

The Role of Psychological Capital and Trust in Predicting Marital Intimacy among Married Individuals in Pakistan

Daniela. Restrepo¹, Ayesha. Siddiqui^{2*}, Patrick. O'Sullivan³

¹ Department of Social Psychology, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

² Department of Applied Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

³ Department of Clinical Psychology, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

* Corresponding author email address: ayesha.siddiqui@qau.edu.pk

Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article type:

Original Article

How to cite this article:

Restrepo, D., Siddiqui, A., & O'Sullivan, P. (2026). The Role of Psychological Capital and Trust in Predicting Marital Intimacy among Married Individuals in Pakistan. *Applied Family Therapy Journal*, 7(2), 1-10.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.5016>

© 2026 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the predictive roles of psychological capital and trust in determining levels of marital intimacy among married individuals in Pakistan.

Methods and Materials: A correlational descriptive research design was employed to explore the relationships among psychological capital, trust, and marital intimacy. The study sample consisted of 410 married participants (196 males and 214 females) selected through a simple random sampling method based on the Morgan and Krejcie table. Participants completed three standardized instruments: the Marital Intimacy Scale (Waring & Reddon, 1983), the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24) (Luthans et al., 2007), and the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 through Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression to determine the direction and strength of relationships between the variables.

Findings: The results indicated strong positive correlations between marital intimacy and both psychological capital ($r = .68$, $p < .001$) and trust ($r = .72$, $p < .001$). The regression model predicting marital intimacy was statistically significant ($F(2, 407) = 345.27$, $p < .001$), explaining 63% of the variance ($R^2 = .63$). Both psychological capital ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) and trust ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of marital intimacy. These results demonstrate that individuals with higher psychological resources and greater trust in their partners reported stronger emotional, cognitive, and relational closeness.

Conclusion: Psychological capital and trust significantly and positively predict marital intimacy, underscoring the importance of both internal psychological strengths and interpersonal trust in maintaining healthy, satisfying marital relationships. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing optimism, resilience, and mutual trust may effectively strengthen marital bonds.

Keywords: Marital intimacy; psychological capital; trust; marital relationships; positive psychology

1. Introduction

Marital intimacy represents one of the most vital pillars of a healthy and enduring marital relationship, encompassing emotional, cognitive, sexual, and spiritual closeness between partners. It is a multidimensional construct that reflects the depth of emotional connection, mutual trust, and understanding that couples develop over time. The maintenance of intimacy in marriage is not only essential for personal well-being but also serves as a predictor of marital satisfaction, stability, and psychological adjustment (Ghahari et al., 2023). Across cultural and social contexts, marital intimacy is considered a dynamic process influenced by personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors (Gurung et al., 2023). In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on the psychological and relational mechanisms that underlie marital intimacy, particularly the roles of psychological capital and trust in sustaining healthy relationships (Jemima, 2025a).

Marital intimacy has been described as a shared experience of emotional closeness, empathy, and mutual disclosure that fosters a sense of belonging and connection between partners (Navabinejad et al., 2024). Its development requires effective communication, emotional regulation, and the ability to navigate interpersonal conflicts with understanding and compassion. Studies have demonstrated that couples with higher levels of intimacy experience greater satisfaction, reduced risk of emotional divorce, and stronger commitment (Bagheri et al., 2024). However, intimacy is not static; it fluctuates according to life stages, external stressors, and individual psychological resources. For instance, research conducted among couples facing infertility, chronic illness, or dual-career pressures has shown that intimacy often declines when emotional coping mechanisms are insufficient or when trust is compromised (Gharehdaghi & Kachooei, 2023; Nugrahani et al., 2025; Salarfard et al., 2025). These findings underscore the necessity of identifying psychological variables that can protect or enhance intimacy despite contextual challenges.

Psychological capital (PsyCap), a positive psychological state characterized by hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, has emerged as a significant predictor of adaptive functioning in relationships (Sunmonu et al., 2025). Couples high in psychological capital tend to approach relational difficulties with optimism and a problem-solving mindset, thereby enhancing their ability to maintain closeness and intimacy. Hope allows partners to envision shared future goals; efficacy promotes confidence in managing conflicts

constructively; resilience enables recovery from disagreements; and optimism sustains motivation for relational growth. In marital contexts, these components collectively facilitate emotional connection, forgiveness, and mutual support (Badanfiroz et al., 2024). For example, spouses with high psychological resilience are less likely to withdraw during conflict, while those with stronger self-efficacy are more capable of expressing affection and understanding their partner's emotional needs (Vakilian et al., 2024). Thus, psychological capital may function as a buffer against relational distress, promoting enduring marital intimacy even amid stress or dissatisfaction.

