

Effects of Communication Patterns and Emotional Intelligence on Marital Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Conflict Resolution

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at examining the impact of communication patterns and emotional intelligence on marital satisfaction and the mediating influence of conflict resolution styles on their association. The present study utilized quantitative correlational research design wherein data were collected using purposive sampling technique from married individuals comprising of an equal number of men and women living in Bhakkar, Pakistan. Standard psychometric tests were used to measure the level of dyadic communication, emotional intelligence, romantic couple conflict behaviors and marital satisfaction among the participants. The results of correlation analysis indicated that both communication patterns and emotional intelligence were significantly positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Multiple linear regression analysis suggested that communication patterns and emotional intelligence acted as reliable predictors of relationship satisfaction. Hierarchical regression based on mediation analysis illustrated that there was presence of selective mediation effect; constructive compromise behavior acted as adaptive mediator improving marital satisfaction while interactional reactivity was highly destructive and maladaptive mediator deteriorating relationship outcomes. In addition, comparison analysis also showed gender specific conflict styles wherein women were found to exhibit more constructive conflict behaviors than men. Interestingly, there was no difference in the levels of interpersonal skills and marital satisfaction among genders. The implications of these results imply that internal skills related to emotions and communication can be utilized through the behavioral process of conflict management. This highlights the importance of dyad-based premarital counseling in Pakistan. Interestingly, there was no difference in the levels of interpersonal skills and marital satisfaction among genders. The implications of these results imply that internal skills related to emotions and communication can be utilized through the behavioral process of conflict management. This highlights the importance of dyad-based premarital counseling in Pakistan.

Keywords. Marital Satisfaction, Communication Patterns, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution Styles

INTRODUCTION

Despite various advancements in social and cultural spheres, new cultural issues continue to emerge. The premarital relationship carries an immense stigma for all generations of Pakistanis, so young men and women do not have much opportunity to get to know each other better before marriage. Furthermore, during adaptation to the newly established gender roles, couples can face various problems that arise due to the conflict of gender roles and generations owing to differing approaches to traditional values and modern views on life. Many couples manage to cope with all the problems

that occur; however, the number of unsuccessful cases becomes higher annually and causes an increasing divorce rate in Pakistan (Qadir et al., 2021). Marital satisfaction, which is related to how one perceives marriage as being stable, quality and happy relationship, plays an important role as well. It was scientifically proven in longitudinal studies that happy and stable relationships lead to the more positive, long and healthy life of both members (Robles et al., 2014; Whisman et al., 2018).

Interpersonal communication is only one of many variables which act as predictors of marriage quality, but it is considered the major predictor of relationship quality nonetheless. Interpersonal communication is defined as an open exchange of ideas, desires and fears which lead to the development of trust which allows partners to discuss various sensitive topics without being rejected (Gottman, 1994). Nevertheless, communication based on withdrawal, defensiveness and aggression transforms minor misunderstandings into conflicts. Research on marriage suggests that such communication practices are developed from the very beginning of marriage, and negative patterns of communication in the new marriage period predict future problems within marriage and divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). While communication style affects the way couples communicate, emotional intelligence (EI) affects the psychological abilities of dealing with such interactions. People who have high EI are able to cope with stressful transitions within marriage and directly protect the dyad from distressful relational experiences. Conflict management styles could be divided into two general categories including constructive ways such as integrative problem solving and destructive strategies such as domination and avoidance (Thomas, 1976).

Marital satisfaction, defined as how the person perceives the quality, stability, and happiness in the marriage, is another crucial aspect of people's well-being. It has been proven repeatedly through longitudinal research that happy and stable marriages are strongly linked with more positive, long, and healthy life for both partners (Robles et al., 2014; Whisman et al., 2018). However, on the contrary, marital distress may be considered as a significant predictor of mental disorders as well as health issues. Often relational distress is connected to the problem of poor boundaries within the relationship. According to Rice (2022), one of the prevalent problems appears because people try to violate their partner's boundaries to change their beliefs or behaviors.

Interpersonal communication is one of many factors that serve as predictors of the quality of marriage; however, it is often perceived as the key predictor of relationship health. Good communication is a process of an open exchange of thoughts, wants, and fears, and it creates a sense of trust that enables partners to discuss various sensitive issues, such as sexual life, without feeling rejected (Gottman, 1994). However, when communication is associated with withdrawal, defensiveness, or aggressiveness, even small misunderstandings result in conflict situations. Studies on marriage demonstrate that such communication practices are formed early on, and negative patterns of communication during the newlyweds' period predict future marital problems and divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1997).

Whereas communication styles influence how couples communicate, emotional intelligence (EI) influences how effectively they can deal with their interaction psychologically. Whereas cognitive intelligence has been shown to have very little correlation with marital satisfaction in the long run (Dakowicz, 2014), emotional intelligence the skill to correctly perceive, evaluate, communicate, regulate, and employ emotions in problem-solving is an essential attribute in romantic relationships (Jaworowska & Matczak, 2001; Erus & Deniz, 2020). Couples in current socio-economic challenges experience difficulties in interpreting each other's emotions, resulting in the lack of empathy (Halford et al., 2007). High-EI people will be able to understand their partner's emotional distress, regulate their negative emotions while arguing, and preserve emotional intimacy, hence contributing to marital satisfaction.

Nevertheless, having high emotional intelligence and good communication tendencies does not mean that a marriage will necessarily be satisfying because those traits need to be expressed through actions during times of conflict. This is why the conflict management styles are vital because they

show how people express themselves through their behaviors when handling conflicts. There are two broad conflict management styles that include constructive (such as integrative problem solving and accommodation) and destructive (such as distributive confrontation, submission, avoidance, or overprotection) (Thomas, 1976). The constructive styles see conflict as a mutual problem that requires cooperation for its resolution.

It is important to emphasize that the issue of gender is crucial for the manifestation of the dynamics considered above, especially because the society in question Pakistan is a collectivist one with very different socialization processes for males and females. The existing literature implies that women use integrative styles and connect their satisfaction to emotional proximity while males tend to use either distributive or avoidant behaviors (Adriani & Ratnasari, 2021; Ali & Saleem, 2022). Although the ways in which emotional intelligence and communication affect marital satisfaction have been studied thoroughly and proven to exist, there is still little information about the possible behavioral mediators that make up the process described. In all likelihood, it is the style of conflict resolution that can be considered the key behavioral mechanism through which the level of internal EI and habitual communication styles impact the general level of marital satisfaction. Thus, the emotionally intelligent person does not feel satisfied just due to his/her emotional intelligence but because he/she is able to resolve conflicts integratively and constructively.

Rationale of the Study

The development of semi-arranged and egalitarian relationships from traditional arranged marriages in Pakistani society leads to a mental conflict between modern day perceptions and traditional role expectations. In a society where premarital encounters carry a stigma, couples enter into marriage without knowing about their partner's ways of communicating and expressing themselves emotionally. When these lines are crossed and roles become conflicted, problems in the relationship start. Although it is known that communication patterns and emotional intelligence (EI) influence relationships, the knowledge of behavioral processes through which these two factors influence marital relationships in Pakistan's particular socio-cultural context serves as the rationale behind this study.

Research Gap

Numerous studies conducted in an international context have found that there is a strong relationship among emotional intelligence, communication skills, and marital happiness. Nevertheless, an important empirical void lies in understanding how such inner abilities influence marriage success in collectivist societies facing rapid urbanization, as seen in Pakistan. The lack of empirical research on the mediating role of Conflict Resolution Styles between innate emotional/communication abilities and final marital satisfaction is noteworthy. Besides, although there are differences between genders in conflict management worldwide, no sufficient number of empirical studies are available to explore the differences between modern Pakistani males and females in using such styles in different circumstances.

Significance

Both theoretical and practical importance exists for the research work:

- **Theoretical Importance:** It adds value to the existing marital literature as it confirms the applicability of western psychological theories (mediation models of relationship satisfaction) in a non-western collectivistic and Islamic environment.
- **Practical Value:** The results will greatly help clinical psychologists, family counselors, and marriage therapists in Pakistan. It will enable them to develop a specific program of pre-marital counseling in order to control divorce and separation cases in Pakistan.

