



PATHWAYS TO MARITAL SATISFACTION: EMOTION REGULATION, ATTACHMENT STYLES AND LENGTH OF MARRIAGE

Farwa Ali^{1*}, Roomana Zeb², Saima Arzeen³, Hira Nauman⁴, Bargees Khattak⁵

^{1*}Lecturer Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa,
Email: farwaali737@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar,
Email: roomazeb@uop.edu.pk

³Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar,
Email: saimaarzeenmehar@uop.edu.pk

⁴Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar Hira.fwu@gmail.com

⁵Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar, Email: bargeesk@yahoo.com

***Corresponding Author:** Farwa Ali

*Lecturer Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa, Email: farwaali737@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the relationship between emotion regulation, attachment styles, duration of marriage and marital satisfaction. The data was obtained from married individuals (n=385) belonging to Peshawar, Pakistan and included both males and females. Experiences in Close-Relationships – Revised Questionnaire (Fraley et al., 2000), ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross et al., 2003) were used for collecting data. The results revealed marital satisfaction to be significantly positively correlated with cognitive reappraisal strategy whereas significantly negatively correlated with expressive suppression strategy. Significant differences were observed between marital satisfaction of those with a secure attachment style and those with avoidant and anxious attachment style. Likewise, results indicated a significant moderating effect of the duration of marriage on the relationship between marital satisfaction and insecure attachment style. Family and marriage therapists may take into account the findings to have an understanding of the processes underlying quality relationships and help provide interventions for reducing the risk of separation or divorce.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage plays a vital role in one's life. It is defined as a union between two individuals which is recognized by their religion, the law, a cultural group or a local community (Stritof, 2022). This union may last till death or might break off by separation or divorce (Marriage, n.d.). Establishing and maintaining a long-lasting marital union is something many wishes to attain. It is vital for the overall wellbeing of the individuals and their families and makes such concepts worth studying (Çelebi, 2018). Although marriage seems a highly desirable relationship, yet evidence suggests satisfaction with one's marriage is not easily attained. The quality of a person's marital life is more important than just being in a marital union. The success and excellence of a marital relationship is attained by the efforts of the marital partners (Asoodeh, 2010; O'Hora, as cited in Friedlander, 2020). The concept of marriage is influenced by the different characteristics of the marital partners,

such as their level of commitment, empathy, respect, communication patterns, conflict resolution, intimacy and satisfaction in marriage etc.

Marital satisfaction is the essence of marriage. It may be understood as the overall happiness with marriage (Roach et al., 1981). According to Nichols et al. (2000), marital satisfaction is defined as a state of contentment, fulfillment and pleasure which is mutually enjoyed by marital partners when all the aspects of their relationship are taken into consideration. Satisfaction with marriage plays a vital role for both the spouses and is associated with the stability of their marriage (Al-Masri & Al-Quran, 2022). Marital satisfaction and the factors contributing to it are topic of interest to numerous social scientists but similar to other psychological constructs, the concept of marital satisfaction has been researched entirely in the West (Sorokowski et al., 2017). Cultural norms, customs and expectations may have impact on marital relationship and demand undertaking similar constructs in the Eastern culture too. Attachment with one's marital partner is one of the important factors influencing marital satisfaction.

Attachment refers to a bond through which a person seeks proximity and connectedness with another individual whom one feels safe and secure with. It can also be understood as a lasting connection between human beings (Ainsworth & Bell, as cited in Santrock, 2018). Attachment with one's intimate partner is an essential part of life and has a significant role in the marital stability. Research studies have identified numerous factors that have an impact over marital satisfaction. Understanding the impact of various attachment styles on marriage can aid in recognizing the vulnerabilities and strengths of a relationship. Ottu and Akpan (2011) view attachment styles to be a central element in assessing relationships with others.

