

Relationship Between Relationship Closeness and Resilience Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience among young adults. A sample of 128 young adults was analyzed to examine whether higher levels of relationship closeness are associated with greater resilience. Descriptive statistics revealed that participants had an average relationship closeness score of 26.59 (SD = 6.310) and an average resilience score of 42.02 (SD = 8.383). Pearson correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive correlation between relationship closeness and resilience ($r = 0.374$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that individuals with closer relationships tend to exhibit higher resilience levels. The statistical significance of this correlation ($p < 0.01$) confirms that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. While the findings suggest that strong interpersonal connections may contribute to resilience, correlation does not imply causation. Other psychological and environmental factors may also influence resilience, warranting further investigation. This study highlights the potential benefits of fostering close relationships to enhance emotional strength and adaptability in young adults.

Keywords: *Relationship Closeness, Resilience, Interpersonal Relationships, Young Adults*

Relationship Closeness

Relationship closeness, in particular, has been identified as a crucial factor in enhancing resilience. Close relationships provide emotional support, which can buffer against stress and adversity (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Closeness in relationships is a multidimensional concept that refers to the depth, strength, and intimacy of an emotional connection between individuals, characterized by frequent interaction, mutual influence, emotional bonding, and shared understanding. Relationship closeness is a core contributor to personal well-being, social functioning, and resilience because interpersonal relationships can significantly impact psychological and emotional stability within an individual (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Close relationships familial, romantic or platonic are characterized by high levels of interdependence, where the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of one partner affect those of

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the other. Reis and Shaver (1988) posited that relationship closeness arises from repeated, caring exchanges of responsiveness, validation, and support that promote trust and a sense of safety. Certainly, this closeness is often indicative of depth, it involves being one's authentic self in a relationship, without fearing judgment or rejection.

The importance of relationship closeness is substantiated by attachment theory, which holds that relatively secure and close attachments formed early in life provide the psychological basis for resilience and healthy functioning across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1988). Securely attached individuals, who have often experienced higher levels of relationship closeness, are more adept at emotion regulation, stress management, and recovery from adverse experiences (Ainsworth, 1978; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Optimization of relationship closeness has been empirically shown to function as a protective factor in elevating resilience. For instance, Cohen and Wills (1985) revealed that supportive, close relationships buffer individuals from emotional disorders as a consequence of stress exposure. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) emphasized the importance of close relationships in accelerating emotional resilience through mechanisms such as emotion regulation, adaptive problem-solving, and the provision of social support.

Contemporary psychology has broadened the concept of relationship closeness beyond dyadic interactions to include the wider personal and social networks of individuals. Strong social ties across families and communities are increasingly regarded as critical social determinants of mental health and resilience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This broadened view underscores the significance of relationship closeness not only in intimate or familial settings but also in collective and community contexts.

Theoretical Foundations of Relationship Closeness:

Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) Model: The Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) model, developed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992), posits that closeness arises when individuals begin to incorporate aspects of their partner into their self-concept. This process of self-other merging reflects a cognitive representation of the partner as part of the self, promoting shared identity and deep interdependence. The IOS model illustrates how partners grow closer by adopting one another's perspectives, traits, and experiences as their own, which fosters emotional unity.

Social Penetration Theory: Altman and Taylor's (1973) Social Penetration Theory provides a developmental view of closeness, suggesting that intimacy increases progressively through reciprocal self-disclosure and vulnerability. According to the theory, interpersonal closeness grows as individuals move from superficial interactions to deeper emotional exchanges. This gradual process reflects an ongoing negotiation between autonomy and connection, wherein individuals become increasingly open as trust is established over time.

Attachment Theory: Attachment theory, first introduced by Bowlby (1969) and further expanded through the empirical work of Ainsworth (1978), emphasizes the role of early relational experiences in shaping adult close relationships. Individuals with secure attachment styles, typically developed through consistent, responsive caregiving are more likely to form emotionally close and trusting adult bonds. In contrast, anxious or avoidant attachment patterns may lead to difficulties in achieving and maintaining closeness, due to fear of rejection or discomfort with intimacy.

