

Development and Validation of Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale for Married Individuals

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The current study aimed to develop and assess the Perceived Psychological Distance Response scale (PPDRS) for married men and women. A sample of 251 married individuals aged 25 to 40 years was selected through purposive sampling from different workplaces in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. PPDRS was constructed by extracting items from open-ended interviews with married men and women, reviewing the literature, consulting the experts, and carrying out a try-out phase. Factor Analysis using Maximum Likelihood with Promax Rotation extracted two sub-factors and Confirmatory Factor Analysis revealed a good fit model. PPDRS was found to have 27-items and two subfactors: Relational Distancing and Constructive Engagement. The scales showed good construct validity with the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2005). The current study used a construct-focused psychometric approach to operationalize perceived psychological distancing response as a distinct relational regulatory process. Despite its surface similarities with coping structure, it measures culturally specific distancing processes within regional marital contexts.

Keywords. Perceived psychological distance response, married men and women, scale development

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There is ample literature on physical distancing among couples in Asian culture (Jiao et al., 2024); very few focus on the perception of psychological distance, which is a subjective feeling of detachment at the emotional, logical, and relationship levels in legal partners (Dicker et al., 2022). The relationship between romantic couples has long been a central focus of psychological research due to its significant impact on marital satisfaction and on individual and societal well-being across diverse cultural settings (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024). Societies like Pakistan with collectivistic culture are completely rooted in a strong family structure where marriage is not merely a dyadic union, but a set of gender roles, communication patterns, and relationship expectations derived from religious and cultural norms (Hasan et al., 2025). It eventually shapes how they deal with family issues. Both partners take responsibility according to their roles and are bound to fulfil the expectations of the family. Even in the state of relational strain, they try to deal with conflict, and that coping affects the dyadic relationship (Tartakovsky, 2023), whereas in Western individualistic culture, the dynamics of marriage and the family system are different, where married and even unmarried people are considered in the classification of couples. They accepted couples even without any legal contract, whereas in Pakistan, only people with a legal contract are considered as couples according to legal, religious, and social perspectives (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024). To meet the demands and expectations, in Pakistan, most of the people emotionally distance themselves to deal with strain, which is the response towards collectivistic cultural expectations where divorce or separation isn't considered respectful (Burleson et al., 2022).

Psychological distancing varies from physical detachment, as Higgins (1987) stated, incongruence in close emotional bonds and expectations in a relationship creates stress and dissatisfaction in that relationship (Abraham et al., 2024). Bowlby (1969), also presented a concept that perception regarding the unavailability of a bonding figure becomes a cause of loneliness and insecurity even when that person is physically present (Sagone et al., 2023). Trope and Liberman (2010) stated in Construal Level Theory that psychological distance has four different domains based on time, space, society, and hypothetical interpretation, and all of them become the basis of thought processing and emotional reaction. In couples, unavailability of a partner or emotional unavailability alters perceptions regarding the spouse's behavior, reduces love, and can move them towards maladaptive strategies (Burleson et al., 2022). In this regard, psychological distancing may function as a culturally consistent regulatory strategy that allows individuals to manage marital discord without jeopardizing

the structural integrity of the marital bond (Hasan et al., 2025). During conflict, unlike Western individualistic models that emphasize direct emotional expression and boundary assertion during conflict, the South Asian marital bond may rely more on less obvious emotional and cognitive repositioning as a mechanism (Dicker et al., 2022).

