

Understanding the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Marital Satisfaction in Pakistan: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays an important role in improving marital satisfaction by helping people manage emotions, show empathy, and communicate better. This systematic review looks at research studies from Pakistan to understand how EI affects marital satisfaction. It includes 7 studies published between 2010 and 2024, selected using PRISMA guidelines. The review shows a clear positive link between EI and marital satisfaction. It also finds that factors like gender, education, family type, and emotional control influence this relationship. The results suggest that EI should be included in marriage counseling programs in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS

Emotional Intelligence, marital satisfaction, systematic review, pakistan, family systems, gender roles, marriage counseling

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INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction plays a pivotal role in ensuring the psychological well-being, social harmony, and overall life satisfaction of individuals. In Pakistan's socio-cultural context, where family and marital structures are deeply embedded in collectivistic values, understanding the factors contributing to marital satisfaction is not only academically relevant but also socially critical. One such influential factor is Emotional Intelligence (EI), which pertains to an individual's capacity to perceive, manage, and regulate emotions in themselves and in others. As interpersonal relationships, especially marital bonds, require sustained emotional cooperation, EI has emerged as a significant psychological construct that enhances relationship quality, conflict resolution, and mutual understanding among couples¹.

Over the past two decades, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to the role of EI in shaping the dynamics of intimate relationships. Emotional Intelligence was a strong predictor of marital quality among Pakistani couples, explaining significant variance in both adjustment and conflict resolution. Fertile women demonstrated higher marital adjustment scores than infertile women, and Emotional Intelligence played a moderating role in this difference. EI not only positively correlates with marital adjustment but also serves as the most significant predictor compared to other variables like stress and coping mechanisms. These findings affirm the centrality of EI in strengthening marital bonds, particularly in environments where emotional expression is often constrained by cultural expectations^{2,3}.



In addition to local studies, international literature also supports the relationship between EI and marital outcomes. For instance, research from Iran and South Asia reveals similar patterns, with Emotional Intelligence consistently contributing to healthier communication patterns, greater empathy, and reduced conflict among couples. Long-distance marriages among Pakistani individuals and found that high Emotional Intelligence buffered the negative effects of perceived stress on marital satisfaction. These insights are crucial for Pakistan, where increasing migration, dual-earner family structures, and shifting gender roles are transforming the traditional dynamics of marriage⁴.

Despite this growing body of literature, there remains a lack of a comprehensive synthesis that consolidates these scattered findings into a single, evidence-based framework. Existing studies often focus on specific subgroups, such as fertile vs. infertile women, working couples, or long-distance partners, without drawing a generalizable conclusion across diverse marital scenarios. Additionally, prior works seldom analyze how Emotional Intelligence interacts with evolving social conditions, such as the rise of egalitarian gender roles, changing marital expectations, and the psychological impact of urban living. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by systematically reviewing existing empirical literature on Emotional Intelligence and marital satisfaction in the Pakistani context.

The purpose of this systematic review is to understand how Emotional Intelligence influences marital satisfaction in Pakistan by analyzing existing empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals. The review intends to offer a consolidated perspective on this relationship, contribute to culturally grounded psychological theory, and inform future marital counseling interventions within the region.

Methodology: Databases searched include PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and Pakistani Journals such as PJP, PJPPS, HNJSS, and DSSR. Keywords used: *"Emotional Intelligence," "marital satisfaction," "relationship adjustment," "Pakistani couples," "joint family system,"* and *"dyadic adjustment."*

Inclusion criteria

- Peer-reviewed studies (2010-2024)
- Research focused on the Pakistani population
- Studies assessing both Emotional Intelligence and marital satisfaction
- Published in English

Exclusion criteria

- Theoretical or opinion pieces
- Dissertations without empirical data
- Non-Pakistani studies
- Studies with incomplete methodology

Data extraction and quality assessment: The data were screened and extracted by the author using a standardized form that included authorship, publication year, sample size, study setting, instruments used, and key findings. The quality of each study was assessed using the JBI critical appraisal checklist, and only those rated as moderate to high quality were included in the review.

RESULTS

Several studies were initially found during the search process. After removing duplicates and unrelated articles, a smaller number of relevant studies remained. These were reviewed in full detail. Finally, only a selected portion of the studies met the criteria and were included in the final review.

Study characteristics: Three empirical studies conducted in Pakistan examined the link between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and marital satisfaction. Batool and Khalid¹ studied 200 couples using the SSRI and Marital Quality Scale and found that EI explained 56% of the variance in marital satisfaction.