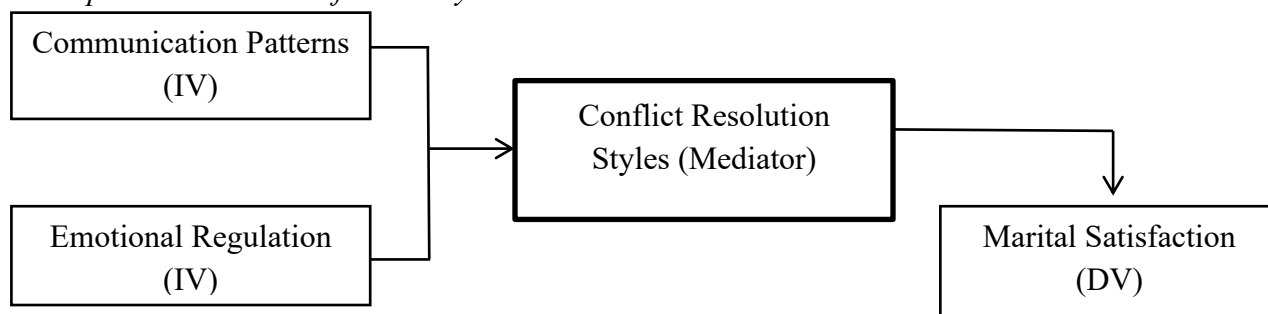
Objectives

- To study the relationship between communication styles, emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of the married individuals from Pakistan.
- To analyze the mediating effect of conflict resolution styles between communication styles, emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction.
- To analyze the significant gender difference in the level of marital satisfaction, emotional intelligence, communication styles and the preference of conflict resolution styles between male and female participants.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Note. The framework shows how these relationships would be established, with the independent variables being Communication Patterns and Emotional Intelligence, and the dependent variable is Marital Satisfaction, while Conflict Resolution Styles acts as the mediating variable.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₁ Communication patterns and emotional intelligence are positively correlated with marital satisfaction.

H₂ Communication patterns and emotional intelligence will significantly predict marital satisfaction.

H₃ Conflict resolution styles will mediate the relationship of communication patterns and emotional intelligence with marital satisfaction.

H₄ There will be a significant difference between male and female participants in levels of marital satisfaction.

H₅ There will be a significant difference between male and female participants in their levels of communication patterns and emotional intelligence.

H₆ There will be a significant difference between male and female participants in their use of various conflict resolution styles.

H₇ There will be a significant gender gap in the application of various conflict resolution by male and female respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marital Satisfaction: Conceptualization and Determinants

Marital satisfaction is a construct described by behavioral researchers to be a multi-faceted construct that is an individual's assessment of his or her romantic relationship. Initially, marital

satisfaction was defined by Norton (1983) as an attitude which is a global measure of the effectiveness and health of the relationship. Later, Li and Fung (2011) stated that marital satisfaction is a purely phenomenological construct that represents the subjective experience of how well one's marriage meets one's relational expectations. As a result, since it is an inner experience, it cannot be objectively measured by external observers; it can be assessed subjectively only from the viewpoint of the couple itself (Baghipour, 2010).

As defined by Bilal and Rasool (2020), marital satisfaction is attained when two people embrace one another's quirks, flaws, and qualities through unconditional respect and true love. It acts like a two-way mirror that captures the wife's view of the husband and vice versa. Finally, marital satisfaction is a dynamic process that is highly reliant on whether the partner satisfies the person's expectations, socio-emotional desires, and needs (Adebayo, 2018).

Communication Patterns and Marital Satisfaction

Communication is the medium of interaction between married people through which marital satisfaction can be built or destroyed. It is well-established from empirical literature that the future course of marriage depends on the type of communication exhibited by the married people. Couples get immense pleasure, feelings of security, and satisfaction from each other in their marriage when both individuals are communicating in positive ways that include active listening and validation (Christensen et al., 2006). However, constant engagement in negative communication behaviors including sarcasm, defensiveness, or stonewalling disintegrates the marital bond and results in relational dissatisfaction (Baucom et al., 2010; Knobloch-Fedders et al., 2014; Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2006).

Marriage theorists believe that communication problems are not just effects of marital dissatisfaction but are actually the root causes. Gottman and Notarius (2002) have proved that negative communication loop constantly destroys the emotional basis of intimacy causing decreased relationship satisfaction and eventually resulting in relationship dissolution. In such a scenario, couples lack the power to co-regulate stress because of the negative communication. Therefore, poor communication is identified as the most prominent reason for relationship breakup and divorce among married people (Burchard et al., 2003).

Emotional Intelligence and Relational Well-Being

Whereas verbal communication exhibits itself externally, the ability to exhibit adaptive relational behaviors is an internally fueled phenomenon by means of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Based on earlier ability-based models of psychology, Daniel Goleman enriched the theory of emotional intelligence by describing it as the interplay between five major components: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills (Cherry, 2018; Goleman, 1995). These elements of cognition and emotion operate together to ensure effective emotional awareness, emotional expression, interpersonal communication, and prosocial goal-directed actions in romantic relationships.

In marital couples, emotional intelligence serves as a cushion to mitigate external stressors. Couples that purposefully develop and combine their EI have a much higher chance of communicating honestly, building greater levels of trust in one another and maintaining a strong emotional connection, which will help them cope with adversity during hard times (Sadiku et al., 2020). Couples with high emotional intelligence can interpret the nonverbal signs of emotional distress exhibited by their partners and control their negative emotional reactions, avoiding turning minor quarrels into full-blown conflicts.

Conflict Resolution Styles: The Mediating Mechanism

Since marriage is the union of two people from different backgrounds, there is no doubt that conflicts will arise, which are a regular part of an interpersonal relationship. However, empirical evidence reveals that disagreement is not an indication of a doomed marriage but rather the way couples deal with the disputes that determine the destiny of the relationship (Askari et al., 2012). Kurdek (1995) established four basic types of conflict resolution methods problem-solving, compliance, withdrawal, and engagement that largely account for the difference in marital satisfaction.

Worldwide empirical research shows that when partners engage in constructive conflict resolution techniques (integrative negotiations, for example), then their overall marriage is characterized by quality. On the contrary, the application of destructive ways of dealing with disagreement leads to significant deterioration of marriage (McNulty & Russell, 2010). Nowadays, there are numerous sociological and economic issues that modern families have to cope with, but many lack communication skills and cannot recognize their partner's emotional state.

In theory, conflict resolution styles do not arise spontaneously; they are very much dependent on the communication and EI levels of the partners. Those individuals who have high EI levels and good communication skills are more likely to develop a conflict resolution style that is more cooperative and problem-solving in nature. On the other hand, those people who lack EI skills and communication skills tend to go for avoidant or destructive conflict style. Hence, conflict resolution styles are the behavioral means for achieving marital satisfaction.

Gender Differences in Marital Dynamics

The issue of gender influences how an individual experiences marital satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and uses conflict resolutions. There are suggestions in the extant literature that men and women get socialized differently, thus behave differently in romantic relationships. In relation to communication and conflict management, there is evidence showing that women tend to use collaborative and integrative styles and express greater relationship satisfaction when emotional proximity is attained (Adriani & Ratnasari, 2021). On the other hand, men may be prone to adopting conflict resolution styles like stonewalling and emotional distance in times of stressful marital conflicts (Ali & Saleem, 2022). Moreover, differences in the dimensions of emotional intelligence may influence the way male and female partners perceive, manage, and show empathy towards their partner's distress (Valentina et al., 2021). It is important to examine these differences from a gender perspective in the collectivist culture of Pakistan.

METHODS

Research methods refer to the specific techniques and instruments used to gather information, such as surveys and questionnaires, which directly present the question through which researchers obtain responses from participants. Methodology presents a broader and more systematic framework that provides the theoretical and logical foundation for the process of research. It includes designs regarding the nature of research approaches and choices related to research design, sampling, data collection, and analysis strategies. This study was conducted using the quantitative research methodology and correlational research design, which tells us the interrelationship among study variables. This chapter includes significant milestones like research design, sample size, sampling technique, inclusion and exclusion criteria, statistical analysis, instruments, informed consent, demographics, procedure, and ethical considerations.

Research Method

This study employs a method of quantitative research to thoroughly analyze the variables using numerical data. This method is used to maintain objectivity and to allow for statistical assessment of research hypotheses.

