

## Trust, Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among Young Adults

Diya M. Jain<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Every individual wants to love and be loved. This feeling of connection with someone is called a relationship. For any relationship to thrive and sustain, there must be communication, love, trust, intimacy and respect. The present study examines 'Trust, Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among Young Adults'. The study aimed at finding the relationship between trust and relationship satisfaction, intimacy and relationship satisfaction, and trust and intimacy; and whether there are any differences with respect to trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction respectively between males and females. The data was collected from the age group 18-24 young adults via Google form. The sample size of this study consists of 186 young adults who are currently dating/in a serious relationship/in a live-in relationship/engaged or married. The tools used in this research were Trust in Close Relationships Scale (Rempel, Holmes and Zanna, 1985), Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (Schaefer and Olson, 1981), and Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrik, 1988). In data analysis, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method and t-test was carried forward in SPSS 26.0. Results suggested that a significant positive correlation exists between trust and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .644$ ), intimacy and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .671$ ), and trust and intimacy ( $r = .661$ ) significant at 0.01 level of significance. The t-test revealed that there are no differences between males and females with regards to trust ( $t = -.312$ ), intimacy ( $t = -.783$ ) and relationship satisfaction ( $t = .329$ ) which shows ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Relationship, Trust, Intimacy, Relationship Satisfaction, Young Adults

Love is one of the various heartfelt and deepest emotion known to humans. There are many types and kinds of love, but most people try to find its declaration in a romantic relationship. For these people, romantic relationships encompass one of the most significant aspects of life, and are a source of immeasurable fulfillment.

Relationship satisfaction is an interpersonal assessment of one's partner's positive feelings and attractiveness to the relationship (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993). A satisfying relationship is essential for the health status and quality of life of both the partners

<sup>1</sup>M.A Psychology, Symbiosis College of Arts & Commerce, Pune, Maharashtra, India; Career Counselor, Mentoria Pvt Ltd

\*Corresponding Author

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(Hinchliff & Gott, 2004; Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003; Impett, Finkel, Strachman, & Gable, 2008).

Some specific features of romantic relationships such as love, commitment, communication, trust, and intimacy can provide relative influence in the evaluation and analysis of the quality of a relationship. Relationship satisfaction is adjustment (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Relationship satisfaction means functioning and well-being (Honeycutt, 1986; Acitelli, 1992).

Theories suggest that prominent qualities like the ability to resolve conflicts, commitment, love, intimacy, trust etc. lead to satisfaction in a relationship. It is not just the qualities that determine satisfaction in a relationship, but also the degree to which these expectations are met by their actual experiences.

Trust and intimacy are two of the most important elements in a relationship and it is difficult for a relationship to thrive without these.

Trust is the mutual confidence which indicates that no individual will make use of another individual's weakness (Sabel, 1993). Trust opens the lines of interaction (Wong et al., 2000), whereas the absence of trust forms an obstacle to effective interactions (McDermott et al., 2004). It is in coexistence with love and commitment as a foundation of a quintessential relationship (C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick, 1983). It is the confidence that an individual will find what is desired from another individual, rather than what is feared (Deutsch, 1973).

Trust between couples is a requirement for balanced and satisfactory romantic relationships. It evolves out of past experience and prior associations. Thus, it develops and grows as the relationship matures. Dispositional elements/features are made to the partner, such that they are regarded as dependable, predictable, and faithful.

The experience of intense feelings of closeness, connectedness and bonding is known as intimacy (Sternberg, 1986). Main and most contributions to relationship quality are made by the couple's emotional intimacy (Levine, 1991; Prager, 1997; Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day & Gangamma, 2014). Intimacy is the process of rapport building that enables humans to comfortably open up about previously suppressed ideas, thoughts and feelings. Intimate interactions serve as the basis for deep conversations that bind individuals' together (Moore, 1985).

Intimacy is words and actions, sharing pain and sadness, feelings and experiences, hard work and humor, happiness and love, etc. Intimacy is not just sexual, but can also be a reassuring touch, listening to a partner and allowing them to be vulnerable. It is a way of letting someone know that they are loved and accepted in spite of the flaws and imperfections. It is a process that occurs over time and is never fully accomplished or completed. Humans need and desire different degrees of intimacy. There is no specified amount of intimacy an individual requires.

