful marital therapy programs. In a study "Changes in Family Role and subjective well-being among Japanese Adults." in which the link between changes in family roles and men and women's subjective well-being in Japan's strongly gendered social milieu is shown. Marriage has been demonstrated to have a favourable impact on happiness. However it revealed that men's self-rated health negatively (Yuko Hara, 2021)<sup>1</sup>. In another study "Family Members Relationship Qualities and Prosocial Behaviours in US Mexican Young Adults: The role of Familism & Ethnic Identity Resolution" around 185 Mexican-American young people in the United States were surveyed and it was observed that Relationship quality was found to be positively connected with increased support for familism principles, as well as resolution of ethnic identity (Cara Streit, Gusta Vo Carlo, Sarah E.Killoren, Ednac. Alfaro ,2017)<sup>2</sup>. One research focused on conceptual and methodological advances in the study of multigenerational family relationships. The researcher attempted to conceptualise directions for interdisciplinary research in this study by making critical use of terms such as shift, generation self - realization and compassion, and covers a range of different metaphors. (Ariela Lowenstein et.al ,2014)<sup>3</sup>. In a study titled "Elective interdependence: Understanding individual agency and interpersonal relationship in Indian families." ,the attitudes of women having kids aged 2-7 years old are discussed, as well as how they manage relationships with others for their children and for themselves. It also reveals how they strike a balance when it comes to interpersonal relationships and individual behaviour. ( Mila Tuli, Nandita Chaudhary ,2010)<sup>4</sup>. There was a study on Mother's and Father's Perception of alteration & stability in their relationship with grown up Sons & daughters. In this study, 142 parent dyads were interviewed. The independence of the firstborn, the amount of time spent were proven to be the most essential aspects. It has been observed that moms and fathers may have diverse relationships with their daughters and

sons. When both parents in the same family gave their responses, there were negligible gender disparities (Christine M.Proulx, Heather M.Helms ,2007)<sup>5</sup>. A study was conducted to know the interaction patterns in married couples and the stress arising out of randomly married couples were selected and interviewed. It was discovered that marital interaction stresses had a direct influence on self-worth and an indirect impact on confidence level. (Obert B Schafer, KAS. Wickrama, Pat.M Keith ,1998)<sup>6</sup>. A study was conducted titled “Perception of Intimacy in marriage”, taking 75 married couples measuring attitude towards self-disclosure , intimacy. It was discovered that men's attitudes about intimacy were more remote than women's. Furthermore, the women's contentment with their marriage was influenced more by their own perspective of marriage than by their husbands' opinions. (Merves-Okin, Amidon and Bernt ,1991)<sup>7</sup> . A study was conducted on Husband-Wife Interaction in Second Carrers. In this study interviews were taken from 68 married artists age around 49-50 or above. It revealed how kind/type of a job can influence the relationship & the interaction between husband and wife.(Leslie Lieberman, Leonard Lieberman ,1986)<sup>8</sup> .A study titled “ The Husband Wife and Mother Son Relationships” was conducted which examines the relationship between husband and wife taking the joint families and nuclear families into account and how the difference would become apparent in the values developed around husband wife relationship in nuclear households. Also how man“s relationship with his mother changes depending on the family structure (M.S Gore ,1962)<sup>9</sup>

In previous psychological study on intimacy, intimacy was defined as a specific or social attribute. Later, social scientists emphasised close' interpersonal and procedural characteristics (Lomanowska, & Guitton, 2016)<sup>10</sup> . Schaefer and Olson (1981)<sup>11</sup> emphasise the many features of intimacy by focusing on the interpersonal and social components of the intimacy process. They define intimacy in relationships as "those in which an individual exchanges intimate experiences in several areas, with the assumption that the experiences and connection would last over time". Regardless of definition differences, the bulk of them include openness, personal acceptance, trusting, connection, emotion, and affection expression. In the current study, intimacy is viewed as a changing process that happens between couples when they share their innermost selves, are trusted, accepted, and emotionally connected. The dynamics of the family system (i.e., relationships, roles, and customs) impact how individuals think, interact, and behave, and people mutually influence the system since they are indivisible members of such a system (Schadler, 2016)<sup>12</sup> .When a system experiences a change, such as parenting, it must adapt by changing its constitutions in reaction to new events and reevaluating present proximity boundaries (P. A. Cowan & Cowan, 2012)<sup>13</sup>.