A number of attachment theories have been put forward. Bowlby and Ainsworth presented their theories of attachment in the context of child-parent relationship. Bowlby (as cited in Santrock, 2018) considered attachment as an emotional connection between the child and their primary caregiver. Those who receive consistent and responsive caregiving will develop a secure attachment, whereas those who receive inconsistent caregiving will develop an insecure attachment with their caregiver. Similarly, In the 1970s, Ainsworth presented her theory of attachment. She conducted the famous strange-situation experiment and identified three patterns of attachment namely secure, anxious and avoidant. Those children whose needs were consistently met, will have a secure attachment. Similarly, those children whose caregiver is unavailable and aren't nurtured responsively will develop an avoidant attachment. Whereas, those children who receive an inconsistent care will have an insecure and unstable attachment pattern. The kind of emotional bonds formed during the early years influence one's interpersonal relationships over the life course (Ainsworth & Bell, as cited in Santrock, 2018). Afterwards, Hazan and Shaver (1987) presented their theory of attachment within the context of adult relationships. They identified three types of attachment, namely secure, anxious and avoidant. Individuals with secure attachment style are comfortable with establishing and maintaining intimate relationships. They can easily express their needs and desires, can communicate openly and clearly with their significant other. The individuals with avoidant attachment are reluctant to seek closeness and tend to be self-reliant. They inhibit any dependency or intimacy needs and are emotionally and physically distant from their partners. Individuals with an anxious attachment seek proximity but fear abandonment and rejection. Such individuals desire physical and emotional connection with their partner (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Attachment with one's significant other influences one's marital satisfaction. The patterns of attachment with one's romantic partner has a lasting impact on marital dynamics. Individuals who are securely attached are satisfied and content with their intimate relationships, whereas those with attachment difficulties are more prone to relationship dissatisfaction (Conradi et al., 2017).

Sina et al. (2018) conducted research to assess the relationship between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Results indicated avoidant and anxious individuals to be dissatisfied with their marriages. Individuals with insecure attachment are usually dissatisfied and emotionally distressed with their relationships mainly because of their perception of the unavailability of the partner and their unmet needs for closeness and security (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). On the

contrary, securely attached individuals report greater satisfaction with their marital life (Banse, 2004) and tend to have higher levels of intimacy, and proximity with their marital partners (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

Another research explored the impact of attachment styles on one's marital satisfaction (Heidari & Kumar, 2021). They concluded that securely attached individuals were satisfied with their marriages as compared to other attachment styles. Those with secure attachment style have better problem-solving capabilities and are able to deal with marital issues of any kind. They tend to be more compromising and forgiving with their spouses than those with insecure attachment style (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Similarly, another research by Justin and Haroon (2019) investigated the relationship between the different styles of attachment and marital satisfaction. The results indicated secure attachment to be positively associated with marital satisfaction, whereas the avoidant and anxious attachment was negatively associated with the marital satisfaction.

Another research by Li and Chan (2012) explored the influence of the types of insecure attachment patterns on marital satisfaction. Results indicated anxious and avoidant style of attachment to be linked with lower satisfaction with one's marriage. Individuals with avoidant style are emotionally distant in their intimate relationships and have trouble establishing and maintaining satisfying romantic relationships. Similarly, anxiously attached individuals tend to exaggerate their vulnerability and unmet needs, thereby perceiving marriages to be less satisfied than they are.

Similarly, the styles of attachment tend to be stable in the adulthood, however they can be modified depending upon various interpersonal experiences and life events. The time spent together by marital partners could be one of the factors affecting one's attachment pattern, especially the insecure attachment style. The role of marriage duration as a moderator in the association between marital satisfaction and attachment styles is not clearly understood, so we need to examine the very relationship.

The views regarding length of one's marriage and marital satisfaction differ. Certain researches suggest marital satisfaction to increase with time, whereas some suggest otherwise. Ziaei et al. (2014) reported marital satisfaction declines as the length of marriage increases. Likewise, another research reported a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and duration of marriage (Glenn, 1998; Kurdek, 1999). On the contrary, various studies have documented a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and duration of marriage (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013; Bulgan et al., 2018). Individuals with many years of marriage report greater satisfaction. They have better adaptability and report fewer issues with their marital life (Tavakol et al., 2017).

