



Development and Psychometric Properties for Scale of Marital Intimacy in Couples

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ABSTRACT

The aims of the present study are the development and evaluation of the psychometric properties of Scale of Marital Intimacy (SMI) in married couples. The study methodology has used cross sectional research design and couples were selected with the purposive sampling technique. The development of the scale was based on deductive approach. Sixty items were selected after expert evaluation. In try-out phase, 50 couples were selected by purposive sampling technique. The items were found to be comprehensible by the couples and 54 items showed acceptable ≥ 0.30 item total correlation coefficient and 0.96 Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. In pilot study, 150 couples were selected by purposive sampling technique and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. A total of 52 items were retained after EFA. These items were administered on another sample of 125 couples selected by purposive sampling technique. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) yielded 16 items for SMI and five subscales. The results in try-out of 54 items showed item-total correlation coefficient from 0.303 to 0.812 in acceptable range. EFA on 54 items yielded acceptable Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity with factor loading ≥ 0.40 of 52 items. CFA showed model fit $p < 0.001$ that established the structure validity and significant loading of the items in its subscales after eliminating 36 items. Final version of Scale of Marital Intimacy retained 16 items with acceptable Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. Conclusively, SMI is a reliable indigenous scale for measuring levels of marital closeness in couples with five sub-scales in Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

Marital intimacy refers to the sincere mutual sharing of physical, psychological, and spiritual needs between a husband and a wife (PsychCentral, 2024). It is for the sake of intimacy need gratification that the majority of the people get married (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Intimacy is considered the sole predictive factor that is responsible for the good quality of the marital relationship in terms of satisfaction, equality, and stable functionality (Kamali, Allahyar, Ostovar, Alhabshi, & Griffiths, 2020; P. Greeff, 2001). Therefore, the maintenance of marital relationship between a husband and a wife is contingent on the level of marital intimacy experienced. Nevertheless, low intimacy in terms of verbal, affective, and physical involvement in marriage is predictive of divorce to occur between the spouses due to less satisfaction in marriage (Davila & Bradbury, 2001; Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). Weinberger, Hofstein, and Whitbourne (2008) found that women in college, who experienced less level of intimacy in their relationships, were more likely to face divorce in their midlife in the United States. On the other hand, Schneller, Arditti, and Arditti (2004) posited that men considered emotional distance and communication problems to be the key contributing factors to their divorce. Therefore, the core reasons for divorces are attributable to a lack of love and companionship, as the crude elements of intimacy among couples (Coontz, 2007).

Nikoogoftar (2021) investigated mediating role of marital intimacy between marital conflicts and emotional divorce among 400 Irani women. It was found that marital intimacy mediated between conflicts and divorce and explained 32% of the variance in the divorces of the females. Al-Shahrani and Hammad (2023) found that the emotional divorce among 270 participants was the outcome of low marital intimacy expressed in term of alexithymia in Saudi Arabia. According to Gallup and Gilani Pakistan, the divorce rate in Pakistan has increased with the passing years and would continue to rise if no strategic remedies are taken at appropriate time (Falak, 2023). Lack of trust, mutual understanding, and intimacy incompatibility served as the major reasons for divorce in Pakistan (Khan, Sikander, & Akhlaq, 2019; Qamar & Faizan, 2021; Ramzan, Akhtar, Ahmad, Zafar, & Yousaf, 2018). These three crucial causal factors of divorce in Pakistan are either directly or indirectly linked to the experience of the intimacy in marriage among couples. Enhancement of marital trust increases the sense of intimacy and relational closeness among husbands and wives because trust plays a mediational role of strengthening the relationship (Bagheri, Kimiaei, & Kareshki, 2021). Similar, high intimacy is an offshoot of good mutual understanding and sharing of similar experiences (Heller & Wood, 1998) thereby buffering the temperamental incompatibilities between the couples (Saeed Abbasi, 2017). Rubab and Alam (2022) considered the crucial link between low intimacy of spouse for marital conflicts and divorce among 75 divorced men and women in Pakistan.