Children while just seeing learn how to sustain mutuality and closeness in a marital connection. Mutuality(Mutual feelings and exchanging thoughts ,emotions ) is critical for maintain balance (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993)<sup>14</sup>. By influencing reciprocity, shared actions or sentiments can increase closeness .Women, particularly in Indian society, are expected to take control of all kids related responsibilities and domestic chores. Women frequently express their dissatisfaction with their work and the pressure. Anger and dissapointment is inversely connected with relationship quality, especially closeness (Frisco & Williams, 2003)<sup>15</sup>.

### **The statement of the problem**

In literature, there has been a lot of focus on couple intimacy. Previous study has tended to focus on the idea and usefulness of marital closeness or any aspect of this notion in

relationship quality, according to a review of the behavioral literature. There has been study examining the usefulness of marital intervention strategies in promoting closeness. Trans survey data is used in the bulk of published content in international and Indian contexts. The primary weakness of this research is that it does not contextualize marital closeness and does not explicitly focus on intimate encounters. The data was taken from a group of couples experiencing intimacy concerns.

According to the previous studies, contemporary marriage proximity research has likewise amplified couples in America. The results from samples in America may not apply to couples from other backgrounds. Different ideas on intimacy are to be expected given the cultural variations between marriages on the basis of different areas or regions. The authors believe that exchange in terms of expressing true feelings, having trusted, accepted, and emotionally connected in relationships would be tough to establish and sustain in Indian society where people place the society needs prior to individual needs. Such society values male authority, sexism, female subjugation to male supremacy, and sacrifice of individual liberty for the sake of social welfare.

As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine factors influencing spousal closeness from the perspective of an Indian couple. To the highest of our knowledge, very few qualitative research on relationship proximity has been conducted. A few studies have examined the multiple facets of spousal closeness from specific gender outlooks at various points in time, such as eight months from child's birth, or have primarily focused on the experiences of a particular group of participants, such as couples who are in their second marriage as first marriage didn't work and newly married couples, or heterosexual couples.

In the Indian setting, there are a few qualitative studies accessible. However, these studies have a number of drawbacks. In several research, the dominance of female perspectives on marital intimacy was so much because female participants outnumbered male participants. In other investigations, data was exclusively gathered through interviews. A detailed examination of the literature reveals that proximity in marriage is less studied in a research using a sample of normal intimate couples not undergoing any therapy. The need for this study is highlighted by the lack of generalizability, difficulties while using different methods, and insufficient research reflecting the viewpoints of intimate partners.

## **Method**

The current study investigated characteristics that impact relationship closeness using a qualitative research technique. A qualitative method explores topics through the eyes of people to understand how they perceive and give meaning to occurrences.

## **Participants and instruments**

The study included 16 participants (eight couples) from Udaipur, city in Rajasthan. Participants varied in age from 25 to 38 years. Flyers with the participation conditions and research aim were distributed in public places such as theatres, outside schools and cafes. The researcher gained permission to recruit volunteers from the boards of language institutes and universities. Data was collected between December 2021 and April 2022.

Purposive sampling was used to pick participants with certain features. Potential Indian participants were assessed using the PAIR (Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships) Intimacy Scale to make sure that they were in a close relationship with their spouse and eligible to participate in the study. Participants were asked to relate

intimate information in a narrative format. The purpose of the study was to get insight into relationship closeness from couples who had been together for a long time. The duration of time spent together may reflect changes in marital closeness. The criteria for inclusion in the study were that (a) participants were married only once ; (b) Marriage had lasted at least six years; and (c) Must have minimum one child since they got married. Table 1 shows the demographic statistics of the intimate partners.

The criteria for ethical research were followed. In a permission form that the participants had to fill before involvement, in which they were given information about the goal of the study, the time range, the specifics of participation. Participants were guaranteed of their confidentiality and lack of tracking. It was also stressed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and that the data was solely accessible to the lead researcher and his/her study team members.

