

The Relationship Between Fear of Intimacy and Sexual Desire Among Young Adults

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Abstract

Fear of intimacy reflects an individual's discomfort with emotional closeness, vulnerability, and self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships. In contrast, sexual arousal and desire represent key components of human sexuality shaped by a complex interaction of psychological, biological, and relational influences. The present study aims to examine the association between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire among young adults. A quantitative approach was adopted, and data were collected from individuals aged 20–30 years using standardized measures, namely the Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) developed by Descutner and Thelen and the Sexual Arousal and Desire Inventory (SADI) developed by Toledano and Pfaus. Statistical analyses including descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation were employed. The study is expected to offer insights into how emotional barriers influence sexual motivation and functioning, thereby contributing to a more integrated understanding of intimacy and sexuality in young adulthood.

Keywords: Fear of Intimacy, Sexual Arousal, Sexual Desire, Young Adults, Emotional Closeness, Psychological Functioning

1. INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a formative phase marked by the development of close relationships, increasing emotional independence, and the exploration of personal identity, including one's sexual self. During this period, individuals often seek meaningful emotional connections; however, not everyone experiences comfort in engaging with emotional closeness. For some, intimacy can evoke discomfort or anxiety, giving rise to what is termed as fear of intimacy. Fear of intimacy involves hesitation or avoidance when it comes to emotional vulnerability, trust, and self-disclosure in relationships. Individuals experiencing this fear may struggle to form deep emotional bonds, which can influence the quality of their interpersonal relationships.

At the same time, sexual arousal and desire play a significant role in human relational and personal experiences. Sexual desire refers to an individual's interest or motivation toward sexual activity, while arousal encompasses both psychological and physiological responses. Importantly, these experiences are not purely biological; they are shaped by emotional context, relational dynamics, and perceived safety within relationships. Although emotional intimacy and sexual desire often overlap in romantic contexts, they are not identical. A person may experience sexual desire without emotional closeness, or vice versa.

Therefore, examining how fear of intimacy relates to sexual arousal and desire can provide valuable insight into how emotional and sexual aspects of relationships interact in young adulthood.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1. Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory, introduced by John Bowlby, emphasizes the role of early relational experiences in shaping how individuals form emotional bonds later in life. Patterns of attachment developed in childhood often influence one's comfort with intimacy, trust, and emotional dependence in adult relationships. Individuals with insecure attachment patterns may be more likely to experience fear of intimacy.

2.2. Intimacy and Emotional Closeness

Intimacy involves a sense of emotional closeness characterized by trust, openness, and mutual understanding. It requires individuals to be vulnerable and authentic in their interactions. When individuals perceive intimacy as threatening or uncomfortable, they may avoid such closeness, which can impact relationship satisfaction and emotional connection.

2.3. Sexual Arousal and Desire

Sexual arousal and desire are multidimensional processes involving emotional, cognitive, and physiological components. Rather than being purely instinctive, sexual desire is influenced by relational factors such as intimacy, communication, and emotional security. The presence or absence of emotional closeness can therefore shape an individual's experience of sexual desire.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1. Review of Literature related to Fear of Intimacy

Nguyen and Park (2022) examined fear of intimacy among young adults across diverse cultural backgrounds. The objective of the study was to understand how fear of emotional closeness affects interpersonal trust and relational engagement. The study used a cross-sectional design with standardized measures of fear of intimacy and trust. Results showed that individuals with higher fear of intimacy reported lower levels of interpersonal trust and greater emotional guardedness. Participants avoided emotionally intense interactions and expressed discomfort with vulnerability. The authors concluded that fear of intimacy plays a significant role in emotional distancing across cultures. The study emphasized the importance of addressing fear of intimacy to improve emotional connection and relationship quality among young adults.

Harper and Collins (2019) conducted a study on fear of intimacy and vulnerability avoidance among young adults. The study aimed to explore how fear of emotional closeness influences emotional expression and interpersonal behavior. Using a correlational research design, data were collected through self-report measures of fear of intimacy and emotional openness. Findings revealed that higher fear of intimacy was associated with reluctance to share personal emotions and avoidance of emotional dependence. Participants perceived vulnerability as risky and emotionally threatening. The authors concluded that fear of intimacy significantly limits emotional expression and relational connection. The study highlighted the need for interventions that encourage emotional awareness and vulnerability acceptance.