1.1. The Significance of the Study

Thus, in the light of the findings of literature review, there is an emerging need to comprehend the conceptualization of element of intimacy in marital relationship among Pakistani couples. This understanding would be fruitful in working at maladjusted relational problems in intimacy between husbands and wives. Therefore, the present study has aimed at the development of a measurement namely Scale of Marital Intimacy (SMI) to assess the level of relational closeness among the couples and to devise psychotherapeutic intervention if necessary. In Pakistan, Urdu translated version (Abbasi & Zubair, 2015) of Marital Intimacy Questionnaire is unanimously used in various researches Iqbal, Ayub, Van De Vijver, and Halford (2019); Tahir and Khan (2021) to gauge the concept of marital intimacy among couples. The Marital Satisfaction Scale developed in Pakistan (Ayub, 2010) has not been used to assess marital intimacy because conceptually the two construct hold distinct differences. Hence, gaps exist for the measurement of the marital intimacy between couples in the literature, and the present study addresses this breached area in Pakistan.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

Hence, the objectives of the present study were

1. To develop a scale for measurement of marital intimacy by deductive approach and
2. To measure the psychometric properties of the scale of marital intimacy for evaluation of its soundness and quality.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

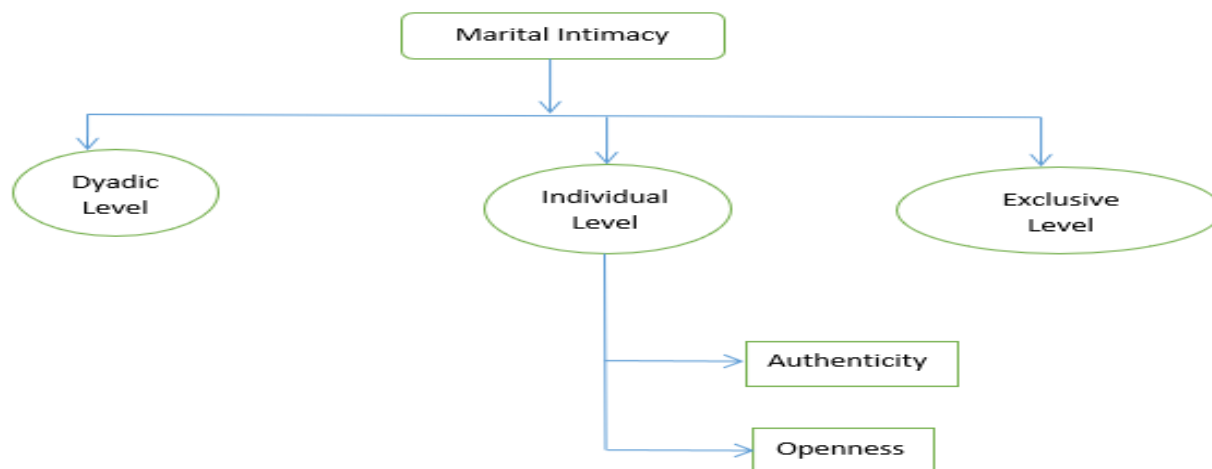
The present study used cross sectional analytical research design. It was carried out in the department of Psychology, University of Gujrat from September, 2023 to December, 2023. The ethical approval was taken from Advance Studies and Research Board (ASRB), University of Gujrat, reference no: UOG/ASRB/1613. The research study comprised of two phases. Phase-I deals with the development of the Scale for Marital Intimacy. Phase-II deals with the analyses of the psychometric properties of the SMI.

2.2. Phase-I

The deductive approach for scale development was abided by several studies (Naz, Bano, & Leghari, 2018; Riaz & Bano, 2018) conducted in Pakistan. The Scale of Marital Intimacy (SMI) was developed by following deductive approach. This method applies any one strategy out of two. First, the items intended to capture a heretofore defined theoretical construct are derived from review of the literature. Second, the items developed to define the construct on the basis of a theory, are subjected to critical evaluation by the experts (Hinkin, 1995). The present study has used both strategies of deductive approach to develop the items based on a predefined theoretical model. At initial step, an item pool of 65 items was generated

based on the review of the literature, Marital Intimacy Theory (Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 1995) and Marital Intimacy Questionnaire (Van den Broucke, Vertommen, & Vandereycken, 1995). The conceptual model of marital intimacy is shown in the figure below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Marital Intimacy Model based on Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, and Vertommen



