



The Influence of Attachment Styles and Communication Patterns on Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether communication patterns explain how insecure attachment relates to marital satisfaction among Pakistani married adults. Using a cross-sectional design, 160 married adults (age range = 20–53 years) completed the Experiences in Close Relationships–Short Form (ECR-S), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire–Short Form (CPQ-SF), and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. Pearson correlations, multiple regression, and mediation analyses (Hayes PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples) were conducted. Insecure attachment was associated with lower marital satisfaction and lower positive interaction. Positive interaction significantly mediated the association between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction (indirect effect = -0.32 , 95% bootstrap CI [-0.44 , -0.22]). In contrast, demand/withdraw communication did not carry a significant indirect effect because insecure attachment was not a reliable predictor of demand/withdraw in this sample (indirect effect = -0.01 , 95% bootstrap CI [-0.05 , 0.01]). Findings highlight the practical value of strengthening constructive couple communication, especially in collectivistic settings where relationship processes are embedded within broader family systems. The study contributes culturally relevant insights into relationship dynamics in South Asian societies and offers empirical guidance for developing attachment-informed marital interventions tailored to collectivist contexts.

Keywords: Insecure Attachment, Marital Satisfaction, Communication Patterns, Mediation, Collectivist Culture, Pakistani Couples



Introduction

Marital satisfaction is a critical component of psychological well-being and overall quality of life. It reflects the emotional connection and fulfilment experienced within the spousal relationship and is often linked to family harmony and individual mental health. Research from Western contexts has consistently highlighted two major predictors of marital satisfaction: attachment styles and communication patterns. However, these dynamics may manifest differently across cultures. In collectivist societies like Pakistan, where familial interdependence, gender role expectations, and norms of emotional expression differ markedly from those in the West, it is essential to examine these constructs within a culturally appropriate framework (Kagitcibasi, 2005; Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

In Pakistan, marriage is seen as more than just a personal connection between two people—it is deeply tied to the wider family and shaped by strong cultural expectations. Ideas about family honour, close family bonds, and traditional roles for men and women play a significant role in how couples express their feelings and interact with each other (Rehman et al., 2015). Factors such as arranged marriages, the involvement of extended family members, and adherence to cultural customs make married life more complex (Qadir et al., 2005). Because of this, personal traits such as how people form emotional bonds (attachment styles) or how well they communicate may differ in Pakistan from those in more individual-focused cultures.

Attachment theory, first introduced by Bowlby (1969, 1982), helps explain how our early relationships with parents or caregivers shape the way we connect with others later in life. These early experiences form our basic beliefs about ourselves and whether we can trust others. Building on this idea, Ainsworth (1978) identified three main attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and ambivalent. Later, researchers added a fourth type, disorganised (Main & Solomon, 1986). Hazan and Shaver (1987) applied these ideas to adult romantic relationships, showing that the way we bonded with caregivers as children can strongly affect how we experience love, closeness, and trust as adults.

People with a secure attachment style usually have healthy, supportive relationships. They are good at handling disagreements, can share their feelings easily, and feel comfortable asking for what they need. In contrast, people with insecure attachment styles—like anxious or avoidant—often struggle with trust, closeness, and communication. Anxious individuals might often worry about being left out and seek constant reassurance, while avoidant individuals tend to hide their feelings or avoid getting too emotionally close (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016).

The way people form emotional bonds also affects how they communicate in relationships. Those with a secure attachment style are usually good at clearly sharing their needs and at listening to their partners with care and understanding. On the other hand, people with an anxious style might express themselves with excessive emotion or behave unpredictably. At the same time, avoidant individuals often shut down or pull away during tough conversations. These habits come from how people handle emotional closeness—some show too much emotion, while others try to hide it (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Overall et al., 2022). Because



of this, communication can either help build a stronger relationship or create distance, depending on a person's attachment style (Hudson et al., 2020).

Communication lies at the heart of every relationship. It includes both verbal and nonverbal ways in which couples share their thoughts, feelings, and expectations. Studies have shown that when partners communicate openly and with empathy, they tend to feel more satisfied in their relationships (Agu & Mmamel, 2025). In contrast, negative patterns such as avoidance or the demand-withdraw cycle can create tension, build resentment, and contribute to lasting dissatisfaction (Abbasi & Afsharina, 2015). Christensen and Sullaway's communication model highlights how mutual constructive communication supports relational stability, while patterns rooted in avoidance or hostility tend to harm the relationship.

