



**Exploring the Influence of Family Quality of Life on Intimacy and Marital Attitudes
among Indian Young Adults**

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Abstract

This study investigates the dramatically evolving dynamics of intimacy, marriage, and family life in modern Indian culture due to sociocultural, economic, and technical developments. The aim of the study is to examine the influence of family quality of life on experience of intimacy and attitudes towards marriage in young adults. The participants mainly comprised of young college students of Indian origin (n=160), between the age of 18-25years. The findings show that there is no significant correlation between Family functioning and fear of intimacy. However, there is a strong negative linear association between marital attitudes and fear of

intimacy. Additionally, the results also inform that there is a weak positive correlation between the quality of family functioning and the positive attitude towards marriage of an individual. The findings emphasize the importance of considering both personal and family aspects when determining how young people perceive marriage.

Keywords: Family Quality of Life, Fear of Intimacy, Marital Attitudes, Young Adults

Introduction

Cultural Context

India is a nation of collectivist culture where the institution of family serves as the foundation. Social solidarity and interdependence are encouraged in Indian society (Chadda, et al., 2013). Familial relationships and values, kinship, tradition, and legacy are ingrained in each individual belonging to this society. Family serves as the point of origin which has been defining and preserving generational values, core beliefs, and purpose (Sharma et al., 2022).

However, the Indian society has undergone a drastic metamorphosis since the past two decades (Pradhan, 2011). The dynamics of interpersonal relationship patterns, family structure, and lifestyles have been influenced immensely by the changes in the social and cultural viewpoints (Chadda et al., 2013). The impacts of these changes are predominance of nuclear families (National Family Health Survey, 2013), emergence of single parent along with childless households (Pradhan, 2011), and hike in divorce rates among couples with children (Goode, 1993).

Early adulthood is a very impressionable and crucial time that impacts one's perception of intimacy and marriage decisions; and particularly in India, the family functions significantly dictate these choices for young adults. Bowlby (1982) suggested that a supportive and nurturing

familial atmosphere will be successful in fostering secure attachments which are symbolized by a feeling of trust and safety.

This study attempts to explore how the family quality of life, experiences of intimacy as well as attitudes towards marriage have been influenced by these recent altercations in Indian culture. Furthermore, how these domains are interlinked as well.

Family Quality of Life

Dai and Wang (2015), elaborated on the concept of Family functioning as the comprehensive contentment of physio-emotional necessities within a family unit. Epstein (1987) gave 6 crucial areas needed to achieve the ideal family functioning, including communication styles, analytical skills, family roles, emotional regulation, participation, and discipline. The amalgamation of these domains promotes overall well-being of interpersonal relationships.

Intact households function better than non-intact ones (Shek et al., 2015). Additionally, close, and supportive family dynamics are positively associated to influence physical and mental health of the individuals (Cohen & Syme, 1985).

Fear of Intimacy

Sternberg (1997), defined Intimacy as essential to the study of intimate relationships, which involves feelings of closeness, connectivity, and belongingness within loving partnerships. However, fear of intimacy, can be elucidated as an inhibited ability of an individual to express their personal ideas and feelings, is an essential obstacle in the process of establishing intimate relationships with other significant individuals in their surroundings (Descutner & Thelen, 1991).

Mature romantic alliances function in a similar function as early relationships between parent and child albeit with some subtle differences (Bowen, 1978; Leung, 2001; Rodrigues, 2009).

Increased fear of intimacy and weak attachments have been noticed to have an association with family households promoting perfectionism; demonstrating how strong long-lasting influence family dynamics have on the intimacy and relationship formation among young adults (Caren & Thenmozhi, 2022).

Marital Attitudes

Marriage can be explained as a relationship of wife and husband being shared between two individuals of opposite sex which is socially acceptable, with the primitive goal to have their parenthood authorized (Reiss, 1980). Family dynamics and their extent of expressiveness is positively linked with more optimistic attitudes towards marriage of an individual. (Muench, et al., 1994)

When young adults perceive their parents' marriage to be problematic and incompatible, it is observed that they marry later (Willems-Bloom & Nock, 1992). There is research in support by Du et al. (2022) and Park and Harris, (2023) stating that witnessing continuous conflicts or a loveless marriage, can make an individual wary of marriage. The theme of race continuity is common between both, the present and parent generation of India regarding their attitudes towards marriage (Adhikari, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Present Study

Due to the convergence of societal, economic, and technical forces, the dynamics of familial bonds, intimacy, and marital perspectives are undergoing a dramatic metamorphosis in the mosaic of contemporary India. The objective of this study is to analyze and get a deeper comprehension of ideas like how an individual's family functions, how they view intimacy, and their attitudes toward marriage, as well as how they are interlinked, in context to the young adults of the new India.