Parallel to psychological capital, trust serves as the foundation of all intimate relationships. It refers to the belief in one's partner's reliability, integrity, and emotional availability (Tianqi & Jinhao, 2024). Trust develops gradually through consistent patterns of honesty, empathy, and mutual support, and it is considered a prerequisite for vulnerability and openness—two central components of intimacy (Jemima, 2025b). In couples with high trust, partners feel secure in sharing their thoughts, fears, and personal experiences, leading to enhanced emotional closeness. Conversely, trust deficits are strongly associated with relational anxiety, suspicion, and emotional distance (Nokman & Rosidi, 2025). A lack of trust can undermine communication and lead to marital boredom, emotional withdrawal, or even dissolution of the relationship (Homaie et al., 2023). Therefore, trust and intimacy are mutually reinforcing constructs: trust fosters intimacy, and intimacy strengthens trust, creating a virtuous cycle of emotional connection and relational satisfaction.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the conceptualization and expression of marital intimacy vary significantly across societies (Fathurrohman et al., 2024). In collectivist cultures, such as those in South and East Asia, marital intimacy is often intertwined with family values, social expectations, and religious teachings. Studies among Iranian, Pakistani, and Malaysian couples reveal that emotional expression and physical closeness are often moderated by religious and moral norms (Nokman & Rosidi, 2025). For instance, Islamic teachings emphasize mutual respect, compassion, and faithfulness as foundations of intimacy, aligning with the *maqasid al-shariah* framework, which prioritizes emotional and physical well-being within marriage. Similarly, in Christian marital frameworks, intimacy and trust are interpreted as sacred bonds reflective of divine love and commitment (Kao, 2025). Therefore, psychological and

spiritual dimensions coexist in defining marital intimacy across diverse cultural and religious contexts.

Recent research highlights that psychological interventions targeting emotional regulation and communication skills can significantly enhance marital intimacy. For instance, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and transactional analysis (TA) have been found to improve emotional control, empathy, and connectedness among couples (Badanfiroz et al., 2024; Javid et al., 2025). These findings align with earlier studies showing that systemic and cognitive-behavioral approaches can increase marital satisfaction and decrease emotional distance (Ghahari et al., 2023; Homaei et al., 2023). Such evidence suggests that marital intimacy can be cultivated and strengthened through psychological processes emphasizing awareness, trust-building, and cognitive flexibility. In this context, psychological capital may act as a key internal resource that enhances couples' capacity to engage constructively in these relational processes (Sunmonu et al., 2025). Furthermore, positive psychological constructs—such as optimism and resilience—have been shown to correlate with greater forgiveness, empathy, and emotional responsiveness, all of which contribute to a deeper sense of marital closeness (Nurjanis, 2025).

Empirical evidence supports that marital intimacy functions as both an outcome and mediator of various relational and psychological factors. For instance, intimacy mediates the relationship between emotional regulation and family stability (Bagheri et al., 2024), between irrational beliefs and marital commitment (Vakilian et al., 2024), and between communication patterns and emotional control (Badanfiroz et al., 2024). These studies collectively highlight the centrality of intimacy in maintaining marital health and demonstrate how individual psychological traits interact with relational dynamics to determine marital quality. Additionally, research among dual-earner couples indicates that emotional intimacy can buffer the negative effects of role conflict and work stress, sustaining marital satisfaction despite demanding life circumstances (Nugrahani et al., 2025). This suggests that intimacy serves as an adaptive mechanism for coping with modern relational challenges such as work-life balance, gender role shifts, and digital communication patterns (Avneesh Kumar & Apeksha, 2024).