Similarly, another research was conducted aimed at comparing the marital satisfaction of two groups of couples. Couples with many years of marriage comprised one group, whereas the other group comprised of couples with lesser years of marriage. Those with many years of marriage reported to be more satisfied than those with lesser years (Shah, as cited in Iqbal, 2013). The marital couples become more understanding, tolerant and forgiving with the passage of time. They are more likely to ignore each other's shortcomings and deal with problems together.

The different patterns of attachment are developed through the childhood. This bonding remains an important part of one's life. It influences the social relationships of individuals, including the marital relationship. Some research studies have revealed that the insecure attachment pattern of both the partners have a negative impact on their marital relationship, whereas some have reported the opposite (Kuncewicz et al., 2020; Sina et al., 2018). It might be a result of the intervening events and experiences that may affect the relationship between the styles of attachment and marital satisfaction. Among other factors, the duration or length one's marriage may contribute towards this, which is not often considered.

The literature concerning the role of the length or duration of marriage in weakening or strengthening the association between insecure attachment patterns and satisfaction with one's marriage is scarce. A study by Kuncewicz et al. (2020) explored the moderating role of duration of marriage on insecure attachment patterns and marital relationship. The results indicated that with the increasing duration of marriage, the quality of relationship improved for the individuals with

anxious attachment, whereas no impact was observed for those with avoidant attachment style. Individuals with an insecure attachment style desire comfort and proximity in their close relationships. When they are provided with sufficient care and support, they may feel less anxious over time and restore the feelings of being lovable and valued. They may perceive marriage as a means of reducing abandonment fears and helps them become open to closeness and intimacy (Çelebi, 2018). The availability and responsiveness of one's partner can have rewarding effects in attaining the marital satisfaction. It reduces worries regarding criticism or disapproval from the partner when needs and desires are expressed. An unavailable and unresponsive partner may cause attachment insecurity and rejection sensitivity. It may trigger mental and behavioral processes that influences one's psychological wellbeing, personal adjustment as well as stability and satisfaction with one's marriage (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Similarly, among the several skills necessary for a happy marriage, emotion regulation is one of those. The understanding as well as appropriate expression of emotions have consequences for individual's social life (Omidi & Talighi, 2017). Context-appropriate expression and regulation of emotions is essential for optimal social functioning. According to Gross (as cited in Mazzuca et al., 2018), emotion regulation is a process of selecting the emotions an individual experiences; choosing the way the emotional states are experienced and responding in a way that is socially appropriate. Gross (1998) presented the Process Model of Emotion Regulation that assumes that individuals can modify and regulate their emotional responses at various points in time during the emotion generating process. This is achieved by employing different strategies, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategy. Cognitive reappraisal strategy occurs before the complete unfolding of an emotional response. It cognitively reframes an emotion-eliciting situation so as to change its emotional effect. Particularly, it aims at transforming the experience and expression of unpleasant or negative emotion-evoking situation. The expressive suppression strategy occurs after the unfolding of the emotional response there by inhibiting the verbal and non-verbal emotional expression in any circumstances (Gross, 2001).

Individuals experience and exchange a number of emotions in their interpersonal relationships. Evidence suggests emotional regulation and emotional balance to be associated with quality and stability of one's social relations (Lopes et al., 2011). The same applies within the context of marital relationships. The way each partner expresses and regulates emotions can have consequences for the two. At times, the marital couples could encounter unpleasant or negative emotional events which if not handled carefully, may cause them to experience unpleasant emotional states. Repeated instances of this nature may influence one's marital life negatively (Bloch et al., 2014). Utilizing appropriate emotion regulation strategy can help couples deal with the unpleasant emotion-evoking situations. They may differ in their ability to use appropriate emotion regulation strategy. Deficits in emotion regulation skills may have an adverse effect over one's life (Omidi & Talighi, 2017). Various studies have investigated the impact of emotion regulation on both individuals and their relationships.

