INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A PSYCHOMETRIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The current research explored the expression of intimate relationship in university students in Pakistani cultural context. In the first phase of the study, 20 university students were interviewed individually to generate the item pool. It resulted in the generation of 71 items on intimate relationship as experienced and expressed by university students. After excluding the repetition and redundant items 35 finalized items were piloted on 30 university students as a self-report measure of 4 point rating scale (Intimate Relationship Scale). Finally a stratified sample of 223 university students (45.9% men and 54.1% women) was given the final list of 35 items scale and a demographic form. Principal component factor analysis revealed two factor solution namely intimacy in relationship and conflict in relationship. The Intimate Relationship Scale found to have acceptable psychometric properties. The results of the research are discussed in the light of cultural context and its implication for the university students.

Keywords: *Intimate Relationship, University Students, cultural context*

INTRODUCTION

Intimacy in close and intimate relationships generally refers to the feeling of being in a close personal association and belonging together with loved one. Intimacy is a kind of familiar and very close connection with another person that form through knowledge of the other and with living experience. Genuine intimacy to form strong intimate relationships depends on loyalty, vulnerability, transparency and true feeling for the other. Intimate interactions from early life serve as the basis upon which relationships later in life are formed and these interactions are basis for all success. All environmental possibilities that one should adapt for better life style depend upon the nature of intimate relations. In an attempt to adapt to other people's styles of relating, one must adjust his or her own behaviors first (Baldwin, 1992).

Human development is mostly seen as a complex interplay of strong forces within the human being and environment or it may be the relationship that forms one personality (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Psychological maturity is all about having integrity in forming relationships. According to the researchers in the field of anthropology, intimacy

is made up of successful seduction, it is a process building bonds with partner that help partners to disclose their feeling to each other secretly and easily. Intimate conversations become the basis for "confidences" (Umemura, Jacobvitz, Messina, & Hazan, 2013). To sustain a lengthy relationship partners require emotional and interpersonal awareness of each other. Murray Bowen (1974) called this "self-differentiation". It results in interaction that has an emotional range involving both robust conflict, and intense loyalty in a couple. Psychological consequences of this result in individuals that are unable to form intimate relationships with others. Researchers have proved that fear of intimacy is negatively related to comfort with emotional closeness and with relationship satisfaction, whereas it is positively related to trait anxiety and loneliness in individuals (Prior & Glaser, 2006).

From a center of self-knowledge and self-differentiation, intimate behaviors form the basis for family relationships (Bowlby, 2007). Poor skills in developing close intimate relationships result in many issue like rejecting close relationships even friendship and those in close associations. According to the scholars, there are four types of intimacy a) emotional, b) physical, c) spiritual, and d) experiential intimacy (Bowlby, 1969). All these types of intimacy are necessary in any intimate relationship to sustain for longer periods of time. An intimate relationship is close associations between two people have physical, emotional, and spiritual or sexual intimacy (Rowland & Perlman 2008). Close intimacy is characterized by close romantic association/ attachment or sexual involvement having intense pleasure as its part. The sense that one should be open and honest in talking to the partner is not involved in other relationships (Mackey, Diemer, & O' Brien, 2000). Intimate relationship plays very important role in over all human experience and development (Rowland & Perlman, 2008).

Human beings have a general desire to belong to others and to be loved by others, and this need or desire can be only satisfied with intimate partner relationship (Perlman, 2007). Such relationships involve sexual attraction, loving each other, caring and honest interactions with the partner (Rowland & Perlman, 2008). Intimate relationships formed during infancy and adolescence give rise to all later intimate relations. These life stages are associated with richer body of knowledge about intimacy than any other life stage (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Relationships are formed as adaptive measures necessary for coping with adjustments and transitions in life. Children seek to develop autonomy while maintaining the ability to retreat to their caregiver for all kinds of support. Adolescents are more concerned with developing individuation also seeking approval from the people around them. Whereas young adults strive to develop personal identity to form close intimate relationships. Relationship provides the context at all stage of life in which personal identity, personality and intimate relationships are formed.