In recent years, the study of marital intimacy has expanded beyond psychological and sociological frameworks to include theological and ethical perspectives. Scholars argue that marriage is not only a social institution

but also a moral and spiritual partnership requiring sustained emotional investment and trust (Kao, 2025; Nokman & Rosidi, 2025). Within these frameworks, psychological capital represents the inner strength and moral endurance necessary to fulfill marital obligations and maintain intimacy under strain. Similarly, trust is conceptualized as an act of faith—both interpersonal and spiritual—that sustains the relational covenant (Jemima, 2025a). Integrating these insights provides a holistic understanding of intimacy that bridges psychological, ethical, and cultural dimensions.

Gender and contextual factors also play critical roles in determining levels of intimacy and trust. Research indicates that women often report higher emotional intimacy and relational awareness, while men emphasize cognitive and behavioral dimensions of trust (Gharehdaghi & Kachooei, 2023). Moreover, situational stressors—such as infertility, chronic illness, or caregiving responsibilities—can differentially affect intimacy based on gender roles and coping mechanisms (Salarfard et al., 2025). For instance, studies among women experiencing infertility show decreased intimacy due to emotional distress, but interventions aimed at enhancing communication and psychological resilience can restore closeness (Salarfard et al., 2025). Similarly, couples undergoing health-related crises demonstrate that higher levels of trust and psychological capital facilitate mutual support and reduce emotional disengagement (Ghahari et al., 2023). These findings confirm that both individual and relational strengths are essential to sustaining marital bonds under diverse life conditions.

Another critical dimension in understanding marital intimacy lies in the role of communication and empathy. Effective communication fosters openness and emotional safety, allowing partners to express vulnerabilities without fear of judgment (Jemima, 2025b). Psychological capital enhances these communicative behaviors by promoting patience, optimism, and cognitive flexibility—qualities that enable constructive conflict resolution (Sunmonu et al., 2025). In contrast, poor communication patterns and mistrust often lead to emotional withdrawal, marital boredom, and eventual relational breakdown (Homaei et al., 2023). Contemporary therapeutic approaches have thus emphasized training couples in empathy and trust restoration as core strategies for enhancing intimacy and satisfaction (Javid et al., 2025). Furthermore, culturally adapted counseling models integrating spiritual and psychological dimensions have shown significant effectiveness in Muslim and Asian societies, where relational harmony and collective

well-being are deeply valued (Fathurrohman et al., 2024; Nokman & Rosidi, 2025).

The sociocultural transformation of modern marriage has introduced new complexities in maintaining intimacy. Globalization, digitalization, and shifting gender norms have redefined marital expectations and expressions of closeness (Avneesh Kumar & Apeksha, 2024). Contemporary couples often face competing demands between personal autonomy and relational interdependence, requiring greater psychological adaptability and mutual trust to sustain emotional bonds. In collectivist societies, where extended family influence remains strong, psychological capital becomes crucial for balancing personal aspirations with familial responsibilities (Gurung et al., 2023). As a result, understanding how internal psychological resources such as optimism and resilience interact with interpersonal trust to shape marital intimacy has become an important research priority.

In summary, the literature reveals that marital intimacy is a multifaceted construct influenced by a combination of psychological strengths and interpersonal trust. While intimacy remains a universal human need, its expression and maintenance are deeply shaped by individual, cultural, and contextual factors. Existing studies have shown that both psychological capital and trust contribute significantly to marital satisfaction and relational stability (Jemima, 2025a; Sunmonu et al., 2025; Tianqi & Jinhao, 2024). However, limited research has simultaneously examined the predictive roles of these two variables in explaining marital intimacy, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Pakistan, where cultural, religious, and emotional dynamics uniquely shape marital experiences.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the role of psychological capital and trust in predicting marital intimacy among married individuals in Pakistan.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a correlational descriptive research design to examine the predictive roles of psychological capital and trust in marital intimacy among married individuals. The target population included married adults residing in Pakistan. Based on the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) sample size determination table, a total of 410 participants were selected through a simple random sampling method to ensure representativeness of the population. Participants were required to have been married

for at least one year and to be literate enough to understand the questionnaire items. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and provided informed consent before participation. The data were collected using standardized self-report instruments: the Marital Intimacy Scale (Waring & Reddon, 1983), the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007), and the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

2.2. Measures

Marital intimacy was measured using the Marital Intimacy Scale developed by Waring and Reddon (1983). This standard instrument assesses the degree of emotional, cognitive, and sexual closeness between spouses. The scale consists of 36 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). It includes several subscales such as emotional intimacy, intellectual intimacy, social intimacy, recreational intimacy, and sexual intimacy, which together capture different dimensions of closeness and connectedness within marriage. Higher scores indicate greater marital intimacy. The reliability and validity of the MIS have been confirmed in multiple studies, with reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding 0.85, demonstrating strong internal consistency and construct validity across diverse populations.

