

The Role of Personality Traits in Predicting Relationship Satisfaction and Conflict Resolution Styles among Married Couples

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Abstract

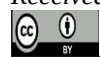
Background: The evolving social norms and the changing expectations in the relationships has transformed the dynamics of marital relationships today, leading towards new challenges including the increased rates of divorce. The keys to happy and stable marriages include higher marital satisfaction and good communication within couples especially in terms of conflict resolution, both of which can be influenced by several emotional, psychological and interpersonal factors. **Objectives:** The goal of this study was to explore whether Personality Traits can predict Relationship Satisfaction and Conflict Resolution Styles among married couples. **Methods:** The research utilized a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional and correlational design. A sample of 191 married participants, between the ages of 19 – 35 living Karachi, were recruited for the study. A demographic sheet along with the Big Five Inventory (BFI), Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) and Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) were employed for the process of data collection. For the statistical analyses, Descriptive Statistics, Pearson's Correlation and Multiple linear regression were conducted. Moreover, to confirm suitability of the scales, reliability analyses were also performed. **Results:** The statistical analysis revealed that Openness ($\beta=0.27$, $t=3.83$, $p<0.05$), Agreeableness ($\beta=0.21$, $t=2.67$, $p<0.05$) and Neuroticism ($\beta=-0.23$, $t=-2.97$, $p<0.05$) were the significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. While Openness ($r=0.301$, $p<0.01$) and Agreeableness ($r=0.302$, $p<0.01$) were positively correlated, neuroticism ($r=-0.272$, $p<0.01$) demonstrated a negative relationship. In addition, Conflict resolution Styles were significantly and solely predicted by Agreeableness with a negative association ($\beta=-0.30$, $t=-3.73$, $p<0.05$). Neuroticism displayed a positive correlation with Conflict engagement ($r=0.204$, $p<0.01$) and Withdrawal ($r=0.225$, $p<0.01$), while Agreeableness was only positively correlated with Positive Problem-Solving ($r=0.189$, $p<0.01$). **Conclusion:** Though, certain limitations exist, the research offers valuable insights that could be useful in the fields of relationship counselling and education.

Keywords: Relationship satisfaction, Conflict resolution styles, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness.

Introduction

Marriage is an essential component of every individual's life given its importance in every culture (Shaheen et al., 2022). It is a legalized union of two individuals that usually encompasses emotional and religious elements (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). The marital bond allows people to feel a sense of stability, security and companionship for life that strengthens the emotional well-

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being of individuals as they find a source of constant love and support in times of difficulty and stressful circumstances (Soulsby & Bennett, 2015). As couples proceed in life and form families, the dynamics of the family are very much determined by the relationship of the couple. Families that are stable and content usually have couples that are satisfied with their marriage, however, in cases where two individuals share a dysfunctional marital bond, their families and its dynamics are quite influenced by it (Jahromi et al., 2010).

Marital or relationship satisfaction can be described as the subjective experience of both partners in a marital union conforming to their expectations and personal criteria (Datchyaayane, 2018). Kazim and Rafique (2021) identified several predictors of marital satisfaction in both individualistic and collectivist cultures, including interpersonal communication, relationship expectations, intimacy, emotional intelligence, romantic love etc. According to the study, personality traits and conflict resolution styles are also two of the fundamental predictors of relationship satisfaction among married couples.

In a marriage where two individuals with different backgrounds, values, upbringing, and personality style and life experiences form a union, the overall personality of each partner plays a key role in determining the overall relationship satisfaction. Due to the tendency for people to force their personal characteristics on their spouse, their personality traits can result in additional stress and hinder the process of achieving higher levels of marital satisfaction (Sadeghi et al., 2016).

Despite several personality traits, one prominent and significant model in the study of personality traits that is widely used is the five-factor model. This model outlines five major traits, also known as the OCEAN traits that helps in assessing personality. Firstly, "O", that represents Openness, is described as an individual's flexibility, curiosity, passion for art and wisdom. "C" represents the trait of Conscientiousness that refers to an individual's desire to be punctual, efficient, self-reliant, calm, process oriented and rational. "E" stands for Extraversion that describes an individual's tendency to be bold, positive, energetic and sociable. "A" – Agreeableness is associated with the attributes such as generosity, sympathy and empathy, kindness, trust and altruism. The fifth trait – "N" refers to Neuroticism which is linked with stress, despair, anxiety, hostility, depression, pity-seeking and low self-esteem (Tavakol et al., 2016).

