

# Effects of Balancing Closeness and Individuality on Quality of Close Relationship

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## Abstract:

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between individuality and relationship closeness in terms of close relationship among young adults. Maintaining a balance between personal independence and emotional closeness is considered an important factor in close relationship development. This study aims to understand how individuality affects relationship closeness levels in interpersonal relationship development. A quantitative method of research has been chosen as an appropriate method to conduct this study. A sample of 250 young adults has been chosen through a convenient sampling method. Standardized questionnaires to measure Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI) to measure individuality and Relationship Closeness Scale (RSQ) to measure relationship closeness have been administered to collect data. SPSS has been used to conduct a Pearson correlation analysis to understand the relationship between individuality and relationship closeness. The results show a significant negative correlation between individuality and relationship closeness ( $r = -0.206$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that a high level of individuality results in a low level of relationship closeness; however, it is a weak correlation, indicating that it is just one of many factors affecting relationship closeness.

**Keywords:** Individuality, Relationship Closeness, Young Adults, Close Relationships, Pearson Correlation.

## 1. Introduction

In fact, close relationships play a major role in human life and have a significant impact on emotional well-being, psychological adjustment, and quality of life. From the early attachment relationships to adult romantic relationships, friendships, and family relationships, humans are essentially relational beings in search of connection, intimacy, and belongingness. At the same time, people also seek to preserve a sense of individuality and personal identity in close relationships. One of the most important and enduring challenges in close relationships is balancing two fundamental but potentially competing human needs for closeness and individuality. The manner in which partners manage this balance has significant implications for relationship satisfaction, stability, emotional well-being, and the quality of the relationship in the long term. Closeness refers to emotional intimacy, support, trust, and feelings of connectedness with the partner. It entails the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as the belief that the relationship is a source of comfort and security. Individuality, on the other hand, entails the maintenance of autonomy, self-definition, personal boundaries, and independent functioning in the relationship. It enables the individuals in the relationship to retain their values, goals, and identity while

still feeling emotionally connected with someone else. While the concepts of closeness and individuality are perceived as opposites, modern relationship theories highlight the need for an optimal balance between the two in a relationship. This section will introduce the reader to the impact that balancing closeness and individuality has on close relationship quality by presenting the conceptual foundation for both concepts, various theories that explain how these two constructs relate to one another, and finally the consequences that a lack of balancing has. In this way, this section will use a synthesis of various theories and what has already been learned about these two constructs within psychology to offer a comprehensive foundation for why balancing closeness and individuality in a relationship is important and why dominance of one construct by another is not.

**Definition:**

- **Murray Bowen (1978)** - as part of his Family Systems Theory. Bowen emphasized that individuals with higher differentiation are better able to manage emotional reactivity and maintain stable relationships.
- **David Schnarch (1997)**, Individuality reflects a person's ability to maintain personal autonomy and identity while engaging in meaningful relationships without excessive dependence.
- **Arthur Aron, along with Elaine Aron and Danny Smollan (1992)**, defined closeness in terms of inclusion of others in the self, emphasizing emotional interconnectedness and shared identity in close relationships.
- **Harry Reis & Phillip Shaver (1988)**, Relationship closeness involves mutual trust, emotional intimacy, and interdependence between individuals.

**2. Literature review**

**Bond-Zielinski (2009)** A study examined the relationship between differentiation of self and relationship functioning. The findings suggested that individuals with higher levels of differentiation tend to experience healthier interpersonal relationships, characterized by better emotional regulation, effective communication, and lower levels of conflict. The study also highlighted that individuals with low differentiation are more likely to experience emotional dependency and instability in relationships, which may negatively impact relationship quality. Furthermore, the research emphasized that maintaining a balance between individual autonomy and emotional closeness is essential for sustaining healthy and satisfying relationships. These findings support the present study by indicating that individuality plays a significant role in shaping relationship dynamics, including aspects such as closeness, intimacy, and emotional connection.