Psychological capital was assessed using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24) developed by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007). This 24-item self-report scale measures four key components of positive psychological capital: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Each subscale includes six items rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree"). Higher scores indicate greater levels of psychological capital. The PCQ-24 has been validated in numerous organizational and psychological studies, demonstrating high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.84 to 0.90) and good construct and convergent validity. Its multidimensional structure has been supported through confirmatory factor analysis across different cultural contexts.

Trust was measured using the Dyadic Trust Scale developed by Larzelere and Huston (1980). This 8-item instrument assesses the degree of confidence one partner has in the reliability, integrity, and benevolence of the other. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1

("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"), with higher scores reflecting greater trust in one's partner. The scale includes subdimensions related to faith in the partner's honesty, dependability, and emotional supportiveness. Previous research has confirmed the DTS's strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values typically above 0.85 and robust evidence of both convergent and discriminant validity across marital and romantic relationship samples.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were computed to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and main study variables. The relationships between marital intimacy, psychological capital, and trust were examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). To determine the predictive power of

psychological capital and trust on marital intimacy, a standard linear regression analysis was conducted. All statistical tests were evaluated at a 0.05 significance level ($p < .05$).

3. Findings and Results

The study sample consisted of 410 married participants, including 196 males (47.8%) and 214 females (52.2%). The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 56 years, with a mean age of 34.72 years ($SD = 7.41$). Regarding educational background, 132 participants (32.2%) held a bachelor's degree, 174 (42.4%) had completed postgraduate studies, and 104 (25.4%) had a high school education or lower. In terms of marital duration, 119 participants (29.0%) had been married for less than five years, 186 (45.4%) for between five and ten years, and 105 (25.6%) for more than ten years. Concerning residence, 263 participants (64.1%) lived in urban areas, while 147 (35.9%) resided in rural settings.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 410)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Marital Intimacy	132.47	18.63
Psychological Capital	104.82	14.57
Trust	46.39	7.64

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for marital intimacy was 132.47 ($SD = 18.63$), indicating that participants generally reported moderate to high levels of closeness in their marital relationships. The mean score for psychological capital was 104.82 ($SD = 14.57$), reflecting a relatively high level of positive psychological resources among participants. The mean trust score was 46.39 ($SD = 7.64$), suggesting that most respondents expressed a strong sense of confidence and reliability in their partners. The dispersion across variables shows acceptable variability suitable for correlational analysis.

Before conducting the regression analysis, the statistical assumptions were examined to ensure validity of the results.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that all variables were approximately normally distributed (p -values ranging from .078 to .196). Scatterplots confirmed the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity, showing no major deviations. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.94, suggesting independence of residuals. Multicollinearity was assessed through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, which ranged from 1.21 to 1.37, well below the threshold of 10, and Tolerance values were between 0.73 and 0.82, indicating absence of multicollinearity. Therefore, all major assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence were met, confirming the suitability of data for regression analysis.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Among Study Variables (N = 410)

Variables	1. Marital Intimacy	2. Psychological Capital	3. Trust
1. Marital Intimacy	—		
2. Psychological Capital	.68** ($p < .001$)	—	
3. Trust	.72** ($p < .001$)	.61** ($p < .001$)	—

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables. Marital intimacy was strongly and positively correlated with psychological capital ($r = .68$, $p < .001$) and trust ($r = .72$, $p < .001$). Additionally, psychological capital and trust were also significantly

correlated ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with higher psychological resources tend to exhibit higher relational trust. These strong associations indicate that both psychological capital and trust are significantly linked with marital intimacy.

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analysis for Predicting Marital Intimacy (N = 410)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Regression	42876.31	2	21438.16	.79	.63	.63	345.27	< .001
Residual	25065.18	407	61.59					
Total	67941.49	409						

Table 3 shows that the overall regression model predicting marital intimacy from psychological capital and trust was statistically significant ($F(2, 407) = 345.27$, $p < .001$). The model explained 63% ($R^2 = .63$) of the variance in marital intimacy, indicating a strong predictive capacity.