Relationship satisfaction is the most accurate predictor and interpreter of relationship stability (Horn et al., 1997). A research conducted on online relationships found that communication satisfaction, trust, and intimacy are the most powerful predictors of relationship satisfaction (Anderson et al., 2006).

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Absence of gender differences was identified in passion among adolescents and adults (Falconi & Mullet, 2003; Gao, 2001; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986) and it was evident in other researches that gender roles have shifted (Connolly et al., 1999; Ha et al., 2010; Levesque, 1993; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). There were no gender differences (Connolly et al., 1999; Gao, 2001; Ha et al., 2010) found in commitment and intimacy (Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Gao, 2001).

In terms of trust, this paper aims at showing how dependability, predictability and faith play an important role in relationship satisfaction.

In terms of intimacy, the paper will show how emotional intimacy, social intimacy, sexual intimacy, intellectual intimacy and recreational intimacy play a crucial role in relationship satisfaction among young adults.

It will also intend to show that there is no difference between males and females with respect to trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

### *Need for the study*

The present research explored the significant relation of trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged between 18-24 years. It aims at finding out how trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction are interdependent on each other in romantic relationships, such as, couples who are dating, those in a serious relationship/live-in relationship, and those who are engaged or married.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### *Aim*

The study aims to explore the relationship between trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults.

### *Objectives*

- To study the relationship between trust and relationship satisfaction among young adults.
- To study the relationship between intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults.
- To study the relationship between trust and intimacy among young adults.
- To study the difference between males and females with respect to trust.
- To study the difference between males and females with respect to intimacy.
- To study the difference between males and females with respect to relationship satisfaction.

### *Hypotheses*

Ho1: There is a significant correlation between trust and relationship satisfaction among young adults.

Ho2: There is a significant correlation between intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults.

Ho3: There is a significant correlation between trust and intimacy among young adults.

Ho4: There is no difference between males and females with respect to trust.

Ho5: There is no difference between males and females with respect to intimacy.

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Ho6: There is no difference between males and females with respect to relationship satisfaction.

### *Participants and Procedure*

The total sample size was  $N = 186$ , and consisted of 94 males and 92 females who were either dating or were in a serious relationship/live-in relationship or were engaged/married, and in the age range between 18 to 24 years. With the use of snowball sampling technique, the data was collected from males and females who are currently in a romantic relationship. Structured and Standardized Questionnaires were sent across via Google forms and those who met the inclusion criteria were selected.

The consent was acquired from the participants. The participants were granted confidentiality of their personal details and responses. The questionnaires were administered individually, and any questions and doubts were clarified. The data collected was then examined through statistical analyses.

### *Tools*

**Trust in Close Relationships Scale:** Trust in Close Relationships Scale developed by Rempel, J.K., Holmes, J.G. and Zanna, M.P in 1985, a 17-item scale is used for assessment of trust. The scale is divided into 3 subscales viz., predictability, dependability, and faith. The positive items are 1-3, 7-13, and 15-17. The negative items are 4-6, and 14.

Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale which range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for positive items, and 7 (strongly disagree) to 1 (strongly agree) for negative items. High scores reflect better trust in a relationship.

The overall Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be .81, along with subscale reliabilities of .80 for faith, .72 for dependability, and .70 for predictability.

**Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale:** Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale developed by Schaefer, M.T. and Olson, D.H. in 1981, a 36-item scale is used for the assessment of intimacy. The scale has 5 factors viz., emotional intimacy, social intimacy, sexual intimacy, intellectual intimacy, recreational intimacy, and one "faking" scale. The positive items are 1-7, 15, 17-20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 30, 34, and 35. The negative items are 8-14, 16, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 31-33, and 36.

Items are rated on a 5-point scale which range from 1 (does not describe me/my relationship at all) to 5 (describes me/my relationship very well) for positive items, and 5 (does not describe me/my relationship at all) to 1 (describes me/my relationship very well) for the negative items. High scores reflect a better level of intimacy.

Items with the frequency split closest to 50%-50% were chosen. Responses of participants were factor analyzed using varimax rotation and principal factor rotation. The factor loading criterion level was .20. The test was found to have good reliability and has yielded good results in the past. Split-half method was used to determine reliability. Each subscale has a Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. Emotional scale, Social scale, Sexual scale, Intellectual scale, and Recreational scale have a coefficient of .75, .71, .77, .70, and .70 respectively.