The cognitive reappraisal strategy for emotion regulation is more productive than the expressive suppression strategy for personal as well as social outcomes. According to Levenson et al. (2013) using the appropriate strategy for emotion regulation can enhance one's emotional coordination, and interpersonal relationships, thereby increasing the chances of greater satisfaction with one's relationships. Individuals who use cognitive reappraisal strategy report enhanced social interactions and functioning (Richards et al., 2003) which ultimately results in greater satisfaction with one's marital life (Mazzuca et al., 2018). Appropriate use of this strategy helps overcome life stressors effectively and facilitates quality relationship between partners. On the other hand, expressive suppression has been linked with lower relationship satisfaction since it disrupts effective rapport building and communication in interpersonal relationships (Velotti et al., 2016). Similarly, Butler et al. (2003) reported that expressive suppression is related with poor emotional outcomes and affiliative behavior in social relationships. Inhibiting emotional expression in close relationships may be perceived as indifference, and may hinder feelings of closeness and intimacy. It might be related with feelings of contempt and dissatisfaction in both partners.

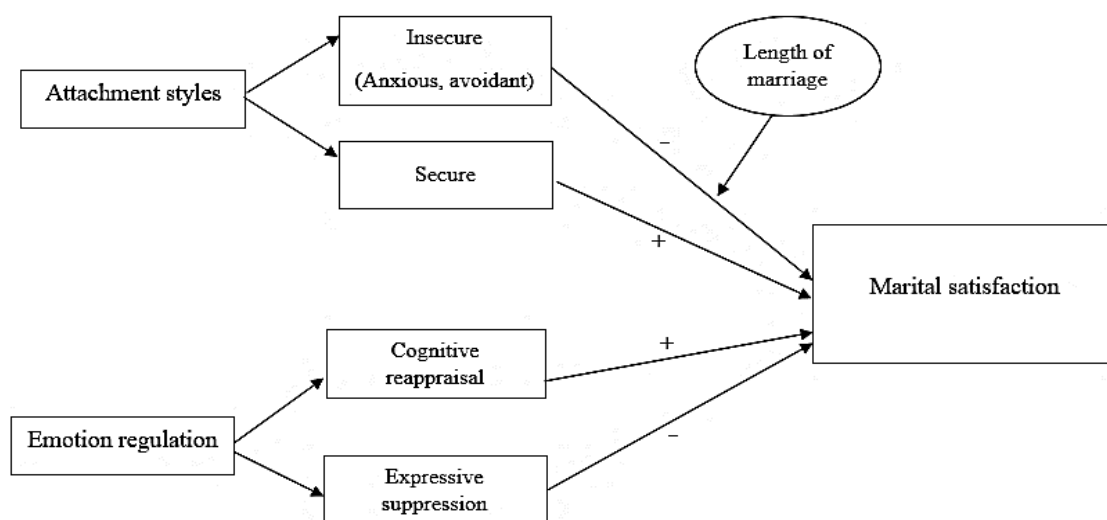
Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction.
2. To assess how the strength of the relationship between insecure styles of attachment and marital satisfaction will be affected with the change in duration of marriage.
3. To assess the relationship between marital satisfaction and emotion-regulation strategies.

Hypotheses

1. Securely attached individuals will score high on marital satisfaction scale as compared to anxious and avoidant attached individuals.
2. The association between insecure attachment style and marital satisfaction would be weakened with the increase in the duration of marriage.
3. There will be a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and cognitive reappraisal strategy.
4. There will be a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and expressive suppression strategy.

Model



METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study comprised a total of 385 married individuals including 195 males and 190 females. “Raosoft Sample Size Calculator” (Raosoft, 2004) was used to obtain the sample size. Convenience sampling technique was used to recruit the sample from Peshawar, Pakistan. Participants with age ranging from 20 to 56 years were included (M= 34.42, S.D.= 8.34) in the study. The duration of marriage of the participants ranged from 1 to 21 years (M= 10.56, S.D.= 4.26) excluding those with less than a year of marriage. Participants with at least intermediate level of education were included in the study.

