

## **Effect of Communication Patterns and Emotional Distress on Relationship Dissatisfaction Among Married Individuals**

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This study aims to find out the relationship between, communication patterns i.e., constructive, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw, emotional distress and relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals. Age gap and gender differences were among the demographic variables assessed for married individuals. The study sample consisted of married individuals ( $N = 226$ ) from Islamabad and Rawalpindi men ( $n = 148$ ) and women ( $n = 78$ ). The Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ), the Perceived Emotional Distress Inventory (PEDI) by and Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) were administered to married individuals. The results of the study showed a positive association between emotional distress and relationship unhappiness. It showed a positive correlation with self-demand/partner withdraw, self-withdraw, and partner demand/demand communication patterns and a substantial negative correlation with constructive communication patterns. The results also showed that emotional discomfort is a significant predictor of marital dissatisfaction in married individuals. The study examines high levels of marital discontent and emphasizes the importance of positive communication methods, spending time together, talking, and supporting one another. Since many married individuals find it difficult to communicate properly, especially when it comes to important concerns, they often avoid problematic communication practices. The study's findings can be utilized to better understand married people's emotional distress, self-demand/partner withdrawal, constructive communication styles, and marital discontent.

*Keywords.* Emotional distress, constructive communication pattern, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw communication patterns, relationship dissatisfaction

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Marital dissatisfaction has continued to be a well-researched topic in the field of marriage and family life (Zainah et al., 2012). Married couples who converse positively to their spouse about challenging circumstances report feeling happier in their marriage than those who avoid or retreat from challenging situations and speak adversely to their spouse more frequently than positively, according to Smith et al. (2008). Other research' findings revealed that people with mood disorders who were trying to control them reported lower levels of marital satisfaction than people without them (Chambless et al., 2002). Some study indicates that the presence of psychological disability in one spouse is connected with the other spouse's level of marital happiness (Thompson & Webb, 2008). According to Whisman's (2007) research, there is a direct link between marital difficulty and a higher likelihood of contemporary anxiety disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and social anxiety disorder (SAD).

Based on a couple's emotional and functional well-being, time spent together, and communication skills, stress can either directly or indirectly affect the result of their marriage, according to the marital distress model (Bodenmann et al., 2007). Depression is associated with greater incidence of breakups in relationships for both men and women (Butterworth & Rodgers, 2008). The ties are probably reciprocal, though. This implies that sadness and divorce are not the sole outcomes of depression; depression or its consequences can also harm a relationship to the point where it is unsustainable and ends in divorce. Additionally, depression is more likely to occur after a divorce (Barrett, 2000; Maciejewski et al., 2001). Many researchers have found a connection between depression and the persistence of an unpleasant marriage (Davila & Bradbury, 2001). The main discovery is that higher levels of anxiety and depression symptoms are linked to relationship dissolution. Research on couples found a strong link between marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction and a person's history of depression (Whisman, 2001). Herr et al. (2007) looked at the level of depression in married men and women in their study. They found that people with depressive symptoms at the moment, regardless of gender, also report having less fulfilling relationships. The researcher found that people with a history of depression also showed significant levels of marital unhappiness in a related study, demonstrating the strong and enduring link between depression and marital contentment. More depressed people report being less content in their marriages, according to Jackson (2009). Moreover, there's a link over time between mental illness and a person's increased risk of experiencing a failed marriage.

Research indicates that happy couples place a high priority on excellent communication in their marriages (Carroll et al., 2013). Malouff et al. (2015) claim that a person's degree of marital pleasure can be predicted by their capacity for constructive and successful communication with people in other relationships, which is crucial to upholding a happy marriage. These positive kinds of communication can include the love, devotion, and trust that a couple shows one another (Stearns, 2014). Carroll et al. (2013) stated that there are a few rules for marriage communication that should be followed. First-person communication, sincerity, listening to one another's conversations without interfering, listening to your partner's complaints, not making assumptions about your partner, clearly expressing your needs to them, giving their behavior weight, and making an effort to speak quietly and softly are a few of these. It should not be surprising that some marital therapists have placed a strong emphasis on improving couples' communication skills as part of marital/couple therapy, given the apparent importance of effective communication in enhancing marital pleasure and the health of the individuals involved (Walitzer et al., 2013).