**Relationship Assessment Scale:** The Relationship Assessment Scale developed by Hendrick, S.S. in 1988 is used for the assessment of relationship satisfaction. The positive items are 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. The negative items are 4 and 7.

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Items are rated on a 5-point rating scale which range from 1 (Option A) to 5 (Option E) for the positive items, and 5 (Option A) to 1 (Option E) for the negative items. Scores from 7-14 reflect low satisfaction, 15-21 reflect average satisfaction, and 22-35 reflect high satisfaction in a relationship. After adding up all the items, the total score is divided by 7 to get the mean score for each individual. If the average score for males and females is above 4.0, it means that they are better satisfied with their romantic relationship. If males score closer to 3.5 and females score below 3.5, it means that they have greater dissatisfaction with their romantic relationship.

The mean inter-item correlation was calculated to be .49 and Cronbach's alpha was .86. The RAS test-retest reliability was .85.

### *Data Analysis*

With the help of SPSS 26.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, statistical analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method was applied in SPSS to find the correlation between trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults. T-test was employed, which is a procedure for comparing the means of two groups. It was employed to test the difference between the two groups of young adults, that is, males and females, with respect to trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

### *Ethical Statement*

Confidentiality and the purpose of the research were briefed to all participants in the header of the form, where they were given an option to withdraw their participation or contact the researcher in case of any queries. The research was done as a part of Master's dissertation and was reviewed by the scientific committee of Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune. No potential physical or psychological risk was identified.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the total sample (N = 186)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>
Trust	Males	96.06	8.18	94
	Females	96.53	11.93	92
	Total	96.29	10.18	186
Intimacy	Males	139.89	16.78	94
	Females	141.92	18.56	92
	Total	140.89	17.67	186
Relationship Satisfaction	Males	30.34	3.76	94
	Females	30.16	3.58	92
	Total	30.25	3.66	186

Table 1 indicates the descriptive statistics of (N = 186) respondents. It shows levels of trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction between two groups, that is, males and females. Mean values of females for the variables trust and intimacy seem higher than the mean values of males. The mean value of males for the variable relationship satisfaction is greater than the mean value of females. The table also provides the standard deviations for each variable across the two groups. The mean score for males is 96.06, 139.89, and 30.34 for trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction respectively. The mean score for females is 96.53, 141.92, and 30.16 for trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction respectively. The total mean scores for males and females are 96.29 for trust, 140.89 for intimacy, and 30.25 for relationship satisfaction. Standard deviation scores for males are

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8.18, 16.78, and 3.76, and those for females are 11.93, 18.56, and 3.58 for trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction respectively. The total standard deviation value for trust is 10.18, intimacy is 17.67, and relationship satisfaction is 3.66.

**Table 2: Parametric Correlations (Pearson's  $r$ ) for Dependent Variables**

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1.Trust	186	96.29	10.18	1		
2.Intimacy	186	140.89	17.67	.661**	1	
3.Relationship Satisfaction	186	30.25	3.66	.644**	.671**	1

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

Table 2 provides for correlation. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was computed in order to measure the statistical relationship between the three variables, that is, trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. The table reveals that a significant positive correlation exists between intimacy and trust ( $r = .661$ ) and relationship satisfaction and trust ( $r = .644$ ). The table indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between trust and intimacy ( $r = .661$ ) and relationship satisfaction and intimacy ( $r = .671$ ). The table also reveals that there is a significant positive correlation between trust and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .644$ ) and intimacy and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .671$ ). All of these variables were found to be significant at the 0.01 level of significance. This indicates a high correlation between the dependent variables.

**Table 3: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation, and  $t$  Value of Trust, Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction for Males and Females**

Variables	Males		Females		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Trust	96.08	8.18	96.53	11.93	-.312
Intimacy	139.89	16.78	141.92	18.56	-.783
Relationship Satisfaction	30.34	30.16	3.76	3.58	.329

*Note.* Males  $n = 94$ , Females  $n = 92$ .