There have been theoretical and empirical exploration of these concepts with respect to western society and culture; However, there is a need to fill the current research voids and an in-depth understanding for these areas of psychology with reference to the evolving Indian society. The study intends to add significant insights to current theoretical frameworks by exploring the complex interactions among Indian young adults between Marital Attitudes, Intimacy, and Family Quality of Life (FQoL). Additionally, the research aims to provide light on the complex dynamics within familial contexts and its consequences for Indian youth's socio-emotional development and relational well-being through rigorous empirical analysis and interpretation.

Hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between family quality of life and marital attitudes of an individual.
- Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between fear of intimacy and attitudes towards marriage of an individual.

- Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant relationship between the family functioning of an individual and the fear of intimacy being experienced by them.

Sample

Simple random sampling was used to collect the data. The sample consisted of young adults belonging to the age group between 18 to 25 years of age. Both offline and online close-ended questionnaire surveys were circulated to gather the information. Individuals of Indian origin was included in the inclusion criteria. Prior to their participation in the study, the participant's confidentiality was taken into consideration, and their consent was obtained. The sample consisted of 160 young adults, 80 males and 80 females.

Measures

Family APGAR: This scale was given by Gabriel Smilkstein, MD. It is a brief 5-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess different domains of family functioning. Maximum of three responses (0, 1, 2) is presented in a Likert scale for each item. The scale has good construct validity (Karimi, 2022) and demonstrates good internal consistency of Cronbach $\alpha = 0.86$).

Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS): It is a self-report instrument to measure an individual's fear of intimacy and was developed by David Burns. This 35-item self-report scale uses a Likert 5-point rating system. The total score of the FIS is between 35 and 175. Its Construct validity was established by factor analysis and significant correlations (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). FIS has a high internal consistency and test-retest reliability, demonstrated by an alpha coefficient of 0.93.

Marital Attitude Scale (MAS): It is a part of the Marital Scales which was created by Lee A. Rosén and Stacey S. Park (2013). This 23-item self-report survey evaluates the perspectives and opinions of married and single people regarding heterosexual marriage. MAS has an internal consistency of 0.85 and test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.91. It also demonstrates high construct validity and language validity coefficient of 0.93.

Design. Objectives and hypotheses were established by understanding the research gaps in both the previous and current literature present, through an extensive literature assessment. The current study follows a quantitative research design to evaluate and assess the influence of Family Quality of Life on experience of Intimacy and Marital Attitudes among Indian young adults. Simple random sampling was employed for sample collection. An offline and online close-ended survey form, consisting of items related to various demographic details and the tools to measure the variables, was generated. They were circulated among college students and young adults who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for the sample in accordance with the research objective are: (i) the participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and (ii) an Indian citizen. The inferential and descriptive statistics analysis of the obtained quantitative data were done using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.0.0 through Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression Analysis.

Pearson Correlation was used to know if there is any significant relationship between any of the variables and if any, then its nature. Linear Regression Analysis was applied to see if the independent variable (family quality of life) would be a predictor for any of the dependent variables (fear of intimacy and marital attitudes).

Throughout the research, ethical standards such as obtaining informed consent and securing ethical clearance would be prioritized. Essentially, this study design aims to

provide a holistic configuration for examining the complex association of familial influences on intimate relationships and perception about marriage among young adults in India.

Result

In the sample (n=160, 80 males, 80 females), Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression Analysis have been implemented to decipher the relationship among family quality of life (family functioning), fear of intimacy and attitudes towards marriage in young adults.

Table 1

Summarized table for total number of participants, mean and standard deviation of all responses for all different tools.