**Ellen Berscheid, Mark Snyder, and Allen M. Omoto (1989)** focused on the conceptualization and measurement of closeness in relationships. The authors highlighted that relationship closeness is a complex construct that cannot be understood through a single dimension. Instead, they proposed that closeness involves multiple aspects such as frequency of interaction, emotional intensity, mutual influence, and diversity of shared activities. The study emphasized the importance of developing reliable methods to measure closeness, as it plays a crucial role in understanding relationship quality. Their work contributed significantly to relationship research by providing a clearer framework for defining and assessing interpersonal closeness.

**Garth J. O. Fletcher and L. A. Kininmonth (1992)** focused on the measurement and structure of relationship closeness. The researchers examined how individuals perceive closeness in their romantic relationships and identified that closeness is a multidimensional construct, involving emotional intimacy,

cognitive interdependence, and behavioural connections. Their findings suggested that individuals in close relationships tend to develop shared perceptions, mutual understanding, and interconnected identities, which strengthen relationship bonds. The study contributed to the development of more refined tools for assessing relationship closeness and interdependence.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Objectives

- To investigate how adults manage a need for both intimacy and individuality in close relationships.
- To evaluate the effect of this need for intimacy and individuality on psychological well-being and relationship quality.
- To explore best practices and interventions in maintaining intimacy and individuality in adult couple relationships.

#### 3.2. Hypothesis:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between closeness and individuality on the close relationship among the young adults.

#### 3.3 Research design:

The study design to be adopted is a quantitative non-experimental correlational study design. This study design is appropriate to examine the relationship between closeness, individuality, and close relationship quality without manipulating any of the independent study variables. A cross-sectional survey method is to be adopted to conduct this study at a given point of time. Standardized questionnaires are to be administered to measure closeness, individuality, and relationship quality of the participants. Independent Variables: Closeness, Individuality (Autonomy), Dependent Variable: Quality of close relationship For this study, a sample of 250-300 adults currently in a close relationship is to be considered. A sampling method of convenience sampling along with snowball sampling is to be adopted to sample the population. Since it is difficult to measure independent study variables such as closeness, individuality, and relationship quality through a standardized instrument such as Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ), Differentiation of Self Inventory-Short Version (DSI-SF), Enabling Objectives, a correlational study design is to be adopted to measure the strength of relationship between independent study variables.

### 4. Sample size and Sample technique

The study will be based on a sample size of 250 young adults, whereby the participants will be recruited using a mix of convenient sampling, as this helps in the selection of participants who are easily accessible, snowball sampling, as this helps in the selection of participants, purposive sampling, as this helps in the selection of participants intentionally, hence the increase in the number of participants.

#### 4.1. Inclusion criteria

- The participants for the study will be adults aged 18 years and above, and they must be in an intimate personal relationship, e.g., a romantic relationship or a committed personal relationship.
- The participants must also have been in a personal relationship for a minimum of six months.
- The participants must also be able to read, understand, and respond to the study questionnaires in English.
- The participants must also be willing to provide informed consent for the study. The participants must also be willing to respond to all the questions on the study questionnaires honestly and independently

#### 4.2 Exclusion criteria

- Individuals under the age of 18, those without an existing close personal association, and those whose association period is less than six months will be excluded from the study.
- Similarly, participants whose responses are incomplete, inconsistent, or show a pattern will also be excluded.
- Furthermore, persons experiencing severe psychological distress and intensive psychiatric treatment, which may impact perceptions of relationships, will also be excluded from the study.

**4.3. Tool Used and Description:**

**Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994). Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ).**

Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ), developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994), is an instrument used to measure adult attachment styles. The purpose of this instrument is to measure individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in their close relationships through assessing their dimensions of attachment anxiety and avoidance. This instrument helps to identify how individuals see themselves as well as others in close relationships, which in turn helps to classify their attachment styles as secure, fearful, preoccupied, or dismissing.

**Drake, J. R., Murdock, N. L., Marszalek, J. M., & Barber, C. E. (2009). Differentiation of Self Inventory—Short Form (DSI-SF).**

Differentiation of Self Inventory - Short Form (DSI-SF), developed by Drake, Murdock, Marszalek, and Barber (2009), is an instrument that measures an individual’s differentiation of self. The purpose of this instrument is to measure the extent to which an individual can differentiate themselves emotionally while at the same time staying connected to others, especially in close relationships. This instrument assesses an individual’s emotional reactivity, emotional cut off, fusion, taking an “I-position,” etc.