An individual's personality can influence different aspects of their life, including their approach toward conflicts, which often acts as a distinctive factor among partners. Based on the dimensions of cooperativeness (the degree to which one regards other's views and concerns) and assertiveness (the extent to which an individual focuses on their own motives and priorities), Thomas and Kilmann classified five styles of conflict resolution in their conflict model. These styles include; competing (uncooperative and assertive), collaborating (both; cooperative and assertive), compromising (moderate levels of cooperativeness and assertiveness), avoiding (uncooperative and unassertive) and accommodating (cooperative and unassertive). Depending on the nature and importance of the conflict, each style can be employed in various circumstances (Thomas & Kilmann, 2008).

Individuals usually acquire these conflict management strategies in their childhood (Hysi, 2015). Research has proven that people tend to favor certain approaches over others while resolving interpersonal conflicts and these approaches further determine the outcomes such as increase or decrease in tensions, peaceful resolution, impasse and contentment. Though situational factors

contribute significantly to the employed strategy, people seem to have a subjective inclination towards an approach (Espinoza et al., 2022). Studies reveal that those who possess higher degrees of conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness favor more integrative and cooperative techniques for handling conflicts. However, those who exhibit higher levels of neuroticism are more inclined to deal with conflicts through dominance or avoidance (Umul & Güloğlu, 2023; Tehrani & Yamini, 2020).

To address the significant issue of marital satisfaction which ultimately results in divorces, it is critical to understand the dynamics of relationships. Globally, substantial research has been carried out assessing the relationship between personality traits and conflict management styles and between personality traits and marital satisfaction. However, only a few research have looked into the direct associations between these variables. Existing research often examines the moderation or mediation of these variables. Furthermore, minimal research has been done on the Pakistani context, where cultural and societal factors may have a greater impact on these dynamics. Therefore, by studying how conflict handling styles and relationship satisfaction can be influenced by personality traits, this research will seek to bridge this gap, while offering an expanded view on marital outcomes can be influenced by personality traits.

The significance of this research resides in its ability to assess how personality traits might exert influence on relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles, proposing valuable insights to strengthen the marital relationships. Today, the world is witnessing a rapid increase in the number of divorces. Since the pandemic, there has been a surge in the divorce rate in Pakistan, as around 3800 divorce cases were filed in Karachi alone in the first three months of 2020 (Falak, 2023). Therefore, studying how personality traits may be playing a role in exacerbating conflicts is vital. By studying these factors, the research can further assist in the creation of tailored interventions for couples' whose conflicts stem from personality differences. The results will be beneficial for married couples in understanding individual differences and fostering healthier relationships.

Although, the research in this domain is extensive, there is insufficient data that would demonstrate how these factors relate in the distinct setting of Pakistan. People worldwide differ from each other not just on the basis of personal dispositions, but also their collective traits that are usually different for every region. Majority of the research on personality factors and relationships originate from other parts of the world and generalizing their data for other unstudied populations such as Karachi, would not consider its unique setting and culture into account. Therefore, exploring the connection between these variables among married couples also provides insights about the cultural norms and values in this region that remains uncovered in psychological research. Studying the Big Five traits including Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Neuroticism allows to gain a deeper knowledge about how these traits can impact marital satisfaction and help individuals to work on aspects of their personalities to improve the quality of their marital relationships.

Limited research based on assessing the relationship of personality traits and conflict resolution styles in married couples, suggests that there is considerable potential and room for exploration in this particular field. While there has been some research based on personality traits and relationship satisfaction with the mediating role of other factors, there is limited research in Pakistan, addressing the direct link between the two variables. Considering the increasing divorces in Pa-

kistan, it is crucial to study factors that can possibly play a role in exacerbating differences and conflicts. Moreover, existing research often assesses one of the three variables acting as a mediator in the association of the other two variables. However, this research aims to identify the direct relationship between the independent variable; personality traits, with the two dependent variables; relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles. By examining the role of personality traits in predicting relationship satisfaction and conflict Resolution styles among married Couples the study simultaneously fill the gap in both areas.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between personality traits and the degree of relationship satisfaction among married couples.
2. To examine the relationship between personality traits and the conflict resolution style among married couples.
3. To explore whether personality traits significantly predict relationship satisfaction among married couples.
4. To study whether personality traits significantly predict different conflict resolution styles among married couples.

