



Self-disclosure and Intimacy in Interpersonal Relationships: Role of Perceived Partner Responsiveness

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ABSTRACT: This paper deals with the study that examines self-disclosure and its relationship with intimacy in an interpersonal relationship. Also, the roles of perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) and the partner's self-disclosure are examined in relation to the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy. These are examined through a study based on the primary data collected from students studying in various universities across India using a Google form. The research shows that self-disclosure and the perceived partner's self-disclosure are essential in developing intimacy in a relationship. Likewise, perceived partner responsiveness (PPR), when interpreted as understanding, validating, and caring, significantly impacts the intimacy in a relationship. Further, the study also shows that emotional disclosures are more predictive than factual disclosures of intimacy in an interpersonal relationship.

KEYWORDS: Self-disclosure, Perceived Partner Responsiveness, Perceived Partner's Disclosure, Emotional Disclosure, Intimacy in Interpersonal Relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-disclosure is the "revealing personal information to others" (Gilbert, 1976). It helps develop intimacy in an interpersonal relationship (Jourard, 1971). Likewise, it is also significant, even from a health perspective. This is because withholding information about stressful and traumatic events may lead to psychological and physical problems, which are responsible for many suicides of students. On the other hand, disclosing may reduce the adverse effects of concealment (Greene et al., 2006). Further, there are two forms of self-disclosure: personal disclosure, i.e., mostly expressing factual thoughts and feelings, and relational or emotional disclosure, which focuses on one's relationship with another person (Greene et al., 2006). Thus, we discuss in this paper the impact of self-disclosure on intimacy in an interpersonal

relationship and compare which form of disclosure affects intimacy in a relationship more widely.

Perceived partner responsiveness (PPR), the perception that a partner understands, values, and responds supportively to one's needs, is another vital component that affects intimacy in an interpersonal relationship (Candel & Turliuc, 2021). This is endorsed by Reis and Shaver, who argue the significance of perceived partner responsiveness in the relationship between self-disclosure and the development of intimacy (Reis, 2018). Thus, despite many factors influencing disclosure, we study in this paper how perceptive partner responsiveness (PPR) and partner's disclosure play a significant role in disclosure leading to intimacy in an interpersonal relationship.

II. OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of this paper:

1. To find how the "perceived partner responsiveness" and "partner's disclosure" impact the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy in an interpersonal relationship.
2. To find which form of self-disclosure, factual or emotional, significantly impacts intimacy in an interpersonal relationship.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Altman and Taylor, in their book 'Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships,' put forward the 'self-penetration theory,' in which they argued that people have a highly organized system regarding information known to themselves and others in the form of a sphere. In a sphere with both breadth and depth, one could learn a wide range of things about another person (breadth) or more detailed information about one or two things (depth). Here, they also claim that the core of the sphere contains information far removed from what others can see or detect - the most personal aspects of one's identity, and thus,



one could know another person by 'penetrating' the sphere (Greene et al., 2006). This theory also asserts that people disclose information based on their analysis of costs and rewards, i.e., they reveal information if they feel the rewards (such as getting together) outweigh the costs (such as embarrassment) (Littlejohn et al., 2017). This theory's dialectics also form a base for Sandra Petronio's theory of privacy management, in which she explains how relationship partners rely on rules about control, ownership, and co-ownership of private information to open or close privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2013).

Laurenceau, Feldman Berrett, and Pietromonaco conducted two studies based on daily diary records illustrating partner's responsiveness to disclosure input contributes to the experience of intimacy in relationships and thus found that both self-disclosure and partner disclosure are significant predictors for intimacy. However, partner responsiveness also mediated the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy. Greater disclosure by self and partner disclosure was associated with a perception of more excellent responsiveness by the partner that, in turn, was associated with a perception of higher intimacy in the relationships (Laurenceau et al., 1998).

Zick Rubin examined the association between the level of self-disclosure to one's partner as positively associated with intimacy in a relationship (Rubin, 1970). Further, Reis & Patrick's interpersonal

process model of intimacy claims that intimacy develops through a dynamic process whereby an individual discloses personal information, leading to intimacy only when the perceived partner's responsiveness is interpreted as understanding, validating, and caring. Researchers have also distinguished between factual (descriptive) and emotional (evaluative) disclosure when examining the impact of self-disclosure in intimate relationships. Although both types of disclosures reveal private aspects of the self to others, self-disclosures involving emotions are believed to generate greater intimacy than merely factual ones (Reis, 2018).

IV. MATERIALS/METHODS

To assess the above objectives about the relationship among different variables, i.e., self-disclosure, perceived partner disclosure, partner's disclosure, and intimacy in an interpersonal relationship, we take into account a study based on the primary data collected from people aged 18-25 years studying in different universities across India like IIT Madras, JNU, NLUs, etc. In this study, people were asked to rate the extent of the impact of self-disclosure, emotional disclosure, and factual disclosure on the intimacy of a relationship, and also how a perceived partner's responsiveness and partner's disclosure impact the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy in an interpersonal relationship. The data collected can be seen below.