\*\* $p > 0.05$

Table 3 provides for Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and  $t$ -test for Equality of Means. Levene's Test of Equality for Variances tests the assumption of  $t$ -test that the variances of each variable are equal across the groups. If the Levene's test is significant, this indicates that the assumption has been violated. It was computed for all three dependent variables and the Levene's Statistic values, that is,  $F$  values were 12.97 for trust, .608 for intimacy, and .072 for relationship satisfaction. Levene's value should be insignificant for  $F$ , that is, ( $p > 0.05$ ). In case of trust, significance value is .000 that means equality of variance assumption has been violated ( $p < 0.05$ ). The significance value is .437 and .789 for intimacy and relationship satisfaction respectively. This indicates that the equality of variance assumption has not been violated ( $p > 0.05$ ) and Levene's values are insignificant.

Table 3 indicates  $t = -.312$  for trust,  $t = -.783$  for intimacy, and  $t = .329$  for relationship satisfaction. The  $df$  value is 184. The significance (2-tailed) value for  $t$  should be ( $p < 0.05$ ) in order for the  $t$  values to be significant and to have differences between the two groups (males and females) with respect to the three variables. In the case of trust, the significance value is .755, for intimacy it is .435, and for relationship satisfaction it is

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.742. It indicates that all three values are higher than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the  $t$ -test is not significant. Thus, it indicates that there are no differences between males and females with respect to their trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction in a romantic relationship. Males and females are equal in their levels of trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

**Table 4: Tests of Normality**

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Trust	.061	186	.085	.983	186	.021
Intimacy	.076	186	.010	.975	186	.002
Relationship Satisfaction	.123	186	.000	.938	186	.000

*Lilliefors Significance Correction*

Table 4 indicates that the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used to examine the normality of the data. Normality of the variables was tested with the help of normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Skewness values were -.366 for trust, -.436 for intimacy, and -.681 for relationship satisfaction. Kurtosis values were -.123 for trust, -.416 for intimacy, and -.019 for relationship satisfaction. Therefore, Skewness and Kurtosis values were well within the range of -1 to +1 and -2 to +2 respectively.

**Figure 1. Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Trust**

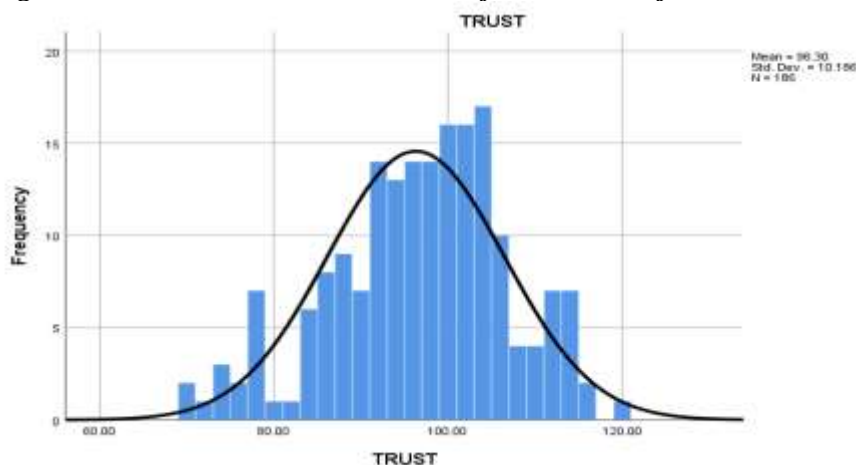


Figure 1 represents the Q-Q plot and Histograms superimposed with Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Trust. The Skewness value is -.366 and Kurtosis value is -.123 for Trust. Therefore, the Skewness and Kurtosis values were well within the range of -1 to +1 and -2 to +2 respectively.

**Figure 2. Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Intimacy**

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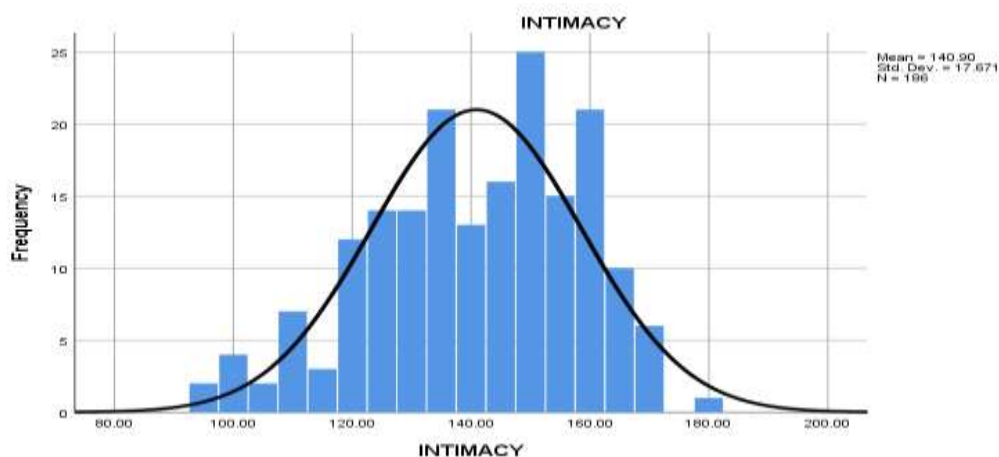