Attachment and communication are closely intertwined. People with secure attachment styles generally cope with relationship stress in a calm and clear-headed way. In contrast, those with insecure attachment may either respond with emotional intensity or pull away. These reactions reflect different emotional regulation strategies that stem from one's attachment orientation. That is why communication is often seen as a central pathway through which attachment styles influence the quality of a marriage.

A growing body of research supports this connection. For instance, Mardani (2021) found that communication skills significantly mediated the link between attachment style and marital satisfaction. Likewise, a study by Bedair et al. (2020) showed that secure attachment was a strong predictor of marital satisfaction among Qatari couples, highlighting the importance of effective communication. In Pakistan, findings indicate that anxious and avoidant attachment styles are linked to lower marital satisfaction, particularly among female university students. Abbasi and Dawood (2000) further noted that women with secure attachments and higher levels of education reported better marital adjustment.

Beyond attachment and communication theories, Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) offers yet another way to understand what shapes relationship satisfaction. According to this perspective, people evaluate their relationships based on the balance between rewards, such as emotional support and companionship, and costs, such as conflict or emotional burden. When the rewards outweigh the challenges, satisfaction generally improves. From this angle, communication becomes either a valuable source of emotional connection or a contributor to relational stress.

Existing evidence from Western samples supports the role of communication as a pathway linking attachment insecurity with relationship outcomes. However, relatively few studies have tested this mechanism among Pakistani married adults. Recent work in Pakistan has begun to document links between attachment-related processes and marital functioning, but mechanistic models that integrate attachment, communication patterns, and satisfaction remain scarce (Ali et al., 2023). Addressing this gap is important for culturally responsive marital counselling and family therapy, where identifying modifiable interpersonal processes can guide intervention planning.

Hypotheses



H1: Insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) will be significantly and negatively associated with marital satisfaction among married individuals.

H2: Insecure attachment styles will be significantly associated with communication patterns, such that higher attachment insecurity will be related to lower levels of positive communication and higher levels of demand/withdraw communication.

H3: Communication patterns will be significantly associated with marital satisfaction, such that positive communication will positively predict marital satisfaction, whereas demand/withdraw communication will negatively predict it.

H4: Communication patterns (positive and demand/withdraw) will mediate the relationship between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction.

Method

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the mediating role of communication patterns in the relationship between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction among Pakistani married individuals. Data were collected using standardised self-report measures and purposive sampling.

Sample

Participants were selected using purposive sampling from urban and rural areas across Pakistan. Both urban and rural residents were included to ensure representativeness across geographic and sociocultural backgrounds. Additionally, individuals in romantic relationships outside legal marriage were not considered eligible participants. All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. The frequency and percentage of demographic variables, including age categories, gender, occupation, residential area, education, and duration of marriage, were calculated for the sample.

Table 1

Demographics Characteristics of the study Sample (N=160)

Variables	<i>n</i>	%
Age in years		
20-30	78	48.8
31-40	65	40.6
41-53	17	10.6
Gender		
Male	80	50.0
Female	80	50.0
Education		
Matric	16	10.0
Intermediate	18	11.3
Graduate	60	37.5



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

Post-Graduate	52	32.5
Uneducated	14	8.8
Occupation		
Worker	108	67.5
Non-worker	51	31.9
Residential Area		
Urban	80	50.0
Rural	80	50.0
Duration of marriage (in years)		
1-5	97	60.6
6-15	51	31.9
16-25	12	7.5

Note. n= frequency of the sample, %=percentage

The majority of participants were between 20 and 30 years old (48.8%), followed by those aged 31–40 (40.6%) and 41–53 years (10.6%). Most participants had completed graduate (37.5%) or postgraduate (32.5%) education, while a smaller portion were uneducated (8.8%). Regarding occupation, 67.5% were employed, and 31.9% were non-workers. The sample was evenly split between urban and rural residents (50% each). In terms of marital duration, most participants had been married for 1–5 years (60.6%), with fewer in the 6–15-year (31.9%) and 16–25-year (7.5%) ranges.

Measures

Three Standardized self-report instruments, translated and validated in Urdu, were administered.

Experience in Close Relationships–Short Form (ECR-S). The (Wei et al., 2007) is a 12-item scale assessing adult attachment styles, specifically attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale provides two subscale scores: anxious attachment and avoidant attachment. Higher scores indicate greater attachment insecurity. In this study, the Urdu version demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$ for anxiety; $\alpha = .85$ for avoidance).