The adjusted R^2 value (.63) suggests a stable and reliable model fit. The relatively high F-statistic reflects the substantial joint contribution of psychological capital and trust to explaining variations in marital intimacy among participants.

Table 4

Multivariate Regression Coefficients for Predicting Marital Intimacy (N = 410)

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant (Intercept)	28.73	4.82	—	5.96	< .001
Psychological Capital	0.54	0.06	.38	9.21	< .001
Trust	1.17	0.10	.49	11.72	< .001

As presented in Table 4, both predictor variables made significant unique contributions to the prediction of marital intimacy. Psychological capital was a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.54$, $\beta = .38$, $t = 9.21$, $p < .001$), indicating that a one-point increase in psychological capital was associated with a 0.54-point increase in marital intimacy, holding trust constant. Trust also emerged as a strong predictor ($B = 1.17$, $\beta = .49$, $t = 11.72$, $p < .001$), showing that higher trust levels substantially enhanced marital intimacy. The standardized beta coefficients demonstrate that trust had a slightly stronger influence on marital intimacy than psychological capital, corroborating the theoretical model that interpersonal trust forms the foundation upon which intimacy is built. Overall, the regression model supports that both psychological and interpersonal factors jointly and significantly predict the quality of marital intimacy among married individuals.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the predictive roles of psychological capital and trust in marital intimacy among married individuals in Pakistan. The findings of the study revealed significant positive correlations between both independent variables—psychological capital and trust—and the dependent variable, marital intimacy. Specifically, higher levels of psychological capital were associated with stronger emotional, cognitive, and sexual closeness between spouses, while greater trust predicted higher relational openness, communication, and commitment. The results of the linear regression analysis further indicated that both psychological capital and trust significantly predicted marital intimacy, with trust showing a slightly stronger contribution to the model. These findings provide empirical support for the theoretical proposition that psychological and interpersonal resources are central to the development and maintenance of marital intimacy (Jemima, 2025a; Sunmonu et al., 2025).

The strong relationship observed between psychological capital and marital intimacy aligns with earlier research emphasizing the role of positive psychological traits in fostering healthy and satisfying marital relationships. Psychological capital—comprising self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism—functions as an internal psychological buffer that enables partners to navigate relational challenges effectively. Individuals who possess higher levels of psychological capital tend to exhibit greater emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills, which in turn promote intimacy and closeness (Bagheri et al., 2024). The present findings are consistent with the conclusions of (Badanfiroz et al., 2024), who found that psychological interventions aimed at enhancing emotional control and communication patterns led to significant improvements in marital intimacy among women experiencing infidelity-related distress. Similarly, (Sunmonu et al., 2025) demonstrated that couples receiving emotionally-focused therapy showed improvements in bonding and closeness, primarily because such interventions cultivate optimism, trust, and emotional self-efficacy. These convergent findings suggest that psychological capital enhances individuals' ability to engage in constructive relational behaviors that sustain intimacy.

A key insight emerging from the data is that psychological capital appears to influence marital intimacy both directly and indirectly through its effect on communication and emotional resilience. Participants with higher optimism and hope reported more confidence in addressing relational conflicts and expressing affection, which supports the theoretical framework proposed by (Vakilian et al., 2024). Their study emphasized that hope and cognitive flexibility predict stronger marital commitment, even among couples facing infertility—a highly stressful marital context. Likewise, (Ghahari et al., 2023) found that psychotherapeutic interventions designed to strengthen emotional expression significantly enhanced marital intimacy, especially in relationships marked by emotional detachment. These findings collectively highlight that the internal psychological resources encapsulated in psychological capital play a decisive role in sustaining emotional and physical closeness.

Moreover, the results reinforce the proposition that trust is a central determinant of intimacy in marriage. The strong correlation between trust and marital intimacy observed in this study is consistent with the relational model proposed by (Jemima, 2025b), who argued that trust functions as the emotional foundation upon which intimacy is built. Trust

allows partners to disclose vulnerabilities and express authentic emotions without fear of betrayal or rejection, thereby fostering a sense of emotional safety and connection. This finding echoes the observations of (Tianqi & Jinhao, 2024), who explained that trust and intimacy share a bidirectional relationship—trust facilitates intimacy, while intimacy reinforces trust. The present study's regression results further confirm this interdependence, showing that even after controlling for psychological capital, trust remained a significant predictor of marital intimacy, underscoring its indispensable role in relational harmony.