The primary source of marital discontent is negative and harmful communication, which includes demand-withdraw, criticism, and disputes (Jackson, 2009). Madahi et al. (2013) discovered a positive correlation between relationship dissatisfaction and negative communication in a study on communication styles and relationship satisfaction among married students. According to research, destructive communication between marriages is associated with reduced marital happiness (Siffert & Schwarz, 2011). This illustrated how important communication problems are in married relationships. Upon surveying married individuals who had been together for four years, Johnson et al. (2005) found that those who communicated less positively and more negatively experienced lower levels of marital satisfaction. However, a higher level of constructive communication can counteract the negative impacts of more destructive or negative communication on marital happiness. Constructive communication is negatively correlated with marital discontent, according to research by Madahi et al. (2013) on communication styles and student satisfaction. Furthermore, a positive link was seen between discontent and the demand-withdraw communication pattern.

The study's conclusions indicate that men are more vulnerable than women to a variety of problems in their close relationships, including their partner's suffering (McCann, 2011). Another study found that married individuals whose partner makes less money deal with a variety of stressors in their lives, which may be harmful to their

overall psychological health. On the other hand, [Kouros and Cummings \(2011\)](#) discovered a stronger correlation between the couple's discontent with their relationship and the symptoms of depression experienced by men. A study on gender differences by [Lawrence et al. \(2008\)](#) found that husband and wife marital happiness is predicted by communication habits. This shows that the relationship between communication styles and marital satisfaction varies depending on a person's gender. Marital pleasure was not influenced by gender, and neither was it correlated with the kind of marriage or the mix of gender and marriage type ([Arif & Fatima, 2015](#)).

A marriage between married individuals with an age difference of more over ten years is referred to as a relationship with an age gap ([Lehmiller & Christopher, 2008](#)). [Lee and McKinnish \(2017\)](#) found that couples with larger age gaps are less satisfied with their relationships than couples of similar ages, based on a study involving thousands of Australian couples and thirteen years of longitudinal data. Several studies have shown that married couples with an older husband and a younger wife have more marital benefits ([Bergstrom & Bagnoli, 1993](#)). Nonetheless, certain studies found that people profit from marriage the most when they are of similar ages ([Choo & Siow, 2006](#)).

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To examine the correlation between constructive communication patterns self-demand/partner withdrawal communication patterns, emotional distress, and relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.
2. To examine the differences in constructive communication patterns, self-demand/partner withdrawal communication patterns, partner demand/self-withdraw communication patterns, and emotional discomfort in highly and poorly satisfied married individuals.
3. To see gender and age related differences in constructive communication patterns, self-demand/partner withdrawal communication patterns, emotional distress, and relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.

### **Hypotheses**

The present study's hypotheses are as follows:

1. Constructive communication patterns negatively correlate with relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.

2. Self-demand/partner, withdrawal communication patterns positively correlate with relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.
3. Partner demand/self-withdrawal communication patterns positively correlate with relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.
4. Emotional distress leads to high levels of relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals.
5. Highly satisfied and dissatisfied married individuals differ in terms of constructive communication patterns, self-demand/partner withdrawal, partner demand/self-withdraw, and emotional distress.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study was based on cross sectional survey method.

### **Sample**

The sample for this study consisted of married individuals ( $N = 226$ ) from Rawalpindi and Islamabad including men ( $n = 148$ ) and women ( $n = 78$ ) made up the sample. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample.

### ***Inclusion Criteria***

Participants had been wed for at least a year. The study comprised heterosexual individuals who were legally bound by the government as husband and wife.

### ***Exclusion Criteria***

The present study excluded divorced or separated individuals.