Psychological detachment decreases closeness and increases feelings of rejection, emotional suppression, and promotes avoidance (Steenbakkers et al., 2024). Many couples use it as a coping, which can be on a psychological or behavioral level of response, which may be adaptive or maladaptive. Psychological distancing is separate from coping, as coping is a broader concept that explains a person's mental efforts and actions to solve that stressful situation, whereas psychological distancing is one reaction in that broader concept. It is also separate from constructive disagreement resolution, as it is linked with resolution, whereas psychological distancing is not directly linked with resolution. It is mainly linked with mental disengagement. Conflict resolution relates to reinforcement positivity in relations, whereas persistent psychological distancing enhances detachment (Dicker et al., 2022). Relationship satisfaction is based on healthy communication, problem-solving, emotional disclosure, and healthy distancing for conflict resolution. Psychological distance serves as a form of short-term coping with a specific form of relational regulation that enables individuals to maintain functional emotional and behavioral space during interpersonal conflict (Tartakovsky, 2023). The theory of attachment provides the base of the concept and explains that insecurities cause two patterns; being more concerned about the other person in anxiousness of losing that person or neglecting the other partner's needs in avoidance (Sagone et al., 2023). Avoidance is highly linked with emotional suppression and detachment. Psychological distance works as an outcome as the person interprets more abstractly, which makes that person insensitive and less supportive in a state of stress (Yang et al., 2024). The concept of psychological distance stems from the Freudian theory and the concept of defense mechanisms. According to the theory, a person psychologically steps away or changes their thought process to protect their ego from hurt (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). During the 1970s to 1990s, research directed its focus on family structure and dynamics, and researchers observed the behavior of distancing in couples with patterns of demand and withdraw, where one wants to communicate about the problem, but the other doesn't want to, which promotes separation and divorce rates (Hussain & Hayee, 2024). Cognitive psychology discusses the distancing defining the concept of perceiving one's psychological experience from a third-person point of view instead of comprehending

it from first-person point of view. It decreases rumination and emotional response and helps in finding better solutions. However, it can be healthy or unhealthy too (Steenbakkers et al., 2024). Literature shows partners who experience threat and stress in their relationship often detach themselves emotionally, and that detachment helps them in avoiding psychological pain, but it increases marital dissatisfaction (Arslan et al., 2026). Therefore, to promote mental well-being, relational growth, and strengthening, there is a need to reduce avoidance and increase communication. For the identification of taking a timeout from relational patterns, there is a need for an assessment scale.

Need for Scale Development

The review of already available scales shows that coping has traditionally focused on stress regulation at the individual level, which produced numerous instruments designed to assess behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses to adversity. However, these measures often conceptualize coping as a generalized way of managing the stress process rather than capturing relational regulatory mechanisms operating within intimate social systems. Some tools are outdated, and others were not culturally representative. For example, the Dyad Coping Inventory has 37 items with its two domains: Self and Partner (Shujja, 2020). Some of its subscales include Stress Communication, Emotion-Focused Supportive Dyadic Coping, Problem-Focused Supportive Dyadic Coping, Delegated Dyadic Coping, Negative Dyadic Coping, and Evaluation of Dyadic Coping. It didn't have sound psychometric properties for all subscales for men and women, and secondly, it is a translated version. Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised Urdu validation for Pakistani married adults has 26 items, and it was conducted in the main cities of each province of Pakistan, but it is a translated version, which may undermine core cultural characteristics (Hayee & Kamal, 2023). It has two subscales: attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance. Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Short Form) Revised Demand/Withdraw Pattern has 35 items (Crenshaw et al., 2017). It has three subscales: Constructive Communication and two Demand/Withdraw scales (Self-Demand/Partner Withdraw and Partner-Demand/Self-Withdraw). It specifically only measures communication, not cognitive coping. Internationally, there is a scale, the Relationship Closeness Inventory (Berscheid et al., 1989); it has three subscales: Frequency, Diversity, and Strength. It is Western, and it's too old to measure the current transition in the family dynamics of Pakistan. Another one is the Partner version of Psychological Distance Scaling

Task (Murphy et al., 2025), initially it was developed to evaluate self-schema, but then modified to evaluate spouse schema regarding the degree of closeness to their partner. Its sample was White, Asian, Black, Latin American, Indigenous, Multiethnic, and other/ unknown, but their relationship status is diverse, as they can select married and unmarried couples. The Marital Psychological Distance Scale has 69 items with domains of Distance of Values, Social Distance, Distance of Temporal Habits, Personal Space, Physical Body Distance, and overall Closeness score (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). He researched them with couples, even divorces, and couples in clinics. These constructs measure other domains or are very general and may be considered outdated to capture the evolving relational demands of marriage in the current digital era.

Indigenous literature on marital relationships has mostly emphasized marital satisfaction, partner-conflict management strategies, and family functioning in legally married couples (Sagone et al., 2023). However, emotional and relational distancing processes have been underdiscussed, despite their potential role in shaping marital adjustment and conflict regulation. Emotional expression during marital disagreements may not always be socially encouraged in collectivistic cultural settings such as Pakistan, leading individuals to rely on some form of regulatory mechanisms to manage tension in the relationship. In the current study, psychological distancing highlighted the distance from the spouse rather than discussing general conflict resolution strategies. The role of psychological distancing highlights its function either as an adaptive strategy for preserving marital harmony or, when excessive, as a maladaptive form of emotional disengagement that can weaken marital relationships (Hussain & Hayee, 2024). Existing indigenous research provides limited empirical tools to assess this subtle process. The lack of availability of culturally sensitive instruments for measuring Perceived Psychological Distancing highlights the need for developing an indigenous scale that captures relational distancing dynamics within South Asian marital contexts.