**Table 1. Demographic information of the intimate couples**

Number	Fictitious Name	Age	Gender	Total Children	Length of Marriages (Years)	Job
Couple 1	Ravi Shreya	27 26	M F	1	5	Government employee House wife
Couple 2	Karan Riya	30 29	M F	2	7	Banker Teacher
Couple 3	Rohit Divya	37 33	M F	1	6	Doctor Housewife
Couple 4	Tarun Simran	32 28	M F	3	5	Auditor University lecturer
Couple 5	Raj Gargi	29 25	M F	2	8	Garment Business Researcher
Couple 6	Dhruv Udit	34 30	M F	2	5	Employee in a private company Teacher
Couple 7	Viren Aishwarya	28 28	M F	1	6	Doctor Makeup Artist
Couple 8	Nikhil Nidhi	35 32	M F	2	7	Export Businessman Business

### **In-Depth Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were performed for around one hour each. Several guidelines were followed in the preparation of the interview process. There were open-ended questions throughout the interviews. The researcher questioned the participants when they were not with their spouse in order for them to freely express their views as they might have felt little conscious while expressing when their spouse was around. This method was also used to guarantee that the legitimacy of the interviews was not compromised. Participants received data transcripts from interviews and diaries for verification.

### **Role of Researcher**

The study was carried out in stages. To begin, the researcher performed all interviews to ensure uniformity. Second, the researcher was in charge of translating and compiling some of the material (including interviews and journals) that were in Hindi. He then worked on data transcription, literature review preparation, and data analysis and interpretation. The researcher also oversaw the data collecting and analysis process, including notes, and edited the whole publication.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Consensual qualitative research (CQR) is a sort of inductive and qualitative analysis in which a group of researchers tries to establish an agreement on data analysis and interpretation. Because the data is triangulated through numerous views, the biases associated with the individual analyzing the data are decreased with this process. The study begins with in-depth interviews,

during which redundancies and extraneous data are removed. The utterances serve as the analytical unit. To concentrate on meaning, the researchers read and listened to the text. The domains and essential ideas inside the domains were individually established by the researcher. Axially coding is comparable to domains. During coding meetings, the researcher compared and contrasted the domains and fundamental concepts. Before moving on to the next phase, the researcher watched each domain and key concept and integrated their comments into the study. Each domain's meaning portions were coded. The process of categorizing was an interpretative one that involved the ongoing comparing of meaning parts. The categories were created with the help of family systems and previous study. The codes were double-checked by the researcher by examining the data and assessing the differences between each case, as well as the potential impact of biases throughout the coding technique. Finally, the researcher developed and finalized the domains, categories, and subcategories by cross-analyzing the data. The domains, categories, and subcategories, as well as their quantities, were documented (see Table 2).

The term general (14-16 participants) refers to all cases or almost all that discussed the category or subcategory; typical (8-13 participants) refers to half or more of the cases that discussed the category or subcategory; and variant (2-5 participants) refers to less than half of the cases that discussed the categories. The results of single cases are not revealed.

### **Results**

Participants' responses were classified as follows: Interaction with family members (ii) Duration of time spent in marriage/Length of marriage (iii) Selflessness, Compassion and devotion(iv) Appreciation (v) Working together and participating in activities (vi) Parenting, Child care and Child Rearing(vii) Socializing together/Mutual friendships (viii)

Culture and belief systems. The section that follows provides a description of each domain, with verbatim remarks.

### **Interaction with family members**

Participants stressed the permeability of closeness, believing that it may be learnt and grown via family relationships. Individuals from various familial backgrounds were observed to have diverse perceptions of intimate acts. One participant, for example, stated that people from emotionally detached families who observe "violence and antagonism" are more prone to adopt similar behaviors. They underlined that interactions with parents and other family members teach people how to socialize and set expectations for their relationships. For example, "some men want their wife to have attributes similar to her mother and would also like them to cook similarly to their mother." Others expect them to "raise and care for children rather than decide on other life choices." "Some males "seek for spouses who are docile, acquiescent, and obedient." "Some women want their spouse to have attributes similar to their father, such as pampering them with love and care, like their father does." Participants stated that their parents' and siblings' intimate conduct provided as a good or negative intimacy model. Their parents' and other family members' interactions laid the framework for engaging, showing affection, and dealing with the spouse. According to a saying, when a lady selects a guy to marry, she should look at how he treats her mother. Is he concerned about her? Does he treat her with dignity? Is he making an effort to fulfill his obligations to her? Similarly, while deciding someone to marry, a guy should consider a woman's mother. What is the mother's demeanor? How does she communicate with her husband? Is she happy? When defining the role of parents in participants' intimate conduct, twelve participants agreed that various coping methods help couples deal with personal issues, prevent family disagreements, and maintain marital intimacy. Participants typically rated their in-laws as "nosey," "selfish," and "interfering," and as having a negative influence rather than a positive one on their intimacy. Disputes between her and her husband ensued, according to a couple of the female participants, as her in-laws sought to solve their troubles by counseling them on what to do. Furthermore, the presence of her husband's family in-laws caused her and her husband anxiety since they were terrified of being judged negatively by her husband's family members.