As far as the Pakistani cultural context is concerned, no research was found in which intimate relationship was measured using indigenous scale. Intimate relationship its pattern and related satisfaction are complex constructs that have a long lasting impact on the growth and development of an individual and all later development of relationships that also highlights the importance of this topic to be undertaken in research indigenously. Researchers have also noticed that culture plays a vital role in making individuals learn how to relate in relationships with other people and also how we form bonds. As if we see the divergence between interests of the individual and the group is universal at the bio-psycho-social levels, where, the group exerts pressure on the individual to change the behaviors as they wish for; the individual strives for developing the growth of the self and its individuality.

Therefore, it would be important to explore intimate relationship in the traditional Pakistani cultural context where falling in line, and collectivist culture exerts pressure to be more relationship focused than individuality (Chao, 1994). As reported before, there is a dearth of local literature on intimate relationship and also keeping in mind the cultural influence of the experience and expression of psychological phenomena, there is a need of developing a valid and reliable scale for intimate relationship. This research is focusing on pattern of intimate relationships in university students. Once the pattern of intimate relationship is identified, it would further help in student counseling services to provide need based interventions and skills required to overcome relational troubles. The current research would aim to firstly, explore the pattern of intimate relationship reported by the university students. Secondly, develop a valid and reliable scale for measuring different patterns of intimate relationship in university students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Phase I: Item Generations
As first step of the scale development phenomenology was explored about Intimate Relationship as experienced by university students for item generation.

Participants and procedure
For this purpose 20 university students were contacted and interviewed using in-depth interviews. Students were studying in BS (Hons) and were from age range of 19-24 years. Ten females and ten males were selected in the study using purposive sampling and were given an operational definition of the intimate relationship. After that large item pool was generated. Statements were formulated. Initially seventy one (71) statements were generated. Using the expertise of the researchers forty six (46) were finalized discarding redundant and overloading items. These finalized items were then given to three expert

researchers in the relevant field to see relevance of the statements with the variable under study. After that the next step was arranging statements in descending order using frequency league. This step helped to see the strength of the each item which ultimate helped to arrange the items.

Phase II: Empirical Validation
After this the finalized scale was than given to six experts in the field of psychology to rate each item from 1-5 rating scale. Where 1 is least related and 5 is highest. And those having percentage less than 10 % were discarded having unsatisfactory relatedness. This led to finalization of thirty five (35) items. After that content adequacy assessment was carried out. For this reason scale was given to 10 participants to check the user friendliness of the scale. To ensure people comprehend the item easily.Finalization of the scale was done using expertise of the supervisor than scale was subjected to data collection for factor analysis. Before data collection adequate sample size was determined.

Phase III: Tryout Phase
Try out phase was aimed to determine the reader friendly comprehension level of the items, instructions, and layout of the measure.

Participants and procedure
Thirty university students (15 boys and 15 girls from BS Hons Year I) selected through purposive sampling technique were given intimate relationship scale. It took 15 minutes to complete the scale. No difficulties were reported in terms of comprehension of items and the layout of the scale.

Phase IV: Main Study
The main study was aimed to determine the psychometric properties of the IRS.

Participants
The sample ($N = 223$) from age range of 18-24 years with the mean age of 19.93 ($SD = 1.85$) for the main study was selected from public sector universities of Lahore. The sample was divided into main strata according to gender and further sub-divided according to the educational level of the participants i.e., four years of BS Hons. (Under graduation) including 66 (30%) from (BS-I), 73 (33%) from BS-II and 39 (17%) from BS-III, and 42 (19%) from BS-IV with almost an equal proportion of gender including 101 (45.9%) male participants and 119 (54.1) female participants government universities.

Measures

Demographic Performa
It comprised of basic information of the participants including age, gender, birth order, siblingsfamily system and educational level.