Method

Married men and women were included as participants in the research. The study was divided into the following phases:

Phase I: Item Generation

This phase aimed to explore the expression of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response scale by married men and women aged 25 to 40 years.

Participants and Procedure

It aimed to explore strategies used by one spouse to distance themselves psychologically in couples. Through purposive sampling, which was based on the selection of participants according to set criteria by the researcher, 20 participants, 10 men and 10 women, were selected (Memon et al., 2024). The participants (married men and women) who were married for a minimum of 2 years, with at least one child, and were living together in an intact family system were selected for the study. The proposed age range of the participants was within the range between 25 and 40 years ($M = 30.45$ and $SD = 5.55$), with a minimum of 14 years of education.

Married men and women who perceive psychological distancing in their marital relationship are defined as their thinking, feelings, or actions in which one of the spouses faces conflict, distances themselves emotionally and mentally, and adopts some coping methods to deal with the conflict. What are they? The following questions were asked by the participants, i.e. “You must have often seen people who, in the event of a disagreement with their spouse, distance themselves (mentally and emotionally) and try various measures to deal with this disagreement. According to you, what could be those possible measures? All the married men and women were individually asked open-ended questions regarding the perceived psychological distancing response in conflicts. The verbatim of the participants was noted so that their interviews could be transcribed, and responses were collected, and further, they could be used for the item generation of the scale. After excluding repetition from the selected items, a final list of 29 positive items and 48 negative items was formed in Urdu that included verbatim, and it was transformed into a 4-point Likert scale where 0 stands for “not at all” and 3 stands for “always”. Then it was submitted for further validation.

Phase II: Expert Validation

This phase comprised of following steps:

Participants and Procedure

The purpose of expert validation was to confirm whether all the items were relevant to the main construct or not. Inclusion criteria was based on to carry out validation, 10 clinical psychologists with a minimum of five years of clinical and research experience in their field of working with married individuals, were given the operational definition of Perceived Psychological Distancing Response. 7 were

female psychologists, and 3 were male psychologists. Clinical psychologists were also given the generated items that were selected in phase one and were asked to rate them. The rating will be taken on a 4-point Likert scale, in which 0 was *not relevant at all*, and 3 was *to a greater extent*. They gave feedback regarding the understandability of the items, repetition, relevance to the main definition, and clearness. Most relevant were retained, and repetitive and ambiguous items were discarded. Item-Content Validity Index and Scale-Content Validity Index (0.84) were checked. The remaining 26 positive items and 41 negative items were arranged according to the suggestion of experts and used for a try-out phase.

Phase III: Try Out

Participants and Procedure

The purpose of this phase was to check the understandability and whether it is easy to use or not. For the try-out, the questionnaire was administered to 25 separately married participants: 13 married men and 12 married women, with the age range between 25 years and 40 years ($M = 32.84$ and $SD = 3.07$), who were married for a minimum of 2 years, with at least one child, and were living together in an intact family system were selected for the study. They had a minimum of 14 years of education, and all of them were working in the government and private sectors. Most of them were from the education sector, some of them from the medical field, and a few of them were running their own business.

Initially, informed consent was taken from them, and other ethics were ensured. They were asked to give feedback about whether it is easy or not, especially about language, whether it can be easily understood, the overall structure of items, and the instructions that were given to participants. The time for filling the form and opinions was noted. After conducting a try-out, the items that were difficult to understand were modified or merged, and some of the irrelevant items were excluded. The final number of comprehensible 29 items was retained and administered to the sample.

Phase IV: Establishing Psychometric Properties

The phase aimed to establish the psychometric properties of Perceived Psychological Distancing Response Scale.