### **Measures**

#### ***Demographic Information Sheet***

*The demographic information sheet comprised of gender and age gap between married individuals.*

#### ***Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ)***

Christensen and Sullaway (1984) developed the CPQ, a 35-item self-assessment to study how married people deal with marital

problems. It employed a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating *extremely unlikely* and 5 indicating *extremely likely*. The scale (PDSW) is broken down into three subscales: constructive communication (CC), self-demand/partner withdrawal (SDPW), and partner-demand/self-withdraw. The subscale for constructive communication has 10 items (2, 6, 8, 23, 25, 27, 1, 24, 25 and 26), There were 13 items in the self-demand/partner withdraw subscale (3, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 28, 30, 32, and 34) and 13 items in the self-demand/partner withdraw subscale (4, 5, 10, 12, 14,16, 18, 20, 22, 29,31, 33 and 35). The Communication Patterns Questionnaire has been demonstrated to be reliable and valid in samples from the United States (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002) and Australia (Noller & White, 1990), with the scale's alpha reliability.78.

### ***Perceived Emotional Distress Inventory (PEDI)***

Moscoso et al. (2012) developed the Perceived Emotional discomfort Inventory (PEDI), a 12-question measure for assessing the prevalence and intensity of emotional discomfort in married individuals. The scale measures anxiety (2, 5, 6, and 7), anger (1, 4, 9, and 10), hopelessness (8, 11), and depression (3, 12). Individuals respond to each PEDI item on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*always*). The inventory's overall score might be between 0 to 36. Higher scores reflect perceived emotional suffering at higher levels. The ratings for each individual PEDI category are simply added up to produce a Global Severity Index raw scores (GSI). There are no cut-off scores for the PEDI because it is not a diagnostic tool. The PEDI items should be regarded as ordinal variables in terms of statistics. The scale is reliable having 0.74 alpha reliability coefficient.

### ***Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32)***

Funk and Rogge (2007) assessed relationship satisfaction using a 32-item scale known as the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI). Comparing CSI-32 to other existing measures of marital satisfaction, it is thought to be more specific, accurate, and able to provide more information. It is a Likert scale with a 5-point scale, ranging from *highly sad* to *extremely joyful*. The CSI-32 scores vary from 0 and 128. A higher score indicates more relationship satisfaction, whereas a score below 84.5 indicates relationship dissatisfaction. The scale has a high alpha reliability ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

### **Procedure**

The current study was designed as a quantitative study with married individuals utilizing the purposive sampling technique. The

sample consisted of 226 married individuals. They were accosted in their homes and offices. Individuals were informed of the study's objectives and asked to provide their responses, leaving no questions unanswered. They were told that the information they submitted would be kept confidential and utilized solely for research purposes. The data was then analyzed and computed using SPSS 21. Frequency, correlation, *t*-tests, regression, and one-way ANOVA were all used to analyze the data.

## Results

Table 1: *Frequency and Percentage of Demographics Variable of Study (N = 226)*

Variables	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
Early adulthood (19-35)	81	35.8
Middle adulthood (36-55)	101	44.6
Late adulthood (older than 55)	44	19.4
Gender		
Male	148	65.5
Female	78	34.5
Socio Economic Status		
Low	26	11.5
Middle	107	47.3
High	93	41.2
Number of children		
no children	93	41.2
1 – 3	97	42.9
4-6	36	15.9
Year of marriage		
less than 5 years	94	41.6
5 to 10 years	96	42.5
more than 10 years	36	15.9
Family system		
Joint	133	58.8
Nuclear	93	41.2
Age gap between couples		
less than 5 years	116	51.3
5-10 years	91	40.3
more than 10 years	19	8.4

Table 1 displayed the frequency and percentage of various demographic factors, including age, gender, financial status, number of children, and year of marriage, family structure, and age difference between partners. The age group of 19-35 years ( $n = 81$ , 35.8%) and over 55 years ( $n = 44$ , 19.4%) had smaller numbers of individuals as compared to 35-55 years' age range ( $n = 101$ , 44.6%). Compared to

female married individuals ( $n = 78, 34.5\%$ ), there were more male married individuals ( $n = 148, 65.5\%$ ). Comparing those with low ( $n = 26, 11.5\%$ ) and high ( $n = 93, 41.2\%$ ) socioeconomic status, people with middle socioeconomic status were more numerous ( $n = 107, 47.3\%$ ). People who had one to three children had more of them ( $n = 97, 42.9\%$ ) than those who had none at all ( $n = 93, 41.2\%$ ) or four to six children ( $n = 36, 15.9\%$ ). There were more people ( $n = 96, 42.5\%$ ) who had been married for five to ten years than there were people who had been married for less than five years ( $n = 94, 41.6\%$ ) and more than ten years ( $n = 36, 15.9\%$ ). The proportion of people living in nuclear families ( $n = 93, 41.2\%$ ) was lower than that of people living in joint families ( $n = 133, 58.8\%$ ). Those with an age difference of less than five years with their partner were more common ( $n = 116, 51.3\%$ ) than those with an age gap of five to ten years ( $n = 91, 40.3\%$ ) and more than 10 years ( $n = 19, 8.4\%$ ).

