

## Role of trust in marital satisfaction among single and dual-career couples

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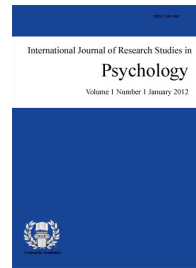
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### ***Abstract***

The present study examined the role of trust in marital satisfaction in a sample of 140 couples including 70 single & 70 dual-career couples. Moreover, gender differences were also studied. Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993), and Trust Scale (Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985) were used to measure the constructs. The age of the sample ranged from 25 to 61 years ( $M = 40.90$ ,  $SD = 9.62$ ). Multiple regression analysis demonstrated trust as significant predictor of marital satisfaction for single career couples, dual-career couples and for the whole sample respectively. Significant gender differences were found in trust for both single and dual-career couples. Implications of results as well as directions for future empirical research are discussed.

***Keywords:*** trust; marital satisfaction; single career couples; dual-career couples

## **Role of trust in marital satisfaction among single and dual-career couples**

### **1. Introduction**

Human race has evolved roles that males and females play. These roles have become less fixed and less clearly defined with the passage of time (Amato & Booth, 1995). The roles that men and women have in their relationship determine the extent of the bond or connection they experience in their relationship. Of all the relationships between men and women marriage is the most vital. Marriage is the basic structure of life and family system and it plays a vital role in maintaining an individual's psychological well-being (Kim & McKenry, 2002; Williams, 2003). Both partners perform multiple tasks like job and family along with their efforts to maintain a balance between them. Without achieving equilibrium in relation it is not possible to have a satisfied marital life.

The present study is an empirical attempt at examining the relationship between couple's trust in each other and their marital satisfaction. The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that it compares the relationship between trust and marital satisfaction across single and dual-career couples. In matrimonial life trust has been recognized as an important determinant of mutual relationship (Gurtman, 1992; Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2006), whereas betrayal has been found negatively related with marital satisfaction (Atkins, Bauco, Christensen, 2005; Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001), but there is dearth of studies which examined the direct relation between trust and marital satisfaction itself.

#### *1.1 Marital Satisfaction*

Marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Stone & Shackelford, 2007). According to Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, and Kim (2002) marital satisfaction is a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning. From an evolutionary perspective, marital satisfaction can be viewed as a psychological state of regulated mechanisms that monitor the benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person (Shackelford & Buss, 2000). Marital satisfaction affects many other areas of human life as well such as physical and emotional health and relationship between couples, parents, and children as well (Fincham & Beach, 1999).

Marital satisfaction is a key element of perceived happiness, and a growing number of empirical studies are attempting to identify its determinants. For instance, in their comprehensive survey of determinants of marital satisfaction, Cottrell, Neuberg, and Li (2007) found trustworthiness, cooperativeness, agreeableness, extraversion, attractiveness, intelligence, humor and wealth as important predictors of marital interpersonal relations.

#### *1.2 Trust and Marital Satisfaction*

Heller (2000) discussed that trust believes that the person who is trusted will do what is expected. Trust has been recognized as an important factor in interpersonal relationships (Cottrell et al., 2007; Gutman, 1992; Rotter, 1980). In couples, discrepancies in reported levels of trust are linked to lower levels of marital satisfaction (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991). Despite the potentially significant role of trust as determinant of marital satisfaction, there is a dearth of studies pertaining to the relationship between trust and marital satisfaction in Pakistan. The present study is an empirical endeavor in the same direction and hypothesizes that trust would be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction.

### *1.3 Marital Satisfaction in Dual and Single Career Couples*

Employment status as single or dual-career couples is another relevant factor to the topic of the present study. In dual career couples, typical gender roles are compromised since both the partners are earners. This in turn may have a direct bearing on the dynamics of trust in marital relationship. In order to have a satisfied matrimonial relationship, male spouse in a dual career couple may have to be more egalitarian and trusting towards his wife since she has to be amongst many male colleagues at her work place in contrast with a housewife who has minimal contact with males outside of her family. Furthermore, issues like division of labor at home, child rearing, work hours, work-family conflict, and nature of job could strain the marital relation. The relationship of interactional patterns to the marital satisfaction of single and dual-career couples depends most likely upon certain factors e.g. equality and reciprocity in the relationships, mutual give and take, spousal support, to be involved in each other's careers, having equal commitment to the relationship, and to practice equal decision making. Research has documented that sharing non-traditional sex-role attitudes and the husbands' approving of their wives' careers were related to higher marital satisfaction (Sprunt & Howes, 2011). During recent years the trend of dual-career couples has become increasingly common in urban culture of Pakistan, so the present study is a valuable empirical endeavor at examining the factors that might contribute to their marital satisfaction.