Research Design

The association between variables is investigated using a correlational research design this was used in this study. Finding out how these variables interact and predict one another in the context of marriage is made easier by this non-experimental design. McCombes (2019) defines correlational research design as a traditional technique to measure the statistical relationship between two or more variables as they naturally occur without manipulation and to see if changes in one correspond with changes in another, revealing whether the association is positive, negative, or nonexistent, though it never establishes causation. Since the goal was to find patterns of correlations rather than modify variables, a correlational strategy was selected (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling, is used to select $N=100$ married individuals ($n=50$ males, $n=50$ females). This sampling technique, also known as judgmental sampling, depends on the researcher's judgment in determining and choosing the people, situations, or occurrences that can offer the most information to meet the goals of the study (Nikolopoulou, 2023). The data was gathered from Pakistani society located in Bhakkar and nearby areas. Prior to the administration of questionnaires, participants were informed about the nature and purpose of study. Participants are chosen according to particular traits that support the study's goals, guaranteeing a pertinent and easily available sample. Data was collected from the married people in the age range of 20 to 50 years or more who have a middle socioeconomic status.

Statistical Analyses

The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS initially, Cronbach's alpha was computed to ensure the consistency of the scales. The results indicated that the scales possessed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's coefficients ranging from .73 to .92. These values exceed the conventional threshold of .70, confirming that the instruments are reliable. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographics and main variables. *T*-test, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis were used in the study to test the research hypotheses. Pearson correlation was applied to examine the relationship between variables. Positive correlation is a relationship of two statistically consistent variables where the effect on one variable is reflected in the other variable. On the other hand, in a negative correlation, an increase in one variable creates an opposite effect on another variable. Zero correlation shows variables are not connected.

The *t*-test is a statistical analysis used to compare the differences between two groups. To examine the impact of multiple independent variables on the dependent variable, multiple linear regression was conducted. This analysis was used to determine the overall significance of the model and to identify the individual contribution to each predictor. Mediation analysis was performed to investigate the underlying mechanisms between the independent and dependent variables. Mediation analysis was conducted using regression-based procedures to examine the underlying mechanisms through which the independent variables influence the dependent variable. This analysis was carried out to determine whether the proposed mediating variables significantly explained the relationship between the predictors and the outcome variable within the conceptual framework of the study.

Instruments

Communication Patterns Scale: Dyadic communication assessment scale (Immanuel, 2020), a 16-item scale to measure verbal and nonverbal communication patterns between spouses. As the scale is freely available in public domain through open access publishing, no formal permission was required for its use in the present study. The scale ranges from 1 (rarely) to 5 (always). Items 1, 2, 3, 11, and 13 are reverse-scored, as they represent negative communication patterns; items

4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 15 are of the responsive communication domain, and items 5, 12, 14, and 16 are from the self-disclosure domain. The scale demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha=.73$).

Emotional Intelligence Scale: The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Schutte, 1998) is a 33-item scale. The scale demonstrated reliability ($\alpha=.87$). It is based on the ability model of Mayer and Salovey; it measures emotional intelligence from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Items 5, 28, and 33 are reverse scored, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, to ensure the accuracy of the emotional intelligence score. Higher scores mean stronger emotional intelligence.

Conflict styles scale: The romantic partner conflict scale is a 39-item scale (Zacchilli et al., 2009) to assess strategies used during disagreements. It measures conflict resolution from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Scale has no reverse-coded item, although it has six different constructive and destructive styles, including compromise, domination, separation, avoidance, submission, and interactional reactivity. Each subscale was treated as an independent construct in the analysis, and scores were computed separately. Correlations and other statistical analyses were conducted for each domain individually to better understand their distinct relationships within the study.

Marital Satisfaction Scale: The ENRICH marital satisfaction scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) is a 15-item scale to evaluate the overall level of satisfaction in the marriage on a 5-point Likert scale. Responses range from 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree. The scale demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .784$). The EMS Scale comprises two sub-scales: the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales. The scale is a 15-item scale comprising the Marital Satisfaction Scale (10 items) and Idealistic Distortion (5 items). This scale contains several negative items to avoid response bias. Items 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, and 14 are reverse-scored. Items 1, 4, 6, 9, and 13 are of idealistic distortion. Total score of the scale is calculated by using the following formula: $EMS = MS - [(MS) \times (\text{correlation between MS and ID})^2 \times (ID \times 0.01)]$. The higher scores represent higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Informed Consent

A formal informed consent process was implemented to ensure ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Every participant was provided with a detailed consent form that clearly explained the academic purpose of the research, which was conducted under the supervision of the Department of Psychology at Thal University Bhakkar. The consent form explicitly stated that participation was entirely voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw from the study without providing reason or facing negative consequences. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were ensured that their responses would be anonymized, and their identities would not be linked to the data in any published report. Participants were informed that collected data would be used strictly for academic and research purposes.

Demographic Variables

A structured demographic information sheet was developed to obtain relevant background information from the participants. The sheet included details regarding age, gender (male or female), duration of marriage, family system (nuclear or joint), educational level, socio-economic status, monthly income, and number of children. This information was collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' demographic characteristics and to facilitate further statistical analysis within the study.

Procedure

Initially, formal research approval was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Thal University Bhakkar Punjab Pakistan. Following the approval, participants were personally approached and explained the purpose of the study. The research questionnaire containing the demographic sheet and

the four scales as mentioned above was delivered after signed informed consent was obtained. To make sure participants knew how to rate the items on the 5-point Likert scale, instructions were given for each scale. To ensure accuracy, participants were given enough time to do the survey whenever it was convenient for them. Each questionnaire was examined for completeness upon return to make sure no questions remained unanswered. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to reduce self-reporting bias.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines to maintain the integrity and welfare of all participants. The study prioritized the principles of confidentiality and anonymity; consequently, individual identities were protected, and all gathered data were treated as strictly confidential. Data is used solely for academic research, and study design ensures that no psychological, physical, social, or emotional harm is inflicted on the participants during the data collection process. The participants were fully aware of study aims, ensuring they were well informed throughout the process. All authorities subsequently granted permission for data collection

RESULTS

The study resolves to examine the validity and reliability of the scale and psychometric properties of the instrument proposed to be used in the study, the correlation between the variables, the comparison of means of independent samples, finding the role of mediation, and predictions regarding variables; for this purpose, statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, and mediation analysis.

Table 1

Frequency and percentage of participants

Demographic Variables	<i>N</i>	%
Sex		
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Age		
18-24 years	27	27%
25-34 years	33	33%
35-44 years	23	23%
45-above	17	17%
Duration of Marriage		
Less than 1 year	15	15%
1-3 years	32	32%
4-7 years	22	22%
8 years or more	31	31%
Education Level		
Matric	18	18%
Intermediate	22	22%
Bachelors	34	34%
Masters/MPhil	26	26%

Family System		
Nuclear Family	47	47%
Joint Family	53	53%
Socio Economic Status		
Middle	100	100%
Number of Children		
No Child	33	33%
Single Child	26	26%
2 Child	21	21%
3Child or more	20	20%
Monthly Income		
20000 to 30000	19	19%
31000 to 40000	32	32%
41000 or More	49	49%

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the study sample that consisted of 100 married participants ($n = 50$, 50%) sex, age 18-24 years ($n = 27$, 27%) 25-34 years ($n = 33$, 33%) 35-44 years ($n = 23$, 23%) 44-more ($n = 17$, 17%), duration of marriage less than 1 year ($n = 15$, 15%) 1-3 years ($n = 32$, 32%) 4-7 years ($n = 22$, 22%) 8 years or more ($n = 31$, 31%); educational level: matriculation ($n = 18$, 18%), intermediate ($n = 22$, 22%), bachelor's ($n = 34$, 34%), and master's/M.Phil. ($n = 26$, 26%); number of children: no child ($n = 33$, 33%), single child ($n = 26$, 26%), or 2 children ($n = 21$, 21%). 3 or more ($n = 20$, 20%); monthly income: 20000-30000 ($n = 19$, 19%); 31000-40000 ($n = 32$, 32%); 41000 or more ($n = 49$, 49%).

Table 2

Psychometric properties of study variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach' α
DCAS	60.62	6.75	37-76	.73
SEIS	126.04	12.91	83-157	.87
CRS	126.56	13.67	85-161	.79
EMS	33.39	4.61	20.68-43.56	.78

Table 2 shows the psychometric properties for study variables ($N=100$). Coefficients of Cronbach's alpha ranging from .73 to .87, indicating high reliability across all measures. CRS reported the highest mean score ($M=126.56$, $SD=13.66$).