Table 2: *Correlation Between Study Variables (N = 226)*

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5
1. CCP	9	34.10	5.88	.81	-				
2. SDPW	13	27.65	3.93	.70	.68**	-			
3. PDSW	13	27.24	3.67	.65	.77**	.81**	-		
4. ED	12	47.17	6.02	.74	.88**	.88**	.87**	-	
5. RD	32	95.04	11.99	.88	-.14*	.22**	.20**	.20**	-

Note. CCP = constructive communication pattern; SDPW = self-demand/ partner withdraw; PDSW = partner demand/self-withdraw; ED = Emotional Distress; ANX = anxiety; DEP = depression; HOP = hopelessness; ANG = Anger; RD= Relationship Dissatisfaction.

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

Table 2 showed Pearson correlation among study variables. The result indicated that there is a negative relationship between constructive communication pattern (CCP) and relationship dissatisfaction. It also shows that self-demand/ partner withdraw (SDPW) communication pattern has significant relationship with relationship dissatisfaction ( $r = .22$ ). Positive Pearson correlation between partner demand/self-withdraw (PDSW) communication pattern and relationship dissatisfaction ( $r = .20$ ) were also found by the results.

### Prediction of Emotional Distress in Relationship Dissatisfaction

Table 3 indicated linear regression among emotional distress (predictive variable) and relationship dissatisfaction (outcome variable). The result specified that emotional distress positively predict relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals



( $F = 10.07$ ,  $B = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with an  $R^2$  of .43. The value of  $R^2$  showed that emotional distress explains 43% variance in relationship dissatisfaction.

Table 3: *Linear Regression Analysis to Predict Relationship Dissatisfaction from Emotional Distress Among Married Individuals*

Variables	B	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Constant	38.85	13.43	64.27
Emotional Distress	.86	.33	1.40
$R^2$	.43		
F	10.07***		

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4 presents an independent sample  $t$ -test. The findings show a substantial difference in constructive communication  $t = 224$  (1.48,  $< .05$ ), self-demand/partner withdraw  $t = 224$  (1.60,  $p < .50$ ), partner demand/self-withdraw  $t = 224$  (1.67,  $p < .05$ ), and emotional distress  $t = 224$  (1.77,  $p < .05$ ) between highly and low satisfied married individuals. The results indicate that there are significant differences between highly and low satisfied married individuals on constructive communication, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw, and emotional distress. Low satisfied married individuals score high on emotional distress ( $M = 48.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while high satisfied married individuals score high on constructive communication pattern ( $M = 46.71$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 4: *Differences between Highly Satisfied and Low Satisfied Married Individuals*

Variables	Highly satisfied ( $n = 159$ )		Low satisfied ( $n = 67$ )		$t(224)$	$p$	Cohen's $d$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
CCP	46.71	6.54	33.72	5.56	1.48	.006	.27
SDPW	27.38	3.85	28.30	4.09	1.60	.001	.30
PDSW	26.97	3.52	27.87	3.95	1.67	.001	.33
ED	34.99	5.76	48.25	6.50	1.77	.007	.36

Note. CCP = constructive communication pattern; SDPW = self-demand/ partner withdraw; PDSW = partner demand/self-withdraw; ED = Emotional Distress.

Results in Table 5 show differences between male and female married individuals on relationship dissatisfaction, constructive communication, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw and emotional distress. Results were non-significant on

relationship dissatisfaction  $t(224) = -.51, p > .05$ , Partner demand/self-withdraw  $t(224) = -2.01, p > .05$  and emotional distress  $t(224) = 2.37, p > .05$ . Findings were significant on constructive communication  $t(224) = -1.75, p < .05$  and self-demand/partner withdraw  $t(224) = -1.03, p < .05$ .