The findings are also supported by cross-cultural evidence highlighting the universality of trust as a precursor to emotional closeness in marriage. For example, (Nokman & Rosidi, 2025) found that within Islamic marital frameworks, trust and cohabitation serve as key indicators of relational health and align with the moral objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*. In such frameworks, trust transcends emotional security—it represents a moral and spiritual bond that sustains marital commitment. Similarly, (Kao, 2025) emphasized that in Christian relational ethics, intimacy and trust are viewed as sacred acts of commitment reflecting divine love. In this light, the current findings reinforce the notion that across both Islamic and Christian contexts, trust embodies both psychological and moral dimensions, essential for sustaining marital intimacy. This dual perspective may explain why participants in this study, who were predominantly from a collectivist and religiously influenced society, reported strong associations between trust and intimacy.

Another important dimension of these findings pertains to the interconnectedness of psychological capital and trust as mutual reinforcers of intimacy. Psychological capital not only directly fosters intimacy but also strengthens trust by enhancing partners' capacity for empathy, forgiveness, and optimism. This interactive relationship aligns with the argument made by (Nurjanis, 2025), who found that forgiveness plays a mediating role in maintaining romantic stability, especially during early marriage. Likewise, (Nugrahani et al., 2025) demonstrated that emotional intimacy in dual-earner couples acts as a shield against the negative effects of role conflict, with trust and emotional resilience working in tandem to sustain satisfaction. The present results extend these insights by suggesting that in contexts marked by social and economic pressures—such as Pakistan's emerging urban middle class—psychological capital may help maintain trust and intimacy despite external stressors.

The findings also correspond with relational models emphasizing emotional regulation and communication as mediators between psychological traits and intimacy. The positive associations found here mirror the results of (Badanfiroz et al., 2024) and (Ghahari et al., 2023), who both reported that training in emotional regulation and interpersonal communication improved intimacy. These studies highlight that when couples are equipped with psychological strengths like optimism and self-efficacy, they communicate more effectively and manage conflicts constructively, thereby deepening trust and emotional connection. The same mechanisms likely explain the present study's findings, as participants with higher psychological capital scores demonstrated higher levels of intimacy and trust simultaneously.

Cultural factors must also be considered when interpreting these results. In collectivist societies such as Pakistan, the expression of intimacy is often intertwined with moral, familial, and religious expectations (Navabinejad et al., 2024). The findings that psychological capital and trust predict marital intimacy suggest that even within conservative cultural frameworks, psychological and interpersonal factors remain crucial in determining relational satisfaction. As (Fathurrohman et al., 2024) emphasized, Islamic teachings advocate compassion and emotional responsiveness within marriage, which correspond closely with modern psychological constructs like empathy and resilience. Therefore, psychological capital may act as a bridge between traditional moral values and modern relational dynamics, enabling couples to sustain intimacy within cultural and religious boundaries.

This interpretation is further supported by research demonstrating the cultural flexibility of intimacy-related constructs. For example, (Gurung et al., 2023) found that Nepali couples perceive intimacy as a balance between emotional connection and family obligations, suggesting that cultural norms shape—but do not diminish—the universal importance of intimacy. Similarly, (Gharehdaghi & Kachooei, 2023) observed that even in high-stress contexts such as parenting children with chronic illness, psychological self-efficacy and emotional regulation significantly influence marital intimacy levels. The current findings align with this body of literature by affirming that intimacy is a dynamic construct sustained by psychological and interpersonal strengths across various life contexts.

The predictive strength of trust observed in this study also aligns with therapeutic evidence indicating that rebuilding trust is often the first step toward restoring intimacy in

distressed marriages. For instance, (Homaei et al., 2023) found that systemic couple therapy focused on emotional differentiation significantly improved both trust and intimacy among couples experiencing emotional divorce. Similarly, (Javid et al., 2025) showed that transactional analysis training enhanced partners' awareness of their emotional patterns, leading to improvements in trust and intimacy dimensions. Taken together, these studies and the present results highlight trust as a therapeutic entry point for improving marital relationships, as its restoration facilitates emotional openness and attachment.