Research questions

1. Will there be a relationship between personality traits and the degree of relationship satisfaction among married couples.
2. Will there be a relationship between personality traits and the conflict resolution style among married couples.
3. Do personality traits significantly predict relationship satisfaction among married couples?
4. Do personality traits significantly predict different conflict resolution styles among married couples?

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant relationship between personality traits and the degree of relationship satisfaction among married couples.
2. There will be a significant relationship between personality traits and the conflict resolution style among married couples.
3. Personality traits will significantly predict relationship satisfaction among married couples.
4. Personality traits will significantly predict different conflict resolution styles among married couples.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional research design was used for this research with the objective of identifying the relationship between personality traits, relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles.

Participants

For the present research, 191 participants (109 females and 82 males) were recruited. To recruit participants that fit the requirements of the study (married individuals belonging to the age group 19-35 with three years of marriage at least), the research utilized the method of purposive sampling. To maintain uniformity and relevance to the objectives of the research, all participants were supposed to have completed Matriculation at least.

Instruments

Big Five Inventory (BFI) (Oliver John et al; 1991): The Big Five Inventory, based on the Five-Factor Model, was developed by Oliver John and his collaborators in 1991. It is a psychological assessment tool in the form of a self-report that aims to measure the Big Five traits of personality; Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion and Neuroticism. Comprising 44 items, the BFI utilizes a 5-point Likert scale to assess how participants respond to the statements associated with their overall personality by selecting any of the following responses; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. Each statement aims to encapsulate a distinct aspect of one of the Big Five attributes. For example, the answer of the phrase “I see Myself as Someone Who Is full of energy” contributes to the dimension of extraversion. Similarly, “I see Myself as Someone Who Is a reliable worker” adds to the score of Conscientiousness.

As the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five categories of the BFI fall between 0.70 and 0.90, the scale demonstrates strong internal consistency. Moreover, the stable scores of individuals over time suggest that the test-retest reliability is excellent. Convergent validity has been shown when the BFI was validated against other recognized measures based on personality. Therefore, the convergent validity verifies the scale's ability to accurately measure personality traits (Arterberry et al., 2014).

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) – CSI-32 (James D. Funk & Ronald D. Rogge, 2007): James D. Funk and Ronald D. Rogge designed the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) in 2007, with the aim of measuring relationship satisfaction among couples. CSI-32 is one of the three versions of the CSI, which was employed for this study. The scale consists of 32 items that utilizes both, direct rating scales and 6- and 7-points Likert Scale.

With the Cronbach's alpha values surpassing 0.90, strong internal consistency is exhibited by CSI that confirms the scale as extremely reliable (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI's correlation with other validated measures of relationship satisfaction shows that it has excellent convergent validity. The CSI-32 has also been translated in other languages and validated with psychometric testing in countries like China. The results demonstrate good psychometric properties confirming its reliability in a cross-cultural context as well (Wang et al., 2024).

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) (Kurdek, 1994): One of the widely used scales for determining the conflict resolution strategies of individuals in specifically intimate relationships, is the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory. The CRSI was developed by Kurdek in 1994 and consists of 16 conflict behavior styles practiced by their partner (CRSI- Partner) and by themselves (CRSI- Self partner), that are assessed on the Likert Scale (where 1 = “Never” and 5 = “Always”). Respondents are asked to rate how often they engage in a particular conflict resolu-

tion style that may be Positive problem solving, Compliance, Withdrawal or Conflict engagement. For CRSI- Self, the Cronbach's alpha values were found to be between .65 and .89, and ranged from .80 to .91 for CRSI- Partner, suggesting an adequate internal consistency for both. The stability of results over the period of 1 year for both categories were also adequate and significant. In terms of validity, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to validate the four-factor structure, revealing that the items precisely reflect these four conflict resolution approaches (Kurdek, 1994).