Participants and Procedure

The sample of the current study consisted of 251 married men and women; 116 men and 135 women through purposive sampling with an age range of 25 to 40 years ($M = 33.49$ and $SD = 4.81$), from private and government workplaces. Inclusion criteria was based on to include those (married men and women) who were married for a minimum of two years, with at least one child, and were living together in an intact family system were selected for the study. The proposed age range of the participants was within the range between 25 and 40 years, with a minimum of 14 years of education. In the sample, most of them were from the educational sector, some of them from the health care department, and administration and banking. Few were from the legal profession, the IT department, and the workers. Very few had their own business. On the other hand, exclusion criteria was not to include the participants who had any physical unfitness or who were divorced or widowed were excluded from the selection for the current study.

Measures

For establishing the psychometric properties, the following scales in the Urdu language were administered with a demographic sheet.

Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale

The scale that was newly developed and was indigenous ([Arslan et al., 2026](#)) was given to the married men and women to check their perception of psychological distancing in their marital relationship. The self-report scale has 29 items with a 4-point Likert scale for rating, where 0 is never, 1 is rare, 2 is often, and 3 is always. The participants are requested to rate each item that manifests their feelings, emotions, and actions. They are requested to rate “according to how they relate to their marital relationship”.

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2005)

It was used to measure construct validity. It assesses the strength and repetition of conflict between romantic links. It helps in assessing the domains of conflicts and the way they are dealt with. It consists of 43 items with subscales: Compromise, Avoidance, Interactional Reactivity, Separation, Domination, Submission, and Emotional Reactivity. Compromise is linked to responses of cooperation and agreement between the partners and it is having 14 items, Domination

is linked to successfully winning the conflict and is having 6 items, Submission is linked to accept other partner's needs and is having 5 items, Separation is more linked to be on distance to discuss the conflict later and it is having 5 items, Avoidance is linked to keep away from the conflict and is having 3 items, Interactional Reactivity is linked to more towards verbal anger and is having 6 items and Emotional Reactivity is linked to the feeling a person have after the conflict and is having 3 items, with alpha values .95 of Compromise, .87 of Domination, .82 of Avoidance, .82 of Submission, .83 of Separation, .81 of Emotional Reactivity and .82 of Interactional Reactivity. The scale also has sound psychometric properties in the current study sample; the internal consistency of the scale was 0.91.

Demographic Performa

It was used to collect demographic information: age, gender, education, occupation, designation, working hours, spouse's age, spouse's qualification, spouse's profession, type of marriage, duration of marriage, age difference with spouse, living with spouse or not, number of children, gender of first child, income of participant, and type of family system.

Procedure

Firstly, the researcher introduced herself and briefed the participants about the motive of the study, then verbal informed consent was taken after approaching the participants. The participants who were willing were given the protocol of the demographic sheet and scales. Participants were assured about privacy and also that it is not for their marking of right and wrong. Individually, the data was collected after giving instructions in the Urdu Language for more clarity and so that they could choose the relevant option from the Likert scale. They were encouraged to ask questions. Lastly, they were appreciated and debriefed. Participants took 30 minutes to complete the form. For scale development, factor analysis (Exploratory Factor Analysis) and (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) were conducted on two different data sets collected from the participants through SPSS 25.

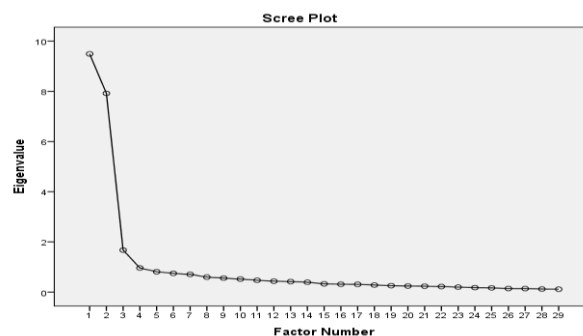
Results

This portion describes the psychometric properties of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Initial analysis shows normal distribution of the data on Perceived Psychological Distancing Response - F1: Relational Distancing ($M = 11.66$, 5% trimmed, $M = 11.19$, kurtosis = $-.85$, skewness = $.48$) and Perceived Psychological Distance Response - F2: Constructive Engagement ($M = 18.45$, 5% trimmed $M = 18.49$, kurtosis = $-.84$, skewness = $-.31$). Maximum Likelihood (ML) with Promax rotation was conducted on the first half ($N = 251$) of data (Men = 46%, Women = 54%) to identify the key factors of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale (PPDRS). The criterion given by [Tabachnick and Fidell \(2013\)](#) was used to choose the number of participants, which states that for scale development, 5 participants needed to be recruited against each item of the scale. Firstly, the suitability of the existing data for factor analysis was determined. Initial Cronbach alpha of Relational Distancing was $.946$ and Constructive Engagement was $.951$, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy (KMO) was $.921$, and Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$) demonstrating that existing data is appropriate to run factor analysis as Field (2013) proposed that Kaiser-Myer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy (KMO) should be $\geq .70$ and Bartlett's test of sphericity should be statistically significant ($p < .05$). Number of factors in PPDRS was determined based on Eigenvalue > 1 and factor loadings $> .30$ on particular factor ([Raubenheimer, 2004](#)).