The marital intimacy model shows that marital intimacy comprised of closeness between husband and wife in dyadic manner with cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components of expression. However, the dyadic is effected by the individual traits and behaviours of each spouse and encompasses authenticity and openness of one spouse towards the other. An authenticity referred to be oneself in the relationship and openness refereed to free sharing of ideas and feelings. The dyadic relationship between husband and wife is also effected by their relationships with the members of the family and friends, forming the exclusive level of interaction among them (Van den Broucke, Vertommen, et al., 1995). Although the theoretical framework for the generation of the items in the scale development included marital intimacy model of North-western Europe, "the content adequacy assessment" proposed by Hinkin (1995) is carried out with the experts and participants (in try-out) to gauge the cultural relevance of the items developed for the measurement of the construct of marital intimacy. Thorndike and Thorndike-Christ (2013) considered content validity to be the magnitude that the test measures construct with the relevancy and representativeness of the items. Lawshe (1975) formula for content validation was used to calculate the degree of agreement among five experts (three PhDs and two PhD scholars in Psychology). Out of 65 items, 58 items with ≥ 0.99 content validity ratio according to the expert agreement were retained. These 58 items were considered essential for measuring the construct of marital intimacy in Pakistani socio-cultural context. Two items were added based on emotional expression of sadness and aggression (one item for each emotion) in dyadic relational interaction among couples. Two items containing double negative statements were rephrased into positive direction for the measurement of the marital intimacy. Hence, a total of 60 items was finalized for try-out phase.

The expert panel suggested response categories on seven points Likert scale for SMI ranging from 1 to 7 (1 stands for "strongly disagree" and 7 stands for "strongly agree"). In try-out phase, 100 participants (50 husbands and 50 wives) were selected by purposive sampling technique from urban and rural areas of Gujrat. They were briefed about the study and verbal informed consent was sorted. Their age ranged between 25 years to 65 years ($M=43.88\pm 9.99$). For pilot study, 300 participants (150 husbands and 150 wives) were selected by purposive sampling technique from urban and rural areas of Gujrat, Sialkot, and Gujranwala. In fact, 330 participants (165 husbands and 165 wives) were approached but 30 participants (15 couples) either returned incomplete questionnaire or failed to return the questionnaire at all. The participating couples were briefed about the study and verbal informed consent was sorted. Their age ranged between 19 years to 73 years ($M=42.41\pm 11.52$).

2.3. Phase-II

For main study, another sample of 260 participants (130 husbands and 130 wives) were selected by purposive sampling technique from urban and rural areas of Gujrat, Kharian, and Jhelum. They were briefed about the study and verbal informed consent was sorted. Privacy and confidentiality was maintained. Only 250 participants (125 husbands and 125 wives) returned completely filled questionnaire. Their age ranged between 20 years to 70 years ($M=42.50\pm 10.83$). Similar inclusion criteria was hold for the participants in try-out, pilot, and main study which implied ≥ 19 years of age, either of husband or wife, with at least one year of marriage and having a child with a willingness to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria hold presence of any mental disorder, absence of a child, or demised spouse, along with unwillingness to participate in the study. Data Analysis comprised of exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-24) and Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS-24).

3. Results

The 60 items, in try-out phase, were found to be comprehensible by the couples and 54 items showed acceptable ≥ 0.30 item-total correlation coefficient (Table 1). Table 1 showed that item no 15, 25, 43, 48, 56, and 58 were less than 0.30 item-total correlation coefficients for SMI. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 54 items in try-out is 0.96. Hence, out of sixty items, six items were excluded and remaining 54 items were carried out in EFA.

Table 1: Item-Total Correlation Coefficients for Scale of Marital Intimacy (N=100)

Items	r	Items	r	items	r	Items	r
1	.703**	17	.566**	32	.585**	49	.473**
2	.506**	18	.789**	33	.705**	50	.477**
3	.793**	19	.327**	34	.642**	51	.640**
4	.603**	20	.737**	35	.639**	52	.414**
5	.749**	21	.645**	36	.806**	53	.560**
6	.708**	22	.699**	37	.578**	54	.587**
7	.660**	23	.686**	38	.693**	55	.744**
8	.432**	24	.477**	39	.694**	57	.738**
9	.311**	26	.694**	40	.747**	59	.503**
10	.801**	27	.771**	41	.659**	60	.418**
11	.526**	28	.652**	42	.620**		
12	.463**	29	.664**	44	.812**		
13	.651**	30	.624**	45	.705**		
14	.303**	31	.737**	46	.472**		
16	.493**	32	.585**	47	.630**		

The adequacy of the sample was evaluated by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Results demonstrated KMO value of 0.935 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant which means that sample is highly adequate and data can be accepted for further analysis in EFA (Table 2).

Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for SMI in EFA (N=300).