Statistical Technique

To statistically analyze the data SPSS Statistics V.29 was used. Descriptive Statistics were used to collectively describe the basic elements and features of the data, including the demographic details of participants. Furthermore, Pearson's Correlation allowed in assessing the trend and magnitude of the linear relationships between the variables of this study. Additionally, the technique of Multiple Linear Regression was also utilized to examine the significant predictors of relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Information of the participants.

Sample Characteristics		N(n=191)	%
Gender	Male	82	42.9
	Female	109	57.1
Age Group	19-24	18	9.4
	25-30	77	40.3
	31-35	96	50.3
Education	Matric / O levels	3	1.6
	Intermediate / A levels	11	5.8
	Bachelors	107	56.0
	Masters	68	35.6
	PHD	2	1.0
Duration of Marriage	3-5 years	106	55.5
	6-8 years	42	22.0
	9-11 years	23	12.0
	12+ years	20	10.5
Type of Marriage	Love Marriage	87	45.5
	Arranged Marriage	87	45.5
	Interfaith Marriage	2	1.0
	Intercaste Marriage	1	0.5
	Cousin Marriage	13	6.8
	Exchange Marriage	1	0.5

Family Living Setup			
	Nuclear	74	38.7
	Joint	117	61.3
Socioeconomic Class			
	Lower Class	35	18.3
	Middle Class	100	52.4
	Upper Class	56	29.3

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the given variables

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. deviation
Age of the participants	191	21	35	30.37	4.02
Duration of marriage	191	3	17	6.25	3.47

The results of the descriptive statistics for two variables – Age and duration of marriage – that were based on a sample of 191 individuals, suggested that the minimum age in the sample was 21, while the maximum age was 35, with a mean of 30.37 (SD = 4.02). According to the data, the minimum reported duration of marriage was 3 years while the maximum was 17 years. The mean was calculated to be 6.25 years (SD = 3.47).

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for scales.

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Big Five Inventory	44	0.722
Couple Satisfaction Index	32	0.980
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory	16	0.822

To ensure the suitability of all the scales, reliability of each scale was assessed. According to the analysis, the Big five inventory (BFI) displayed reliability within acceptable range ($\alpha = 0.722$), while the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) presented an excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.980$). With a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.822, the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory demonstrated a good internal consistency. The results of the analysis therefore confirm the appropriateness of the scales for this study.

Table 4: Correlations among Big Five personality traits, Couple Satisfaction & Conflict Resolution Styles of the participants

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Extraversion	–	.322**	.289**	-.401**	.245**	.202**	-.090	.052	-.187**	-.179*
2 Agreeableness		–	.487**	-.309**	.208**	.302**	-.442**	.189**	-.494**	-.257**
3 Conscientiousness			–	-.349**	.235**	.179*	-.366**	.112	-.338**	-.162*
4 Neuroticism				–	-.021	-.272**	.204**	-.105	.225**	.119
5 Openness					–	.301**	-.115	.198**	-.211**	-.197**
6 CSI						–	-.297**	.346**	-.477**	-.350**
7 Conflict Engagement							–	-.054	.710**	.552**
8 Positive Problem Solving								–	-.066	.052

9	Withdrawal											–	.631**
10	Compliance												
	Mean	3.30	3.93	3.75	3.06	3.62	3.88	1.91	3.33	2.03			2.25
	SD	.74	.58	.62	.74	.45	1.07	.90	.83	.86			.80

Note. * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.01$; SD = Standard Deviation; CSI = Couple Satisfaction Index

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Big Five personality traits as predictors of Couple Satisfaction

Couple Satisfaction								
Variables	B	B	SE	t	F	p	95 %ile CI for B	
							LL	UL
Constant	1.493	–	.882	1.693	8.866	.092	-.247	3.234
Extraversion	-.004	-.002	.110	-.033		.974	-.220	.213
Agreeableness	.382	.208	.143	2.665		.008**	.099	.665
Conscientiousness	-.110	-.064	.136	-.811		.419	-.379	.158
Neuroticism	-.325	-.226	.109	-2.969		.003**	-.541	-.109
Openness	.637	.269	.166	3.827		.000**	.309	.965
R	.440							
R ²	.193							
ΔR ²	.193							

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; SE = Standard error

A multiple regression analysis was run to investigate whether couple satisfaction is significantly predicted by the Big five traits. The outcome showed a significant, positive relationship between Openness ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 3.83$, $p < 0.01$) and marital satisfaction. Agreeableness ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$) was also observed to have a significantly positive association. This suggested that individuals scoring high in Openness and Agreeableness report higher levels of satisfaction from their relationships. In contrast, Neuroticism exhibited a significantly negative association ($\beta = -0.23$, $t = -2.97$, $p < 0.01$) indicating that higher levels of neuroticism were linked with lower levels of couple satisfaction. The overall model reported 19.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.193$).