### *1.4 Gender Differences in Trust and Marital Satisfaction*

Previous research has found that wives' trust is predictive of husbands' levels of marital satisfaction and adjustment (Johnson & Talitman, 1997; Quinn & Odell, 1998). Existing literature illustrates mixed findings in trust and marital satisfaction regarding gender. Mahfuz (2011) revealed that there are no significant gender differences in interpersonal trust, however, German (2008) found that trust and marital satisfaction is significantly higher among women than men.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1 Sample*

The researchers approached 140 male teachers of public sector schools in Sargodha district of Pakistan through convenience sampling. Of these 140 male teachers, 70 had wives who were also employed in public sector organization whereas 70 had wives who were just house wives. The researchers requested all the male teachers to get the questionnaires filled by their spouses as well. Thus the sample of present study comprised of ( $N = 140$ ) married couples. The age of sample ranged from 25 to 61 years. The participants were explained that their participation in this study was absolutely voluntary and they could quit the study at any stage. They were also assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

### *2.2 Instruments*

The constructs of the present study were measured through psychometrically sound self-report measures. The details are as follows:

#### *Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale*

To measure marital satisfaction of couples Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) was used in current study. Its concurrent validity is .73 with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. Construct validity with Family Satisfaction Scale, thoughts of divorce, and demographic correlations of other satisfaction scales, suggesting non-redundancy among the scales. Cronbach's alpha revealed an internal reliability of .86 and test re-test reliability coefficient is .86 over time (Fowers & Olson, 1993). It has Likert type 5 point rating response format ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree.

*Trust Scale*

Trust scale (Rempel, et al., 1985) was used, which is composed of 3 sub scales i.e. Predictability, Dependability and Faith. The total Trust measure is the sum of the 3 sub scales total. Items are anchored on 7 point Likert type response format. Alpha reliabilities reported by the authors were .80, .72, .70, and .81 for faith, dependability, predictability and overall scale respectively.

2.3 Procedure

Principals of different public schools, for boys and girls, were contacted personally. They were briefed about the topic of the study. After securing permission from them, participants were directly approached in the staff rooms. Informed consent was ensured from them. Instructions about scales along with testing booklets were given to them and they were briefed about the purpose of the study. They were asked to response to all questionnaires according to their true feelings. All of the participants were assured about the confidentiality and privacy of the information taken from them. Questionnaires were distributed to male/female teachers, so that they could return them after completion by their spouses. These forms were collected after three or four days of distribution depending upon when all the forms, duly completed by both partners were returned back to their respective school heads. They were also thanked for participating in the study.

3. Results

The data of current study were analyzed through SPSS 18 version. Alpha reliability were computed in order to ensure psychometric strength of scales and sub-scales used in study; correlation matrix was computed of all variables to have an insight in relationship pattern and finally regression analysis was used for hypothesis testing. Table 1 represents the correlation matrix, means, and standard deviations computed for the sample of both dual and single career couples for all pairs of scores for total marital satisfaction, trust and its three subscales. Table 1 also tells us that except predictability which is a subscale of trust all the variable were significantly and positively correlated with marital satisfaction.

**Table 1**

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix for both Dual and Single Career couples for all the Variables Used in the Study (N = 120 couples).*

Variables	MS	Trust	Depend	Faith	Predict	$\alpha$	M	SD
MS	--	.14*	.14*	.16*	.07	.78	56.92	9.21
Trust	--	--	.92**	.94**	.86**	.91	91.11	17.48
Depend	--	--	--	.83**	.68**	.81	26.95	6.00
Faith	--	--	--	--	.72**	.67	38.55	7.59
Predict	--	--	--	--	--	.84	25.60	5.49

Note. MS = Marital satisfaction; Depend = Dependability; Predict = Predictability.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Table 2 investigates effect of trust on marital satisfaction through linear regression analysis. Table 2 suggested that 38% of the variance in single career couples can be explained by a model comprising trust ( $R^2 = .38, p < .001$ ). On the whole the model was significant  $\{F(2, 116) = 9.78, p < .001\}$  and trust ( $\beta = .27, t = 3.20, p < .01$ ) was significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction. Table 2 also explained that 50% of the variance in dual-career couples is explained by trust ( $R^2 = .50, p < .001$ ). Overall the model was significant  $\{F(2, 117) = 19.58, p < .001\}$  and trust was found ( $\beta = .09, t = 1.23$ ) significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction in dual-career couples. Finally results in Table 2 depicts that 41% of variance among both single and dual-career couples ( $R^2 = .41, p < .001$ ) is attributable to trust ( $\beta = .18, t = 3.17, p < .01$ ) which positively predicted marital satisfaction among both single and dual-career couples. Overall the model was significant  $\{F(2,236) = 25.04, p < .001\}$