Siddiqa and Majeed² assessed 240 dual earners with WLEIS and DAS, reporting a positive correlation between EI and adjustment ($r = 0.46$). Zaidi *et al.*³ analyzed 205 individuals and found a moderate yet significant positive correlation between EI and dyadic satisfaction.

Thematic synthesis

- **Positive correlation:** All studies reported significant positive links between EI and marital satisfaction
- **Gender differences:** Women's EI often showed a stronger association with marital satisfaction
- **Family systems:** Couples in joint family systems benefited more from high EI
- **Education and urban setting:** Higher education level and urban background enhanced EI outcomes
- **Emotional regulation and empathy:** These subcomponents of EI had the highest predictive power

DISCUSSION

The synthesis of literature in this review reveals a consistent association between Emotional Intelligence and the quality of marital relationships within the Pakistani context. Individuals with higher emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation reported greater stability, satisfaction, and resilience in their marriages. This trend was evident across diverse populations, including dual-earner couples, those in long-distance relationships, and individuals facing fertility-related challenges. The overall pattern confirms that Emotional Intelligence is a key relational strength that supports emotional cooperation and mutual understanding in married life⁵.

The evidence from the reviewed studies suggests that Emotional Intelligence does more than enhance emotional expression; it contributes directly to relational functioning. Couples who scored higher in emotional self-awareness and interpersonal sensitivity tended to demonstrate more constructive responses to conflict, lower emotional reactivity, and a stronger sense of shared emotional goals. Notably, this pattern was evident in the study by Siddiqa and Majeed², where EI was found to be the strongest predictor of marital adjustment among dual-earner couples. Their findings underscored that emotionally intelligent partners are better equipped to manage daily pressures, resolve disputes calmly, and sustain intimacy despite external demands.

These findings correspond with a previous study by Jardine *et al.*⁶ investigating emotionally mature individuals in late marriages, where emotional maturity, closely linked to Emotional Intelligence, was positively associated with satisfaction levels. Furthermore, in long-distance marriages, Emotional Intelligence mitigated the negative psychological effects of prolonged physical separation, confirming its buffering effect under stress. The capacity to regulate personal emotions and remain emotionally present appears to compensate for physical absence and environmental strain.

In terms of interpersonal communication, the work of Zarch *et al.*⁴ provided empirical support for the idea that Emotional Intelligence enhances mutual responsiveness and reduces miscommunication between partners. Their study found that couples with higher emotional insight maintained a more positive emotional climate, which in turn promoted higher satisfaction. Abbasi *et al.*⁷ large-scale work added another dimension, showing that gender role attitudes and multitasking demands interact with Emotional Intelligence, especially in dual-career households. Emotionally intelligent individuals can more effectively navigate complex social expectations and household responsibilities.

The present review extends the earlier foundational work by Batool and Khalid¹, who developed a culturally tailored measure of Emotional Intelligence and linked it to marital harmony. While their work focused on scale development and early predictive value, this review contributes by integrating more recent, varied studies and emphasizing Emotional Intelligence across changing social and marital conditions in Pakistan.

Although the findings are strong, there are some limitations in the studies reviewed. Many used cross-sectional designs, which means they only looked at one point in time, so we can't know the long-term effects or causes. Most studies also used self-report questionnaires, which may not always be accurate due to personal bias. In addition, many participants were from urban and middle-class backgrounds, while people from rural and low-income areas were mostly left out. Important factors like religion, family influence, and cultural traditions were also not studied much to emotions in marriage.

Future research should use long-term and experimental methods to see how Emotional Intelligence changes over time in marriage. It would be helpful to create programs that teach emotional skills to couples, especially before and during the early years of marriage. Studies should also include rural areas and consider cultural values to better understand how Emotional Intelligence affects marital satisfaction in Pakistani society.

CONCLUSION

This review shows that Emotional Intelligence plays a key role in improving marital satisfaction among Pakistani couples. Studies consistently report a positive link between EI and relationship quality, highlighting the importance of emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy in marriage. Despite some limitations, the findings suggest that EI is a learnable skill that can be strengthened through counseling and education. Integrating EI training into marriage counseling and preparation programs may help couples build healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This study highlights the important role Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays in improving marital satisfaction in different relational settings in Pakistan, such as dual-earner families, long-distance marriages, and couples dealing with stress. The findings can help counselors, psychologists, and social workers design effective programs to build emotional skills in couples. It also provides useful insights for premarital education and culturally sensitive counseling. By reviewing multiple studies, this research gives a clear picture of how EI influences marriage within a South Asian context. It opens the door for future studies to explore deeper emotional aspects of marriage and develop new theories on emotionally intelligent relationships.

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