### **Duration of time spent in marriage/Length of marriage**

According to the interviews, creating an intimate relationship takes time. Few participants agreed that the quantity of time couples spend together had a big impact on their degree of closeness. However, ten participants responded that the chance to exchange sentiments and build a sense of belonging is more significant than the quantity of time. The participants saw this sense of belonging as an essential to resolving disputes or changing erroneous perceptions of their emotions. Many participants stated that they spent time with their spouses and constantly negotiated conflicts in order to deepen closeness. One participant reported that when he and his wife worked in separate cities, their time was consumed by job tasks and responsibilities, leaving little time for communication and intimacy, and much less time to spend together:

*"We both worked in different cities, our time is consumed by job tasks and responsibilities, leaving little time for communication and intimacy, and much less time to spend together: We worked during the week and didn't have much time to spend together because of the distance. On weekends, I had to deal with work backlogs as well,*

*but I told my wife that if time allowed, we would arrange a vacation so that we could spend quality time together and discuss a variety of issues."*

Because of the duration of the married connection, an intimate relationship inside marriage was prone to change. Some said that they could improve their self-differentiation through time and that they could grasp how their partners varied from them in order to respect their differences. This method enabled them to reach an acceptable agreement, increase their support for one another, solve their difficulties, and behave sensibly. Fourteen participants stated that couples enhance their commitment to a marriage relationship through time because the length of timespent in a relationship creates a sense of "responsibility" and "attachment." They also become so accustomed to one other's routines and ways of life that it no longer bothered them. It was said that couples needed time to learn how to sacrifice their own demands in order to continue their connection. Eleven individuals stated that love became stronger with time.

### **Selflessness, Compassion and devotion**

The majority of these individuals said that improving closeness is more about how selflessly you love and dedicate to the person. Some have commented on this topic, stating that in Indian tradition, a self-sacrificed woman or man is equivalent with an intimate wife or husband. "If you are intimate, you should be willing to do everything, you should commit your soul, yourself," For example. "It's all about choice," one of the female participants said. Some people feel that committed moms and wives are more intimate in the opinion of their Indian husbands."

Participants stated that self-sacrifice reciprocity drives couples to engage in self-disclosure and spend more time together. However, eight participants agreed that communicating one's true self with Indian spouses is challenging since the line between sacrifice and responsibility for women is highly fuzzy. In other words, males view what Indian women interpret as self-sacrifice as women's duty.

*"Indian men believe that washing dishes, cleaning the house, and raising a child are women's responsibilities. They don't realize that women may devote time to themselves and their hobbies; instead, they sacrifice their own needs, time, and interests for the sake of the family."*

### **Appreciation**

Ten females and seven males agreed that appreciation is an important component of intimate relationships. They emphasized that feeling acknowledged for their efforts in fulfilling an obligation might improve communication between spouses because they feel valued. The majority of the female participants stated that Indian husbands do not recognize their wives' efforts since it is considered a stigma in Indian patriarchal society. *"In Indian culture, it is not often seen men praising their spouses for what she accomplishes, because men do not want to appear subordinate to their wives. That might jeopardize their dominance."* Some argue that a culture of appreciation to women should be promoted since marriage would struggle without it.

### **Working together and participating in activities**

During the interview, participants noted that after a while, a certain amount of boredom sets in, which might damage the health of the marriage and harm marital intimacy. They felt that breaking up repetitive routines, working on projects together, and engaging in new activities, particularly new leisure activities, were essential for closeness. *"After a time, you will see that you are locked in a cycle and everything is repetitious,"* one participant stated. *You should do something new together, such as try a new easy hobby."*

The majority of respondents said that such an activity might be as basic as "*performing regular exercise together*," "*participating in festivities and special events*," "*cooking together*," "*travelling or having a leisurely walk*," "*working together on interiors of your house*" and "*going out for a trip*."