Table 3

Psychometric properties of subscales of CRS

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's
Compromise	53.81	7.01	27-65	.84
Domination	23.06	5.91	9-28	.92

Separation	11.44	2.52	4-15	.78
Avoidance	17.15	4.68	7-24	.89
Submission	14.85	4.57	6-23	.85
Interactional Reactivity	13.99	4.31	6-25	.76

Table 3 shows the psychometric properties for sub-scales of the conflict resolution styles scale ($N=100$). Coefficients of Cronbach's alpha range from .76 to .92, indicating high reliability across all measures.

Table 4

Correlation matrix of EMS subscales

Variable	1	2
Marital Satisfaction	-	.680**
Idealized Distortion		-

Note. $p < .01$

Table 4 shows that both domains of the marital satisfaction scale show a significant positive correlation.

Table 5

Pearson correlation among communication patterns scale, emotional intelligence, CRS sub-scales, and marital satisfaction

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Communication Patterns	-	.52**	.42**	.09	.14	-.12	.15	-.31**	.45**
2. Emotional Intelligence		-	.53**	-.083	.06	-.29**	-.04	-.34**	.48**
3. Compromise			-	-.09	.09	-.13	-.08	-.23*	.48**
4. Domination				-	.28**	.22*	.14	-.04	-.10
5. Separation					-	.18	.215*	.001	.160
6. Avoidance						-	.19	.22*	.02
7. Submission							-	.24*	-.12
8. Interactional Reactivity								-	-.48**
9. Marital Satisfaction									-

Table 5 shows a significant positive correlation between communication patterns and emotional intelligence ($r=.52, p < .01$). Both independent variables show a significant positive correlation with the dependent variable, where SEIS ($r=.48, p < .01$) and DCAS ($r=.45, p < .01$) are both positively associated with marital satisfaction. Compromise shows a moderate positive correlation with marital satisfaction ($r=.48, p < .01$). It is also positively correlated with both DCAS ($r=.42, p < .01$) and SEIS ($r=.53, p < .01$). Interactional reactivity is significantly negatively correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = -.48, p < .01$), communication patterns ($r = -.31, p < .01$), emotional intelligence ($r = -.34, p < .01$), and also with compromise ($r = -.25$).

Figure 2

Graphical Representation of Correlation Analysis

The analysis revealed that **Communication Patterns** ($r = .52, p < .01$), **Emotional Intelligence** ($r = .48, p < .01$), and **Compromise** ($r = .48, p < .01$) show significant positive correlations with **Marital Satisfaction**, whereas **Interactional Reactivity** ($r = -.48, p < .01$) shows a significant negative correlation with **Marital Satisfaction**, as well as with other variables.

1. Communication Patterns	.52**	.42**	.09	.14	-.12	.15	-.31**	.45**	
2. Emotional Intelligence		.53**	-.083	.06	-.29**	-.04	-.34**	.48**	
3. Compromise			-.09	.09	-.13	-.08	-.23*	.48**	
4. Domination				.28**	.22*	.14	-.04	-.10	
5. Separation					.18	.215*	.001	.160	
6. Avoidance						.19	.22*	.02	
7. Submission							.24*	-.12	
8. Interactional Reactivity								-.48**	
9. Marital Satisfaction									
Variable Number:	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[6]	[7]	[8]

Table 6

Mean Comparison of Male and Female among Study Variables

Variables	Male		Female		$t(98)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Communication Patterns	61.24	5.76	60.00	7.63	.92	.36	.18
Emotional Intelligence	124.14	13.02	127.94	12.65	-1.48	.14	-.29
Compromise	52.32	7.24	55.30	6.50	-2.17	.03	-.43
Domination	19.30	5.49	14.98	5.56	3.91	.00	.78
Separation	10.58	2.26	10.28	2.76	.59	.55	.12
Avoidance	17.12	4.45	15.56	4.82	1.68	.09	.34
Submission	15.70	4.19	14.00	4.82	1.88	.06	.38
Interactional Reactivity	13.58	3.73	14.40	4.82	-.95	.34	-.19
Marital satisfaction	32.64	3.76	34.14	5.26	-1.64	.12	-.33

Table 6 presents the mean comparisons and independent sample t-test results of gender differences on the study variables ($N = 100$ with $n = 50$ males and $n = 50$ females). Based on the analysis conducted, there is a significant gender difference in Compromise, $t(98) = -2.17, p = .03$ where the female participants ($M = 55.30, SD = 6.50$) have scored significantly high compared to the male participants ($M = 52.32, SD = 7.24$) resulting into a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = -.43$). In comparison, male participants ($M = 19.30, SD = 5.49$) were found to score significantly high compared to female participants ($M = 14.98, SD = 5.56$) for Domination, $t(98) = 3.91, p < .001$ with large effect size (Cohen's $d = .78$). Concerning the Interactional Reactivity variable, there is no significant gender difference, $t(98) = -.95, p = .34$ (very small effect size – Cohen's $d = -.19$), where male participants ($M = 13.58, SD = 3.73$) scored similarly as the female participants ($M = 14.40, SD = 4.82$). All other variables such as Communication Patterns, Emotional Intelligence, Separation, Avoidance, and Submission do not show any gender difference ($p > .05$).