Measure	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
Scale of Marital Intimacy	.935	$p < 0.001$

Principal Axis Factoring in varimax rotation with eigenvalue greater than 1 was used to cluster the items, with analogous themes/factors on 54 items of SMI. The items were loaded in a factor with ≥ 0.40 value. By Scree plot, five factors were fixed, with .40 or above loading to retain in given factor (Table 3). Table 3 indicated that SMI consists of five subscales; Dyadism (items in F3), Genuineness (items in F4), Openness (items in F1), Positive Cliquishness (items in F2) and Negative Cliquishness (items in F5). Item no. 19 and 55 did not belong to any factor and hence were excluded.

Table 3: Factor loading of 54 items of SMI in Exploratory Factor Analysis (N=300).

Items	F1	Items	F2	Items	F3	Items	F4	Items	F5
M33	.730	m52	.727	m6	.786	m28	.777	m60	.798
M34	.721	m54	.650	m3	.752	m27	.721	m59	.796

M38	.647	m51	.645	m2	.750	m29	.675	m50	.792
M12	.646	m53	.626	m5	.728	m30	.609	m49	.787
M32	.639	m45	.598	m7	.726	m26	.604	m46	.706
M40	.598	m47	.543	m1	.722	m36	.483	m16	.666
M24	.573	m44	.505	m4	.460	m20	.470	m8	.574
M10	.566	m57	.498			m18	.432	m9	.564
M17	.558	m21	.460					m14	.513
M13	.558	m52	.727						
M41	.528	m54	.650						
M39	.514	m51	.645						
M42	.502	m53	.626						
M31	.493	m45	.598						
M11	.486	m47	.543						
M23	.471	m44	.505						
M35	.446	M57	.498						
M22	.445	M21	.460						
M37	.411								

Table 4 showed results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on 16 items of SMI. It has illustrated Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value as 0.92 which was in the acceptable range. However, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) value, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) value and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value were 0.92, 0.90, and 0.08 respectively, which confirmed the factors/subscales of SMI. The proposed model was significant at p-value of <0.001. Thus, CFA confirmed the model of marital intimacy with five factors such as dyadism, genuineness, openness, positive cliquishness and negative cliquishness (Fig 2).

Table 4: Model Fit Summary of 52 items in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (N=250)

P	CMIN/DF	Comparative Fit Index	Incremental Fit Index	Tucker Lewis Index	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
<0.001	2.7	0.92	0.92	0.90	0.08

Figure 2: Five Factor Model for Scale of Marital Intimacy via Confirmatory Factor Analysis