Figure 2 represents the Q-Q plot and Histograms superimposed with Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Intimacy. The Skewness value is  $-.436$  and Kurtosis value is  $-.416$  for Intimacy. Therefore, the Skewness and Kurtosis values were well within the range of  $-1$  to  $+1$  and  $-2$  to  $+2$  respectively.

**Figure 3. Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Relationship Satisfaction**

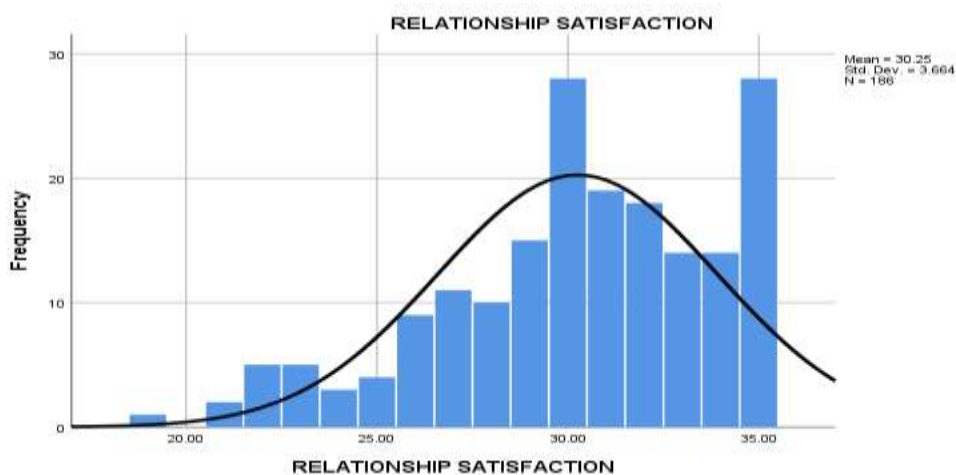


Figure 3 represents the Q-Q plot and Histograms superimposed with Normal Distribution Curve for the data of Relationship Satisfaction. The Skewness value is  $-.681$  and Kurtosis value is  $-.091$  for Relationship Satisfaction. Therefore, the Skewness and Kurtosis values were well within the range of  $-1$  to  $+1$  and  $-2$  to  $+2$  respectively. These 3 figures also indicate that the data fulfills the normality assumptions, thus, satisfies the requirement of the parametric test ( $t$ -test).

## DISCUSSION

The  $H_0$  stating that 'There is a significant correlation between trust and relationship satisfaction among young adults' was accepted. The results in Table 2 indicate that a significant positive correlation exists between trust and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .644$ ) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where trust is correlated with relationship satisfaction. The measures of relational trust were significantly related to relationship quality (Couch & Jones, 1997). Rempel et al. (2001)



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studied that attributional statements expressed in high trust relationships emphasized positive aspects of a relationship. Research also showed that trust, intimacy, and communication turned out to be the strongest predictors of relationship satisfaction in online romantic relationships (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006).

The Ho2 stating that ‘There is a significant correlation between intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults’ was accepted. The results in Table 2 indicate that a significant positive correlation exists between intimacy and relationship satisfaction ( $r = .671$ ) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where intimacy is correlated with relationship satisfaction. Individuals with higher intimacy dating goals were more satisfied with their relationships than the ones with lower intimacy dating goals. The association between intimacy dating goals and relationship satisfaction was stronger among older participants (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). Love factors such as intimacy, passion, and commitment along with the physical factors such as hot, warm, and demonstrative showed a greater portion of variance in relationship satisfaction (Hill & Talmadge, 2009).