Communication Patterns Questionnaire–Short Form (CPQ-SF). The CPQ-SF (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) includes 15 items that measure communication behaviours between partners. It consists of two subscales: positive communication (e.g., constructive problem solving) and demand/withdraw communication (e.g., one partner demands while the other withdraws). Responses are given on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 9 (very likely). The Urdu version used in this study showed good reliability ($\alpha = .79$ for positive communication; $\alpha = .81$ for demand/withdraw).

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. Developed by Fowers and Olson (1993), this 10-item scale measures marital satisfaction across various domains such as affection, conflict resolution, and general contentment. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The



Procedure

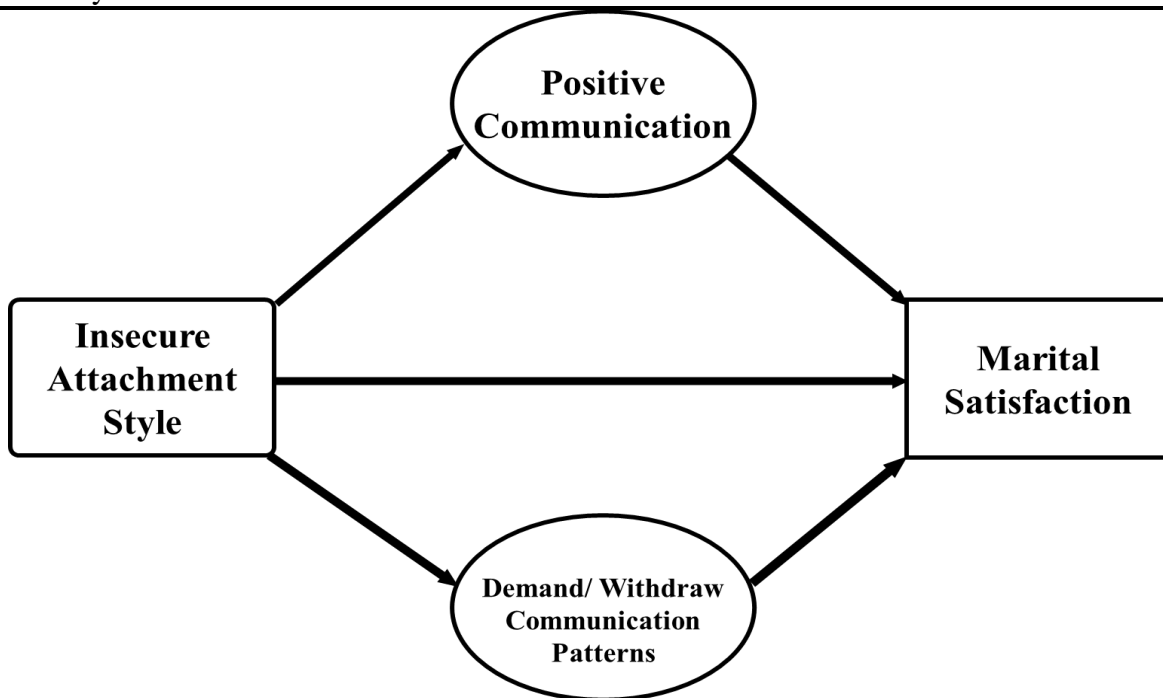
Ethical approval was obtained from the departmental review board prior to data Collection. Participants were approached in community settings, including educational institutions, workplaces, and residential areas. Each participant was briefed on the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of participation. Written informed consent was obtained, and participants completed the questionnaires in Urdu to ensure accessibility. Completion of the scales took approximately 15–20 minutes. Anonymity was ensured, and no identifiable information was recorded. All data were entered and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27).

Proposed Model

The proposed parallel mediation model examines whether two communication patterns, positive communication and demand/withdraw communication, serve as mediators in the relationship between insecure attachment style and marital satisfaction. This model was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) to simultaneously evaluate the indirect effects of both communication pathways. Insecure attachment was conceptualised as the independent variable, marital satisfaction as the dependent variable, and both communication patterns as mediators. The model is grounded in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and aims to assess distinct relational mechanisms within the Pakistani collectivist cultural context.

Figure 1

Proposed Parallel Mediation Model of Positive and Demand/Withdraw Communication Between Insecure Attachment Style and Marital Satisfaction



Note. This conceptual model illustrates the hypothesised mediating roles of positive and demand/withdraw communication patterns in the relationship between insecure attachment style and marital satisfaction.



Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were calculated for demographic variables and all primary study variables, including insecure attachment styles, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction. Reliability analyses were performed using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency of the standardised scales and subscales (ECR-S, CPQ-SF, and ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale). Pearson product-moment correlations were used to examine the bivariate associations among attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences across variables and test the hypothesised mediation models. Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) was utilised. Separate mediation analyses were conducted to assess the indirect effects of positive communication and demand/withdraw communication on the relationship between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction.

Results

Prior to conducting the main statistical analyses, preliminary data screening procedures were performed to ensure the quality and appropriateness of the dataset. The dataset was examined for missing values, response inconsistencies, outliers, and violations of normality. Any incomplete or erroneous entries were removed in accordance with the study's inclusion criteria. Descriptive statistics were computed for all major study variables to evaluate measures of central tendency and dispersion. To confirm the instruments' internal consistency, reliability analyses were conducted using Cronbach's α for each scale. Additionally, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital duration, and employment status were summarised to provide a contextual overview of the participant sample. To address the study's aims, descriptive and inferential analyses were performed. Descriptive statistics summarised demographics and psychological constructs,

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Study Measures (N = 160)

Scales	<i>K</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>
ECR-S Questionnaire-Urdu	12	40.42	10.13	22-59	.70
ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale-Urdu	15	58.90	10.12	29-75	.90
CPQ-SF-Urdu	9	48.68	12.53	17-75	.70
Demand/withdraw	6	27.75	10.88	8-49	.75
Positive interaction	3	20.93	5.39	3-27	.73

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-SF Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Short Form

Table 2 summarises descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for all study variables. The ECR-S (12 items, $\alpha = .70$) showed acceptable reliability; scores ranged from 22 to 59 ($M =$



40.42, SD = 10.13). The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale–Urdu (15 items, $\alpha = .90$) showed excellent reliability, with its subscales Marital Satisfaction ($\alpha = .86$) and Idealistic Distortion ($\alpha = .79$) also demonstrating strong consistency. The CPQ-SF (9 items, $\alpha = .70$) had adequate reliability; the Demand/Withdraw subscale ($\alpha = .75$) and Positive Interaction subscale ($\alpha = .73$) also showed acceptable internal consistency. All measures exhibited sound psychometric properties for use in the Pakistani context. Overall, the scales used in the current study demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, indicating their reliability for assessing adult attachment, marital satisfaction, and communication patterns in the current Pakistani sample.

Relationship between the Study Variables

It was hypothesised that insecure attachment would be negatively associated with marital satisfaction and positive communication patterns, and positively associated with demand/withdraw communication patterns. Additionally, it was expected that positive communication would be positively correlated with marital satisfaction, while demand/withdraw communication would be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. These predictions were based on attachment theory and prior research highlighting the role of communication in relationship quality.

Table 3

Correlation between Study Variables (N=160)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. ECR-S	-	-.54**	-.29**	-.13
2. ENRICH		-	.59**	-.01
3. CPQ-P			-	.08
4. CPQ-D				-

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-P= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Positive Interaction, CPQ-D= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Demand/Withdraw

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the key study variables (N = 160). Results showed a significant negative correlation between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction, $r(158) = -.54, p < .01$, as well as between insecure attachment and positive communication patterns $r(158) = -.30, p < .01$. A significant positive correlation was found between positive communication patterns and marital satisfaction, $r(158) = .59, p < .01$. However, demand/withdraw communication was not significantly correlated with any variable ($p > .05$). These findings indicate that higher insecure attachment is associated with lower marital satisfaction and less positive communication. In contrast, positive communication is associated with greater marital satisfaction. Demand/withdraw communication patterns do not appear to be statistically significantly associated with the other constructs.

Predictive Relationship between Study Variables



It was hypothesised that insecure attachment (ECR-S) would significantly negatively predict marital satisfaction, such that higher levels of attachment insecurity would be associated with lower marital satisfaction. Additionally, it was expected that positive communication patterns (CPQ-P) would significantly predict marital satisfaction, indicating that greater constructive communication would be associated with higher satisfaction. Finally, it was hypothesised that demand/withdraw communication patterns (CPQ-D) would negatively predict marital satisfaction; however, this relationship was expected to be weaker or potentially non-significant.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression of Marital Satisfaction from Study Variables (N=160)

Variable	Estimate	SE	95% of CI		p
			LL	UL	
Constant	59.59	4.15	51.40	67.78	<.001
ECR-S	-.41	.06	-.53	-.30	<.001
CPQ-P	.89	.11	.67	1.11	<.001
CPQ-D	-.09	.05	-.20	.01	.08

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-P Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Positive Interaction, CPQ-D Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Demand/Withdraw.