Figure 3
Graphical Description of Gender Differences

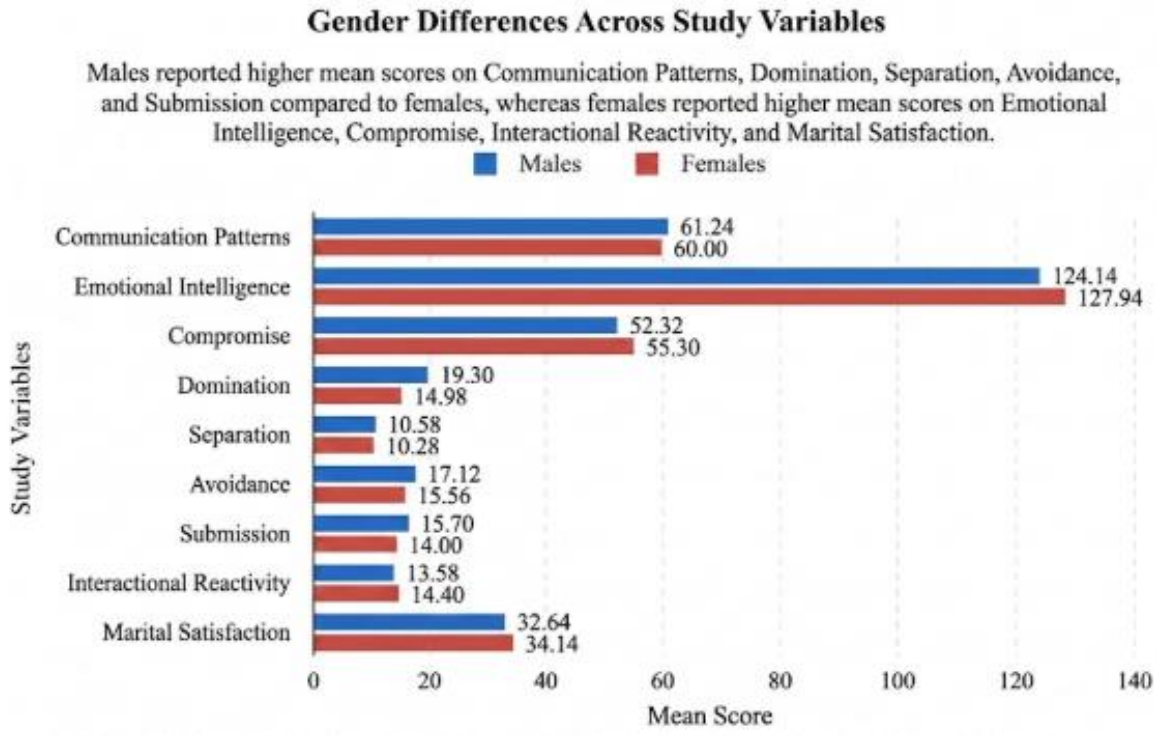


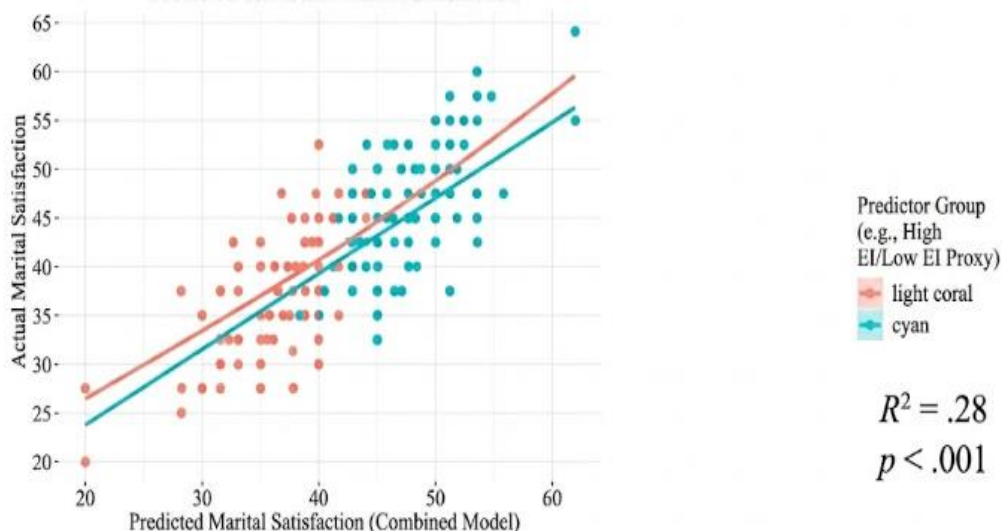
Table 7
Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Variable	B	SE	B	t	p	95%CI
Constant	6.95	4.30		1.61	.10	-1.58, 15.49
Communication Patterns	.19**	.07	.27	2.72	.01	.05, .32
Emotional Intelligence	.12***	.04	.34	3.35	.00	.049, .19
R ²	.28					

Note. $R^2 = .28$, $F(2, 97) = 19.04$, $p < .001$.

Table 7 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis examining the predictive role of communication patterns and emotional intelligence on marital satisfaction. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 97) = 19.04$, $p < .001$, indicating that independent variables significantly predicted marital satisfaction. The model explained 28.2% of the variance in the marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .28$). Communication patterns showed a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction ($B = .19$, $\beta = .27$, $p = .01$), suggesting that better communication patterns are associated with a higher level of marital satisfaction. Similarly, emotional intelligence demonstrated a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction ($B = .12$, $\beta = .34$, $p = .001$), indicating that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience greater marital satisfaction.

Figure 4
Scatter plot description of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

**Table 8**

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Satisfaction from Communication Patterns and Conflict Resolution Sub-Scales

Variables	<i>B</i>	95% CI	SE	<i>B</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1					0.20	0.20***
Constant	14.92	[7.44, 22.39]	3.77			
Communication Patterns	.31	[.18, .43]	.06	.45***		
Step 2					.47	.27***
Constant	15.98	[6.97, 24.98]	4.53			
Communication patterns(DCAS)	.17	[.04, .29]	.06	.25**		
Compromise	.19	[.08, .31]	.06	.29***		
Domination	-.11	[-.23, .02]	.06	-.14		
Avoidance	.23	[-.07, .53]	.15	.13		
Separation	.18	[.02, .34]	.08	.18*		
Submission	-.09	[-.26, .08]	.09	-.09		
Interactional Reactivity	-.37	[-.55, -.19]	.09	-.35***		

Note. CI=confidence interval=Dyadic Communication Adjustment Scale.

$p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

Table 8 shows that in step 1, ΔR^2 value of .20 revealed that DCAS explained 20% variance in the outcome with the model being significant. The findings revealed that DCAS positively predicted the outcome ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$). In step 2 the ΔR^2 value of .27 revealed that DCAS and different conflict resolution styles explained 27% variance in the outcome. The findings revealed that DCAS ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$) remained a significant predictor. Compromise a conflict resolution style ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$) remained also a significant positive predictor. While, interactional reactivity ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .001$) remained a significant negative predictor. Separation ($\beta = .18$, $p > .05$) shows positive results. Other conflict resolution styles domination, avoidance, and submission remained non-significant results.

Figure 5

Graphical Representational of Meditational Analysis

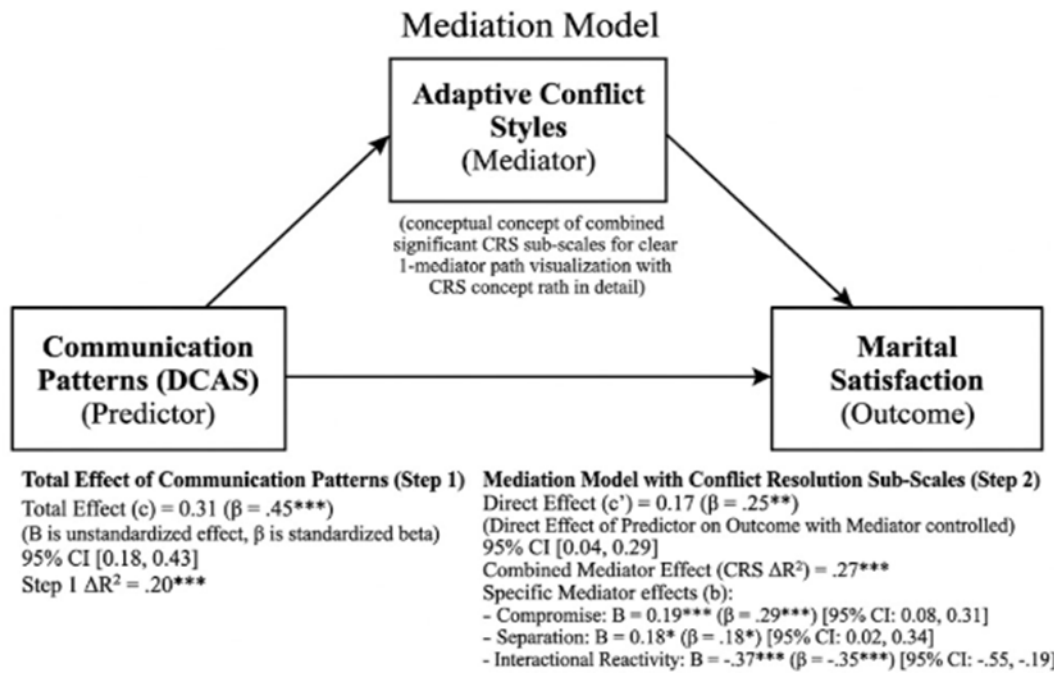
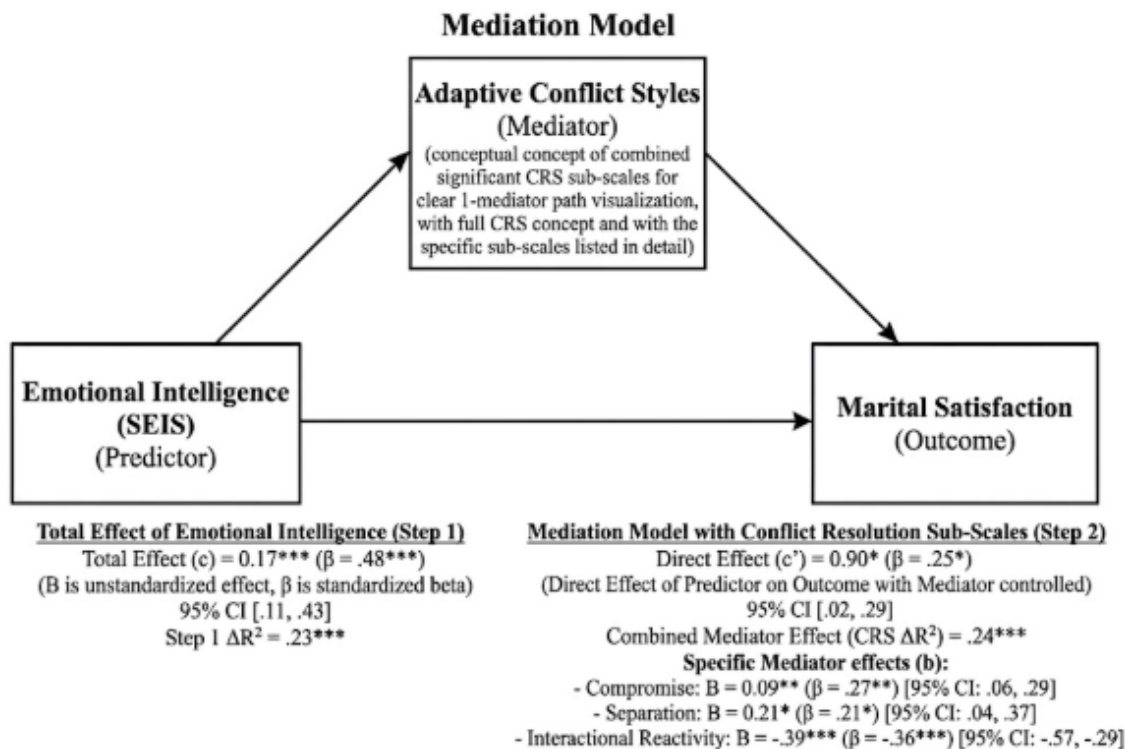