Khandelwal and Sharma (2019) examined fear of intimacy and emotional inhibition among Indian young adults. The objective of the study was to explore how emotional closeness anxiety influences interpersonal behavior and emotional expression. The study employed a survey-based design using standardized fear of intimacy scales. Results revealed that participants with high fear of intimacy

demonstrated emotional suppression and avoidance of emotionally intense situations. Many individuals reported discomfort with self-disclosure and emotional dependence. The authors discussed that societal expectations encouraging emotional control may reinforce fear of intimacy. The study concluded that fear of intimacy significantly affects emotional expression and relational engagement. The researchers emphasized the need for emotional skills training to promote healthier interpersonal relationships.

Patel and Shah (2018) conducted a study on fear of intimacy and interpersonal avoidance among Indian young adults. The purpose of the study was to assess how fear of emotional closeness impacts social and relational functioning. Using a correlational research design, data were collected through self-report measures of fear of intimacy and relational avoidance. The findings showed that individuals with higher fear of intimacy avoided close relationships and exhibited discomfort with emotional vulnerability. Participants reported difficulty forming emotionally meaningful connections. The authors concluded that fear of intimacy serves as a significant barrier to emotional closeness and relational satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of early intervention to address intimacy-related fears in young adulthood.

3.2. Review of Literature related to Sexual Desire

Sharma and Kulkarni (2025) conducted a study on sexual desire and psychological well-being among urban young adults in India. The objective of the study was to examine how emotional factors such as stress, relationship satisfaction, and self-perception influence levels of sexual desire. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 360 young adults aged 20–35 years through self-report measures assessing sexual desire, emotional well-being, and relational comfort. The findings indicated that higher emotional stress and interpersonal discomfort were associated with lower levels of sexual desire. Participants who reported emotional openness and relational security demonstrated higher sexual motivation. The study concluded that sexual desire among Indian young adults is closely linked to emotional and psychological states rather than purely biological factors. The authors emphasized the importance of emotional safety and intimacy in understanding sexual desire within Indian sociocultural contexts.

Iyer and Menon (2024) examined sexual desire and sexual self-concept among college-going young adults in South India. The study aimed to explore how individuals' perceptions of their sexual selves influence their experience of sexual desire. A sample of 280 students aged 18–25 years was assessed using questionnaires measuring sexual self-concept, sexual confidence, and sexual desire. Results revealed that participants with a positive sexual self-concept reported significantly higher levels of sexual desire. Conversely, feelings of guilt, shame, and discomfort surrounding sexuality were associated with suppressed sexual desire. The authors concluded that internalized attitudes toward sexuality play a crucial role in shaping sexual desire among Indian youth and highlighted the need for open conversations around sexual health and emotional intimacy.

Toledano and Pfaus (2023) investigated the psychological components of sexual desire and arousal among young adults in North America. The study aimed to distinguish desire-related processes from physiological arousal while examining emotional and cognitive contributors. A quantitative design was used, with data collected from 460 participants aged 18–40 years using the Sexual Arousal and Desire Inventory (SADI). The findings indicated that sexual desire was strongly associated with emotional openness, relational comfort, and positive sexual cognitions, while anxiety and emotional inhibition were linked to reduced desire. The authors concluded that sexual desire is a psychologically mediated construct influenced by emotional and relational factors, reinforcing the relevance of studying desire independently from arousal.

Mark and Lasslo (2021) explored sexual desire and emotional avoidance among young adults in committed relationships in the United States. The objective was to assess whether discomfort with vulnerability predicts reduced sexual interest. A cross-sectional design was employed with a sample of 358 individuals aged 21–35 years. The findings revealed that emotional avoidance and fear of dependency were significantly associated with lower sexual desire. The study concluded that sexual desire may diminish when individuals perceive intimacy as emotionally threatening.

4. RESEARCH GAP

Although prior studies have explored fear of intimacy and aspects of sexual functioning separately, there is limited research directly examining how fear of intimacy relates to sexual arousal and desire. Much of the existing literature has focused on broader constructs such as attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, or general emotional factors, rather than isolating fear of intimacy as a specific variable. Additionally, many studies have been conducted in Western contexts or within long-term relationships, which may not fully represent the experiences of young adults across different relationship statuses. Research within the Indian context remains particularly limited, especially considering the cultural influences on emotional expression and sexuality. This highlights the need for further investigation into how fear of intimacy is associated with sexual arousal and desire among young adults.

5. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Exploring the relationship between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire is important for understanding the interplay between emotional and sexual aspects of human relationships. Emotional closeness is a key factor in relationship satisfaction, while sexual desire contributes to relational and personal well-being. By examining how fear of intimacy influences sexual experiences, the present study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological factors that shape relationships. The findings may be useful in counselling settings, particularly in addressing intimacy-related concerns and promoting healthier relational dynamics. Furthermore, the study adds to the limited body of research in this area, especially within culturally diverse populations.

6. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

6.1.Objectives

1. To assess the level of fear of intimacy among young adults.
2. To assess the level of sexual arousal and desire among young adults.
3. To examine differences in fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire with respect to their gender, age groups, relationship status, and living arrangement among young adults.
4. To investigate the relationship between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire among young adults.

6.2 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire based on their gender, age groups, relationship status, and living arrangement among young adults.
2. There is no significant relationship between fear of intimacy and the dimensions of sexual arousal and desire among young adults.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1. Research design

The study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire among young adults aged 20–30 years.

7.2 Sample

Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method for selecting the sample of 252 young adults aged between 20 and 30 years from various colleges and institutions.

7.3 Tools Used in the Study

The tools used for the present investigation are presented below:

- Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) developed by Descutner and Thelen
- Sexual Arousal and Desire Inventory (SADI) developed by Toledano and Pfaus.

7.4 Scoring Procedure

The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) consists of 35 items rated on a Likert-type scale. All items are reverse scored to ensure that higher scores reflect greater levels of fear of intimacy. The final score is computed by taking the mean of all item responses, with higher scores indicating higher discomfort with emotional closeness.

The Sexual Arousal and Desire Inventory (SADI) comprise multiple descriptive items rated on a scale ranging from 0 to 5. The scale measures four dimensions: evaluative, physiological, motivational, and negative. Items corresponding to the negative dimension are reverse scored so that all dimensions are aligned in the same direction. Mean scores are calculated for each dimension, and an overall mean score is derived to represent the individual’s level of sexual arousal and desire. Higher scores indicate higher levels of sexual arousal and desire.

7.5 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to address the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to assess the levels of fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire among young adults. Inferential statistical methods were employed to examine differences and relationships between variables. Independent samples t-test was used to analyze gender differences, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences across age groups, relationship status, and living arrangements. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire. The results were interpreted based on the direction, magnitude, and significance of the obtained values, providing insight into the patterns of association and group differences among the study variables.

8. TESTING OF OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

Objective 1: To assess the level of Fear of Intimacy among young adults.

Table 1: Level of Fear of Intimacy among young adults.

Variables	N	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
Fear of Intimacy Sum	252	139	93.10	19.137	66.97
Fear of Intimacy Average	252	4	2.68	0.559	67

The mean and standard deviation of the level of fear of intimacy among young adults are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that young adults exhibit a moderate level of fear of intimacy overall (M = 93.10, 66.97%). The average score (M = 2.68, 67%) further supports this finding, suggesting that participants experience a moderate degree of discomfort with emotional closeness and vulnerability in relationships. This indicates that while young adults can form interpersonal connections, a certain level of hesitation or emotional guardedness is present.

Objective 2: To assess the level of Dimensions of Sexual Arousal and Sexual Desire among young adults.

Table 2: Level of Dimensions of Sexual Arousal and Sexual Desire among young adults.

Dimensions of Sexual Arousal and Sexual Desire	N	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
Evaluative	252	5	3.45	0.908	69
Negative/Aversive	252	5	2.99	0.879	59.8
Physiological	252	5	3.22	0.726	64.4
Motivational	252	5	3.19	0.789	63.8
Total Average	252	5	3.14	0.845	62.8

The mean and standard deviation of the dimensions of sexual desire and arousal among young adults are presented in the above table. The results indicate that participants exhibit a moderate level of sexual desire and arousal overall (M = 3.14, 62.8%). Among the dimensions, the evaluative dimension (M = 3.45, 69%), physiological dimension (M = 3.22, 64.4%), motivational dimension (M = 3.19, 63.8%) and negative/aversive dimension (M = 2.99, 59.8%) show moderate level of sexual desire and arousal among young adults. Overall, the findings suggest that young adults experience a moderate level of sexual desire and arousal.

Hypotheses 1(a): There is no significant difference in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Gender among young adults.