The Ho3 stating that ‘There is a significant correlation between trust and intimacy among young adults’ was accepted. The results in Table 2 indicate that a significant positive correlation exists between trust and intimacy ( $r = .661$ ) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where trust is correlated with intimacy. Research showed that trust, intimacy, and communication turned out to be the strongest predictors of relationship satisfaction in online romantic relationships (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006). In another study, communication satisfaction is predicted by trust, intimacy, and physical attraction (Anderson & Lynn, 2000).

The Ho4 stating that ‘There is no difference between males and females with respect to trust’ was accepted. The mean value of Trust in females was higher than the mean of males. The  $F$  value 12.97 with a  $df$  184, was found significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating the significant difference between males and females. But,  $t = -.312$ , and the significance value is .755, which shows that ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the results in Table 3 indicate that there are no differences between males and females with respect to their trust in a romantic relationship. Males and females are equal in their levels of trust in a romantic relationship.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where there are no differences between males and females apropos trust. Studies indicated that there were no significant gender differences found on any of the three factors, that is, dependability, predictability, and faith in the Trust Scale (Norris and Zweigenhaft, 1999).

The Ho5 stating that ‘There is no difference between males and females with respect to intimacy’ was accepted. The mean value of Intimacy in females was higher than the mean of males. But, the  $F$  value .608 with a  $df$  184, was found to be insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating no significant difference between males and females.  $t = -.783$ , and the significance value is .435, which shows that ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the results in Table 3

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indicate that there are no differences between males and females with respect to their intimacy in a romantic relationship. Males and females are equal in their levels of intimacy in a romantic relationship.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where there are no differences between males and females apropos intimacy. According to research, males and females had different means on intimacy with their same-sex friends but mentioned similar means with romantic partners. Results indicated that both males and females reported higher mean scores on intimacy with romantic partners than with friends (Salas and Ketzenberger, 2004). A positive correlation existed between both males and females on all the components of experienced intimacy and marital satisfaction, and no differences were shown between males and females for experienced intimacy and marital satisfaction (Greeff and Malherbe, 2011)

The Ho6 stating that 'There is no difference between males and females with respect to relationship satisfaction' was accepted. The mean value of relationship satisfaction in males was higher than the mean of females. The  $F$  value .072 with a  $df$  184, was found insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating no significant difference between males and females.  $t = .329$ , and the significance value is .742, which shows that ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the results in Table 3 indicate that there are no differences between males and females with respect to their relationship satisfaction in a romantic relationship. Males and females are equal in their levels of relationship satisfaction in a romantic relationship.

The findings of the present research were consistent with earlier studies, where there are no differences between males and females apropos relationship satisfaction. Studies showed that relationship beliefs along with relationship experience were associated with relationship satisfaction. This accounted for more than 50% of the variance in satisfaction for both males and females (Frazier and Esterly, 1990). Another study indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between types of love and relationship satisfaction. The t-test results showed that there were no gender differences in types of love and relationship satisfaction (Kochar and Sharma, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

### *Limitations*

- The age group included in the study was 18 to 24 years and thus, the possibility of obtaining slightly varying results on the elder population cannot be ruled out.
- There still remains scope to increase the hypotheses by changing the grouping structure under relationship status.
- The sample size comprises 186 people in total. Therefore, one should cautiously look at the data and computed values while making generalizations.
- Limited number of variables was considered due to constraint of time.

### *Implications*

- Obtained results can help counselors in solving relationship issues and strengthen them:
- Young adults can nourish and build their relationship by knowing the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship.
- Young adults can be made aware of the qualities of their relationship which will help them to gain a better insight about their relationship.

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- Young adults can figure out ways to solve conflicts in their relationships.
- It can help in premarital and marital counseling.
- It can also help in divorce counseling so that the partners can find a way to talk to each other and resolve the issues.

### *Suggestions*

- Interaction between age and gender can be studied in terms of relationship satisfaction.
- More variables like passion, commitment, affection, support, etc. can be included in the study.
- Research can be done on how to increase the level of trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction.
- A wider sample can be studied.
- Even number of responses can be taken under each category to conduct hypothesis testing on relationship status.
- Age group can be increased in order to draw better conclusions.
- Qualitative research can be done by developing self-made tools.

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of the current study was to understand and explore the relationship of trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction among young adults who are currently involved in a romantic relationship. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between Trust and Relationship Satisfaction, a strong positive correlation between Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction, and a strong positive correlation between Trust and Intimacy. The *t*-test revealed that there are no differences between males and females with regards to trust, intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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