Figure 1: *Scree Plot of Perceived Psychological Response Scale (PPDRS)*



Subsequently, factor analyses were conducted with five, four, three, and two-factor solutions. The Two-factor solution seemed appropriate as it has the most interpretable factor structure with the minimum dubious items. Therefore, a Maximum Likelihood (ML) with Promax Rotation was applied to 29 items of PPDRS with a two-factor solution. All those items whose factor loadings were less than $.30$ were

excluded. In this way, no items were excluded. The factor loadings of 29 items are shown in Table 1. Findings described in Table 1 indicate that 29 items of PPDR could be categorized under two main components: Relational Distancing and Constructive Engagement. Labels to the factors were given according to the commonalities of items in a particular factor.

Table 1: *Promax Rotation of Factors Underlying Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale (N = 251)*

S. No	Item No.	Statements	F1	F2	h^2
1	22	Ignoring spouse.	.83	-.10	.68
2	23	Exaggerate the issue.	.82	-.10	.68
3	25	Being influenced by others in ways that worsen the situation.	.77	-.07	.60
4	20	Taunt your spouse.	.77	-.04	.59
5	29	Use children for personal benefit.	.77	-.07	.59
6	24	Neglect household matters.	.76	.04	.59
7	28	Try to cause emotional or physical pain.	.75	-.01	.57
8	17	Engaging in gossip with others about spouse.	.75	-.15	.57
9	16	I prefer spending more time outside the home.	.73	-.01	.53
10	18	Oppose spouse's opinion.	.73	-.00	.53
11	15	Become angry with spouse.	.71	.14	.54
12	21	Do not express your feelings to spouse.	.69	.08	.50
13	26	Lose hope that circumstances will improve.	.67	.05	.46
14	19	Do not take the initiative to reconcile with your spouse.	.66	.07	.45
15	14	Blaming spouse.	.62	.15	.42
16	27	Spend life by compromising with your spouse.	.51	.24	.34
17	12	Try to find positive aspects in the matter.	.02	.84	.72
18	9	Try to reconcile quickly (for example, help with tasks, take care of needs, etc.).	.02	.84	.71
19	13	Take steps to please your spouse (for example, give gifts, talk lovingly, show attention, etc.).	-.07	.83	.69
20	6	Take the initiative to talk to spouse.	.11	.82	.68
21	8	Become cautious next time.	-.01	.82	.67
22	11	Admit your mistake in front of spouse.	.04	.81	.66
23	7	Do something your spouse likes (e.g., give a gift, go out for recreation, share a meal, etc.).	-.00	.80	.65
24	10	Express your feelings to your spouse.	.06	.78	.63
25	3	Think about the matter and try to find a solution.	-.00	.78	.60

Continued...

S. No	Item No.	Statements	F1	F2	h^2
26	4	Talk to spouses about the issue.	-.00	.77	.60
27	1	To become temporarily silent.	-.06	.71	.50
28	2	Ignore the situation (for example, keep busy with work or social activities).	.10	.62	.40
29	5	Seeking help from elders to resolve the matter.	.11	.55	.32
% of Variance			29.62	27.51	
Eigen Values			8.59	7.98	
Cumulative%			29.62	57.14	

Factors Description

A brief description of the two factors of PPDRS is given below:

F1: Relational Distancing

It consists of 16 items from item no 14 to 29, which focus on emotional coping and aggressive and hostile coping, which is highlighting the negative and maladaptive ways used by both partners to deal with any conflict. Possible Score range is minimum 0 and maximum 35. A higher score indicates a higher focus on maladaptive strategies, and a lower score indicates a lower focus on maladaptive strategies.