Table 3: Significant differences in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual arousal and Desire based on gender among young adults

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	“t” value	Significance
Fear of Intimacy	Female	129	90.75	20.845	2.006	0.05 Significance
	Male	123	95.56	16.901		
Sexual Arousal & Desire Evaluative	Female	129	3.41	0.942	0.848	Not Significant
	Male	123	3.50	0.872		
Sexual Arousal & Desire Negative/Aversive	Female	129	3.10	0.923	2.060	0.05 Significance
	Male	123	2.87	0.818		
Sexual Arousal & Desire Physiological	Female	129	3.23	0.749	0.227	Not Significant
	Male	123	3.21	0.704		

Sexual Arousal & Desire Motivational	Female	129	3.19	0.842	0.127	Not Significant
	Male	123	3.20	0.732		
Sexual Arousal & Desire Total Average	Female	129	3.10	0.893	0.717	Not Significant
	Male	123	3.18	0.793		

From Table 3, the calculated ‘t’ values for fear of intimacy (2.006) and the dimensions of sexual arousal and desire negative/aversive (2.060) are higher than the table value (1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance. It is clear that there is a significant difference among young adults with respect to gender in fear of intimacy and the negative/aversive dimension of sexual arousal and desire. From the above table it is also observed that there is no significant difference with respect to gender in evaluative, physiological, motivational and overall sexual arousal and desire. Therefore, the framed null hypothesis is partially accepted.

Hypothesis 1(b): There is no significant difference in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Age groups among young adults.

Table 4: Significant differences in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Age groups among young adults

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Fear of Intimacy	Between groups	10095.780	2	5047.890	15.360	0.01 Significance
	Within groups	81828.740	249	328.629		
	Total	91924.520	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Evaluative	Between groups	5.501	3.41	0.942	0.848	Not Significant
	Within groups	201.424	249	0.809		
	Total	206.925	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Negative/Aversive	Between groups	21.293	2	10.647	15.351	0.01 Significance
	Within groups	172.692	249	0.694		
	Total	193.985	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Physiological	Between groups	0.059	2	0.030	0.056	Not Significant
	Within groups	132.145	249	0.531		
	Total	132.205	251			
	Between groups	3.695	2	1.848	3.018	Not Significant

Sexual Arousal & Desire Motivational	Within groups	152.424	249	0.612		
	Total	156.119	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Total Average	Between groups	6.223	2	3.111	4.481	0.05 Significance
	Within groups	172.884	249	0.694		
	Total	179.107	251			

From Table 4, the calculated ‘F’ values for fear of intimacy (15.360) and the negative/aversive dimension of sexual arousal and desire (15.351) is higher than the table value (6.64) at the 0.01 level of significance. The calculated ‘F’ value for overall sexual arousal and desire (4.481) is higher than the table value (3.84) at the 0.05 level of significance. It is clear that there is a significant difference among young adults with respect to age groups in fear of intimacy, the negative/aversive dimension of sexual arousal and desire and overall sexual arousal and desire. From the above table, it is also observed that there is no significant difference among young adults with respect to age groups in evaluative, physiological, and motivational. Therefore, the framed null hypothesis is partially accepted.

Hypothesis 1(c): There is no significant difference in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Living arrangements among young adults.

Table 5: Significant differences in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Living arrangements among young adults

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Fear of Intimacy	Between groups	3312.409	4	5047.890	828.102	0.01 Significance
	Within groups	88612.111	247	358.753		
	Total	91924.520	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Evaluative	Between groups	4.575	4	1.144	1.396	Not Significant
	Within groups	202.350	247	0.819		
	Total	206.925	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Negative/Aversive	Between groups	4.321	4	1.080	1.407	Not Significant
	Within groups	189.665	247	0.768		
	Total	193.985	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Physiological	Between groups	1.274	4	0.318	0.601	Not Significant

	Within groups	130.931	247	0.530		
	Total	132.205	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Motivational	Between groups	2.626	4	1.657	1.056	Not Significant
	Within groups	153.493	247	0.621		
	Total	156.119	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Total Average	Between groups	5.144	4	1.286	1.826	Not Significant
	Within groups	173.963	247	0.704		
	Total	179.107	251			

From Table 5, the calculated ‘F’ value for fear of intimacy (828.102) is higher than the table value (6.64) at the 0.01 level of significance. It is clear that there is a significant difference among young adults with respect to living arrangements in fear of intimacy. However, the calculated ‘F’ values for the dimensions of sexual arousal and desire, namely evaluative (1.396), negative/aversive (1.407), physiological (0.601), motivational (1.056), and overall sexual arousal and desire (1.826), are lower than the table value (3.84) at the 0.05 level of significance. It is also observed that there is no significant difference with respect to living arrangement in these dimensions. Therefore, the framed null hypothesis is accepted only for sexual arousal and desire with their dimensions and not accepted for fear of intimacy.