### **Parenting, Child care and Child Rearing**

Participants reported a variety of favorable and bad parental experiences. Child-related duties, according to the respondents, needed patience, time, and effort. The lack of these characteristics has an effect on closeness. During crucial times, children appeared to foster cooperation and support amongst partners in various activities. Parenthood was seen positively by the vast majority of respondents. Parenthood, according to these participants, fostered mutual participation in education and decisions about the children's life. "*We sit and speak about our goals for our kids, including the school to which we will send them and the skills we anticipate our kids to learn*," one female participant stated.

Parenting gave some people the opportunity to learn how to divide work, while it encouraged others to stick together through difficult times. Participants discussed how children help to consolidate and enhance marriage relationships. Parenting, according to ten participants, has helped them learn more about themselves and their partners. One female participant stated that such understanding is necessary "*to evaluate each other's strengths and prevent pushing someone beyond his/her competence*." The majority of those questioned said that having a kid increases "*marriage commitment*," "*family unity*," and that self-sacrifice leads to closeness. Participants also stated that having children reduced relationship friction. "*We don't quarrel or argue because of the kids, or at least not when the kids are there*," one male participant said. While less than half of those questioned said that having children helped them to interact and spend more time together, ten said that their time together and communication was limited since the children were the center of their attention and the topic of their conversation.

According to some findings, several people had unfavorable sentiments regarding paternity after they had their first kid. Because children were the source of relational tension and anxiety, paternity posed a danger to marital intimacy. Three participants stated that financial hardship, disagreements about child-rearing and caring for children all resulted in a loss of closeness. Few people said that children had a negative impact on closeness and energy. Parenthood, according to these participants, may result in a lack of physical (e.g., sexual involvement) or emotional attending to each other, as well as a loss of privacy.

*"All interactions are about the children, rather than our aspirations, accomplishments, problems, hopes, and even future plans. My sense of solitude dwindled, as did my sexual activities."* one of the participant stated.

Children had a more detrimental impact on closeness in women than in males. Six female participants stated that motherhood disrupts intimacy since their partners' engagement in childcare and duties is minimal. For example, "*I was the one who had direct touch with the youngster 24 hours a day. When my son was sick, I brought him to the doctor, and when he was bored, I played with him*." one of the female participants mentioned.

Despite these unfavourable opinions, all female participants afterwards stated that majority of Indian mothers spend their time and efforts to ensure their children's well-being.

### **Socializing together/Mutual friendships**

According to the interviews, socializing together has a big impact in relationship bonding. Interaction with shared friends, rather than with individual friends, improved personal

relationships. The majority of participants emphasized the importance of common friends in their psychological well-being. One participant, for example, stated that "*Being with others, I mean friends that we share, is vital for our mental wellness.*" Fifteen individuals reported that spending time with common friends was a pleasurable experience.

Twelve participants stated that encounters with mutual friends gave them with several possibilities to acquire life skills including "*cooperation*," "*support*," and "*mutual self-sacrifice*." Such encounters also allowed them to adapt their friends' experiences into their daily lives. Such chances, according to four participants, were "*missing*" in their parents' relationship since they were frequently "*in charge*" and "*rarely considered children as friends*." Some individuals expressed concern about the harmful effects of individual friends on their relationships. Most participants thought that individual friends reduced togetherness because they stated that their spouses' time and energy would be spent with friends. Some people were concerned that individual friends would cause interpersonal conflicts. Nine people expressed concern that their discussions with individual friends will "*be carried to their house*" and impact their personal closeness. Ten participants stated that particular individuals frequently influenced their spouse's impression of their husbands or wives and harmed marital connection.

### Culture and belief systems

The majority of these individuals agreed that increasing closeness is more about reacting to and fulfilling cultural duties. Some have commented on this problem, stating that in Indian culture, marriage is not just between actual people, but between two families, and they all play a vital part in protecting marriage and helping to sustain the relationship.