Table 9
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Satisfaction from Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Sub-Scales

Variables	B	95% CI	SE	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1					.23	.23^{***}
Constant	11.91	[3.93, 22.39]	4.02			
SEIS	.17	[.11, .43]	.03	.48^{***}		
Step 2					.46	.24^{***}
Constant	14.45	[4.61, 24.98]	4.96			
SEIS	.90	[.02, .29]	.04	.25*		
Compromise	-.09	[.06, .29]	.06	.27^{**}		
Domination	-.09	[-.21, .04]	.06	-.11		
Avoidance	.23	[-.07, .53]	.15	.12		
Separation	.21	[.04, .37]	.08	.21*		
Submission	-.05	[-.21, .11]	.08	-.05		
Interactional Reactivity	-.39	[-.57, -.29]	.09	-.36^{***}		

Table 9 shows that in step 1, ΔR^2 value of .23 revealed that SEIS explained 23% variance in the outcome with the model being significant. The findings revealed that SEIS positively predicted the outcome ($\beta=.48, p>.001$). In step 2 the ΔR^2 value of .24 revealed that SEIS and different conflict resolution styles explained 24% variance in the outcome. The findings revealed that SEIS ($\beta=.25, p<.05$) remained a significant predictor. Compromise a conflict resolution style ($\beta=.27, p<.01$) remained also a significant positive predictor. While, interactional reactivity ($\beta=-.36, p<.001$) remained a significant negative predictor. Separation ($\beta=.21, p>.05$) shows positive results. Other conflict resolution styles domination, avoidance, and submission remained non-significant results.

Figure 6
Graphical Representation of Meditational Analysis



DISCUSSION

In essence, the major purpose of this study was to extensively analyze the complex processes associated with the functioning of marriages under the distinct socio-cultural and institutional context of Pakistan. Contrary to the conventional individualistic approach that assumes that marriage stability is solely determined by the virtues of the individuals themselves or personality characteristics of the partners, this research examined the relational and interactional dynamics involved in the process taking place between the partners, especially when relationships become strained. The main conclusions of this research are that marital satisfaction is a highly relational and process-based phenomenon. Although effective communication skills and high level of emotional intelligence (EI) play a crucial role as an anchor for the happiness of the couple, all their positive influence is channeled through conflict resolution approaches. Couples who have high emotional and communicational competences tend to follow constructive behavior patterns, such as compromise, rather than getting locked in destructive vicious cycles, for example interactional reactivity. In this way, they attain better marital satisfaction.

Communication Patterns, Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction (H₁)

The first hypothesis (H₁) suggested that there is a positive relationship between communication patterns and emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction. Indeed, the empirical findings of the current research entirely confirm the hypothesis in question, as the analysis shows highly significant positive correlation between independent variables and relational outcome of married couples from Pakistan. This means that couples who are able to communicate constructively and demonstrate high levels of emotional skills tend to develop strong and successful relationships. The results obtained by the current research are consistent with a large number of studies conducted around the world. For example, the positive relationship between open communication and marriage quality confirms the groundbreaking research of Markman et al. (2010). In fact, as stated by these researchers, constructive communication becomes the most important instrument of communication. Through this instrument, spouses can express their thoughts and emotions to each other in an open manner.

Moreover, constructive communication is an important preventive element in the dyad. According to Bradbury and Fincham (1990), constructive communication prevents the escalation of ordinary

conflicts through helping the couple deal with the weaknesses in the system in a rational manner. However, dysfunctional or unconstructive styles of communication would definitely end up with escalating misunderstandings, defensiveness, and conflicts that ultimately lead to declining in the subjective quality of the marriage. Often, interpersonal and intrapersonal dysfunctions emerge due to a lack of capability of expressing one's needs or interpreting one's partner emotions (Barry et al., 2008; Mamak, 2013; Romanis, 2011). This concept is further highlighted by Amiri et al. (2011), where it was found that marital satisfaction is at its peak when both individuals use a problem-solving style to handle any problems that exist in the marriage. On the other hand, satisfaction is significantly reduced when both partners adopt an avoidant or unconstructive style of handling relationship problems. Similar findings have been reported by (Madahi et al., 2013).

The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital happiness is a clear illustration of the importance of affective functioning in maintaining relationships. People with high levels of EI have the ability to correctly identify, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as those of their partners (Schutte et al., 2001). Such abilities contribute to the creation of a harmonious atmosphere and help to cope with domestic disagreements successfully (Fitness, 2001). The positive relationship found in this study confirms the abundant empirical literature on the topic in relation to different cultural populations (Abbasi et al., 2016; Anghel, 2016; Lavalekar et al., 2010; Yediri & Hamart, 2015). For instance, Brackett et al. (2005) found that the couples with low EI from both parties had the highest scores on the scales of disagreement and poor-quality relations and the lowest ones on the scales of relational intimacy, support, and positive affect. Luckily, empirical studies show that such skills are trainable; training in communication competencies increases both the level of emotional intelligence and marital happiness (Ghorbanshiroudi et al., 2011). Finally, the verification of H₁ serves to prove the fact that in Pakistan, just as anywhere else, good communication and emotional intelligence are key to maintaining a healthy marriage.

The Interconnected of Conflict Resolution Styles (H₂)

Secondly, the hypothesis (H₂) predicted that there will be a significant association between conflict resolution styles, communication styles, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction. The results of this study confirmed this hypothesis only partly. Passive or non-constructive conflict strategies such as avoidance, separation, and submission did not produce any consistent statistically significant links between all the variables mentioned. However, the compromising strategy of conflict resolution was found to be a highly significant predictor of communication styles, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction. Such partial confirmation demonstrates that the qualitative character of a conflict strategy determines its influence on the marital system as a whole. Compromising is a constructive and adaptive strategy which directly influences the process of marital adaptation. The finding agrees with international empirical patterns in which it is shown that couples who use positive conflict resolution strategies consciously can improve the general quality of their marriages while using negative and competitive strategies make them susceptible to serious conflicts (McNulty & Russell, 2010).

With regards to structure, a cooperative approach to conflict is characterized by the desire for mutual gain and positive dyadic outcomes. This is achieved through the process of changing the zero-sum game of conflict into a joint problem solving task that creates an environment of organizational openness and trust. Competitive approaches to conflict, on the other hand, increase structural tension and inflate minor conflicts by attending to the immediate needs of the dominating partner to the detriment of the overall relationship (Deutsch, 2006).

Compromise is a necessary process that is needed to be done in order to solve conflicts between individuals as well as to develop strong emotional connections. For compromise, one needs to control himself/herself and overcome the impulsive actions, emotional instability and aggression in order to find a common ground and evaluate the main needs of both partners. If people try to solve a

marriage conflict in terms of their own wishes and ignore the weaknesses of their partner, then the subjective marriage satisfaction will be reduced (Wheeler et al., 2017).

However, it is crucial to understand how these processes work through a different cultural context. In accordance with Face-Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988), the individuals from collectivist societies are taught to use such types of conflict management techniques which help them save the face and maintain the social balance. In Pakistan, this situation becomes even more difficult due to the fact that people are used to living in a joint family system, when spouses need to monitor their emotional expressions and even use indirect communication (Hofstede, 2001). Accordingly, although explicit compromising behavior by couples leads to marital satisfaction, the structural limitations imposed by collectivism could make passive or avoidant conflict strategies context-bound, defensive, or very situational, thus providing an account for the nonsignificant findings regarding avoidance and submission in the present study.