**4.4 Statistical analysis:**

The data collected for the study was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation were computed for the characteristics of the data. In examining the relationship between individuality and relationship closeness, the Pearson product moment correlation method was used, this helped in determining the strength and direction of the relationship.

**5. Result**

This chapter will discuss the results and interpretation of analysis that has been done to understand the relationship between closeness and individuality among young adults.

**Table 1:**

Descriptive statistic table that will include the mean and standard deviation of closeness and individuality among young adults.

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Individuality	13.35	3.382	250
Closeness	5.18	647	250

The descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation for the variables. The variables Individuality has a sample N=250, mean=13.34 and standard deviation=3.382 and closeness has a sample N=250, mean=5.18 and standard deviation=647.

**Table 2:**

Correlational analysis showing the relationship between closeness and individuality among young adults.

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Variables	Pearson's correlation	r value	Decision
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Individuality			
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1	-0.206	Rejected	
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Closeness			
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\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The significant relationship is noticed between the two variables, there is a relationship between closeness and individuality on the relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ : There is no relationship between individuality and closeness in relationship.) is rejected. This study examined the effects of balancing closeness and individuality on the quality of close relationship among the young adults.

## 6. Discussion:

The main aim of the research was to find the relationship between individuality and closeness in close relationships. The findings indicate a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.206$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the two variables. Data showed a higher levels of individuality are associated with lower levels of relationship closeness, although the strength of the relationship is weak. This suggests that individuals who show higher differentiation or individuality may experience slightly lower perceived closeness in relationships. One possible explanation is that people who strongly maintain personal independence, autonomy, and emotional boundaries may prioritize their individuality, which can sometimes reduce emotional dependence or closeness with others. However, the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship is weak, meaning individuality explains only a small portion of the variation in relationship closeness. Therefore, other psychological and interpersonal factors such as communication, emotional support, attachment style, and mutual understanding may also play an important role in determining relationship closeness. Therefore higher levels of individuality tend to report slightly lower levels of closeness in their relationships. However, the strength of the correlation was weak, indicating that individuality is only one of several factors that may influence relationship closeness.

Overall, the study importance of maintaining a balance between personal independence and emotional closeness in relationships. While individuality allows individuals to maintain their personal identity and autonomy, relationship closeness contributes to emotional bonding and support. Therefore, a healthy relationship may involve integrating both individuality and closeness.

## 7. Summary:

The present study examined the effects of balancing closeness and individuality on the quality of close relationship among the adults above aged 18 years and above who are involved in a close interpersonal relationship. Information came from two hundred fifty population, gathered through establish methods: The Relationship scale questionnaire and the Differentiation of self inventory – short form. The descriptive statistics values shows level of individuality ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 3.382$ ) and closeness ( $M = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 647$ ). The Pearson correlation analysis showed  $r = -0.206$ ,  $p = .001$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. This result indicates that individuality and relationship closeness are significantly related, with a negative relationship.

## 8. Conclusion

The present study shows the significant correlation between the scores obtained using the said questionnaires and indicates a negative correlation between the 2 variables, this study contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics between personal independence and relationship quality among young adults and may be useful for future research in the field of interpersonal relationships and psychological well-being.

### 9. Limitation

- A future studies researchers may also consider qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into how individuals balance individuality and closeness in their relationships.
- Researchers can include participants from different age groups, such as adolescents, married couples, and older adults, to better understand relationship dynamics across the lifespan.
- Additional psychological variables such as attachment style, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and relationship satisfaction can be included to gain a more comprehensive understanding of relationship closeness.

### 10. Recommendations

- The study design employed in this study is a cross-sectional study design, which only allows for a single point in time to be studied and therefore cannot be used to determine cause and effect between two or more variables.
- The study targeted only young adults and therefore may not be applicable to other age groups such as young teens and elderly persons.
- The study relied on self-report questionnaires that may be subject to social desirability bias and inaccurate perception.
- The study only targeted individuality and relationship closeness and therefore may have omitted other important aspects such as communication style, attachment style, emotional intelligence, and relationship satisfaction.

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