F2: Constructive Engagement

It consists of 13 items from item no 1 to 13, focuses on solutions and productive actions found by both partners, and highlights the positive and adaptive ways used by both partners to deal with any conflict. Possible Score range is minimum 0 and maximum 39. A higher score indicates higher focus on adaptive strategies, and a lower score indicates lower focus on adaptive strategies.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of PPDRS

Participants and Procedure

The sample of the current study consisted of 264 married men and women; 123 men and 141 women through purposive sampling with an age range of 25 to 40 years ($M = 34.35$, $SD = 4.81$), from private and government workplaces. Inclusion criteria was based on to include those participants (married men and women) who were married for a

minimum of two years, with at least one child, and were living together in an intact family system were selected for the study. The proposed age range of the participants was within the range between 25 and 40 years, with a minimum of 14 years of education. In the sample, most of them were from the educational sector, some of them from the health care department, technical fields, administration, and banking. Few were from the legal profession, the IT department, and the workers. Very few of them were business owners. On the other hand, exclusion criteria was not to include the participants who had any physical unfitness or who were divorced or widowed were excluded from the selection for the current study.

Factor solution of Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale (PPDRS) determined by EFA was cross validated by conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the second half of data comprising 264 participants (Men = 46%; Women = 53%). The sample size for CFA was determined in light of the criterion given by [Kline \(2015\)](#) i.e. to recruit at least 10 cases against each item of the scale. CFA was conducted on Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) version 24.0 by using the maximum likelihood method ([Jackson et al., 2009](#)). Findings of CFA were reported by bearing in mind the guidelines of [Jackson et al. \(2009\)](#). Initial analysis confirmed the multivariate normality of the current data on Perceived Psychological Distance Response; F1: Relational Distancing (skewness = 1.51, kurtosis = 2.44, $M = 11.76$, 5% trimmed $M = 10.80$), Perceived Psychological Distance Response; F2: Constructive Engagement (skewness = -.49, kurtosis = 0.01, $M = 22.01$, 5% trimmed $M = 22.23$). In this study, χ^2/df , Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), as shown in the [Table 2](#), were used as model fit indices to assess the degree of fit between the sample and the model.

Table 2: *Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale (N = 264)*

	$\chi^2(df)$	$\chi/(df)$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Model 1	786.887(312)	2.522	.897	.884	.076
Model 2	751.624(309)	2.432	.904	.891	.074

Note. χ = Chi Square; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error Of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Means Square Residual.

[Table 2](#) shows that the preliminary CFA model had a poor fit and needed modification. Analysis of modification indices suggested that significant improvements in the model could be achieved by correlating

the error terms (Kline, 2015). Therefore, after considering the logic and theories, covariances among the error terms were added to improve the model. After that, items that have low factor loadings were excluded to obtain a good fit model, as these items are also problematic and cause errors in the model. Thus, 2 items explaining minimum variance were removed from the model. All modifications significantly improved the model. However, despite all modifications, factor structure remains as it was found in EFA. Table 2 shows that the final PPDRS model provided a good fit, with all indices within the recommended and acceptable ranges (Jackson et al., 2009). The chi-square value is significant, suggesting a poor model fit; however, the χ^2/df value falls within the recommended range (Hooper et al., 2008). Considering these values of fit indices, items loading and squared multiple correlations of the two factors of the PPDRS were investigated as described in Table 3, which demonstrates that all items of the PPDR fall within the acceptable and recommended range and fulfil the selection criteria of factor loadings $> .30$.

Table 3: *Factor Loadings of Items on Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale (N = 251)*

Serial No.	Item No.	λ_1	λ_2	r^2
1	14	.65	.65	.42
2	15	.61	.61	.37
3	16	.64	.64	.41
4	17	.73	.73	.54
5	18	.76	.76	.58
6	19	.57	.57	.32
7	20	.82	.82	.68
8	21	.69	.71	.50
9	22	.83	.83	.69
10	23	.83	.83	.69
11	24	.79	.78	.60
12	25	.78	.77	.60
13	26	.78	.78	.61
14	28	.60	.60	.36
15	29	.60	.60	.35
16	1	.11	.10	.01
17	2	-.06	-.07	.01
18	3	.64	.62	.39
19	4	.73	.73	.53
20	6	.73	.73	.53
21	7	.66	.65	.43
22	8	.58	.56	.31
23	9	.78	.79	.62

Continued...