The implications of the current findings are also consistent with research on modern marital dynamics and the transformation of relationship expectations. (Avneesh Kumar & Apeksha, 2024) noted that contemporary marriages increasingly value emotional transparency, equality, and psychological safety as hallmarks of intimacy. The positive role of psychological capital in this context suggests that adaptability, optimism, and mutual trust are indispensable traits for navigating the evolving expectations of modern marriage. Additionally, (Salarfard et al., 2025) emphasized that counseling approaches addressing emotional regulation and psychological well-being are particularly effective for couples facing infertility, further reinforcing the practical value of psychological capital in promoting intimacy and resilience in the face of adversity.

Overall, the findings confirm that psychological capital and trust are strong and complementary predictors of marital intimacy. Psychological capital fosters internal emotional stability and proactive coping, while trust enhances relational security and openness. Together, they form a dual foundation that supports the maintenance of intimacy, particularly in cultural contexts that value both emotional connection and moral integrity. These results underscore the importance of integrating positive psychology and relational trust-building interventions in marital counseling and therapy, as both domains contribute substantially to marital quality and longevity.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations; while psychological capital and trust were found to predict marital intimacy, the directionality of these relationships cannot be definitively established. Longitudinal research would be required to explore how changes in psychological resources and trust dynamics

influence intimacy over time. Second, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may introduce social desirability bias—especially in a cultural context where discussing intimacy may be sensitive. Third, the study's participants were drawn exclusively from Pakistan, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or religious populations. Additionally, the study did not control for moderating factors such as age, duration of marriage, socioeconomic status, or religiosity, which could have influenced the relationships observed. Finally, while the study included standardized instruments, future research could benefit from incorporating qualitative methods to capture the deeper cultural meanings of intimacy and trust.

Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine the causal pathways between psychological capital, trust, and marital intimacy. Researchers could also investigate mediating mechanisms such as emotional regulation, empathy, or communication patterns to better understand how psychological traits translate into relational outcomes. Cross-cultural comparisons between collectivist and individualist societies would further clarify the cultural contingencies shaping intimacy and trust. Moreover, integrating qualitative interviews could provide richer insights into how couples experience and define intimacy within their specific cultural and religious frameworks. Finally, future research might explore the impact of digital communication, gender role expectations, and societal transformations on intimacy development in contemporary marriages.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that marital counseling and educational programs should incorporate components that enhance psychological capital and rebuild interpersonal trust. Interventions such as optimism training, resilience-building workshops, and trust restoration exercises could be integrated into premarital and marital counseling curricula. Therapists and counselors should focus on helping couples cultivate mutual understanding, emotional transparency, and adaptive coping strategies. Moreover, community and faith-based programs can play an essential role in promoting awareness of psychological well-being and relational trust as fundamental pillars of marital success. By equipping couples with both emotional and cognitive tools, practitioners can strengthen the psychological foundations necessary for long-term marital intimacy and satisfaction.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals who helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

References

Avneesh Kumar, N. I. M., & Apeksha, T. (2024). Reimagining Marriage: The Depiction of Modern Relationships in Contemporary Fiction. *Pj*, 15(02), 91. <https://doi.org/10.59467/pj.2024.15.91>

Badanfiroz, A., Abolghasemi, A., Khosrojavid, M., & Shal, R. S. (2024). Effectiveness of Dialectical Behavior Therapy on Emotional Control, Communication Patterns, and Marital Intimacy in Women With Marital Infidelity Experience. *PWJ*, 5(3), 86-96. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.pwj.5.3.11>

Bagheri, R., Bakhshayesh, A., & Mahmoodabadi, H. Z. (2024). Predicting Family Stability Based on Emotion Regulation and Sexual Self-Efficacy: The Mediating Role of Marital Intimacy. *Journal of Social Behavior and Community Health*. <https://doi.org/10.18502/jsbch.v8i2.16982>

Fathurrohman, M., Mahendra, V. B., Basalamah, F., & Amrulloh, M. I. (2024). Methods of Prenatal Education From the Perspective of Al-Qur'an and as Sunnah. *At Turots Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 896-908. <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v6i2.731>