Instruments

Demographic sheet

It had information like participant’s gender, education, age and the duration of marriage.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993)

It is the shorter version of ENRICH Marital Inventory (Fowers & Olson, 1989) for assessing marital satisfaction. It comprises 15 items with six items reverse-coded. Out of 15, 10 items measure satisfaction with marriage, whereas the remaining are idealistic distortion items that control for responses that are socially desirable. The responses are scored on a 5-point Likert scale indicating

the degree of agreement or disagreements with the statements. A higher score on this instrument indicates higher satisfaction with marriage and vice versa. Evidence for concurrent validity is reported via a correlation of .81 for couples scores and .73 for individuals score with Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment scale.

The Experiences in Close-Relationships - Revised Questionnaire (Fraley et al., 2000)

This scale is used to measure the different attachment styles. It comprises 36 items, with 14 items reverse scored. The responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale indicating the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements. The responses for each of the style of attachment are averaged. A high score on each of the attachment pattern indicates the presence of that style of attachment. An adequate reliability of .93 has been reported for this instrument.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003)

This scale is developed by Gross and John (2003) for assessing the emotional regulation strategies, named expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal. It consists of 10 items which measure the two strategies used by an individual for emotion regulation. The responses are scored on a 7-point Likert type scale. The responses are scored on a continuum that ranges from 1 to 7 indicating strongly disagree and strongly agree, respectively. The responses for each strategy are averaged. A higher score on any strategy indicates the usage of that strategy by the respondent. A reliability of .90 has been reported for cognitive reappraisal items, while .80 for expressive suppression items.

Procedure

For carrying out the research, convenience sampling strategy was employed for sample selection. The sample comprised married men and women residing in Peshawar, Pakistan. Those who were at least intermediate passed were preferred. The participants were told about the purpose of the study and approached for data collection. Their participation was voluntary and were assured with regard to the confidentiality of the data gathered. As and where required, the participants were guided regarding the questionnaires administered.

RESULTS

Table 1 Psychometric properties of the scales

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
Emotion Regulation Questionnaire				
Cognitive reappraisal	4.31	.98	1.34 – 6.49	.90
Expressive suppression	3.97	1.18	1 – 6.76	.83
Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised				
Anxious attachment	3.32	.99	1.38 – 6	.95
Avoidant attachment	2.98	1.03	1.34 – 6	.98
ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale	50.34	15.40	13 – 75	.94

Table 1 shows the psychometric properties of the instruments used in the current study.

Table 2 One-way Analysis of Variance in ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale across the attachment styles

	Attachment styles						F	η^2
	Secure		Avoidant		Anxious			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
EMSS	62.93	3.76	42.68	13.51	42.38	13.79	136.81	.85

Note: EMSS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale *p < .05

Table 2 shows significant differences in marital satisfaction across the different attachment styles, i.e., secure, avoidant and anxious. Significant mean differences are observed between secure

attachment style (M=62.93) and avoidant attachment style (M=42.68) as well as between secure attachment style (M=62.93) and anxious attachment style (M=42.38).

Table 3 Moderating effect of the length of marriage on the relationship between Insecure Attachment Styles and Marital Satisfaction

Predictor	MS		95% CI	
	B	P	LL	UL
Constant	50.16	.000	48.96	51.36
IAS	-.37	.000	-.41	-.33
LOM	.36	.001	.14	.59
LOM*IAS	.009	.023	.001	.017
R ²	.65			
ΔR ²	.005			
F	226.1			
ΔF	5.21			

Note: MS= Marital Satisfaction, IAS= Insecure Attachment Styles, LOM= Length of marriage
LOM*IAS = Interaction Variable P < .05

Table 3 shows the Length of Marriage (LOM) as a moderator in the relationship between Marital Satisfaction (MS) and Insecure Attachment Styles (IAS). IAS predicts a significant negative change in MS ($\beta = -.37, t = -17.63, p < .05$). LOM significantly predicts MS ($\beta = .36, t = 3.23, p < .05$). Similarly, an interaction of IAS and LOM significantly predicts MS ($\beta = .009, t = 2.28, p < .05$).