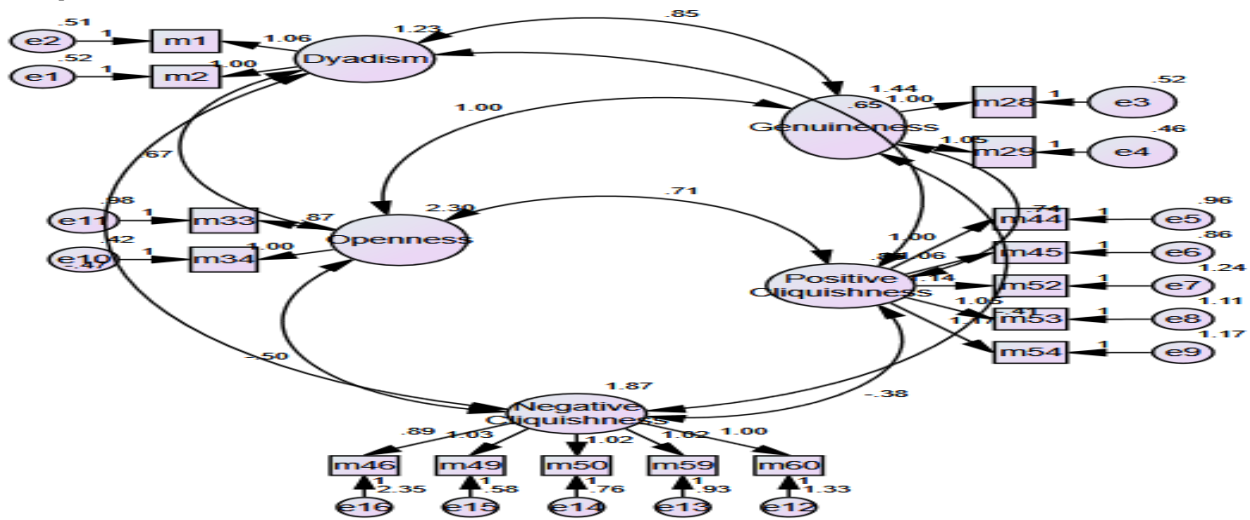


Figure 2 show that there are five subscales in SMI, confirmed by CFA. These subscales are 1) *Dyadism* expressed emotional interaction between the husband and the wife. 2) *Genuineness* expressed authenticity in terms of being oneself as honestly as possible in a relationship of one spouse with another. 3) *Openness* expressed as free sharing of ideas and opinions of one spouse with another. 4) *Positive Cliquishness* referred to the healthy interaction of the spouse as one unit with the close family and close friends. 5) *Negative Cliquishness* referred to unhealthy interaction of the spouse as one unit with the close family members and close friends. Table 5 indicated that the total scale and subscales, dyadism, genuineness, openness, and positive cliquishness have a significant positive relationship with each other whereas negative cliquishness is negatively correlated with all other subscales. The presence of significant correlation coefficient among the whole scale and its subscales supported adequate construct validity. The value of Cronbach's alpha demonstrated that all subscales and total scales have sufficient reliability.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation Coefficients and Cronbach's Alpha Reliabilities of the Subscales and Scale of Marital Intimacy (N=250).

Subscales/scale	k	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	α
1. Dyadism	2	11.24	2.49	.55**	.35**	.53**	-.25**	.54**	0.83
2. Genuineness	2	11.24	2.66		.46**	.56**	-.20**	.63**	0.86
3. Openness	2	10.49	3.07			.43**	-.21**	.54**	0.85
4. Positive Cliquishness	5	26.61	5.53				-.24**	.71**	0.82
5. Negative Cliquishness	5	13.65	7.24					.37**	0.89
6. Total SMI	16	73.24	11.24						0.74

Note: k= No. of items; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

4. Discussion

4.1. Scale Development Process

The primary aim of the present research study was to develop and to establish sound psychometric properties of SMI for married couples in Urdu. The deductive approach of scale development yielded item pool of 65 items, subjected to expert evaluation. Expert evaluation is considered crucial step in scale development that ensures validity and appropriateness of the items intended to measure a construct (Lamm, Lamm, & Edgar, 2020). In total, 60 items were finalized for the Scale of Marital Intimacy on a seven point Likert scale categories starting with strongly disagree to strongly agree. Hereafter, a try-out study was conducted with 60 items in which 54 items were showed ≥ 0.30 item-total correlation coefficient and 0.96 Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The item-total correlation coefficient greater than and equal to 0.30 is considered acceptable for retention of the items to conduct EFA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore, six items were removed and EFA was carried out on 54 items.

The results of the present study revealed 0.935 KMO value and $p < 0.001$ Bartlett's test of sphericity which specified the adequacy of the sample size and suitability of the data for exploratory factor analysis. These values are consistent with the recommended range of acceptability of values for KMO (greater than or equal to 0.90) and significant of p-value for Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1974). EFA indicated that SMI consists of five subscales and CFA confirmed 16 items in these subscales; Dyadism (item no. 1 and 2), Genuineness (item no. 28 and 29), Openness (item no. 33 and 34), Positive Cliquishness (item no. 44, 45, 52, 53, and 54) and Negative Cliquishness (item no. 46, 49, 50, 59, and 60). In addition, CFA revealed 0.92, 0.92, 0.90, and 0.08 model fit indices for CFI, IFI, TLI, and RMSEA respectively in the present study. These values are in acceptable ranges as recommended by the experts (Bentler, 1990; Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). The correlation coefficients and reliability coefficients for subscales and scale are in acceptable range (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Further, SMI with dyadism, genuineness, openness, and positive cliquishness in the present study confirmed the dyadic level, authenticity, openness, and exclusiveness in the marital intimacy model (Van den Broucke, Vertommen, et al., 1995).

However, negative cliquishness emerged as a distinct subscale in Pakistan that was not present in Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, and Vertommen's model for marital intimacy. The reason is attributable to the cultural differences between the East and the West in terms of collectivism and individualism respectively (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). In the Western cultures, individual is considered to be an independent entity and distinct from others. Therefore, he or she can express the desires, wishes, and can made individual decisions in any matter of life. On the other hand, Eastern cultures insist on the interdependence of people that give rise to production of harmony and fitting in the group. Thus, the individuals are not free to make independent self-expression and decisions (Fatehi, Priestley, & Taasoobshirazi, 2020). It implied that negative interactions (emotional expression) between the spouses are inevitable from concealment in front of the relatives and close friends in Pakistan, giving rise to the negative cliquishness as a distinct subscale. However, in Europe the individualistic culture masked the negative emotional expression of an individual in front of the family and friends.