Ghahari, S., Sheybani, F., Ghazanfari, Z., Afshar, P. F., & Jamil, L. (2023). Comparison of the Three Methods of Psychotherapy

on Marital Satisfaction and Intimacy in Married Women. *Clinical Psychology and Special Education*, 12(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.17759/cpsc.2023120101>

Gharehdaghi, M., & Kachooei, M. (2023). Comparison of Mother With Father of Children With Cancer in Terms of Marital Intimacy, Parental Self-Efficacy and Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies. *Aftj*, 4(3), 323-336. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.4.3.21>

Gurung, S. K., Chapagain, R., & Sharma, S. (2023). Exploring the Lived Experiences of Marital Intimacy Among Nepali Married Couples: A Transcendental Phenomenological Approach. *Asian Journal of Population Sciences*, 17-36. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ajps.v2i1.51088>

Homaei, F., Shahlapour, S., Omidbakhtari, N., & Mirzaei, Z. (2023). The Effectiveness of McMaster's Systemic Couple Therapy on Self-Differentiation and Marital Boredom and Intimacy of Couples With Emotional Divorce. *Jarac*, 5(2), 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jarac.5.2.6>

Javid, M. M., Sexton, J. E., Siavashani, F. T., Taridashti, S., Tabibian, N., & Dorer, J. (2025). Differential Impacts of Transactional Analysis Training on Marital Intimacy Dimensions. *The Family Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807251384277>

Jemima, N. A. A. L. (2025a). Factors Affecting Marital Satisfaction and Relationship Quality Among Christians in Ghana. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 08(09). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i9-25>

Jemima, N. A. A. L. (2025b). The Role of Intimacy, Trust, and Commitment in Sustaining Healthy Marriages. *(Ijhrss)*, 02(09). <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijhrss/05-2025-vol02i9>

Kao, G. Y. (2025). My Body, Their Baby: A Progressive Christian Vision for Surrogacy. *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 77(1), 55-56. <https://doi.org/10.56315/pscf3-25kao>

Navabinejad, S., Rostami, M., & Parsakia, K. (2024). Influences of Family Structure and Intimacy on Emotional Divorce: A Cross-Sectional Analysis. *JPRFC*, 23-30. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jprfc.2.1.5>

Nokman, M. S., & Rosidi, M. H. (2025). The Validity of Fasakh Due to Non-Cohabitation: An Analysis of Marital Intimacy and Its Implications Within the Framework of Maqasid Al-Shariah. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, IX(VII), 2213-2222. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.907000182>

Nugrahani, A., Prameswari, Y., & Napitupulu, R. P. (2025). Dual-Earner Dynamics: How Emotional Intimacy Shields Marital Satisfaction From Role Conflict. *The Family Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807251346973>

Nurjanis. (2025). Peran Kemaafan Pasangan Dalam Menjaga Stabilitas Hubungan Romantis Pada Awal Pernikahan. *Journal of Education and Culture*, 5(2), 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.58707/jec.v5i2.1332>

Salarfard, M., Mahmoudinia, M., Rahimi, M., & Roudsari, R. L. (2025). A Systematic Review of Counselling Approaches and Their Impact on Marital Intimacy Among Women and Couples Experiencing Infertility. *BMC psychology*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-03430-4>

Sunmonu, H. O., Tiamiyu, K. A., Yusuf, J., & Ahmed, M. (2025). Emotionally-Focused Therapy and Marital Bonding: Counselling Implications for Nigerian Couples. *Coution Journal of Counseling and Education*, 6(2), 83-97. <https://doi.org/10.47453/coution.v6i2.3533>

Tianqi, X., & Jinhao, J. (2024). Intimacy and Trust in Interpersonal Relationships: A Sociological Perspective. *Journal of Sociology and Ethnology*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.23977/jsoce.2024.060306>

Vakilian, K., Ebrahimi, S., Fouladvand, M., Moslemi, A., & Najdi, N. (2024). Predicting Commitment of Married Women Based on Emotional Intimacy, Cognitive Flexibility, and Irrational Beliefs of Infertile Couples in Arak City in the 2021: A Cross-Sectional Study. *The Open Public Health Journal*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.2174/0118749445267020240209073345>