**Table 2**

*Regression analysis for predicting Marital Satisfaction (N = 120 couples).*

Variables	Single career couples			Dual career couples			Single and dual career couples		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	F	B	$R^2$
Trust	.27**	.38	9.78**	.09	.50	19.58**	.18*	.41	25.04**
Dep	.38**			.14			.07		
Faith	.03	.09	3.65*	.31	.03	1.22	.03	.07	121.45
Pre	.12			.13			.08		

Note. Dep = dependability; Pre = predictability. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

Table 2 also demonstrated contributions of sub scales of trust i.e., dependability, faith and predictability in the prediction of marital satisfaction. 9% of the variance in single career couples is explained by a model comprising constructs of dependability, faith and predictability ( $R^2 = .09, p < .001$ ). On the whole the model was significant { $F(3, 117) = 3.65, p < .05$ } and among the predictors, dependability ( $\beta = .38, t = 2.05, p < .05$ ) was only significant predictor, whereas faith ( $\beta = .03, t = .11$ ) and predictability ( $\beta = .12, t = 1.05$ ) were found non-significant. In case of dual-career couples, the subscales of trust explained only 3% of the variance in marital satisfaction ( $R^2 = .03, p = n.s$ ). Overall the model was non-significant { $F(3, 117) = 1.22, p = n.s$ }. Finally, our model explained 7% of variance in both single and dual-career couples ( $R^2 = .07, p = n.s$ ). Overall the model was non-significant { $F(4, 234) = 121.45, p = n.s$ }.

Results in Table 3 indicated significant gender differences in trust { $t(238) = 1.63, p < .05$ }, dependability { $t(238) = 1.56, p < .05$ } and predictability { $t(238) = 1.93, p < .05$ }, whereas non-significant gender differences in marital satisfaction, and faith among single career couples.

**Table 3**

*Comparison of Males and Females on all variables among Single Career couples (N = 60 couples).*

Variables	Males (n = 60)		Females (n = 60)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	MarSat	56.88	10.90	55.88			9.62	.36	
Trust	92.48	14.22	87.55	18.63	1.63	.04	-11.97	1.13	0.29
Dependability	26.93	5.33	25.75	6.65	1.56	.05	-3.81	.45	0.19
Faith	39.08	6.39	37.36	8.35	1.19	.23	-4.47	1.11	0.23
Predictability	26.46	4.24	24.43	5.72	1.93	.05	-4.14	.04	0.40

Note. EmoSta = emotion stability, MarSat = marital satisfaction = MSIde = idealistic distortion

Results in Table 4 demonstrate significant gender differences in trust { $t(238) = 1.63, p < .05$ } and predictability { $t(238) = 2.21, p < .05$ } and non-significant gender differences in marital satisfaction, dependability and faith among dual-career couples.

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Males and Females on all Variables among Dual Career Couples (N = 60 couples).*

Variables	Males (n = 60)		Females (n = 60)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	MarSat	57.74	7.85	57.20			8.40	.53	
Trust	89.50	20.31	94.91	15.63	1.63	.05	-1.06	10.92	-0.29
Dependability	26.71	6.76	28.40	4.89	1.07	.28	-.99	3.36	-0.28
Faith	38.05	8.61	39.73	6.73	1.26	.20	-.97	4.40	-0.21
Predictability	24.73	6.15	26.78	5.41	2.21	.02	.211	3.85	-0.35

Note. EmoSta = emotion stability, MarSat = marital satisfaction = MSIde = idealistic distortion

#### 4. Discussion

The present findings confirmed the hypothesis concerning effect of trust in marital satisfaction. Trust, in single career couples, dual-career couples was found to be significant predictor of marital satisfaction (see Table 2). Trust was also found to be significant predictor of marital satisfaction when regressed on total sample containing both single and dual-career couples. A logical explanation of this result may be that individuals having high trust in partner are not used to perceive negatively about their partners. They tend to demonstrate cooperative and caring behavior and are less upset and angry about spouse. This in turn may make them more satisfied in their marital relation.

This line of reasoning is supported by pertinent research as Ross (2009) found that successful relationships are those in which partners know that they can accept each other's words, believe in each other, and depend on each other to keep promises and to be faithful to commitments that are made (Ross, 2009). William and Mark (2008) investigated the predictors of marital adjustment on the first two years of marital relation. They found that interpersonal trust, desired spousal behavior change, and emotional maturity are highly associated with marital satisfaction. Current results also bring out the significance of cultural context. Wives in Pakistan, regardless of career status, are more acclimatize to the obligation of doing household work and respecting husbands. They are less reactive to negative feelings as they show respect and trust in their husbands and are more committed to their relationships which may enhance marital satisfaction.