4.2. Cultural Implications of the Findings

The marital intimacy model comprised of: 1) dyadic components of emotions, cognitions, and behaviours expressions between the husbands and the wives, 2) the individual level of authenticity and openness, and 3) the exclusive level of interaction of spouses either as

"I" or "We" with others (family and friends) (Van den Broucke, Vertommen, et al., 1995). In Pakistan, the CFA revealed that dyadism contained only emotional expression component between the couples. This finding signifies the importance of oral cultural expressive norms that emphasize emotions over cognitions and behaviours in Pakistan. Practicality in terms of behavioural actions and thought processing in terms of cognitions are less likely to be pondered upon in Pakistani social norms of interaction than emotional expression and validation. That is why cognitive and behavioural components were absent in Pakistani model of marital intimacy. Several studies posited emotions to be a crucial aspect of relational closeness among couples. Emotional engagement between the couples is considered to serve as glue for them to stick with each other (Finzi, Cohen, & Ram, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 1987; Vannoy, 2000). This might be the reason for low divorce rate in collectivistic culture of East as compared to individualistic culture of the West (Toth & Kemmelmeier, 2009).

In Pakistani context, the close intimacy between the spouses is evitable for contentment and commitment within the perspective of the religion (Ahmad & Ahmed, 2021). Intimacy, or more precisely love, as reflected in *understanding* between the couples inculcate a sense of hope for commitment that persists within the constraints of social behaviour exhibited in front of the others (family and friends) (Maqsood, 2021a). Pakistan has a collectivistic culture, yet the intimacy between spouses demand an equilibrium-balanced midway between the extremities of individualism and collectivism (Maqsood, 2021b). Perhaps that is a reason inevitably explaining the emergence of negative cliquishness as a separate and distinct factor in the present study whereas rest of the factors (especially emotional component of dyadic; authentic and openness components of individuality; and positive comment of exclusiveness) are akin to the Western model of marital intimacy. Nevertheless, the difference existed in exclusive expression of close relational interaction expressed as we in Pakistan, unlike "My partner and I" (Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, et al., 1995) in the West. It is noteworthy that the negative cliquishness is experienced with the close family friends and significant family members in Pakistan, unlike indistinguishable boundary between close and far-off friends and relatives in marital intimacy model by Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, et al. (1995). Anyhow, marital intimacy predicted marital satisfaction among couples in Pakistan (Makhdoom & Malik, 2019) as it thrive to seek balance between the fabricate extremities of collectivism and individualism.

The Marital Intimacy Scale (Walker & Thompson, 1983) has been used in several studies to assess the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on marital intimacy among couples in Iran (Ebadi, Pasha, Hafezi, & Eftekhari, 2018; Maleki, Madahi, Mohammadkhani, & Khala'tbari, 2017; Zakhirehdari, Navabinejad, & Koraei, 2019). Similarly, *Experiences in Close-Relationships - Revised Questionnaire* (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) and *ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale* (Fowers & Olson, 1989) have been used in Pakistan to investigate marital intimacy in several studies (Ali, Zeb, & Arzeen, 2023; Atta, Adil, Shujja, & Shakir, 2013; Hayee & Kamal, 2023). These Westernized scales provide the findings that might not capture the indigenous essence and meanings in one's socio-cultural context. Therefore, the development of SMI is useful tool for the local researchers to use for therapeutic intervention pre-test and post-test assessment of the differences in the level of relational closeness among couples in Pakistan.

5. Conclusion

Scale of Marital Intimacy (SMI) with five subscales, is a sound reliable measurement to assess the level of closeness in relationship among married couples in Pakistan. The values of KMO in EFA and model fit indices in CFA are in acceptable ranges. Thus, SMI holds sound psychometric properties for further use in research. The implications of the findings suggest significance for psychotherapeutic intervention in married couples to uplift their relationship. The scores obtained with SMI would reveal the levels of marital closeness (low, average, high) among the couples. This would be fruitful for devising the therapeutic techniques and strategies that would enhance marital satisfaction in husbands and wives. Consequently, the beneficiary aspects include reduction in the divorce rate by provision of counselling and psychotherapies among couples. SMI is a useful instrument in the context of assessment and intervention for couples in Pakistan.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions

The sample size is small in the present study, therefore, future research could be planned with large sample size. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Future research plan could use cluster sampling and could include various significant geographical cities in Punjab. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings. The present study has focused on Gujrat only. However, future studies could include adaptation of SMI when used in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Sindh, and Azad Kashmir based on the cultural sensitive elements of expressing closeness in marital relationships among couples in other provinces of Pakistan.

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