The overall model was significant, $F(3, 156) = 12.45, p < .001$, indicating that the predictors accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in marital satisfaction. Insecure attachment significantly predicted lower marital satisfaction, $B = -0.41, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [-0.53, -0.30], p < .001$. Positive communication patterns were a significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction, $B = 0.89, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [0.67, 1.11], p < .001$. However, demand/withdraw communication was not a significant predictor, $B = -0.09, SE = 0.05, 95\% CI [-0.20, 0.01], p = .08$. These findings suggest that insecure attachment and constructive communication patterns play a central role in marital satisfaction, while demand/withdraw interactions show a marginal effect.

Table 5

Positive Communication Pattern as Mediator (N=160)

Variable	M (Positive Communication)				DV (Marital Satisfaction)					
	B	SE	P	β	B	SE	P	β		
Constant	27.33	1.68	<.001	–	56.71	3.85	<.001	–		
IV (ECR-S)	a	-.02	.04	<.001	-.29	c'	-0.40	0.06	<.001	-.04
M(TCPQP)	–	–	–	–	b	0.88	0.11	<.001	.47	
			$R^2 = .088$				$R^2 = .49$			
			$F=15.33$				$F=77.42$			

Note. ECR_S = Experience in Close Relationships– Short Form; TCPQP = Positive Communication Pattern; TENRICH = Marital Satisfaction.

The results in Table 5 showed that ECR_S significantly predicted TCPQP ($B = -0.02, SE = 0.04, p <$



.001, $\beta = -.29$), indicating that higher maladaptive Experience in close relationships was associated with lower levels of positive communication.

In the second regression model, both ECR_S and TCPQP were entered as predictors of marital satisfaction. ECR_S significantly predicted TENRICH ($B = -0.40$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.04$), and TCPQP also significantly predicted TENRICH ($B = 0.88$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .47$), suggesting that greater positive communication is linked with higher marital satisfaction. The R^2 values indicated that ECR_S explained 8.8% of the variance in positive communication ($F = 15.33$, $p < .001$), and the overall mediation model explained 49% of the variance in marital satisfaction ($F = 77.42$, $p < .001$).

These findings support a partial mediation effect, where positive communication patterns significantly mediate the relationship between experience in close relationships and marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesised that demand/withdraw communication patterns would mediate the relationship between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction. Specifically, higher levels of attachment insecurity were expected to predict greater use of demand/withdraw communication, which in turn would be associated with lower marital satisfaction. This indirect pathway was anticipated to be significant, suggesting that maladaptive communication behaviours partially explain the negative impact of insecure attachment on marital outcomes.

Table 6

Demand/Withdraw Communication Pattern as Mediator (N=160)

Variable	<i>M (Positive Communication)</i>				<i>DV (Marital Satisfaction)</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	β
Constant	33.23	3.53	<.001	–	83.29	3.47	<.001	–
IV (ECR-S)	a -0.14	0.08	.111	-1.3	c' -0.55	0.06	<.001	-.55
M(TCPQD)	–	–	–	–	b -0.07	0.06	<.001	-.08
	$R^2 = .02$				$R^2 = .301$			
	$F = 2.56$				$F = 33.84$			

Note. ECR_S = Experience in Close Relationships– Short Form; TCPQD = Dysfunctional Communication Pattern; TENRICH = Marital Satisfaction.