Conflict Resolution Styles	Primary Relational Mechanism	Operational Impact on Marital Quality
Compromise	Mutual accommodation, collaborative problem solving, and establishing common ground	Highly Positive: Strongly correlates with elevated EI, constructive communication, and marital satisfaction
Interactional Reactivity	Physiological arousal, impulsive emotional outbursts, and defensive escalation.	Highly Negative: Act as a destructive pathway that directly de-escalates marital satisfaction
Avoidance/ Separation	Spatial or emotional distancing, tactical pauses or abrupt withdrawal.	Contextual: Statistically inconsistent dependent upon attachment security and cultural boundaries

Predictive Power of Communication and Emotional Intelligence (H₃)

Finally, the third hypothesis (H₃) predicted the statistical significance and robustness of the prediction of marriage satisfaction by communication and emotional intelligence. This paradigm has been fully supported by the empirical study because the standard multiple linear regression analyses showed that the two variables were statistically significant and robust predictors of relationship satisfaction. This paradigm shift indicates that communication and emotional skills not only coincide but also serve as the predictors of the relationships. The unique predicting capacity of communication found in the current study is consistent with the general agreement in family sociology. Communication is the fundamental infrastructure that ensures marital success and satisfaction (Omoboye et al., 2024). In case this infrastructure collapses, there are predictable consequences the demand-withdraw communication strategy when one person tries to put pressure on the other who responds defensively by withdrawing from the communication context is the powerful and long-term predictor of marriage dissatisfaction and divorce (Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

As a result, constructive and positive communication behavior emerges as one of the key factors which help predict the resilient marital quality, while negative, critical, and dismissive communication behavior helps predict an increased likelihood of experiencing acute relationship stress (Rehman & Holtzworth, 2007). In other words, constructive communication affects the dynamics of everyday communication between partners within the marital relationship, creating a conducive environment for the adaptive handling of conflicts and developing of emotional intimacy. The above findings are completely in line with the earlier domestic findings by Batool and Khalid (2012) who stated that emotional intelligence acts as a very important factor helping to predict the adjustment within a marital relationship among the citizens of Pakistan. Local scientific research proves that emotional intelligence positively affects the development of a successful relationship,

since it teaches people how to control their emotions in the course of interpersonal interaction. As a result, individual stress turns into something else and does not affect the relationship negatively (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 1998).

Comment on Model Variability: It must be noted that although the predictors here are clearly statistically significant, the regression model here explained only a relatively small percentage of the total variance in marital satisfaction. This shows that marital satisfaction is a multi-dimensional construct, affected by many other factors. It has been shown through literature that personality traits, particularly neuroticism and low conscientiousness are major determinants of marital satisfaction (Robins et al., 2000). Additionally, stress-related factors like persistent financial problems have also been found to be strong determinants of marital break-ups (Dew, 2008), while the availability or lack of good social support systems acts as a crucial determinant of stability in difficult circumstances (Thoits, 2011). In parallel with communication, emotional intelligence was found to be an independent and significant predictor of marital success, which is a discovery that is consistent with recent research on adult relationships (Baja et al., 2023). Based on classical theories, EI promotes relationship success because it gives people skills that enable them to recognize their emotions and manage them quickly in stressful interpersonal settings (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 1998). Thus, individual distress does not become relationship distress, which predicts psychological well-being and longevity of relationships (Zeidner et al., 2004).

The Mediating Role of Conflict Resolution Styles (H4)

According to the fourth hypothesis (H4), conflict resolution styles should have played a substantial role of mediators between the communication patterns and emotional intelligence, and the level of satisfaction with marriage. However, the results obtained by the author partially confirmed the stated hypothesis, demonstrating a selective model of mediation. It means that only compromise and interactional reactivity served as statistically significant mediators; the rest of the conflict styles failed to have any indirect impact on the research topic. Compromise is a key element of the model because of its significant positive impact. Through the prism of the ability model of emotional intelligence, suggested by Stolarski et al. (2011), individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence can choose mature behavior tactics for solving conflicts in their romantic relationships (Expósito et al., 2019).

Compromise serves as the mechanism that drives these competencies. There is an extensive amount of research done about compromise (operationalized through scales such as Romantic Partner Conflict Scale), being considered the benchmark solution to resolving conflict, involving the creation of a cooperation-oriented middle ground on purpose. Empirical validations in the context of joint decision-making (Kamp Dush & Taylor, 2012), conflict management (Azadifard & Amani, 2017; Greeff & de Bruyne, 2000), integrative styles (Ali & Saleem, 2022; Dildar et al., 2013) and problem solving (Scheeren et al., 2014) all converge on the idea that people maintaining compromise as a mindset possess a high cognitive tolerance to interpersonal differences and consciously seek solutions of mutual benefit that balance personal requirements and those of the partner (Wheeler et al., 2010). This constructive process also helps preserve emotional intimacy. As shown by Gottman et al. (2015), conflict resolution using affective problem-solving, which is focused on repairing emotional connections rather than applying any logic and cognition-based approach, is highly superior in bringing harmony back into a couple's relationship.

It is worth noting that the qualitative context discussed above can be applied when considering the positive correlation sometimes found between intimacy and temporary distance or pausing. According to Farooq et al. (2024), a short pause during an emotionally charged argument may sometimes help deepen the connection between two spouses. Nevertheless, this approach is very much dependent on individuals' dispositions, attachment security, and feeling of safety to pause

without fear of being abandoned. In terms of clinical practice, setting up healthy boundaries will create a much-needed protective mechanism against outside pressure, emotional abuse, and over commitments (Gottman et al., 2015). In other words, temporary distancing or conflict pausing will sometimes have a constructive effect as long as it is done in the context of a secure attachment.

On the other hand, interactional reactivity proved to be an influential mediator, showing significant correlation with marital problems. The discovery indicates that emotional volatility, intensity, and impulsiveness during a confrontation significantly negate and undo the positive effects provided by a person's baseline emotional intelligence and communication skills. The conclusion is strongly corroborated by the seminal research conducted in the field of psychophysiology by Levenson & Gottman (1983), who showed that elevated physiological arousal and high emotional reactivity during conflict highly correlate with severe marital distress. The inability to solve conflicts due to negative affectivity and emotional reactivity results in a dramatic decrease in couples' relationship satisfaction (Verhofstadt et al., 2005). In the case of milder forms of such reaction, spouses will try not to confront the issue altogether and avoid interacting. However, in more extreme forms of the phenomenon, one of the partners might leave the discussion dramatically, slamming the door in the process (Knudson et al., 1980). In such an atmosphere, neither of the partners will state his opinion properly or just keep repeating his argument and ignoring the opinions of the other partner.

The observation that mediation effects were found only for particular conflict styles is consistent with current methodological trends emphasizing the selective nature of mediation in studies involving dyads. All conflict behaviors do not work similarly; particular behavioral mechanisms mediate in an indirect way whereas others have direct impact or no significance at all in complex paths (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). Thus, according to Cramer (2000), some conflict styles are related to marital quality but do not act as structural mediators. At last, such selective dynamics can be adequately explained by the theory of the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) Model (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). According to the VSA model, individual vulnerability and strengths (for example, existing communication skills and EI) do not determine relationship outcomes alone because their functioning depends on the way couples cope with stressful experiences using adaptive and maladaptive behavioral strategies. In the current study, compromise serves as an adaptive strategy that uses communication and EI skills to improve marital satisfaction. Interactional reactivity works as a maladaptive strategy that exhausts emotions and deteriorates relationships.

The Eradication of Gender Disparities in Marital Satisfaction (H₅)

The fifth hypothesis (H₅) proposed that there would be a statistically significant gender difference in reported marital satisfaction between male and female participants in Pakistan. The empirical findings of the present study rejected this hypothesis, as no statistically significant differences were observed between the genders. This unexpected result demonstrates that within this sample, men and women experience highly comparable levels of subjective satisfaction within their marriages. This symmetry suggests that contemporary marital satisfaction is shaped far more by shared, dyadic relational processes than by gender socialization alone. Methodological literature has long established that overall marital adjustment scores do not significantly differ across gender when evaluated using rigorous, standardized psychometric measures (Spanier, 1976). Similarly, longitudinal studies confirm that husbands and wives tend to report remarkably comparable levels of relationship satisfaction, particularly within stable, long-term marital bonds (Kurdek, 2005).

A definitive meta-analytic review by Proulx et al. (2007) concluded that gender differences in marital satisfaction are generally very small, inconsistent, and frequently statistically non-significant across diverse international cohorts. Because marital satisfaction is fundamentally a dyadic construct, it is jointly co-constructed by both partners through shared experiences, mutual adjustments, and absolute behavioral interdependence. Consequently, both men and women are equally vulnerable to, and uplifted by, the same core relational factors, including communication quality, emotional

intelligence, and conflict strategies. Over time, partners naturally adapt to one another, resulting in a systemic convergence of their subjective perceptions of relationship quality.

