

# Effectiveness of Intimacy Counseling in Improving Marital Satisfaction

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**Abstract**—Marital satisfaction is a central indicator of relational stability and psychological well-being. In collectivistic societies such as India, marital relationships are shaped by cultural norms, gender roles, and extended family involvement, which may influence emotional intimacy between partners. The present study examined the effectiveness of intimacy counseling in improving marital satisfaction among Indian married couples. A quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design was employed with 30 married couples (N = 60) recruited from urban counseling centers. Participants completed the Marital Satisfaction Scale and an Intimacy Assessment Questionnaire before and after an eight-week intimacy counseling intervention. Paired-sample t-tests revealed a significant increase in marital satisfaction,  $t(59) = 9.42, p < .001$ , with a large effect size (Cohen’s  $d = 1.21$ ). Emotional intimacy also improved significantly,  $t(59) = 10.18, p < .001$ . The findings support the effectiveness of intimacy counseling and highlight its applicability within non-Western cultural contexts.

**Index Terms**—intimacy counseling; marital satisfaction; emotional intimacy; couples therapy; India

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction has been consistently linked to mental health, life satisfaction, and family functioning. While marriage in India is traditionally viewed as a stable and enduring institution, contemporary couples face challenges related to work stress, changing gender roles, and reduced emotional communication. Emotional intimacy, defined as the capacity to share personal thoughts and feelings with a partner, is a critical predictor of marital quality. However, cultural norms in India may discourage open emotional expression, increasing the risk of marital dissatisfaction. Intimacy counseling seeks to address these challenges by strengthening emotional bonds and improving communication patterns.

Despite its growing clinical use, empirical evidence from Indian samples remains limited.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has demonstrated a strong association between intimacy and marital satisfaction. Emotionally focused couple interventions emphasize attachment security and emotional responsiveness as mechanisms for relationship improvement. Western studies report large and sustained effects of intimacy-based counseling on relationship outcomes. Emerging Indian research suggests that culturally sensitive interventions that balance traditional values with emotional expressiveness yield better outcomes. Nevertheless, experimental studies evaluating structured intimacy counseling in India are scarce, indicating a clear research gap.

## III. METHOD

### *Design and Participants.*

A quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design was adopted. The sample comprised 30 heterosexual married couples (N = 60) from urban regions of India. Participants were aged between 25 and 45 years, with marital duration ranging from 2 to 15 years. Couples reporting moderate marital dissatisfaction were selected using purposive sampling.

### *Measures.*

Marital satisfaction was assessed using the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), an Indian standardized measure with reported reliability coefficients above .80. Emotional intimacy was measured using the Intimacy Assessment Questionnaire, assessing emotional, psychological, and physical intimacy.

#### *Procedure and Ethics.*

Following informed consent, participants completed pre-test assessments. Couples then attended eight weekly intimacy counseling sessions lasting 60–90 minutes, focusing on emotional expression, empathy, trust-building, and conflict resolution. Post-test assessments were administered after the intervention. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for psychological research, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

#### IV. RESULTS

Marital satisfaction significantly improved from pre-test ( $M = 78.45$ ,  $SD = 8.62$ ) to post-test ( $M = 92.30$ ,  $SD = 7.95$ ). A paired-sample t-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant,  $t(59) = 9.42$ ,  $p < .001$ , with a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.21$ ; 95% CI [0.89, 1.53]). Emotional intimacy also showed a significant increase from pre-test ( $M = 65.20$ ,  $SD = 7.88$ ) to post-test ( $M = 81.75$ ,  $SD = 6.90$ ),  $t(59) = 10.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.31$ .

#### V. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that intimacy counseling is highly effective in enhancing marital satisfaction among Indian couples. The large effect sizes indicate clinically meaningful improvements. These results align with international literature on intimacy-based interventions and extend their applicability to collectivistic cultural settings. The structured counseling environment appeared to facilitate emotional expression that may otherwise be constrained by cultural norms.

#### VI. IMPLICATIONS

Clinically, the findings support the integration of intimacy counseling into marital and family therapy services in India. Culturally adapted intimacy-focused interventions may serve as preventive and remedial tools for marital distress. The study also contributes to cross-cultural counseling literature by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western context.

#### VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's limitations include a relatively small sample size and the absence of a control group. Future research should employ randomized controlled designs, larger samples, and longitudinal follow-ups to assess the durability of treatment effects.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

Intimacy counseling significantly improves marital satisfaction and emotional intimacy among Indian couples. The present findings underscore the relevance of intimacy-based therapeutic approaches across cultural contexts and support their broader application in marital counseling practice.

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