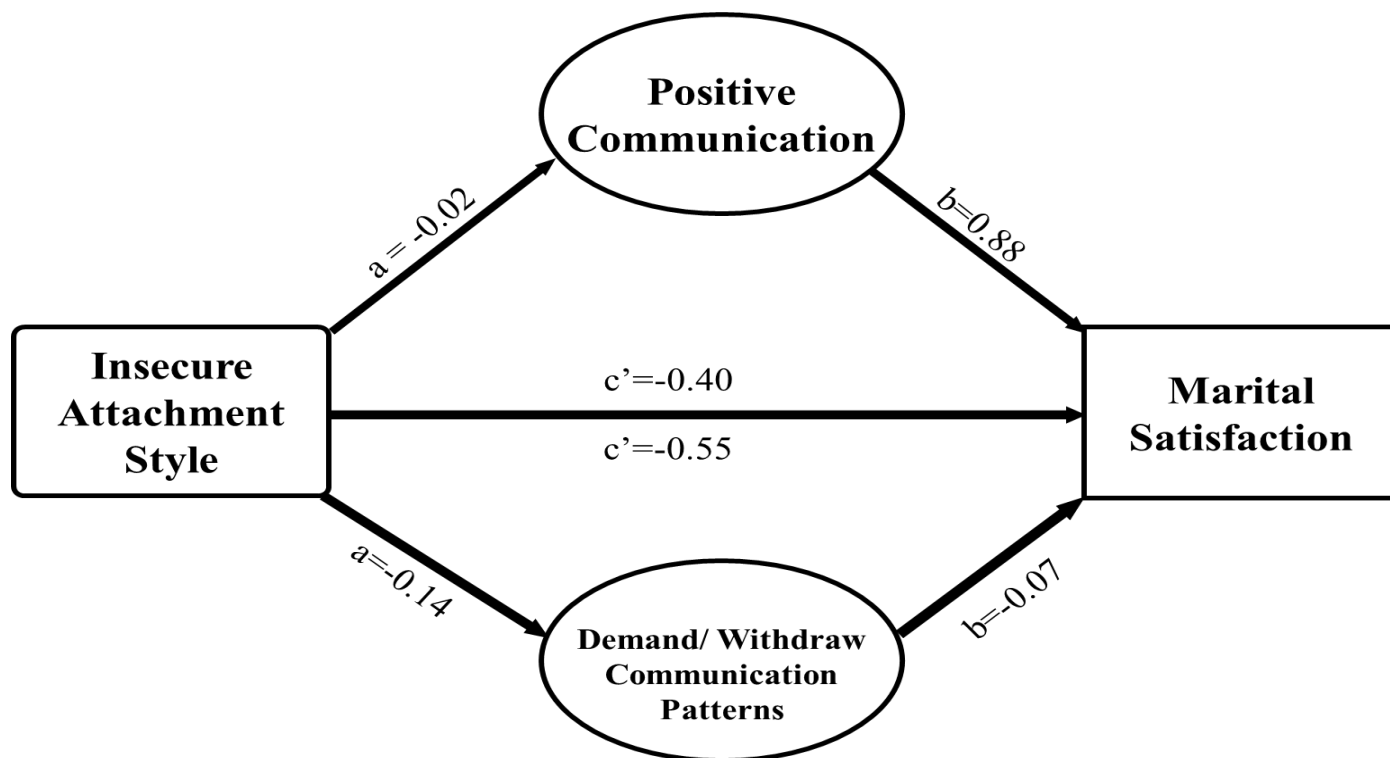
The path from ECR_S to TCPQD was non-significant ($B = -0.14$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .111$, $\beta = -.13$), suggesting that ECR_S did not significantly predict dysfunctional communication. In contrast, ECR_S significantly and negatively predicted marital satisfaction ($B = -0.55$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$), indicating that maladaptive personality traits are associated with lower marital satisfaction. TCPQD also negatively predicted marital satisfaction ($B = -0.07$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$), though the effect size was small.

The model explained 2% of the variance in TCPQD ($F = 2.56$) and 30.1% of the variance in marital satisfaction ($F = 33.84$). As the indirect path was not supported, results indicate no evidence of mediation by dysfunctional



Figure 1

Parallel Mediation Model of Positive and Demand/Withdraw Communication Patterns Between Insecure Attachment Style and Marital Satisfaction



Note. The figure presents unstandardized path coefficients from the parallel mediation model showing that positive communication significantly mediated the relationship between insecure attachment style and marital satisfaction, whereas demand/withdraw communication did not.

The Role of Demographic Factors

The study hypothesised that there would be significant gender differences in attachment security, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction. Specifically, it was expected that male and female participants would differ significantly on the Experience in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form (ECR-S), the Communication Pattern Questionnaire subscales for Positive Interaction (CPQ-P) and Demand/Withdraw (CPQ-D), and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. These differences were assessed using independent samples t-tests to determine whether gender plays a significant role in shaping emotional attachment, communication tendencies, and overall relationship satisfaction in the sample.