In the particular context of Pakistani society, this absence of gender disparity might point towards the continuous and progressive change of the social structure. The patriarchal social structure and the strict gender roles are gradually being changed into a more balanced and cooperative marriage system. High levels of literacy, female higher education, socio-economic consciousness, and changing perceptions about society are leading to a more equal sharing of emotional and relationship responsibilities in modern marriages (Ahmed, 2022). With such a perception of marriage, both husband and wife have similar parameters for evaluating the success of marriage, which removes gender differences from the past.

Gender Similarities in Interpersonal Competencies (H₆)

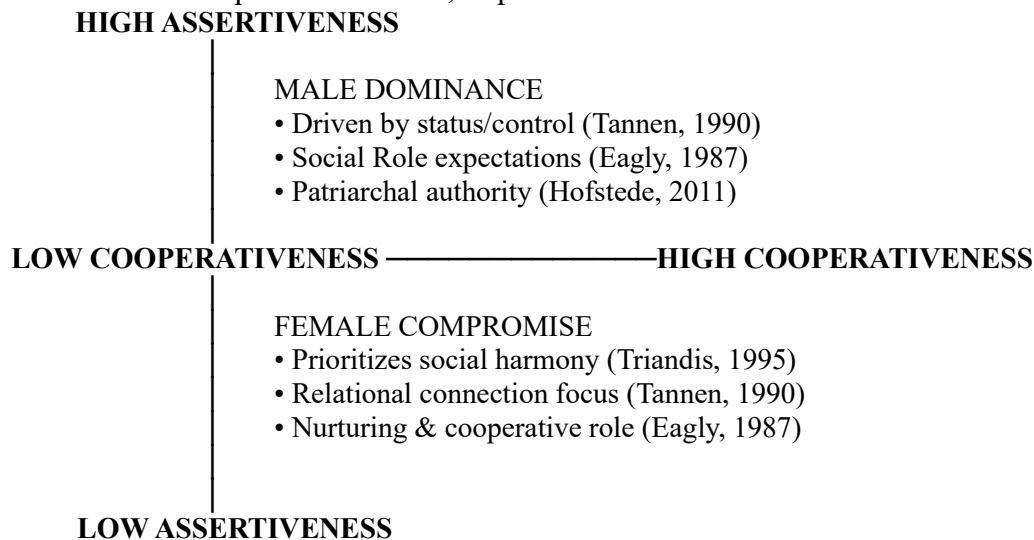
The sixth hypothesis (H₆) claimed that significant gender differences exist in initial communication patterns and EI test results. The empirical results of this research have not confirmed this hypothesis since no significant differences were found among the male and female participants on these measures. This means that males and females included into the current sample demonstrate very similar communication skills and emotional competences. It is another empirical proof of the Gender Similarities Hypothesis put forward by Hyde (2005), who argues that men and women are more alike than different in almost all psychological features, including the style of communication and emotional processes. Moreover, when complex emotional competences are measured instead of narrow stereotypes, the differences in EI become statistically insignificant (Matud, 2004).

Moreover, gender socialization research shows that both males and females are equally well-equipped with the ability to communicate effectively and supportively. The differences, if any, are mostly context-specific and not rooted in their biology (Burlison, 2007). The spread of the contemporary norms of relationships, globalization of digital media, and egalitarian models of relationship further facilitate the process of convergence of expectations and practices among both genders (Ali et al., 2011). Considering the specifics of the Pakistani society, the findings clearly indicate an emergence of a generation change, especially among those people who have been educated and live in cities. In fact, the research carried out at the University of the Punjab demonstrates that rapid integration of women into the labor market and constant exposure to egalitarian ideas changes the family and interpersonal relations in Pakistan (Batoool, 2025). The changes taking place at a macro level in the society have begun affecting the established patterns of socialization, which have been responsible for bringing about a noticeable change in gender-based variations concerning emotional expressiveness and communicative strategies. With the lines between the private and public spheres continuing to become increasingly blurred in Pakistani society, there is no denying that both men and women have become equally adept at communicating.

Style Specific Gender Divergence in Conflict Resolution (H₇)

The seventh hypothesis (H₇) claimed that there would exist a significant gender gap in the application of various conflict resolution styles by male and female respondents. The empirical results obtained in this study have partially validated this hypothesis since they demonstrated that the gender gap in conflict resolution is highly style-dependent but not universally applicable. In particular, female respondents were found to employ compromise significantly more frequently compared to male respondents who used domination much more often. The high frequency of compromise used by female respondents demonstrates a strong cultural and psychological predisposition for maintaining harmony in relations, engaging in active cooperation, and striving for

mutual understanding. On the other hand, the high frequency of domination used by male respondents shows a more assertive or competitive attitude to the resolution of family conflict. These results are congruent with cross-cultural psychology where it is noted that people in collectivistic societies are socialized to highly value interdependence and cooperation (Triandis, 1995). The basic tenet of an interdependent self-construal of individuals directly influences their ways of handling conflicts, often resulting in actions that ensure collective unity at the cost of personal needs (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In terms of traditional conflict theories, such actions are based on two basic parameters: assertiveness and cooperativeness. Domination is characterized by high assertiveness and low cooperativeness, while compromise represents a combination of high self and partner concerns (Thomas, 1976). These different approaches are based on gender-specific socialization and power structures, as presented in the table below:



Such a deviation specific to styles is in agreement with sociolinguistic and sociological theories. According to Tannen (1990), women are socialized to engage in communication from the standpoint of connection and intimacy, while men socialize through a sense of status, independence, and control. These ideas are further elaborated by Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), stating that significant differences in behavior emerge due to the fact that society always holds certain expectations; women are expected to be nurturing, communal, and cooperative, while men are supposed to be agentic, dominant, and assertive. Within the Pakistani community, the above-described socialization process is influenced by the existing patriarchal system. Women are expected to play the role of maintaining family unity and bearing family sacrifices, while men hold dominant positions within households. Significantly, the partial support of hypothesis H₇, with many of the conflict styles failing to yield significant differences based on gender, shows that gender is not always decisive in shaping conflict behavior on its own. Personal factors, context of situations, and dynamics between couples are extremely important in determining the course of conflict (Gottman, 1994). Within present-day Pakistan, such results represent an interesting demographic mix where the influence of old traditions and new relationships patterns overlap. As traditional patterns push men towards domination and women to compromising in cases of high-conflict arguments, continuous exposure to higher education and changes in the social fabric prepares grounds for more versatile conflict resolutions within both genders (Ali et al., 2011).

Conclusion and Practical Implications

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that marital satisfaction in Pakistan is a dynamic, dyadic phenomenon driven by communication patterns, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution

styles. The empirical validation of our hypotheses confirms that while baseline communication and emotional intelligence are vital predictors of marital quality, their impact is heavily mediated by behavioral choices during conflict. Specifically, the adaptive strategy of compromise acts as a bridge that translates emotional capacity into relational success, while interactional reactivity functions as a destructive pathway that directly undermines marital health. Furthermore, the absence of gender differences in baseline emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction points to an ongoing sociocultural convergence among educated Pakistani cohorts, even as traditional gender roles continue to subtly influence specific conflict styles like domination and compromise. These findings carry significant practical implications for clinical psychologists, marriage counselors, and family policymakers in Pakistan. Rather than focusing solely on individual traits, therapeutic interventions should target the dyadic interaction patterns of couples, specifically training them to replace reactive, impulsive outbursts with structured compromise and collaborative problem-solving. Culturally adapted pre-marital counseling programs focusing on emotional regulation and constructive communication could serve as a powerful tool for reducing marital distress and fostering long-term family stability within the evolving fabric of contemporary Pakistani society.

Limitations

- This study utilized a relatively small sample size ($N = 100$), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. The study relied on self-report measures, which are susceptible to social desirability bias.
- The data may not fully represent the diverse marital dynamics of urban cities like Lahore, Karachi.
- The cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. While significant associations were identified, causal inferences cannot be made regarding the direction of these relationships.

Recommendations

- Larger and more diverse samples from different regions should be used to improve the generalizability of findings.
- For better understanding of causal relationships and changes in marital satisfaction over time longitudinal research design should be used.
- Cross cultural studies should be conducted to explore how marital processes differ across societies and cultural contexts.

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