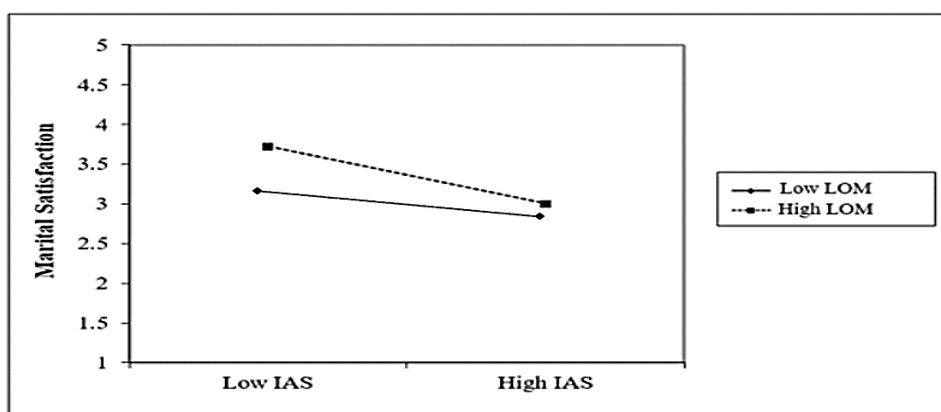


Figure 1: Moderating Role of Length of Marriage in Relationship between Insecure Attachment Style and Marital Satisfaction (n=385)

The above figure depicts the interactive effect of the length of marriage with insecure style of attachment on marital satisfaction. A slight moderation effect is observed. The regression plots show that the relationship between marital satisfaction and insecure attachment style holds weakly for those with a higher length of marriage.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation between ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
1. EMSS	385	50.34	15.40	-	.58*	-.49*
2. CR	385	4.31	0.97		-	-.50*
3. ES	385	3.97	1.20			-

Note: EMSS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale; CR= Cognitive Reappraisal, ES= Expressive Suppression *p < 0.05

Table 4 indicates the relationship between cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression and marital satisfaction. A significant positive correlation between marital satisfaction and cognitive reappraisal ($r = .58, p < 0.05$) and a significant negative correlation between marital satisfaction and expressive suppression ($r = -.49, p < 0.05$) is shown. A significant negative correlation between cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression ($r = -.50, p < 0.05$) is also observed.

Discussion

Humans have a basic desire to affiliate with others. They strongly desire to establish and maintain a long-lasting marital union. It is vital for the overall wellbeing of the individuals and their families and necessitate studying the concept of marital satisfaction. In line with this, some variables like emotion regulation strategies, attachment styles and the length of marriage were considered.

The 1st hypothesis aimed at finding the differences in marital satisfaction of those with secure and insecure pattern of attachment. It stated that those with a secure pattern of attachment will score high on marital satisfaction scale as compared to those with avoidant and anxious attachment. One way ANOVA was performed for obtaining the result. The result depicted in table 2 is consistent with the hypothesis 1. It shows significant differences in marital satisfaction across different attachment styles. A significant mean difference between secure attachment style ($M = 62.93$) and anxious attachment style ($M = 42.38$) was observed. In addition, a significant mean difference between secure attachment style ($M = 62.93$) and avoidant attachment style ($M = 42.68$) was also observed.

The literature concerning attachment styles and marital satisfaction generally supports the notion that securely attached individuals are more content and satisfied with their marriages than individuals with other styles of attachment (Heidari & Kumar, 2021; Sina et al., 2018). A contributing factor for this difference can be the theory of attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals with secure attachment pattern are comfortable with being loved and can easily express their needs and desires. They seek proximity, and communicate openly and clearly with their significant other. Similarly, they have better problem-solving abilities and are able to deal constructively with marital issues of any kind. They tend to be more compromising and forgiving with their spouses than those with insecure attachment style (Ahmad & Hassan, 2014; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hogan, 2020). Likewise, due to responsive and nurturing attachment history, securely attached individuals are better able to form and maintain successful relationships as compared to their counterparts. Characteristics like these contribute to smooth functioning and contentment with one's marriage, thereby resulting in healthy and satisfied marital relationships.