Serial No.	Item No.	$\lambda 1$	$\lambda 2$	r^2
24	10	.81	.81	.65
25	11	.79	.79	.62
26	12	.71	.71	.50
27	13	.87	.88	.77

Note. $\lambda 1$ = Factor Loadings of Initial Model; $\lambda 2$ = Factor Loadings of Final Model; R^2 = Squared Multiple Correlations.

The item total correlation of PPDRS was also calculated by calculating the sum of the 29 items' scores and seeing its correlation with each item of PPDRS. Findings indicated that the item-total correlation of PPDRS ranged from .32 to .72 ($p < .001$). Inter-factor correlation and Cronbach's alphas of all factors of PPDR were also calculated. Findings revealed that two factors of the PPDR score are significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$) with each other (F1: $M = 11.76$, $SD = 9.73$, $\alpha = .92$; F2: $M = 22.01$, $SD = 7.72$, $\alpha = .88$). Furthermore, the Table also shows good internal consistency of subscale, suggesting that items of one subscale were heterogeneous with the items of the other subscale, whereas homogeneous with their own subscale items.

Construct validity of Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale was established using Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2005). Findings showed significant positive association of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response: F1 Relational Distancing Subscale with Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscales; Compromise ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), Avoidance ($r = .14$, $p < .05$) whereas significant negative association of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response: F1 Relational Distancing Subscale with Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscale; Interactional reactivity ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$). Findings showed significant positive association of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response: F2 Constructive Engagement Subscale with Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscales; Interactional Reactivity ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), Domination ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) whereas significant negative association of the Perceived Psychological Distance Response: F2 Constructive Engagement Subscale with Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscales; Compromise ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$), Avoidance ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$), Separation ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$) and Submission ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$). Therefore, it can be concluded that PPDR has good construct validity.

Discussion

The current research aimed to develop the Perceived Psychological Distancing Response Scale to measure the processes of regulation in inter-partner relationships in a South Asian cultural setting. The

psychometric analysis identified a two-dimensional structure of the scale, viz., Relational Distancing and Constructive Engagement, indicating that psychological distancing in marriage relationships is expressed both in interactional and affective regulation pathways. The emergence of these dimensions reinforces the idea that psychological distancing is best conceptualized as a process of relational modulation and not a generalized coping construct. The prominence of psychological distancing in partners as a basic and diverse factor emphasizes the major role of avoidant behavior in couples in Pakistan, such as ignoring and neglecting each other, avoiding resolving issues, and absence that is reinforced by the culture where direct expression of emotions is not considered respectable, and it increases detachment and dissatisfaction (Sasaki & Overall, 2021). It affects culture, family dynamics, and norms, which provide guidance regarding the sharing and communication of problems in relationships. Distancing has a powerful cultural association as it is linked to mental, social, and ethical significance with reference to marriages in Pakistan. The two sub-factors, Emotional Distancing and Constructive Engagement, are closely associated with relationship theories such as Demand-Withdrawal Behavior and Gottman's theoretical framework of decline in relationships. However, the current study also extends theoretical knowledge by covering the cultural manifestation of detachment that was not properly represented by using Western scales. Results support that the scale has sound psychometric properties, which promote its use for research and clinical assessment purposes (Hussain & Hayee, 2024).

The second factor of Constructive Engagement consists of strategies through which individuals manage marital conflict by controlling observable interaction patterns of their partner. Items related to brief silence, selective engagement, and purposeful reduction of confrontation indicate that distancing may function as a mechanism to maintain the relationship (Arslan et al., 2026). In South Asian marital systems, particularly within Pakistan, a temporary reduction in interactional intensity may help prevent escalation of the conflict, preserve marital continuity, and maintain social harmony. This behavioural regulation cannot be viewed as relational avoidance but rather as a culturally ingrained strategy for managing interpersonal conflict (Steenbakkers et al., 2024).

The first factor, entitled Relational Distancing, represents items reflecting internal affective regulation processes such as controlling emotional expression, cognitive restructuring, and reduction of intense emotional arousal during marital tension. These results are consistent with emotion regulation research, which suggests that psychological adaptation often involves emotional intensity rather than complete

suppression of emotions or confrontation with a partner (Yang et al., 2024). In a South Asian marital context, an open emotional expression during conflict might not always be encouraged by society; therefore, emotional distancing may serve as a culturally oriented regulatory approach (Sasaki & Overall, 2021). Furthermore, the construction of perceived psychological distancing response needs to be differentiated from broad coping mechanisms. The literature emphasizes that coping represents a diverse strategy for managing stress, whereas psychological distancing specifically shows relational space creation within marital interaction. The current structure revealed that distancing operates through emotional containment and behavioral modulation rather than general stress management (Burleson et al., 2022).