Table 6: Regression Analysis for Big Five personality traits as predictors of Conflict Resolution Styles

Variables	B	β	SE	t	p	95% CI for B		
						LL	UL	
Constant	4.022	—	.497	8.089	.000**		3.041	5.003
Extraversion	.004	.005	.062	.058	.953		-.118	.125
Agreeableness	-.301	-.299	.081	-3.725	.000**		-.460	-.142
Conscientiousness	-.110	-.117	.077	-1.437	.152		-.261	.041
Neuroticism	.025	.032	.062	.404	.686		-.097	.147
Openness	-.037	-.028	.094	-.395	.693		-.222	.148
R	.388							
R ²	.151							
ΔR ²	.151							

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; SE = Standard error

Table 6 displays the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the influence of the Big Five personality traits on the overall Conflict Resolution Styles of the participants. The only significant predictor identified from the result was Agreeableness that showed a negative association with Conflict Resolution Styles ($\beta = -0.30$, $t = -3.73$, $p < 0.01$). This implied that individuals with higher levels of Agreeableness might be less likely to engage directly to resolve conflicts. The other Big Five traits did not seem to have significant power to predict Conflict Resolution Styles. The variance reported by the overall model is around 15.1% ($R^2 = 0.151$).

Discussion

The present research was designed to evaluate the influence of The Big Five Personality traits on Relationship Satisfaction and Conflict Resolution Styles in married individuals. While the research questions of the study aimed at observing the effect of Big Five traits on relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles of individuals, these also focused on identifying the specific Big Five traits that served as the significant predictors of these two variables in the sample. The results of the correlation and multiple linear regression analyses offered considerable support to the hypotheses of this research.

The findings highlighted Openness and Agreeableness as traits having a significant, positive influence on couple satisfaction. According to the regression analysis, these were also two of the three significant predictors of Relationship Satisfaction. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of the research conducted by Webbo (2017). Another Kenyan study also found both Agreeableness and Openness as positive indicators of Marital Satisfaction (Munini et al., 2024). Moreover, many existing literatures found a positive relationship between Agreeableness and Relationship Satisfaction (Abolghasemi et al., 2024; Brudek et al., 2018; Weidmann et al., 2016; Schaffhuser et al., 2014). The likelihood of being flexible in individuals with higher Openness, while cooperativeness and kindness in highly agreeable individuals may be contributing to the higher levels of satisfaction from their marital relationships.

According to the demographics of this sample, 61.3% of the participants lived in a joint family setup. Traditionally in such setups, there are certain familial norms and expectations influenced by culture and religion that individuals are expected to follow. In such dynamics, highly agreeable people are well-suited, given their tendencies to conform to values and be compliant (Roccas et al., 2002). Consequently, they live in more harmonious and peaceful environments with lesser disputes or conflicts. This may be leading to better dynamics within their marital relationships, and therefore, higher marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, if the positive relationship of Openness with Relationship Satisfaction, particularly among the participants of this study, is viewed in light of the cultural context, it may be due to higher education. As also apparent in the sample of this study, nowadays people have access to better educational opportunities in Karachi, with numerous institutions offering high quality education. Spouses who are educated and higher in Openness may prefer having insightful conversations with each other. Moreover, with education, one adopts a progressive mindset which can be highly beneficial in a relationship as spouses can equally contribute in decision-making. Therefore, it can be stated that higher Openness can influence the overall quality of marriage and marital satisfaction as also identified by Zhou et al. (2017).