On the contrary, individuals with insecure styles of attachment report a decreased satisfaction with their marriages (Li & Chan, 2012). Individuals with anxious attachment are emotionally distressed because of the unmet needs of love, support and connectedness. Such individuals fear abandonment and loss. They are apprehensive and often worry about their relationship with the significant other. They may erroneously believe their partners to be unaffectionate and unavailable and greatly desire attention and reassurance from them. They may, therefore, exaggerate their vulnerabilities and suffering. Similarly, due to their low self-worth and doubts related to their likeability, they may find it difficult to initiate intimate and close relationships. This hinders the maintenance of satisfying and stable relationship with their significant other (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). The individuals with avoidant attachment style avoid any intimacy and closeness to their romantic partners. They have an inflated self-concept and suppress any thoughts or feelings regarding their dependency and neediness (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Similarly, they tend to avoid self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is related with openness, admiration and assurance of one's significant other (Stafford et al., 2000) and plays a role in increasing intimacy and understanding between intimate partners. The absence of this trait in those with an avoidant pattern of attachment is related with a decreased satisfaction with one's relationships (Segrin & Flora, 2005).

Numerous researches generally support that insecure styles of attachment have a negative influence on one's marriage, while a few suggest otherwise. The variation between such studies could be due to another variable that influence this relationship such as the duration of one's marriage (Heidari &

Kumar, 2021; Lavner & Bradbury, 2010; Kuncewicz et al., 2020). The 2nd hypothesis of this study was framed to explore the moderating effect of the length of marriage on marital satisfaction and insecure attachment. The hypothesis stated the length of marriage would weaken the association between marital satisfaction and insecure attachment. Results were generated via the Process procedure. As shown in table 3, insecure attachment style predicts a significant negative change in marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.37, t = -17.63, p < .05$). Length of marriage significantly predicts marital satisfaction ($\beta = .36, t = 3.23, p < .05$). Likewise, an interaction of the length of marriage and insecure attachment styles significantly predicts marital satisfaction ($\beta = .009, t = 2.28, p < 0.05$). On the whole, the interaction of length of marriage and insecure attachment style established a significant model with 65% variance in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.65, F(3, 381) = 226.1, p < .05$). This shows that certain interpersonal experiences may help overcome the insecure attachment, that results in relationship satisfaction. Numerous factors are operative within one's marital life. An essential factor in one's marital life is the presence of a warm and supportive partner. Simpson and Overall (2014) presented the 'Dyadic Regulation Model of Insecurity Buffering' that describes how relationship perceptions of insecure partners are improved by the buffering behaviors of a supportive and caring partner. Partner buffering addresses the specific needs and concerns of insecurely attached individuals. For example, anxiously attached individuals are provided with continuous support, love and care and appropriately dealt during times of distress which ultimately leads to positive relationship outcomes. Similarly, individuals with an avoidant pattern are dealt by using certain strategies that help modify their dysfunctional ideas and behaviors related to intimacy. Skillful accomplishment of such buffering behaviors help individuals with insecure attachment to effectively regulate their behaviors and emotions especially during stressful situations. With the presence of such validating environment, insecurely attached individuals may perceive their marital relationship as a way of restoring their trust of being lovable and valued (Çelebi, 2018). This may result in improved functioning and adjustment as well as greater satisfaction with their marriages. Similarly, over the course of years, the transition to parenthood takes place. For some individuals, the marital bond may be strengthened due to the presence of children that help ascertain a sense of completion. Adequate socioemotional support during these times may improve relationship quality for some people (Zahiri et al., 2016). Moreover, sufficient support from family members may also lessen marital conflicts (Samadaee-Gelekholaee, 2016). These findings show that some individuals with an insecure attachment may remain satisfied with their marriages as long as they are heard and understood as per their needs.