Intimate Relationship Scale (IRS)
The newly developed IRS was used for measuring Intimate relationship satisfaction among university students. IRS was comprised of 35 items related to relationship satisfaction as experienced and expressed by university students. The instructions for IRS were "*Following is a list of Intimate relationship related items which people of your age experience while interacting with their intimate partners; read each item carefully and rate the items to the extent in which you experience these difficulties while relating with other people*". The scoring options included (0) *not atall*, (1) *rarely*, (2) *often*, (3) *always*. High score represented more satisfaction in intimate relationship an individual experienced.

The Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationship Scale (PAIR)
A 36-item measure of relationship intimacy developed by Schaefer and Olsen (1981) is consisted of five factors and one faking scale. The five factors measure five types of intimacy a) social b) recreational, c) intellectual d) emotional, and e) sexual. This scale can be phrased how the relationship is "now", or it can be phrased as how the relationship "should be"depending upon the need of the researcher. Respondents answer each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree).

Procedure
First of all, permission letter was sent to the heads of the three government universities. After obtaining official permission, the participants were randomly selected for group testing averaging 15 participants in each group at one time. The participants who agreed to participate were assured about the confidentiality, anonymity, and the privacy. They were assured that all the information would be collected for research purposes and they were also given the right to withdraw from the testing at any time. All the participants were given the final research protocol comprising demographic sheet, and IRS. The average testing time was 25 minute. Around 20% ($n = 50$) of the agreed participants were retested with one week's interval for test-retest reliability of IRS.Lastly, a debriefing session was conducted. Total of 220 participants completed the information; therefore, 3 testing protocol were discarded. After data collection, SPSS 18 Version was used for data analysis.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
This section describes the factorial structure, reliability, and validity of the IRS.

Item Analysis
Item analysis was also carried out with computation of item-total correlation on 35 items of IRS; 34 items showed significant item-total correlation. The Table 1 shows high inter-item correlation. Those items that had values less than .30 were not retained and by keeping in view these values, the items were being selected in their respective factors. The factor loadings of 34 selected items on two factors with item-total correlations are given in Table 1. The Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .88 and initial Chronbach Alpha was significant at ($p <.001$).

Table I Factor Structure, Eigen Values and Item Correlation of 35 Items of Intimate Relationship Scale with Varimax Rotation (N = 223)

Sr. no	Item no.	FI	FII
1	1	**.41**	.04
2	2	**.51**	.18
3	3	**.62**	.00
4	4	**.71**	.13
5	5	**.69**	.08
6	6	**.68**	.10
7	7	**.67**	.03
8	9	**.41**	.23
9	11	**.61**	.04
10	12	**.72**	.04
11	15	**.63**	.03
12	16	**.34**	.13
13	17	**.67**	.00
14	18	**.52**	.24
15	22	**.67**	.07
16	23	**.65**	.00
17	24	**.58**	.14
18	26	**.46**	.03
19	28	**.53**	.06
20	29	**.57**	.08
21	30	**.55**	.24
22	32	**.32**	.21
23	34	**.54**	.13
24	35	**.71**	.10
25	10	.23	**.33**
26	13	.28	**.57**
27	14	.25	**.30**
28	19	.16	**.36**
29	20	.29	**.74**
30	21	.27	**.72**
31	25	.14	**.59**
32	27	.24	**.37**
33	31	.06	**.58**

34	33	.21	**.41**
	Eigen value	9.38	3.44
	% Variance	26.80	9.87
	% Cumulative	26.80	36.68

The criteria for retaining items in a factor was .30 or above (Kline, 1993) and the items that had been falling within this range were retained in that particular factor. In order to get a best fit model 5, 4, 3 and 2 factor solutions were also tried. The two factor solution was found to be best fit with minimum dubious items and clear factor structure. Those items that had less than .30 factor loading were excluded. Item no. 8 was not loaded so were excluded from the scale.

The Scree plot was showing Eigen values and number of factors that could be retained. The Scree plot has helped in determining the number of factors. Kaiser-Guttman's retention criterion of Eigen values (Kaiser, 1974) revealed two factors whose Eigen value is greater than 1.

Factors Description
On the basis close examination of the items corresponding to each factor and the theme, each factor was assigned a label on the basis of the commonality of the themes emerged by using the expertise of the researchers.