Table 7

Means Difference in Males and Females (N=160)

Variable	Males		Female		t(df)	p	Cohens d
	M	SD	M	SD			
ECR-S	37.28	8.34	43.56	10.82	-4.12(158)	<.001	-.65
CPQ-P	21.50	5.56	20.36	5.20	1.34(158)	.18	.43
CPQ-D	29.14	11.00	26.36	10.65	1.62(158)	.11	.26
ENRICH	61.06	9.61	56.74	10.21	2.76(158)	.01	.44

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-P= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Positive Interaction, CPQ-D= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Demand/withdraw,

*p<.05, ***p<.001

Table 7 indicates the differences between males and females on study variables. It shows that there exists a significant gender difference in terms of attachment styles, $t(158) = -4.12$, $p < .05$ and marital satisfaction, $t(158) = 2.76$, $p < .05$. Findings show that females have a more insecure attachment style ($M = 43.56$, $SD = 10.82$) as compared to males ($M = 37.28$, $SD = 8.34$). Moreover, men report higher marital satisfaction ($M = 61.06$, $SD = 9.61$) than women ($M = 56.74$, $SD = 10.21$). However, there is no significant difference in mean levels of positive and demand/withdraw communication patterns between males and females. $p > .05$

Hypothesis

The study hypothesised that there would be significant differences between individuals residing in urban and rural areas in terms of attachment security, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction. Specifically, it was expected that participants from urban and rural backgrounds would show varying levels on the Experience in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form (ECR-S), Communication Pattern Questionnaire – Positive Interaction (CPQ-P) and Demand/Withdraw (CPQ-D) subscales, and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. These differences were anticipated due to variations in socio-cultural environments, interpersonal norms, and relationship dynamics across residential settings. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether residential area significantly influenced these psychological and relational outcomes.

Table 8

Group Differences in experience in close relationships, Communication Patterns, and Marital Satisfaction by Residential Area (N=160)

Variables	Urban		Rural		t(df)	p	Cohens'd
	M	SD	M	SD			
ECR-S	40.92	9.96	39.91	10.34	.631(158)	.529	.10



CPQ-P	20.34	5.01	21.53	5.72	-1.39(158)	.045	-.31
CPQ-D	29.69	10.22	25.81	11.24	2.28(158)	.024	.32
ENRICH	57.30	10.37	60.50	9.66	-2.02(158)	.165	-.32

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-P= Communication Pattern

Questionnaire- Positive Interaction, CPQ-D= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Demand/Withdraw

Table 8 presents the differences between rural and urban areas in the study variables. It shows that there exists a significant difference in terms of demand/with-draw communication pattern $t(158) = 2.28, p < .05$ and marital satisfaction $t(158) = -2.02, p < .05$. Findings show that married individuals in urban areas acquire more demand/with-draw communication pattern ($M = 29.69, SD = 10.22$) as compared to rural areas ($M = 25.81, SD = 11.24$). The table also shows that married individuals residing in rural areas ($M = 60.50, SD = 9.66$) report higher marital satisfaction than those residing in urban areas ($M = 57.30, SD = 10.37$). However, there is no significant difference in mean positive communication patterns and attachment styles between urban and rural areas. $p > .05$.

Hypothesis

The study hypothesised that there would be significant differences between workers and non-workers on measures of attachment security, communication patterns, and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, it was expected that individuals who are employed (workers) would differ from non-employed individuals (non-workers) on levels of attachment as measured by the Experience in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form (ECR-S), on patterns of positive interaction and demand/withdraw communication as measured by the Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ-P and CPQ-D), and on relationship satisfaction as assessed by the ENRICH scale. These hypotheses were tested using independent-samples t-tests to determine whether employment status was associated with significant variation in these interpersonal and relational constructs.

Table 9

Means Difference in Workers and Non-workers (N=160)

Variables	Workers		Non-workers		t(df)	p	Cohens'd
	M	SD	M	SD			
ECR-S	38.52	9.48	44.39	10.50	-3.52(158)	<.001	-.59
CPQ-P	21.37	5.36	20.10	5.42	1.39(158)	.166	.24
CPQ-D	28.77	10.69	25.45	11.11	1.80(158)	.073	.31
ENRICH	60.18	9.70	56.24	10.65	2.23(158)	.022	.39

Note. ECR-S=Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form, CPQ-P= Communication Pattern

Questionnaire- Positive Interaction, CPQ-D= Communication Pattern Questionnaire- Demand/Withdraw

Table 9 indicates that an independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine differences between



workers and non-workers in experience in close relationships (ECR-S), communication patterns (CPQ-P, CPQ-D), and marital satisfaction (ENRICH) among 160 participants. As shown in Table 9, non-workers ($M = 44.39$, $SD = 10.50$) scored significantly higher on the ECR-S than workers ($M = 38.52$, $SD = 9.48$), $t(157) = -3.52$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -.59$, indicating greater insecure attachment.