For example, "*If you're marital life is not going well or you lack intimacy, everyone in the family will get involved and offer advice.*" one of the participants stated. Our culture reinforces this belief that "*I need to go to my husband's house and take care of my in-laws, which would help in keeping the intimacy*," one of the female participants said.

**Table 2 Frequency Analysis**

Domains, Categories, Subcategories	
<b>1. Interaction with family members</b>	
a) Communication with the family 1) Interaction with parents and other family members may teach you intimacy 2) Family interactions influence perceptions of closeness and expectations of an intimate partner b) Family acts as a model of closeness 1) The model may be used to identify conduct in subsequent relationships. 2) The model proposed by parents represents their efficiency.	General Typical Typical Variant
<b>2. Duration of Time spent in marriage/Length of marriage</b>	
a) The amount of time spent together is essential to togetherness. b) The quality of time spent together is more important than the amount of time spent together. c) Time must be set aside for togetherness. d) Marriage longevity can improve several elements of intimacy.	General Typical General General
<b>3. Selflessness, Compassion &amp; Devotion</b>	

## UGC CARE I

a) Selflessness and Devotion to each other enhances intimacy 1) An unclear line between women's sacrifice & responsibility discourages women from disclosing themselves. 2) To sustain intimacy, one must be prepared to go to any length and commit oneself. 3) Due to variety of unfavorable situations, women sacrifice their own needs, time and interests for the sake of family and maintain closeness.	General Typical Typical
<b>4.Appreciation</b> a) Appreciation is essential element bringing intimacy among couples. 1) Appreciation is rarely practiced by Indian men as they feel by doing so they would be seen as subordinate to them. 2) The sense of appreciation to women need to be fostered.	General Typical Typical
<b>5.Working together &amp; Participating in activities</b>	
a) To bring life to boring routines, participating in activities together is important to build intimacy. b) Not doing things together may not improve intimacy.	General Variant
<b>6.Parenting, Childcare &amp;Child Rearing</b>	
a) Children encourage greater collaboration and assistance in a variety of activities and important time periods. 1) Making decisions regarding the lives and education of children.	Typical
2) Division of work 3) Emotional Support b) Children help to sustain the spousal connection 1) Learning about oneself & one's spouse. 2) Improving attachment and family unity 3) Reducing relationship conflict 4) Thinking about other's need before oneself.  c) Children generate relational tension and anxiety 1) Financial difficulties are increased, disagreements over child raising and nurturing  d) Children have an impact on time spent together 1) Less time to spend together and communicate 2) Encourage parents to spend more time together.  e) Children have a negative impact on closeness and energy 1) Less physical intimacy and emotional attention to each other. 2) Women are more frustrated due to child related responsibilities.	Typical Typical Typical General Variant General  Variant  Variant Typical  Variant Typical  Typical Typical
<b>7.Socializing together/ Mutual friendships</b>	

## UGC CARE I

a) Mutual friends benefit the marriage bond and intimacy 1) Improving well being 2) Creating a pleasurable experience 3) Strengthens life skills and integrating life experience.  b) In certain Indian families, there is a lack of opportunities to develop the skills  c) Individual friends have a bad influence on marriage and intimacy 1) Sense of being together is not there. 2) Wasting husband or wife's time and energy 3) Causing interpersonal tension 4) Contributing to anxiety and depression 5) Influence the husband or wife's viewpoint.	General Typical Typical Variant  General Typical Typical Variant Typical
<b>8. Culture &amp; belief system</b> a) Increasing intimacy is more about fulfilling cultural duties b) Cultural beliefs helps in maintaining the intimacy bonds c) Increasing marital adjustments d) Helps in decreasing conflicts between them.	General Typical Typical Typical

**Discussion**

The current study is the first to explore the factors that influence relationship intimacy using family theory. Because it explores intimate concerns through the perspective of family system members, this study makes a significant contribution to family theory. Furthermore, by giving voices to strong Indian couples, the study analytically advances previous work in this area. The findings emphasize the importance of two new characteristics, selflessness and commitment, and appreciation, in increasing intimacy among Indian couples. According to the findings of this study, marital connection is increased in Indian collectivist society when males and females fulfil their jobs and are willing to sacrifice.