Factor 1: Intimacy in Relationship
The first factor of the scale consists of 24 items. A high score on this subscale refers to a tendency ofhigh level of satisfaction in intimate relationship. The sample items include, "sharing everything with the partner"; "trusting each-other"; "respecting partner"; "understanding partner"; and so on.

Factor 2: Conflict in Relationship
The second factor of the IRS consists of 10 items. A high score in this subscale denotes conflict regarding intimate relationship. The sample items include, "desire to have attention of the partner"; "paying attention to partner"; "no life without partner"; and so on.

Psychometric Properties of IRS
In order to know the scale has all psychometric properties concurrent validity, split half reliability and test retest reliability was computed.

Construct Validity

The table 2 showed that IRS has a significant positive correlation with other two factors of it. Also the Cronbach Alpha ranges from .70- .90 showing that the scale is found to have high internal consistency.

Concurrent Validity

On the basis of the aim for culturally sensitive tool development researcher were unable to perform traditional concurrent validity. The parallel scale for concurrent validity on the same construct was not available and available was not found to be significant that increased the demand for the development of indigenous scale. After review of the literature it was found the expression and perceived experience in an intimate relationship in Pakistan was totally different from the west. Here people are different in their intimate relationships in university life like sexual or physical intimacy may not be the major part of their intimate relationship whereas spiritual intimacy may be the very important element. Culture is assumed to affect all aspects of life (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005). It is generally acknowledgedto be an important factor affecting all kind of intimate relationship (Bond, 1997; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Kağıtçıbaşı & Berry, 1989; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 2000). To validate our scale expert validation from six experts in the field was carried out.

Table 2 Inter-correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas of IRS, Subscales

Factors	1	2	3
1.IRS	-	.35***	.94***
2.CIR		-	.63***
3.IRS T			-
M	53.74	17.71	74.20
SD	10.70	4.36	13.22
A	.90	.70	.89

Note: IRS = Intimacy in relation Scale, CIR= Conflict in Relation Scale, IRS T= Intimate Relationship Scale Total.
Correlation is significant at *p*< .000.

The above table showed that there is significant relationship between two factors of the scale and total scale of intimate relationship.

Test-Retest Reliability

Test retest reliability of IRS was computed and established. For this purpose, 20% sample from the main study was retested after interval of one week. The result showed that the test- retest reliability of IRS is r= .91 (p < .001) that indicated highly significant correlation among the score of two administration of IRS at different time.

Split -Half Reliability

The odd- even method was used to determine the split-half reliabilities of the intimate relationship scale. The scale has two factor subscales. Split- half reliability for both factors was computed separately. Both factors were divided into two halves, one comprising of all odd items and other of all even items. The correlation between the two forms divided was r = .35 (p <.000). The items were arranged in descending order according to the highest loading to ensure the halves are split equally. First factor of internalized conflict had 12 odd items and 12 even items. The correlation between two halves of the first factor is r = .84 (p <.000). The internal consistency of this factor was .90. The second factor of externalized conflict had 5 odd items and 5 even items. The correlation between two forms of this factor is r = .60 (p <.000). The internal consistency of this factor was .70.

Gender Difference on GRCS

T test result indicated that men and women university students don't differ significantly in intimate relationship total score. Moreover, no significant difference is found on two factors of the IRS.

DISCUSSION

Intimate relationships have attracted a lot of importance from the field of social, counseling and clinical psychology because of its therapeutic value in dealing with different psychopathologies and many daily life issues particularly related to university students. As a basic desire of human beings, to be in an intimate relationship has many therapeutic values. Integrating aspects may help to inform changes in how individual psychopathology and relationship dysfunction are diagnosed and treated indeed; this has implication for the next DSM version. There is wide spread empirically supported clinical use of relational interventions (Beach et al., 2006).