Table 5: Gender Wise Differences of Married Individuals on All the Scales and Subscales

Variables	Male ( <i>n</i> = 148 )		Female ( <i>n</i> = 78)		<i>t</i> (224)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
RD	78.84	25.12	80.62	24.86	.51	.81	.01
CCP	33.60	6.45	35.04	4.50	1.75	.01	6.25
SDPW	27.46	3.95	28.03	3.90	1.03	.02	1.24
PDSW	26.89	3.78	27.91	3.37	2.01	.23	1.41
ED	46.49	6.35	48.46	5.14	2.37	.46	.54

Note. RD = Relationship Dissatisfaction; CCP = constructive communication pattern; SDPW = self-demand/ partner withdraw; PDSW = partner demand/self-withdraw; ED = Emotional Distress.

Table 6: Age Gap Wise Differences Among Married Individuals on All the Scales and Subscales

Variables	Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
					<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Emotional Distress	1	116	47.29	5.48	46.28	48.30	5.71	.004
	2	91	47.90	5.59	46.73	49.06		
	3	19	42.89	9.04	38.53	47.25		
CCP	1	116	34.24	5.18	33.28	35.19	5.44	.005
	2	91	34.76	5.83	33.55	35.98		
	3	19	30.00	8.37	25.96	34.03		
SDPW	1	116	27.69	3.90	26.97	28.41	6.43	.002
	2	91	28.20	3.31	27.51	28.89		
	3	19	24.73	5.52	22.07	27.40		
PDSW	1	116	27.38	3.65	26.71	28.05	4.62	.011
	2	91	27.54	3.20	26.88	28.21		
	3	19	24.84	4.99	22.43	27.24		
Relationship Dissatisfaction	1	116	76.28	26.04	71.49	81.07	2.53	.052
	2	91	83.96	23.55	79.06	88.87		
	3	19	77.15	22.84	66.14	88.17		

Note. 1= less than 5 years; 2 = 5-10 Years; 3 = More than 10 Years; CCP = constructive communication pattern; SDPW = self-demand/ partner withdraw; PDSW = partner demand/self-withdraw.

Table 6 shows the age gap wise differences between couples on emotional distress, constructive communication pattern (CCP), self-demand/partner withdraw (SDPW), partner demand/self-withdraw (PDSW) and relationship dissatisfaction. Results indicate that there is a significant age gap wise differences among married individuals on emotional distress ( $F = 5.71, p < .05$ ), constructive communication pattern ( $F = 5.44, p < .05$ ), self-demand/partner withdraw ( $F = 6.43, p < .05$ ), partner demand/self-withdraw ( $F = 4.62, p < .05$ ) and relationship dissatisfaction ( $F = 2.53, p < .05$ ).

Table 7: *Post hoc test to Investigate Multiple Comparison Among Age Gap Wise Differences Within all Study Variables*

Variables	I (age gap)	J (age gap)	MD (I-J)	SE	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
ED	1	3	4.39*	1.45	.008	.95	7.84
	2	3	5.00*	1.48	.003	1.49	8.51
CCP	1	3	4.24*	1.42	.009	.87	7.60
	2	3	4.76*	1.45	.003	1.33	8.20
SDPW	1	3	2.96*	.95	.006	.71	5.20
	2	3	3.47*	.96	.001	1.18	5.75
PDSW	1	3	2.54*	.89	.013	.43	4.65
	2	3	2.70*	.91	.009	.55	4.85
RD	1	2	-7.68*	3.47	.051	-15.88	.51

Note. 1= less than 5 years; 2 = 5-10 Years; 3 = More than 10 Years; ED = Emotional Distress; CCP = constructive communication pattern; SDPW = self-demand/ partner withdraw; PDSW = partner demand/self-withdraw; RD = Relationship Dissatisfaction.

## Discussion

Effect of Communication Patterns and Emotional Distress on Relationship Dissatisfaction among Married Individuals were assessed in the present study. Data collection was done on 226 married individuals that were living in Islamabad through purposive sampling technique. Informed consent was taken from the sample. Analyses of data provided imperative results.