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Interdependence Theory: Kelley and Thibaut (1978) Interdependence Theory highlights the mutual influence that partners exert on each other's outcomes. Closeness, from this perspective, is cultivated through coordinated behaviors, shared decision-making, and aligned goals over time. As individuals become increasingly interdependent, they adjust their behaviors to optimize relational outcomes, reflecting a shift from individual to joint interests.

Self-Expansion Theory: The Self-Expansion Theory, introduced by Aron and Aron (1986), proposes that individuals seek close relationships to enhance their self-concept by gaining access to their partner's resources, perspectives, and identities. Closeness, therefore, is driven by a motivational process wherein individuals look to grow through intimate connections. The theory suggests that people are inherently drawn to relationships that offer opportunities for personal development and mutual enrichment.

Triangular Theory of Love: Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love conceptualizes romantic closeness as comprising three core components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Intimacy, which involves emotional closeness and connectedness, is central to deep relational bonds. According to this model, the ideal form of love termed consummate love emerges when all three components are present in balance, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of relationship closeness.

Equity Theory: Equity Theory, developed by Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978), focuses on the perceived fairness in relational exchanges. The theory posits that individuals experience greater satisfaction and closeness in relationships where contributions and rewards are balanced. Perceptions of inequity whether being over-benefited or under-benefited can lead to emotional distress and a weakening of relational bonds. Thus, fairness and mutual benefit are critical to sustaining closeness over time.

Resilience

Resilience refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, or systems to adapt positively in the face of adversity, significant stressors, or challenges. It is understood as a dynamic and evolving process that involves the interplay of internal psychological strengths, external resources, and broader environmental contexts. These combined factors enable individuals and systems to not only recover from hardships but also to thrive and grow through adversity (Masten, 2014). Rooted in psychology, sociology, and systems theory, resilience is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in understanding how people and systems navigate life's complexities and uncertainties.

Resilience is characterized by positive adaptation and the capacity to maintain or regain mental health and well-being despite significant stress or trauma. Masten (2001) famously described resilience as "ordinary magic," emphasizing that it arises from normal human adaptive processes rather than extraordinary or rare traits. This perspective highlights that resilience is accessible to most people through the availability of supportive relationships, community resources, and individual coping mechanisms.

Resilience is a vital concept that bridges disciplines and informs strategies for fostering well-being in the face of adversity. Its dynamic and multifaceted nature reflects the interplay between individual strengths, relational support, and environmental resources.

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Theoretical Foundations of Resilience:

Ecological Systems Theory: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory posits that resilience is shaped by the dynamic interplay between individuals and the multiple environments they inhabit. These environments include the microsystem (e.g., family), mesosystem (e.g., community networks), and macrosystem (e.g., societal norms and structures). In this view, resilience emerges through the availability and quality of social support, as well as the broader ecological context in which individuals develop.

Developmental Perspective: Resilience is also understood from a developmental perspective, which highlights how protective and risk factors interact across the lifespan. According to Werner and Smith (1982), longitudinal research demonstrates that positive developmental outcomes often emerge despite exposure to adversity, depending on factors such as age, life stage, and context. For example, supportive caregiving during early childhood or mentoring relationships during adolescence can buffer against risks such as trauma, poverty, or discrimination.

Stress and Coping Theories: Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define resilience as closely linked to effective coping mechanisms. Their transactional model of stress and coping emphasizes that resilience involves both cognitive appraisals of stressors and the ability to implement strategies like emotional regulation and problem-solving. These skills enable individuals to mitigate stress and enhance self-regulation in the face of adversity.

Biopsychosocial Model: The biopsychosocial model views resilience as a multidimensional process, influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. From this perspective, genetic predispositions, such as temperament, interact with psychological resources like optimism and self-efficacy, as well as environmental supports including relationships and community connections (Engel, 1977). This model emphasizes that resilience is not a static trait but a dynamic interaction of various systems.