FIGURE 1:

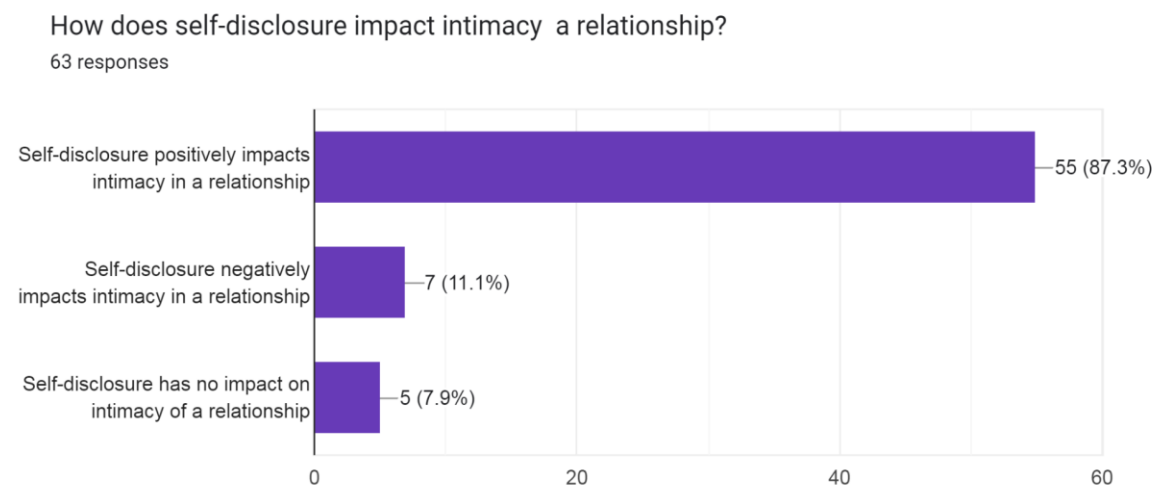




TABLE 1.2

VARIABLES	AVERAGE (On a scale of 1 to 5)
The extent of the positive impact of self-disclosure on intimacy in an interpersonal relationship	3.6
The extent of the impact of perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) on the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy in a relationship	3.7
The extent of the impact of a partner's disclosure on the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy in a relationship	3.63
The extent of the impact of factual disclosure on intimacy in an interpersonal relationship	3.28
The extent of the impact of emotional disclosure on intimacy in an interpersonal relationship	3.66

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1.2 and Figure 1 shows that many agree that "self-disclosure is positively associated with intimacy in a relationship to a large extent." Further, the table shows that Perceived Partner Responsiveness (PPR) and partner's disclosure affect the relationship between disclosure and intimacy in an interpersonal relationship. However, the impact of PPR on self-disclosure and, thus, on intimacy is comparatively more. Also, it shows that both factual and emotional disclosure affect intimacy in an interpersonal relationship, but the impact of emotional disclosure is more than factual disclosure.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study shows that self-disclosure is significant but insufficient to predict intimacy in interpersonal relationships. The findings also show a close correlation between self-disclosure and partner disclosure in predicting intimacy, supporting previous findings (Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1991); perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) was significantly related to intimacy in a relationship (Candel & Turliuc, 2021). Likewise, the study also shows that self-disclosure and partner disclosure significantly predicted intimacy in a relationship, but also shows that PPR plays an active role in this process, supporting the previous results and showing feelings of understanding, validation, and acceptance from the partner are extremely important in shaping intimacy in a relationship (Reis, 2018). The results of this study also support

the notion of previous studies (Reis, 2018) with regard to proving that emotional disclosures are more affirmative than factual disclosures in the intimacy of a relationship.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

From the above study, we can observe that the study is not focused on the differences between males and females in the impact of self-disclosure, the perceptive partner's disclosure, and the perceptive partner's responsiveness to the intimacy in a relationship (Candel & Turliuc, 2021). Further, it must be studied through research based on cultural criteria that influence self-disclosure and intimacy in the interpersonal relationship (Greene et al., 2006). Further, though the above study did not emphasize the inconsistencies, we could find that the strength of the relationships among self-disclosure, partner disclosure, partner responsiveness, and intimacy varies from person to person (Reis, 2018), which can be explored further by a study of the importance of relative importance of the two components in the intimacy process in the relational context (e.g., friendships vs. marriages) (Laurenceau et al., 1998). Likewise, the significance of temporal changes in self-disclosure in developing intimacy in different relationships can also be further investigated (Greene et al., 2006). Therefore, we could infer that self-disclosure, partner's disclosure, and perceptive partner's responsiveness, though subject to personal bias and relational variances, play an



essential role in impacting intimacy in a relationship.

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