The 3rd hypothesis of this study was framed to assess the relationship between marital satisfaction and cognitive reappraisal. It was hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and cognitive reappraisal. Pearson Correlation was performed for finding the results. The result shown in table 4 supports the hypothesis. A significant positive relationship ($r = .58, p < 0.05$) exists between the two variables. It is generally believed in research and clinical domain that cognitive reappraisal is a healthy and effective strategy for emotion regulation with positive relationship outcomes (Meyer et al., 2012). Research evidence suggests the cognitive reappraisal strategy to be linked with improved functioning and satisfaction with social relationships including marital relationships (Mazzuca et al., 2019; Richards et al., 2003). As explained by the Process model of emotion regulation, the cognitive reappraisal strategy reframes an emotion-eliciting situation cognitively so as to change its emotional effect. Particularly, the experience and expression of negative or unpleasant emotion-evoking situation (Gross, 1998). It does not reduce the pleasant emotion-expressive behavior, thereby positively influencing one's marital life. Enhanced emotional regulation between the marital partners help increase interpersonal understanding and mutual cohesion. Appropriate use of cognitive reappraisal helps endure life stressors and plays a significant role in satisfying marital relationships (Mazzuca et al., 2019).

In relevance to the existing literature, the 4th hypothesis stated that using expressive suppression will have a negative relationship with marital satisfaction. Pearson correlation was performed for obtaining the results. The findings shown in table 4 supports the hypothesis. A significant negative relationship ($r = -.49, p < 0.05$) exists between the two variables. The inability to regulate emotions

effectively may negatively impact one's social life. As opposed to cognitive reappraisal strategy, expressive suppression may have unfavorable relationship consequences (Meyer et al., 2012). The habitual use of this strategy for regulating emotions has adverse personal and interpersonal outcomes. It negatively influences communication and social competence, and therefore interferes with the ability to uphold healthy relations (Velotti et al., 2016). Butler et al. (2003) found expressive suppression strategy to be linked with adverse socioemotional outcomes. According to Gross's model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998), using the expressive suppression strategy reduces both positive and negative affect. A decrease in the positive affect can cause negative reactions in others such as contempt, disgust and limited affiliated behaviors (Butler et al., 2003; Gross & John, 2003) leading to detrimental effects on one's relationships. Using expressive suppression impedes interpersonal coordination and may be perceived as disinterest and indifference by one's spouse. This may, in turn, lower feelings of closeness and intimacy causing a decreased satisfaction with the marital life.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between emotion regulation, attachment styles, duration of marriage and marital satisfaction. Among the different attachment styles, secure attachment style is associated with greater satisfaction with marriage. Insecure attachment leads to marital satisfaction by the moderating influence of length of marriage. This indicates that styles of attachment can be somewhat modified with appropriate interventions. For developing greater security among individuals, it is necessary to understand the attachment histories and guide them to form healthier bonds with their partners. In addition, recognizing and utilizing context-appropriate emotion regulation strategy is essential for better relationship outcomes. Knowing the impact of emotion regulation strategies and attachment styles on marital life may contribute to individual as well as couple therapies. This would help lessen marital distress and contribute to lasting marital relationships.

Limitations and Suggestions

The current study has some limitations and suggestions that shall be taken into consideration when conducting similar research.

- The sample comprised of residents of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only. One may consider recruiting sample from across the country that may generate generalizable findings.
- The impact of demographic variables, other than those considered in this research, can be explored to have a deeper insight into marital relationships.
- The current research was based on married individuals, that is, either of the spouse was included in the study sample. Future researches could consider taking married couples for researches of similar nature.
- For extensive results, a longitudinal research design shall be undertaken to explore the lifelong impact of insecure attachment style on marital satisfaction.
- Family and marriage therapists may take into account the findings to have an understanding of the processes underlying quality relationships and help provide interventions for reducing the risk of separation or divorce.

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