Our second objective was to examine gender differences in marital satisfaction and trust among single and dual-career couples. Results of present study revealed non-significant gender difference in marital satisfaction for single as well as dual-career couples (see Table 3 & 4). Although there is empirical evidence that significant differences exist in marital satisfaction (Nazari & Soleymanian, 2008), yet there is considerable literature suggesting non-significant gender differences in marital satisfaction among dual-career couples (e.g. Terry, & Scott, 1987; Zimble, 2012). Our results can also be seen within Pakistani cultural context where a working couple is responsible for both maintaining job related issues outside and domestic matters at home. These circumstances may reduce couple's chances of retaining balance in marital life and thus they are prone to experience low marital satisfaction.

In Pakistan, school teachers are low salaried personnel. Their low income level may provide us with another insight into the results of the present study. Considerable existing literature has also confirmed that family income is associated with marital satisfaction and low socioeconomic status has been established as negative predictor of marital satisfaction for both men and women (Glen & Weaver, 1978; Ross, 2009; Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1989). Current findings are also in same line with Patra, and Suar (2009) who found non-significant gender difference among spouses of single and dual-career families. There are many other factors e.g. spouses' levels of education, their income and family system of living (joint or nuclear) might non-significant gender difference in marital satisfaction.

An important finding of our research was related to gender differences in trust and its subscales i.e. predictability, dependability and faith. Results displayed that men were significantly higher on trust, dependability and predictability among single career couple (see Table 3) and women on trust and predictability for dual-career couples (see Table 4). Predictability emphasizes the consistency and stability of partner's specific behaviors based on past experiences. Dependability concentrates on the dispositional qualities of the partner which warrant confidence in the face of risk and potential hurt, and faith centers on feelings of confidence in the relationship and the responsiveness and caring expected from the partner in the face of an uncertain future (Rempel et al., 1985).

These results are quite logical given our indigenous culture where working women, especially in work settings with male colleagues, are still detested as they have crossed the so called secure environment and comfort of family life. Working ladies do not fit into the prototype of eastern women who are supposed to have

no contact with men who are not her family members. In single career couples men are more trusting, dependable, and predictable because their wives are most likely to be the housewives who have minimal contact with men outside their family. These women portray the typical female gender role which in turn makes their husbands more trusting towards them. On the other hand, women's higher scores on trust and predictability among dual career couples may be attributed to the changing gender roles whereby responsibilities such as child care, housekeeping and kitchen works have been no more exclusive for women. These responsibilities are shared either by the male spouse or by the part time maids which in turn may enhance female spouse's trust in her husband (Panda, 2011).

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study has established the predictive power of trust as a determinant of marital satisfaction in Pakistani culture. Our results posit that marital satisfaction might have not only been preserved but could also be enhanced had the couple taken certain measures to establish their trust in each other. The pattern of gender differences in trust revealed that males of single career couples and females of dual-career couples are more trusting as compared to their spouses. This may imply that higher levels of trust in male spouses of single career couples have been spawned by traditional gender roles whereas higher levels of trust in female spouses of dual career couples might have been procreated by more egalitarian gender roles. Current study will be helpful for social psychologists and family counselors in many prospective. The findings emphasize the role of traditional gender roles for single career couples and egalitarian gender roles for dual career couples in establishing a satisfied matrimonial life. The findings of current study will also be helpful for marital counselors, especially with dual-career couples who are more vulnerable to stress and depression (German, 2008) in maintaining a balance through enhancement of interpersonal trust.

### 5.1 Limitations of the Study

The sample of the present study was selected from limited locale therefore the findings cannot be generalized beyond the specific settings. Furthermore, certain demographic variables like birth order, occupation, socio economic status, participant's academic records and family system have not been controlled in the present study which might have been relevant to the constructs of the present study. Additionally in Pakistani culture women are not as much expressive as men are about the sexual aspects of marital satisfactions. The researchers have found that many women were hesitant to answer about sexuality items which may have biased the results.

### 5.2 Suggestion for Future Research

The findings of the present study can be externally validated if future studies on marital satisfaction among single and dual career couples incorporate broad range of occupations in the sample. Role of work-family and family-work conflict should also be examined in relation to marital satisfaction among dual career couples in comparison with single career couples. Finally, demographic variables such as socio economic status, family system, duration of marriage, and type of marriage (love marriage versus arranged marriage) should also be explored in relation to trust and marital satisfaction of couples.

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