Positive Psychology Perspective: The positive psychology movement views resilience not merely as recovery from adversity but as growth through it. Seligman (2011) argues that resilience is grounded in human strengths such as hope, gratitude, and meaning-making. Rather than focusing on pathology, this perspective encourages interventions that cultivate well-being and psychological growth even in the aftermath of trauma.

Components of Resilience

Resilience is shaped by a combination of personal, relational, and environmental factors categorized as:

- **Internal Factors:** Internal factors include psychological strengths and biological mechanisms that facilitate adaptive responses. Psychological traits such as optimism, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility are central to resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). These characteristics enable individuals to reframe challenges and engage in effective problem-solving. In addition to psychological resources, biological factors such as genetic predispositions and neurobiological responses to stress (e.g., hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis regulation) influence how individuals recover from adversity (Feder et al., 2009).
- **External Factors:** External factors include supportive social relationships and access to community resources. Emotional and instrumental support from family, friends, and mentors provides a buffer against stress and fosters resilience through validation, guidance, and care (Werner & Smith, 1992). Community-level supports such as

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access to healthcare, education, safe environments, and public assistance systems also play a significant role in enhancing resilience, especially in under-resourced populations (Masten & Obradović, 2008).

- **Cultural and Contextual Influences:** Culture significantly shapes how resilience is understood and enacted. Cultural norms, values, and traditions influence coping styles, emotional expression, and the perception of adversity. In collectivist societies, for instance, resilience may be deeply rooted in community-based coping strategies and interdependent roles (Ungar, 2008). These cultural and contextual elements are essential for a more inclusive and globally relevant understanding of resilience.

Applications of resilience:

- **Individual level:** Resilience can be promoted through psychological and behavioral interventions that enhance emotional regulation, stress management, and self-efficacy (Southwick et al., 2014). These approaches empower individuals to adapt effectively to life's challenges and maintain mental well-being.
- **Community level:** Resilience is fostered through policy initiatives and programs that strengthen social cohesion, enhance access to resources, and support disaster preparedness and recovery. Community-based resilience efforts often involve creating supportive environments that encourage collective coping and mutual aid (Norris et al., 2008).
- **Organizational contexts:** Resilience is nurtured through leadership practices that prioritize employee well-being, promote flexibility, and cultivate a positive and adaptive workplace culture. Supportive organizational systems can buffer employees against occupational stressors and promote long-term sustainability (Rees et al., 2015).
- **Global level:** Resilience-informed strategies are increasingly vital in addressing widespread and systemic challenges such as climate change, public health crises (e.g., pandemics), and economic disruptions. These strategies require coordinated efforts among governments, institutions, and global networks to promote adaptability, equity, and sustainability in the face of complex global risks (Folke et al., 2010).

Challenges and Critiques

The overemphasis on individual-level resilience, which may inadvertently obscure or minimize the influence of broader systemic and structural barriers such as poverty, inequality, racism, and institutional discrimination (Joseph, 2013; Ungar, 2011). By focusing narrowly on personal attributes and coping mechanisms, resilience discourse can shift responsibility from social systems to individuals, implying that failure to thrive in adverse conditions reflects personal inadequacy rather than structural injustice.

The cultural variability in defining and expressing resilience. Much of the existing literature on resilience has been developed within Western, individualistic contexts, which may not be universally applicable to collectivist cultures that emphasize interdependence and community-based coping strategies (Theron, 2016).

There is growing awareness of the phenomenon of “resilience fatigue,” wherein individuals or communities are continually expected to adapt to chronic adversity without adequate systemic or institutional support (Neenan, 2009). This expectation can lead to emotional

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exhaustion and disillusionment, particularly when support mechanisms are lacking or unevenly distributed.

How Relationship Closeness Enhances Resilience?

Social support as a buffer: Close relationships provide emotional support, practical help, and a sense of belonging, all of which help buffer against stress and foster resilience. Supportive partners or friends can reduce the psychological impact of adversity by offering encouragement and perspective (Cohen & Wills, 1985)

Attachment theory: According to attachment theory, secure attachment in close relationships enhances resilience by offering a reliable sense of comfort and safety. Individuals with secure attachments tend to seek support and regulate their emotions more effectively during stressful situations (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Coping Modeling: Close relationships can model adaptive coping strategies. By observing how resilient others manage stress, individuals can learn effective coping behaviors and build their own resilience (Bandura, 1986).