As hypothesized and consistent with the results of other studies, Neuroticism revealed a negative association and also appeared as the third significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (Brkljačić et al., 2024; Webbo, 2017; Sayehmiri et al., 2020; Abbasi et al., 2018; Schaffhuser et al., 2014). While studying the effect of personality traits on divorces, studies have also identified higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of Agreeableness to be the influencers of marriage dissolution (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). A longitudinal study based on a sample from the United States, showed a similar negative relationship between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction in married couples (O'Meara & South, 2019). The variety of literature with consistent results on Neuroticism, implied that despite cultural and situational variations across the world, Neuroticism's damaging effect on Relationship Satisfaction remained stable. Since individuals with higher levels of Neuroticism tend to suffer from anxiety, irritability, anger and emotional instability (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017), these can significantly impact one's perception of their relationship and may lead to greater number of conflicts with their partner. Therefore, the findings concluded the importance of emotional stability in healthy marital bonds and proved Hypothesis 3.

Unlike many studies that identified Conscientiousness as a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (Humaira, 2024; Maleki et al., 2019), the outcome of this research revealed Conscientiousness to have a weak, positive correlation with relationship satisfaction however, the regression analysis did not outline it as a significant predictor. Though, not a significant impact, Conscientiousness posed a positive influence on couple satisfaction. Therefore, the results prove Hypothesis 2 that predicted a positive impact of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness on Relationship Satisfaction. The less profound impact of Conscientiousness in the sample of this research can be explained by the study conducted by McCrae & Terracciano (2005) that highlighted the varying expression of personality traits and their effects across different cultural settings.

Relationship Satisfaction was observed to be sharing a positive correlation with Extraversion as well. Though, the strength of the correlation was not as strong as one identified between the variables in the results of Jain & Singh (2019), the direction and significance of the correlation was consistent. The meta-analysis conducted by Orayzi et al. (2016) reported parallel findings, with a weak and positive correlation between Extraversion and Relationship Satisfaction. Extraverted people possess excellent social skills and are more likely to encounter positive affect, which enables them to be liked by others in their surroundings (Tov et al., 2016). Due to this reason, extraverted individuals experience happy relationships with an exchange of positive emotions that simultaneously lead to higher levels of relationship satisfaction experienced by them. Moreover, the trait is also characterized by greater expressiveness and talkativeness that may be allowing them to have better communication with their partners.

The regression analysis further showed that the personality traits accounted for 19.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, that closely aligns with the percentage (18%) given by Brkljačić et al. (2024). This aligns with Hypothesis 1, proving the significant influence of personality traits on couple satisfaction.

In the context of Conflict Resolution Styles, Agreeableness was the only trait to emerge as a significant predictor with a negative link with the overall variable of Conflict Resolution Styles. Since the composite score of conflict resolution styles comprises three maladaptive – Conflict

engagement, Withdrawal, Compliance – and one adaptive style which is Positive Problem Solving, a higher composite score would mean a greater use of maladaptive techniques. Therefore, it can be concluded that individuals with high scores of Agreeableness are less likely to employ maladaptive resolution styles. Considering the cooperative and calm nature of Agreeableness, it can also be interpreted that individuals higher in Agreeableness might generally avoid conflicts. The results of the correlation analysis also made it evident, that individuals who are more agreeable tend to incline towards Positive Problem Solving and refrain from Conflict engagement, Compliance or Withdrawal, as suggested by the significant values.

Considering the cultural context of Karachi, conflict resolution styles can be highly influenced by the traditional norms and the stereotypes prevalent in the region. Dildar & Amjad (2017) also found in their study, that certain conflict resolution styles are specific to gender for example, women usually used collaborating and accommodating styles, while men were found to be utilizing more of the dominating and collaborating styles. In a marital relationship, wives are traditionally and culturally expected to be more agreeable in nature, characterized by calmness, reliability, empathy and patience (Ali, et al., 2011) and thus, expected to resolve conflicts in a more compliant or positive manner. Women who employ Withdrawing styles or engage in the conflict negatively are not appreciated. The negative association of agreeableness with conflict resolution, supports this traditional mind set to a great extent.

Correlation analysis also revealed Neuroticism's positive relationship with Withdrawal and Conflict Engagement. Similar results were seen in another study that identified the role of Neuroticism in influencing engaging and withdrawing styles of conflict resolution, which can further lower the level of relationship satisfaction (Madoures, 2018). However, regression analysis did not show any significant impact of Neuroticism on overall Conflict Resolution Styles. This may have been due to the regression analysis between Big Five traits and the composite score of Conflict resolution styles, which may have weakened the impact of the trait. Thus, it did not appear as a significant predictor.