Similarly, a significant difference was observed for marital satisfaction, with workers ($M = 60.18$, $SD = 9.70$) reporting higher ENRICH scores than non-workers ($M = 56.24$, $SD = 10.65$), $t(157) = 2.23$, $p = .022$, $d = .39$. No statistically significant differences were found for positive communication (CPQ-P) or demand/withdraw communication (CPQ-D), $p = .166$ and $p = .073$, respectively, indicating comparable communication patterns across employment status groups.

Discussion

This study examined whether communication styles mediate the link between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction among married individuals in Pakistan. The findings confirmed a significant negative relationship between attachment insecurity and marital satisfaction ($r = -.54$, $p < .001$), in line with Bowlby's (1969) foundational attachment theory and subsequent research (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Participants with heightened attachment anxiety or avoidance, as measured by the ECR-S, reported diminished relational satisfaction, likely due to emotional dysregulation, low trust, and impaired intimacy—difficulties commonly linked to insecure attachment (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002).

The study also tested two communication patterns—positive interaction and demand/withdraw behaviour as potential mediators. Using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4), positive communication emerged as a significant mediator (indirect effect: 95% CI [.15, .32]), indicating that emotionally responsive and collaborative communication can buffer the adverse impact of attachment insecurity on relationship satisfaction. This finding supports interpersonal process models (Christensen & Sullaway, 1991) and Gottman's (1994) evidence on the protective role of emotional validation, conflict resolution, and open expression in preserving marital quality.

A key finding is that demand/withdrawal communication did not mediate. One explanation is statistical: the "a-path" was small and non-significant, meaning insecure attachment was not strongly associated with demand/withdraw in this sample. Conceptually, demand/withdraw is a dyadic pattern that can be difficult to capture accurately with a single partner's self-report, particularly in cultural contexts where confrontation may be discouraged, and conflict managed through silence, avoidance, or indirect strategies. Meta-analytic work shows that demand/withdraw is generally related to relationship distress, but its strength varies across samples and measurement approaches (Schrodt et al., 2014). In Pakistan, broader family involvement and social constraints on marital dissolution may shape how conflict unfolds and whether a demand/withdraw cycle becomes the dominant pattern (van de Vijver et al., 2022).

The patterns in the data related to gender and work added more insight to the results. Women and people who did not have paid jobs showed higher levels of attachment insecurity and were less satisfied in



their marriages. These findings likely point to bigger social problems, like gender inequality, strict cultural expectations, and the mental stress that often comes with living in male-dominated (patriarchal) societies (Abbasi & Dawood, 2000). For example, women who stay at home and do not work outside may have less independence and rely more on their partners emotionally, which can lower their satisfaction in the relationship.

Interestingly, participants from urban areas were more likely to report engaging in demand/withdraw communication patterns. This could reflect the evolving nature of marital dynamics in urban settings, where dual-income households, changing gender roles, and rising individual expectations are creating new kinds of pressures on couples.

Overall, the results show that good communication plays a key role in reducing the negative effects of insecure attachment on marriage quality. They also show how important it is to understand communication styles in light of cultural values. In South Asian cultures, support programs and therapy should focus on helping couples express their emotions openly and have healthy, respectful conversations.

Conclusion

This study shows that people with insecure attachment styles are usually less satisfied in their marriages. However, it also found that healthy, constructive communication can help reduce some of the negative effects linked to insecure attachment. Interestingly, the common demand/withdraw pattern of communication did not have a strong impact on the link between attachment and satisfaction, suggesting that these relationship patterns might operate differently across cultures. Overall, the findings offer useful insights into how marriage works in South Asian, family-centred societies and highlight the importance of open, emotionally healthy communication to help couples address attachment-related issues.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. First, data were collected from only one partner in each marriage; dyadic designs are needed to capture reciprocal influence and interaction patterns more directly. Second, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference; longitudinal work is required to test temporal ordering among attachment, communication, and satisfaction. Third, the use of self-report measures may be influenced by social desirability and shared method variance.

Implications and Future Directions

These findings offer valuable insights for marital counselling and psychological support services. Encouraging healthy communication skills—such as emotional openness, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving—may be particularly beneficial for individuals with insecure attachment patterns. The study also underscores the importance of culturally sensitive therapeutic approaches that reflect the values and relationship dynamics common in collectivist societies.

To build on these insights and improve intervention strategies, future research should consider



longitudinal or couple-based studies to better understand how partners influence each other over time. Including participants from a broader range of socioeconomic and rural-urban backgrounds would also help make the findings more widely applicable. Finally, integrating qualitative methods could provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the complex and culturally embedded nature of marital relationships.



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