Demographically, the relevance of psychological distancing is particularly important in working married individuals, as their work and marital responsibilities often coexist and lead to cumulative psychosocial demands (Sasaki & Overall, 2021). Working individuals may experience stress both from their workplace and marital expectations, requiring a regulatory mechanism that helps them to give functional performance across different life domains. For example, Behavioral distancing strategies, such as withdrawal from conflict situations, may maintain productivity while managing marital tension. Likewise, emotional distancing may serve as a protective mechanism against stress caused by marital conflict on occupational functioning (Peleg & Peleg, 2023). In our collectivist culture, stability in marriage and family cohesion are both highly valued, due to which distance-based regulation does not appear to be pathological disengagement, but rather it functions as an adaptive negotiation strategy (Akhtar & Malik, 2025). Whereas excessive emotional distancing may exacerbate the consequences if not dealt with through constructive interaction. This is because long-term emotional disengagement may lead to communication suppression, which can further cause marital dissatisfaction and later discord (Peleg & Peleg, 2023).

Factor structure also shows that the perceived psychological distance response scale is multidimensional; adaptive and maladaptive coping. Dyadic Coping Theory by Bodenmann (2005) also highlights that partners can be involved in healthy coping, honest communication, and commitment, or in unhealthy strategies like emotional abuse and ignoring the other partner's needs (Burleson et al., 2022). Unhealthy patterns affect their communication and promote suppression and mental health issues. Trope and Liberman's (2010) Construal Level Theory highlights the changes in thought pattern and mood. It shifts from concrete interpretation to abstract interpretation, and it promotes distance in processing relationships (Yang et al., 2024).

Psychological distancing is not linked with physical proximity, which is linked with the culture of Pakistan, where people remain in that relationship, but to cope with the situation, they distance themselves emotionally and remain quiet to maintain peace (Hussain & Hayee, 2024). Emotional distance works as an internal dealing. In a culture like Pakistan that is rooted in expectations, both males and females, especially males, remain quiet because of their responsibilities, and it is promoted by society even when it is causing stress in relation (Abraham et al., 2024).

Overall, there are different scales on the national and international level, but they are lacking in cultural sensitivity. Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale is related to culturally sensitive issues and can further be used in cross cultural research. Further can help in planning marital counselling. Moreover, mostly, married men and women don't share their issues or experience emotional numbness. This scale helps in assessing their relationship distancing. Proper assessment ensures early recovery and promotes harmony in relationships. It can help in assessing and differentiating healthy and unhealthy strategies people are using in relationships, ultimately increasing authenticity and support in therapeutic settings.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study has the following limitations, such as use of self-report inventories can enhance the chance of bias, especially in Pakistani culture, where people don't like to share their problems. Sample is not representing different areas of Pakistan, nor does it represent rural areas. The cross-sectional research design does not properly show the cause-and-effect relationship between distancing and consequences in the relationship. Data should be collected from different sources to increase authenticity. The sample size should be large that represents all areas of Pakistan. Longitudinal data should be collected to find the causal relationship over time. Longitudinal studies can evaluate the relationship between distancing and outcome over a long time. A dyadic sample can better validate the data of couples. Comparison of individualistic and collectivistic cultures gives a vaster picture. Therapeutic research could evaluate whether emotional expression and healthy attachment can reduce the effect of psychological distance over time.

Implications

The study will provide culturally sensitive indigenous scales of Perceived Psychological Distancing Response in the context of

marriages in Pakistan for addressing the lack of culturally developed scales. It will contribute to methodology and help in validating and implementing the scale in different cultures. The findings of the research will highlight the theoretical knowledge regarding adaptive and maladaptive coping in marital relationships. It will provide knowledge to psychologists and family therapists regarding detachment and its effect on both partners, and in the development and implementation of culturally based family and couple therapy, which will help in promoting wellbeing.

Conclusion

The current study contributes to developing and validating a culturally sensitive scale of perceived psychological distance response in Romantic Pakistani Couples. Previous literature is more on physical distancing in couples. Beyond that, this research highlights the strong impact of psychological distance on relationships. Perceived Psychological Distance Response Scale has sound psychometric properties and is culturally sensitive for research, assessment, and management in therapeutic settings.

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