Close relationships can enhance resilience, and resilience can, in turn, strengthen relationships. Demonstrating the ability to endure crises often increases trust and respect, which reinforces relational closeness. This creates a positive feedback loop where resilience and relationship quality mutually support each other (Southwick et al., 2014; Masten & Reed, 2002).

Communities that emphasize interdependence tend to place greater value on relationships as central to resilience. In such contexts, extended family networks and community ties often serve as vital sources of strength and adaptive capacity (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Ungar, 2011). Closeness in relationships can serve as a protective factor, unhealthy or toxic relationships may have the opposite effect. Dynamics characterized by abuse, neglect, or chronic conflict can hinder the development of resilience and intensify psychological stress (Luthar & Brown, 2007; Evans et al., 2013).

Practical Implications

Therapeutic Interventions: Family and couple therapy frequently emphasizes the importance of enhancing relationship closeness as a strategy to build collective resilience. By improving communication, trust, and emotional support within these relational systems, therapeutic approaches can help families and couples better navigate shared stressors and crises (Walsh, 2016).

Community Support Systems: At the broader social level, fostering strong community networks and encouraging engagement in communal activities are vital for promoting both individual and collective resilience. Supportive community structures such as peer groups, neighborhood associations, or cultural organizations provide social capital that individuals can draw upon during times of adversity (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Ungar, 2011).

Objective

- To investigate the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience in dating couples.

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Hypothesis

- There will be a positive correlation between relationship between relationship closeness and resilience among young adults.

METHOD

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience in dating couples.

Participants

The study involved 128 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years, a demographic considered significant for studying relationship closeness and resilience. Participants were both male and female and are currently in romantic relationships. Inclusion criteria required participants to be within the specified age range and currently in a romantic relationship for a minimum 6 months. Those under 18 and above 25 and those who are not in a romantic relationship and students diagnosed with psychological disorders that might impair their understanding of the study were excluded.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited online using convenience sampling. A link to the online form was shared on social media platforms and university student groups. Eligible participants were young adults aged 18–25 who could understand English and had internet access. Respondents were encouraged to share the form with peers who met the criteria. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and required informed consent before beginning the survey. Data collection was conducted through a secure online platform.

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience among young adults. Data were collected using standardized self-report measures distributed through an online survey. The design was chosen to assess the strength and direction of the association between the two variables without manipulating any conditions.

Measures

- **Relationship Closeness** was measured using **The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)** developed by Susan S. Hendrick in 1988. This tool consists of seven items, uses a 5-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate greater satisfaction. The scale has demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$ to 0.90).
- **Resilience** was assessed using the **Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ)** developed by Nicholson McBride. This questionnaire consists of 12 self-report items, each rated on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater resilience. This scale indicates acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$ to 0.80).

Statistical Analysis

- **Descriptive statistics** were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and the main study variables.
- **Pearson's correlation coefficient** is used to examine the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience

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Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to ethical research guidelines. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. No personally identifying information was collected, and all data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

Procedure

The study was conducted entirely online to ensure accessibility and efficiency in data collection. After obtaining ethical approval, a digital survey was created using google forms and distributed via social media platforms and university networks. The survey began with an informed consent form outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Participants who consented proceeded to complete a questionnaire that included demographic questions and standardized scales like RAS and NMRQ. The estimated time for completion was approximately 10–15 minutes. Once the responses were submitted, data were securely stored and later exported for statistical analysis.

RESULT

This chapter presents the results of the study examining the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience in romantic relationships. The data was analyzed using SPSS software, and descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted to assess the levels and associations between variables.

Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Relationship Closeness	26.59	6.310	128
Resilience	42.02	8.383	128

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables relationship closeness and resilience. The given correlation data provides insight into the relationship between relationship closeness and resilience. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.374$) indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as relationship closeness increases, resilience also tends to increase. The p-value (0.000) is well below the 0.01 significance level, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This means the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance, providing strong evidence that relationship closeness and resilience are meaningfully related. Since the correlation value is positive, it implies that individuals who experience greater relationship closeness are likely to exhibit higher levels of resilience. However, while the correlation is moderate, it does not imply causation. Other factors may also contribute to resilience, and further research could explore additional variables influencing this relationship.

Inferential Statistics

Table 2 Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Relationship Closeness and Resilience

Dimension	Relationship closeness		
	N	r	Sig
Resilience	128	.374**	0.000

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

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Table 2 displays the results of the correlation analysis between relationship closeness and resilience. A moderate positive correlation was found ($r = .374, p = .000$), indicating that individuals who experience higher levels of relationship closeness also tend to report greater resilience. The p -value is well below the .01 significance level (two-tailed), suggesting that the association is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. A sample size of $N = 128$, the findings provide reliable evidence of a meaningful association. While the correlation is not strong, it supports the view that close interpersonal relationships may contribute to greater emotional strength and adaptability. It is important to note that this correlation does not imply causation; other factors may also influence resilience. Nonetheless, the results align with existing research highlighting the importance of social support in fostering psychological resilience.

DISCUSSION

Positive Correlation: Relationship Closeness and Resilience ($r = 0.374, p = 0.000$)

The study looks into the relationships between relationship closeness and resilience. The results show that individuals who report greater closeness in their relationships also tend to exhibit higher resilience levels. The study highlights a statistically significant and meaningful connection between relationship closeness and resilience, suggesting that individuals who maintain stronger interpersonal connections may be better equipped to handle stress, adversity, and life challenges. The findings indicate that close relationships provide emotional support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to an individual's ability to navigate difficulties and recover from setbacks. This study suggests that relationship closeness may serve as a protective factor, fostering a supportive environment where individuals can share their struggles, receive guidance, and gain emotional reassurance. When people feel understood, valued, and supported by those close to them, they are more likely to develop a positive mindset, problem-solving skills, and the confidence needed to overcome difficulties. The statistically significant correlation between relationship closeness and resilience reinforces the idea that social connections play a crucial role in mental well-being and personal growth. Those with strong, meaningful relationships may experience greater emotional regulation, reduced feelings of isolation, and an increased ability to cope with life's uncertainties. The results highlight the importance of relationship closeness in enhancing resilience which helps people manage setbacks, maintain emotional stability, and develop problem-solving skills, allowing them to navigate difficult situations with confidence. Strengthening relationship closeness can help individuals feel more resilient towards their life's setbacks and difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights a significant relationship between relationship closeness and resilience. The study shows that relationship closeness can enhance resilience among young adults. This study finds a moderate, statistically significant positive correlation between relationship closeness and resilience, suggesting that stronger interpersonal connections may enhance resilience. While the results confirm a meaningful association, they do not imply causation. These findings reinforce the importance of social support in fostering emotional strength and adaptability. The findings of this study have significant implications for mental health, relationship dynamics, and personal development, particularly in the context of young adults. The moderate positive correlation between relationship closeness and resilience suggests that fostering strong interpersonal connections can be an important factor in enhancing an individual's ability to cope with adversity and stress. This underscores the importance of social support networks, such as close friendships, family bonds, and romantic relationships, in promoting psychological well-being and emotional stability.

Gaps and future directions

Limited studies have specifically focused on the role of relationship closeness in fostering resilience, especially among young adults. Most existing studies generalize social support without addressing the emotional quality or depth of close relationships. Resilience research often centers on children or older adults, leaving a gap in understanding how relationship closeness influences resilience during young adulthood, a critical developmental stage. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the direct association between perceived relationship closeness and resilience in young adults. Future research is to differentiate between types of relationships, such as friendships, family bonds and romantic relationships, to understand which forms of closeness contribute most to resilience. Investigating the quality of relationships rather than just their closeness could provide more nuanced insights. Future studies could also examine how negative relationships factor (E.g. Toxic relationship or conflicts) might hinder resilience development.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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