Constructive communication styles and relationship dissatisfaction have a negative link, per Table 2 Pearson correlation values (hypothesis 1). The degree of satisfaction in a marital relationship can be accurately predicted by constructive communication (Floyd, 2006). Rehman and Holtzworth-Munroe (2006) discovered that there is a significant association between positive communication patterns, empathy, self-disclosure, and mutual understanding and the quality of relationships. Weigel and Reisch

(2008) also found that constructive communication affects a partner's happiness in a relationship in addition to an individual's. The way a couple interacts with one other even before they get married will most likely have an impact on how successful their union is. Jackson (2009) conducted a review of 43 papers on premarital distress interpreters and found that communication among the pair is a major predictor of future marital suffering.

Relationship dissatisfaction among married people is positively and significantly correlated with self-demand/partner withdrawal communication patterns, according to correlation analysis (Table 2) which approved the hypothesis 2. Eldridge and Baucom (2012) identified the self-demand/partner withdraw pattern as a particular harmful communication pattern. In this pattern, one partner avoids or is passive (withdraws), while the other partner nags, criticizes, or presses (demands). In love partnerships, both domestically and internationally, the self-demand/partner retreat communication pattern is typical (Christensen et al., 2006; Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2006). Relationships are regarded to suffer particularly from the self-demand/partner withdrawal communication pattern because it is polarized and self-reinforcing. Put differently, this pattern entails one party cueing and responding to the other's actions, which leads to a mutually rising contact loop that could obstruct the settlement of conflicts (Eldridge & Baucom, 2012; Eldridge et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 3 i.e. Partner demand/ self-withdraw communication pattern has significant positive relationship with relationship dissatisfaction among married individuals was supported by the results of Pearson correlation Table (Table 2). One of the main, most difficult, and harmful patterns of marital connection, according to Butterworth and Rodgers (2008), is the partner demand/self-withdraw communication pattern. Self-reported affect during dispute conversations was explored by Rehman et al. (2015), who discovered that interactions that were judged by the partners as being less positive, more negative, and causing more negative affect reciprocity were indicative of unhappy marriages. In a second study of the same couples, the researchers examined the emotion behavior that was observed during conflict exchanges, including anger, grief, and disdain (Eldridge & Baucom, 2012). They discovered that unhappy spouses displayed more negative emotion actions, more continuous sequences of negative affect (one spouse's bad affect followed by the other's negative affect), and less positive emotion activities.

According to results (Table 3), those who experience emotional discomfort will also have high levels of relationship dissatisfaction. A state of emotional impairment classified by symptoms of worry,

tension and restlessness, depression, melancholy, loss of interest, and uselessness is known as emotional distress (Mirowsky & Ross, 2002). Certain physical symptoms, such as headache, fatigue, and sleeplessness, which likely vary from culture to culture, may also coexist with these symptoms, according to Butterworth and Rodgers (2008). There is enough evidence to support a cross-sectional association between psychological health issues, such as depression, and relationship dissolution. In both men and women, depression is linked to an increased chance of relationship breakdown (Kessler et al., 2003).

An independent sample *t*-test is shown in Table 4 to investigate differences in positive communication, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw, and emotional distress. The findings indicate that married individuals who are highly content and those who are not differ significantly in terms of positive communication, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw, and emotional discomfort (hypothesis 5). Although few assumptions were made about how well-communication will predict a spouse's level of enjoyment, researchers hypothesized that a spouse's communication system quality had a substantial impact on marital satisfaction (Lavner, 2016). While it's important to share personal information with a spouse in order to enjoy a relationship, it's equally important to communicate positive thoughts towards one's partner. Affection is a basic human need which can be fulfilled through interpersonal interaction. It aids in the formation of mutually supportive relationships (Guero et al., 2011). Affection is one basic human need that can be met through social interaction. It makes it easier for relationships to grow that are advantageous to both parties (Guero et al., 2011). As a result, having such a high degree of negative communication and growing conflict with their spouse leads to an unhappy marriage and the formation of an emotional wall dividing them from their future connection (Schoebi et al., 2012). Such emotionally fraught talks increase partner insecurity and relationship dissatisfaction. According to Brock and Lawrence (2011), when people work through issues together, support one another, and express their emotions to one another, their relationships are stronger and they are happier. Married people who live in extremely nervous, agitated, or stressful environments may experience psychological pain and lose satisfaction in their relationships (McCann, 2011).