	N	Mean	SD
Family APGAR	160	6.745	2.5649
Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS)	160	105.20	22.267
Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS)	160	32.646	9.1066

N= Total number of participants; SD= Standard Deviation.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation between the IV (Family Quality of Life) and DV (Fear of Intimacy)

		Family APGAR	Fear of Intimacy
Family APGAR	Pearson Correlation	1	-.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.268
N		160	160
Fear of Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	-.088	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.268	

N	160	160
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation coefficient of -0.088 indicates that association between fear of intimacy and family functioning is weak and a negative link. Since, the p-value (0.268) is greater than 0.01, their relationships are not statistically significant.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation between Fear of Intimacy and Marital Attitudes

		Fear of intimacy	Marital Attitudes
Fear of intimacy	Pearson Correlation	1	**.592
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N		160	160
Marital Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	**.592	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N		160	160

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Strong negative association between fear of intimacy and marital attitudes is concluded due to the correlation coefficient of -0.592. This association is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of (< 0.001) for this correlation. There is a significant negative relationship between marital attitudes and fear of intimacy.

Table 4*Pearson Correlation between the IV (Family Quality of Life) and DV (Marital Attitudes)*

		Family APGAR	Marital Attitudes
Family APGAR	Pearson Correlation	1	.270**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
N		160	160
Marital Attitudes	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.270**	1
		.001	160
N		160	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A weak positive link is denoted by the correlation coefficient of 0.270, between Marital Attitudes and Family Functioning. This association is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of (< 0.001) for this correlation.

Table 5*Summary table for correlation for all variables*

		Family APGAR	Fear of intimacy	Marital Attitudes
Family APGAR	Pearson Correlation	1	-.088	.270**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.268	.001
N		160	160	160
Fear of intimacy	Pearson Correlation	-.088	1	-.592**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.268		.000
N		160	160	160
Marital Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	.270*	-.592**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
N		160	160	160

	.001	160	
	160		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a significant negative correlation between fear of intimacy and marital attitudes. Additionally, attitudes towards marriage and family functioning are found to be weakly positively correlated.

Discussion

The research findings of the current study display that family quality of life has a negative insignificant correlation with the fear of intimacy (correlation coefficient = -0.088), which is confirming the third hypothesis.

However, on the other hand, fear of intimacy and marital attitudes are found to have significant negative correlation (coefficient = -0.592), thus proving the second hypothesis true.

First hypothesis is accepted as the results show a weakly positive, statistically significant correlation is shared between family quality of life and marital attitudes (correlation coefficient= 0.270).

To strengthen the findings, established researchers indicates that fear of intimacy is an obstacle in course of developing a positive marital attitude as there are significant connection between emotional intimacy and positive attitudes towards marriage Park and Harris (2023); Fatah and Hartini (2022).

The findings demonstrate a positive correlation between marital attitudes and family functioning. Ohtaka (2021) provides evidence to support these findings, stating that daughters with a positive opinion of their fathers and sons with a positive view toward their mothers have positive attitudes toward marriage and cohabitation.

Du et. (2022); Ali (2023) have provided empirical data implying early familial experiences and child's perception of their parents' relationship are highly pivotal in formation of their marital attitudes and expectations. This further assists the relationship between family quality of life, and marital attitudes as calculated in the current research.

According to the literature review, family functioning plays an extremely crucial role in forming an individual's idea of marriage and close interpersonal relationships. The weak and non-significant correlation between family quality of life and fear of intimacy is worth further exploration.

Limitations

The sample size is only 160 young adults, thus requiring a much-elaborated population to generalize the findings. Only young adults belonging to urbanized locations of India were included. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which can be susceptible to bias.

Future Implications

The current quantitative research can further be extended to qualitative research to gain deeper understanding of the functions of family environment and including childhood experiences, and their impact on formation of the concept of intimacy and which would further influence their attitudes towards marriage. Family experiences can be tracked to formulate a trend in marital attitudes, if any.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine and further investigate the influence of family quality of life on experience of intimacy and marital attitudes in young adults belonging to the Indian region. This study sheds light on the strong negative relationship between fear of intimacy and marital attitudes of an individual. It further states that there is no significant connection between the functioning of a family and perception of intimacy. Lastly, it explores the link between family quality of life and attitudes towards marriage revealing a fragile positive significant correlation.

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