It is crucial to understand the factors that might be contributing to the behaviour demonstrated by High-Neuroticism individuals, especially in the cultural context of Karachi. As neuroticism is often characterized by emotional instability or dysregulation, it is important to acknowledge that in South Asian regions, individuals are not taught effective strategies for regulating emotions. Emotional regulation plays an influential role in directing one's behaviour, and Neuroticism and emotion regulation difficulties are positively correlated with Aggressiveness (Rehman & Javaid, 2024). Considering that the cities in Pakistan closely align in terms of culture and values, it can be established that young adults may also be demonstrating a similar relationship. Due to greater Aggressiveness, they are more likely to engage in maladaptive ways of conflict resolution such as Conflict Engagement, as identified in this research.

Munawar et al. (2025) described that suppressing emotions is a common phenomenon in collectivist societies like Karachi, especially in the youth, as a result of abiding by the cultural norms and values that concern honor. This further causes damaging effects on the mental health of individuals. Opting for Withdrawal as a conflict resolution style can be a consequence of these suppressed emotions. Additionally, the suppression of emotions negatively impacts the communication between spouses (Ramzan & Amjad, 2017). Therefore, it is highly important to educate people about the importance of letting their emotions out and about the adaptive strategies of

emotion regulation.

Openness and Extraversion, both exhibited negative correlations with two of the conflict resolution styles – Compliance and Withdrawal. Considering the talkative and assertive nature of Extroverts, it can be anticipated that extroverted individuals might not engage in either of the two styles. Instead, they might be opting for more direct styles of addressing a conflict such as Positive Problem Solving and Conflict Engagement. The evidence of the employment of these techniques was however not found through this research, as the correlations of these two with extraversion were insignificant. In terms of Openness, the results of Rahaman et al. (2010) and Ayachit & Natarajan (2014) also showed negative association with avoiding styles. In addition to the negative relationships with Compliance and Withdrawal, Openness displayed a positive correlation with Positive problem-solving styles. The flexibility in the nature of individuals with higher levels of openness, allow them to understand the perspectives of others, as well as make them less likely to hold firm beliefs and avoid change. The positive association with Positive ways of handling conflicts can be understood in terms of their tendency to be curious that make them open to discussions.

Conscientiousness that showed a negative correlation with Conflict engagement, Compliance, and Withdrawal, can be interpreted in terms of the characteristics of the trait. This Big five trait is marked by discipline, self-control, orderliness etc. (Reis & Sprecher, 2009). Individuals with higher conscientiousness are usually expected to behave in an orderly manner and therefore, utilize adaptive ways to solve conflicts. In cities like Pakistan that are highly traditional as compared to the Western cities, there are higher expectations from women. Similar to how they are expected to be agreeable, conscientiousness is also a trait highly associated with women.

Implications

The valuable insights of the study hold great significance in the psychological domains of relationship counseling and psychological assessments in particular. Since personality traits contribute significantly to marital satisfaction and affect conflict resolution styles, psychologists should offer personality tests to the individuals in the initial phase of counseling as a part of the psychological assessment, and take those traits into consideration while tailoring specific interventions. For example, in case of individuals who are identified as having greater neurotic tendencies, and facing marital conflict or dissatisfaction, can be offered interventions related to anger management and emotion regulation. Counselors should also work on client's communication skills in order to make a positive difference in their negative perception of the relationship and improve the overall quality of their marriage. This can consequently influence positive styles of conflict resolution. Psychologists and counselors can also offer educational workshops for individuals in relationships or those preparing for marriage. These workshops can address how an individual's personality factors can influence their romantic relationship. They can further be taught how to employ some effective strategies to reduce or avoid relationship conflicts in order to have a blissful relationship.