Individuals who associated more strongly with Indian culture were more likely to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the family, according to both males and females. Female participants were dissatisfied with Indian society, believing that women are expected to be more submissive. Selflessness and dedication, according to the majority of participants, can increase self-disclosure and togetherness. In contrast to the present study's findings, it was observed that in Developed nations, acceptance of wants and desires rather than sacrifice strengthens relationship connection.

The majority of participants agreed that showing appreciation to their partner may improve communication. They regarded praise, however, as a negative thing in Indian society, which challenges Indian men's power and hinders them from appreciating their spouses for what they accomplish. This may be connected to India's collectivist society, in which females are supposed to subject to male leadership. Some have stated that it is time to establish a culture of appreciation for women, as marriage would suffer as a result. This demonstrates that the Indian family structure is receptive to new behaviors and adjustments. Intimacy experiences are also created within the social-cultural circumstances of a family, according to the findings. Family relationships are vital in building closeness. In reality; learning to be intimate comes from studying parent behavior and developing ties with parents and family members.

The respondents agreed that marital closeness develops when spouses spend time together. They went on to say that being together necessitates investing and designating time for working with the spouse to establish closeness. Previous research has demonstrated that spending time together improves connection. Time restrictions, on the other hand, decrease marital closeness. Aside from shared time, participants stated that marriage length can assist couples deepen marital intimacy. Spending time together allows couples to learn about themselves and their partner, helping them to develop love, commitment, and, if necessary, sacrifice personal wants.

Participants in the current study emphasized the necessity of trying new things and working together. Participating in activities together is an important aspect of closeness. Participants underlined that these new activities did not have to be spectacular. Working together and partaking in activities was underlined by both genders as important in creating an intimate connection.

Participants in the current study also stated that being a parent increases their degree of closeness. According to family system theory, any transition disrupts a family's balance. A family must readjust to changes, revise its constitutions in reaction to new circumstances, and reassess current borders. Some participants indicated that certain elements of parenting (for example, spousal teamwork) strengthened their marriage connection and increased closeness. Other studies have claimed that having children reduced the amount of time couples spent together, induced relational conflict between couples, and disrupted intimacy. Women were more irritated with motherhood than males, which had a detrimental impact on marital intimacy. However, certain modifications in Indian males' perceptions of gender roles have been noted.

The current study's participants proposed that networking with common friends improves proximity in relationships. The findings of the current study are comparable with those of earlier studies. Previous research has indicated no difference in the influence of mutual and separate friends on marital intimacy, contrary to the current study's conclusions. Mutual friends increase marital intimacy, but other friends decrease it.

Furthermore, the study discovered that culture, as a component of social life (especially in India), might positively contribute to Indian couples' intimacy. Cultural commitment, according to the participants, enhances communication between couples. Participants said that people who have strong cultural values are more likely to make good decisions, restrict romantic connections outside of cultural norms, strive to be a decent person, and reduce conflict. Men who are culturally inclined, according to female participants, support the family by maintaining intimate bonds.

#### **Limitations and area for future research**

There are several drawbacks to this study. The research sample size was limited but consistent with CQR characteristics. The samples only comprised heterosexual couples and did not include gay, bisexual, or transgender couples. Couples from different regions with varying educational levels may have distinct personal experiences than those from Udaipur. Furthermore, data acquired from both spouses of couples was not examined independently. Future study must collect data from a variety of samples of differing ages in a variety of localities. Another limitation of this study was that the data was acquired using self-report methods like interviews. The findings of other data sources (for example, observational studies) may provide different types of information.

### **Implications of the Study**

Despite the constraints highlighted above, this study provides solid conclusions about relationship intimacy that are transferable to other circumstances. The findings of this study might be utilized in pre-marital seminars to educate couples about the many dimensions of intimacy and some of the current issues that Indian couples experience. Given the effectiveness of couple therapy in enhancing intimacy, the data given in this study may assist therapists in developing different intervention programs to increase the degree of intimacy of their clients through shared leisure activities, motherhood, and appreciation. Clinical therapies should tackle cultural stigma in order to improve Indian males' attitudes regarding wife appreciation.

The current study's findings may also improve the cultural competency of therapists dealing with Indian couples. The findings of the current study might be used by therapists or counsellors to better calibrate services to the requirements of Indian couples. They might also create culturally appropriate protocols to foster closeness. In designing such a procedure, it should be stressed that culture is an essential element of Indian life, impacting their interactions.

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