Many theories have reported that all the adult life intimate relationships are dependent on early childhood relations (Bowlby, 1973). A vast body of literature has suggested that intimate relationships play a central role in the overall human development and experience. Human beings have a general desire to belong and to be loved by someone in their life, which is usually satisfied within only an intimate relationship (Perlman, 2007). These relationships involve feelings of liking or loving one or may be more people at one point in time, romance, physical or sexual attraction, sexual relationships, or emotional and personal support between the members. Intimate relationships allow a social network for people to form strong emotional attachments (Rowland & Perlman, 2008).

The students in their university life faces many challenged in forming and maintaining new intimate relationships that they have never experienced before (Parker et al., 2004). In university life intimate relationships are regulated by new rules, new social skills and new mode of bonding within the values and norms of the culture (Bouteyre el al., 2007). The formation of intimate relationship and behaviors involved in it are regulated by the culture in which person is growing. Culture shapes all the relationship behaviors. Many cross-cultural researchers have also noticed a clear difference in the experience and expression of intimate relationship behaviors across collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1993).

It is generally recognized that an individual learns to interact in intimate relationship from the culture in which he lives (Berscheid, 1995). Cultural norms and practices tend to influence not only the external (i.e., behavioral) but also the internal (e.g., representational) aspects of any intimate relationships. A wealth of literature suggests thatcultural differences exist in the emotional expression of the personal close relationships (Planalp & Fitness, 1999). Dion and Dion (1996) have described differences in the interpretation and meaning of romantic love and intimacy across many cultures. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that culture also influences the characteristics that make up our representation of an ideal intimate partner (Buss et al., 1990; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996).

In the present research, intimate relationships as experienced by university students was collected, collated and then transformed into a 4 point self-reported Likert scale (IRS). Factor analysis of 35 items has revealed two factors namely: I) Intimacy in Relationship and 2) Conflict in Relationship. The factor structure of IRS was found to be different from the previous scales PAIR (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). The Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR) was developed by Schaefer & Olson (1981) to assess both the actual and ideal levels of intimacy in relationships.It has five factors and one faking scale. The main need of time was to develop an indigenous scale on intimate relationship as since long no new tool was developed and the developed tool were culturally biased. As the result showed the present scale factor structure revealed two factors only whereas Schaefer and Olson' s scale had five factors evaluating different types of intimacy. The patterns in PAIR are more related with different types of intimacies but current scale showed pattern of intimacy and conflict factors both.

Strikingly, IRS on the other hand has all types of intimacies gathered in one factor under intimacy in relationship. Contrary to the literature conflict in relationship was also found to be the important factor in Pakistani cultural context. This may be because of cultural

impact as in Pakistan intimacy in relationship is determined by intimate interactions and at the same time absence of the conflict(Laurenceau, Troy, & Carver, 2005). The IRS is found to have high internal consistency, test-retest reliability, split-half reliability, and acceptable level of face and concurrent validity. Another interesting finding, contrary to literature, is that non-significant difference was found between male and female participants on overall Intimate relationships (Rosenthal, 1992). This is perhaps because university life is equally challenging for both genders and posits same pressures and demands, therefore, both male and female participants experience and behaves in the same way in intimate relationships.

CONCLUSION

The present research is a ground breaking research in the cultural context of Pakistan to measure patterns of intimate relationships in the university students. Furthermore, this research will help to understand the nature of the intimate relationship closely and help to see its complex dynamic nature according to the Pakistani Culture. This research will provide information how and why this phenomenon is not different in terms of gender as well. The current research and its findings have many implications in the field of social, counseling and clinical psychology. On the basis of the pattern of intimate relationships and issues related many skills and trainings can be planned by the therapist. The satisfaction in intimate relationships is related to overall psychological health of the individual. The IRS can be further used in clinics for research and assessment purpose. Moreover, it will add inbody of literature related to the variable of the study. It is recommended for the future researches to focus on determining the relationship of early parent-child experiences and pattern intimate relationships across various age groups and diverse clinical and general populations. Since, this study was based on the direct self-reported experience and expression of university students, it might be suggested that in future researches should explore the phenomenon of intimate relationship through indirect and projective approach.

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