Moreover, the findings can be proved highly significant in the context of South Asia, particularly urban cities like Karachi. Considering that Pakistan has an overall collectivist approach and firmly supports the idea of joint family, a global change in the family setups has recently been identified in a study (Khalid, et al., 2021). The research not only pointed out the shift towards

nuclear setups from joint setups but also highlighted the preferences of Pakistan's youth to live in a nuclear structure of family for more freedom and privacy and lesser familial disputes and stress affiliated with it. This implied that individuals now will not be expected to live according to the traditional ways as expected in a joint family system, which will consequently narrow down many external and situational factors affecting one's relationship, especially in a South Asian population. Marital relationships can therefore, be more personalized and individuals should work towards understanding themselves as well as their partners for greater satisfaction and lesser marital conflicts.

Conclusion

The current research focused on understanding the influence of Big Five personality traits in predicting Relationship satisfaction and Conflict resolution styles among married couples. Based on Trait theory, Attachment theory and Social Exchange theory, the study delved into tracing the psychological roots of relationship experiences and how personality traits can impact different aspects of a relationship such as dealing with marital conflict and the overall satisfaction they experience from their relationship. The findings were successful in answering the research questions and proving the hypotheses of the study. The results showed that personality traits do have a significant impact on Relationship Satisfaction. While Openness and Agreeableness emerged as the significant, positive predictors of Relationship Satisfaction, Neuroticism demonstrated a negative association. Extraversion and Conscientiousness were also positive influencers however; the impact was not as strong as the other two. The results were also consistent with the findings of many existing literature and consequently proved the first three hypotheses of this research.

While studying Big Five traits' impact on conflict resolution styles, Agreeableness was identified as a significant, negative predictor of the overall conflict resolution styles, implying that agreeable individuals tend to refrain from employing maladaptive conflict resolution strategies. The correlation analyses found neuroticism to be positively linked with Withdrawal and Conflict Engagement styles however it was not identified as a significant predictor through the regression analysis. According to the results of the correlation analyses, Agreeableness positively influenced Positive problem-solving styles however, showed negative associations with the other three. By examining the role of personality traits in predicting relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles among married couples in Karachi, the study successfully adds an insightful investigation in the field of psychological research. Considering that a study incorporating both, relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles under the influence of personality traits had not been conducted yet, especially in the context of Karachi, this research helped by filling this gap and offering valuable insights.

Limitations

Despite the informative insights offered by the results of this investigation, there were some limitations too. Firstly, the scales used for the measurement of the traits, relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles were all self-report measures, which are highly prone to biasness. The responses of the participants could have been altered due to distorted self-perceptions, or because of portraying themselves as socially desirable. Secondly, the study incorporated data from the perspective of only one individual in the marital bond. Responses from both the partners would

have helped in understanding the dynamics of the interactions in a more reliable manner.

Besides that, there a restriction in terms of the questionnaire that was created. Since the form was around 10-12 minutes long, a few potential respondents may have not completed the form due to decline in motivation or attention, reducing the overall number of participants. Additionally, the responses were collected through an online form, which may have restricted some participants from taking part in the research, due to the lack of internet access or unfamiliarity with digital tools. Moreover, the research had an imbalance in the responses from males and females, with a greater number of responses from females. This may have limited the generalizability of the outcomes of this study across the two genders. Furthermore, the majority of the sample was represented by educated individuals. This further restricts the applicability of the findings to the population, due to an underrepresentation of less educated or uneducated individuals who represent a good percentage of Karachi's population.

In addition, this research had utilized a cross-sectional design that observed the relationships between the variables in the given time. Therefore, it did not address how these variables can alter over a period of time. Another limitation encountered by this study was, that it only majorly focused on the three variables – personality traits, relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles – and did not assess the impact of demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, education, living setup in detail, which may have posed some influence on the variables. Lastly, conducting regression analysis using the composite score of conflict resolution styles did not offer insights into how significantly distinct resolution styles are predicted by individual personality traits. Conducting individual analysis would have helped in understanding the connections more clearly.

Recommendations

In accordance with the limitations of the study, some recommendations for future research can be offered. Since this study majorly focused on individual reports and experience, future studies can utilize a dyadic approach that consists of participation of both partners. This would help in building a more reliable picture of the relationships among these variables. Furthermore, it can also be a longitudinal study which would help in understanding the influence of change in personality traits on relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles over a period of time. Future research can also look into approaching individuals with lower educational backgrounds that would help in enhancing the applicability of the findings.

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