An independent sample *t*-test is provided in Table 5 to examine the differences in relationship dissatisfaction, constructive communication, self-demand/partner withdrawal, partner demand/self-withdrawal, and emotional distress between married men and women.

Constructive communication and self-demand/partner withdraw demonstrated significant findings, while relationship dissatisfaction, partner demand/self-withdraw, and emotional distress exhibited non-significant results. According to [Beach et al. \(2003\)](#) there was a modest gender differences in the relationship dissatisfaction and emotional distress, with spouses demonstrating a larger association between the two. On the other hand, [Kouros and Cummings \(2011\)](#) discovered a stronger correlation between the couple's discontent with their relationship and the symptoms of depression experienced by men. [Joiner and Katz \(2005\)](#) did not discover any differences in the symptomology of depression according on gender. A study on gender differences by [Lawrence et al. \(2008\)](#) found that constructive communication patterns and self-demand/partner withdraw communication patterns are connected to relationship dissatisfaction for both husband and wife.

In the current study, age disparities among married individuals were evaluated as an additional demographic variable. [Table 6](#) shows the constructive communication pattern (CCP), partner demand/self-withdraw (PDSW), self-demand/partner withdraw (SDPW), and relationship unhappiness of couples of different ages. The results indicate that married people who are separated by age have significantly different levels of emotional discomfort, positive communication style, self-demand/partner withdrawal, partner demand/self-withdraw, and relationship unhappiness. According to the results, there is a substantial difference in age differences between spouses if the difference is less than five years or more than ten years. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference exists between the age differences in terms of constructive communication patterns, self-demand/partner withdraw, and partner demand/self-withdraw. Additionally, the results revealed a significant difference in the level of relationship dissatisfaction between couples who differed in age by less than five and five to 10 years. A marriage between married individuals with an age difference of more over ten years is referred to as a relationship with an age gap ([Lehmiller & Christopher, 2008](#)). [Lee and McKinnish \(2017\)](#) found that couples with larger age gaps are less satisfied with their relationships than couples of similar ages, based on a study involving thousands of Australian couples and thirteen years of longitudinal data. Many theoretical positions recognize that younger spouses are physically more appealing to males and, on occasion, women ([Coles & Francesconi, 2011](#)). But equal-age couples are preferred by men and women, according to research using internet data ([Belot & Francesconi, 2013](#); [Hitsch et al., 2010](#)). According to studies on marital dissatisfaction, married individuals of different ages were more likely than those of comparable ages to be unhappy with

their spouse. This suggests that over time, married individuals of different ages will encounter greater failure in terms of their marriage's level of pleasure (Brock & Levenson, 2011).

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The sample for the study was made up of married individuals, and future research may take married couples into account. This is the first limitation of the study. Only data was selected from Islamabad; subsequent studies may examine these variables in other Pakistani cities. Future studies may use a clinical population to study these variables since the population included in this study was not clinical. To generalize the findings, the sample size was too small. To generalize the results of the current study, larger samples may be used in future studies.

### **Implications**

The present study has number of implications that can be applied on married individuals who are emotionally distressed and are also dissatisfied with their marriages. The study's findings, which show the significance of positive communication patterns, such as constructive communication patterns, spending time together, talking, and supporting one another, are significantly related to high levels of marital satisfaction. Married people frequently steer clear of unhealthy communication patterns because they frequently struggle with healthy communication, especially when it comes to significant issues. Married people view the engagement and time spent doing activities together as an investment made by one partner in the marriage, and higher levels of marital satisfaction are felt as a result of this confirmation, which is seen as this investment.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the study clearly demonstrates the significance of communication styles, emotional distress, and relationship dissatisfaction among married people. The findings of this study suggest that emotional distress, self-demand/partner withdraw, partner demand/self-withdraw communication pattern, and constructive communication pattern are all strongly associated with relationship dissatisfaction. The study's findings also indicate that the majority of marriage issues are caused by poor communication between the husband and wife. As a result, the spouses experience emotional distress and eventually grow dissatisfied with their union. When two people get married, they need to be able to communicate with one

another. Understanding one another through both verbal and nonverbal cues is important for successful marriage and relationship satisfaction.

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