Hypothesis 1(d): There is no significant difference in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Relationship status among young adults.

Table 6: Significant differences in Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal & Sexual Desire with respect to Relationship status young adults

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Fear of Intimacy	Between groups	5197.694	4	1299.423	3.701	Not Significant
	Within groups	86726.826	247	351.121		
	Total	91924.520	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Evaluative	Between groups	5.669	4	1.417	1.739	Not Significant
	Within groups	201.256	247	0.815		
	Total	206.925	251			
	Between groups	7.575	4	1.894	2.509	Not Significant

Sexual Arousal & Desire Negative/Aversive	Within groups	186.410	247	0.755		
	Total	193.985	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Physiological	Between groups	1.028	4	0.257	0.484	Not Significant
	Within groups	131.176	247	0.531		
	Total	132.205	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Motivational	Between groups	3.793	4	1.948	1.537	Not Significant
	Within groups	152.327	247	0.617		
	Total	156.119	251			
Sexual Arousal & Desire Total Average	Between groups	7.769	4	1.942	2.800	Not Significant
	Within groups	171.338	247	0.694		
	Total	179.107	251			

From Table 6, the calculated ‘F’ value for fear of intimacy (3.701), dimensions of sexual arousal and desire, namely evaluative (1.739), negative/aversive (2.509), physiological (0.484), motivational (1.537), and overall sexual arousal and desire (2.800), are lower than the table value (3.84) at the 0.05 level of significance. It is clear that there is no significant difference with respect to living arrangement in these dimensions and fear of intimacy. Therefore, the framed null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between Fear of Intimacy and the dimensions of Sexual Arousal and Desire among young adults.

Table 7: Showing Correlation Coefficient Values for Fear of Intimacy and dimensions of Sexual Arousal and Desire among young adults

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Fear of Intimacy & Evaluative	-0.211	0.01 Significance
Fear of Intimacy & Negative/Aversive	-0.235	0.01 Significance
Fear of Intimacy & Physiological	0.748	0.01 Significance
Fear of Intimacy & Motivational	0.173	0.01 Significance
Fear of Intimacy & Total Sexual Desire	0.670	0.01 Significance

From Table 7, it is inferred that the values of correlation between fear of intimacy and the dimensions of sexual arousal and desire ($r = -0.211, -0.235, 0.748, 0.173, \text{ and } 0.670$) are lesser and greater than the table value (0.115) at the 0.01 level of significance. The correlation between the variables is found to be both positive and negative in direction. The evaluative (-0.211) and negative/aversive (-0.235) dimensions

show a negative correlation, whereas the physiological (0.748), motivational (0.173), and overall sexual desire (0.670) show a positive correlation. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between fear of intimacy and sexual arousal and desire among young adults, and hence, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

9. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION

- The study helps educational institutions understand the role of fear of intimacy in shaping young adults' interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being.
- The findings highlight that discomfort with emotional closeness may influence relationship patterns and affect overall psychological functioning.
- The results can assist teachers and counselors in identifying students who may experience difficulties in forming close relationships or expressing emotional vulnerability.
- The study encourages institutions to create a safe and supportive environment that promotes healthy emotional expression and interpersonal communication.
- The findings can help counselling services address concerns related to intimacy, relationships, and sexual well-being among young adults.
- The study supports the development of student wellness programs focusing on emotional awareness, relationship skills, and healthy expressions of sexual desire.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested

- Awareness programs focusing on emotional intimacy and healthy relationships may be conducted among young adults.
- Counselling services should address concerns related to fear of intimacy and its impact on relational and sexual functioning.
- Workshops and interventions aimed at improving emotional communication and self-disclosure can be beneficial.
- Educational institutions may incorporate relationship education to promote psychological and interpersonal well-being.

11. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study provides scope for further research in this area. Future studies may consider the following:

- Inclusion of a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability.
- Examination of additional variables such as attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, and emotional regulation.
- Longitudinal studies to understand changes in intimacy and sexual desire over time.
- Cross-cultural research to explore the influence of sociocultural factors on intimacy and sexuality.

12. CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the importance of considering emotional factors when examining sexual behaviour and experiences. Fear of intimacy may influence how individuals engage not only emotionally but also

sexually within relationships. By exploring this association, the study provides a more integrated understanding of how emotional discomfort with closeness can impact sexual arousal and desire. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical domains, offering insights that may inform counselling practices and relationship interventions. Overall, the study highlights the need to view intimacy and sexuality as interconnected aspects of human functioning, particularly during young adulthood.

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