

Marital Adjustment and Happiness among Married Individuals: The Mediating Role of Love LanguagesShafaq Maryam^{1*}, Hafiza Ramsha Iqbal¹**Abstract**

The current research aims to study the mediating role of love languages on marital adjustment and happiness. The study sample is selected from the married individuals from Punjab province Pakistan. The sample comprises of 210 males and 190 females ranging from age 25 – 50 years with $M= 19.87$ and $SD= 1.45$ of participants who are married. The estimated sample size of the respondents was ($N=400$) who were recruited through convenient sampling. Urdu versions of the scales were used. The marital adjustment was measured by Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959), happiness was measured by the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), and the love languages were measured by the Gary Chapman Love Languages Scale (Egbert & Polk, 2006). The results concluded that love languages mediated the role between marital adjustment and happiness. The males scored higher gender differences in love languages. The implication includes strengthening of the marital relationships and knowing about the relationship dynamics in general.

Keywords: Happiness, Marriage, Marital Adjustment, Love Languages

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Introduction

Marital adjustment is considered as the most important factor of prosperous and satisfied life, unfortunately which is started to eliminate from people's lives. The term marital adjustment refers to the way spouses adapt to one another. Satisfaction, cohesion, agreement, affection, and conflicts are all factors that influence marital adjustment levels. Poorly adjusted couples are more likely to experience instability and/or divorce, while well-adjusted couples are more likely to have stable, long-lasting unions. Social and personal resources, lifestyle satisfaction, and rewards from spousal interaction are all predictors of marital satisfaction, which is a component of marital adjustment. Alternate spouses' ages, the length of time they have been married, and the number of children is additional indicators of marital adjustment (Sorokowski et al., 2017).

Love language has gained popularity in terms of helping out people in order to improve their relationships and marital lives. The term "love language" describes a person's preferred method of showing and receiving love from a partner. The phrase refers to a certain way (or ways), which may or may not contain words, that a romantic partner chooses to express coercive love (Coussens, 2023). The five love languages outline five ways that partners can show and receive affection. These include getting presents, spending time with loved ones, being touched physically, and speaking encouraging words (Gordon, 2022).

There is another question raised that marital adjustment is eliminating among people because one or both spouses may not be socially committed to taking care of the others if they have no choice in the marriage. Instead, people might think of the marriage as a social relationship started by the parents, not them, which might lead to less mutual support within the couple. In an arranged marriage setting, this possibility could eliminate the social support for within-couple marriages (Zhang & Axinn, 2021).

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Furthermore, marital adjustment has also hypothesized as the crucial aspect of people's happiness. Happiness, or subjective well-being, is a state of emotional well-being that a person might experience either narrowly when pleasant things happen in a particular moment or more broadly as a favorable assessment of one's life and accomplishments overall. Happiness can be distinguished from other pleasant feelings as well as from negative emotions (such as sadness, fear, and rage) (such as affection, excitement, and interest). This feeling frequently arises along with the smile, one particular facial expression (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

Literature Review

Many foreign researches have explored the phenomena keenly looking the role of love languages in the marital adjustment and happiness between the couples. In a study conducted with 161 heterosexual couples in turkey the mediating role of love languages were assessed in marital satisfaction and differentiation of self the cross sectional study was carried out and found that four out of five love languages had a mediating role. The basic purpose behind the study was to expose the role of love languages as a mediator between self-differentiation and conjugal satisfaction. The results obtained a positive relationship with four love languages except acts of service. The findings concluded were discussed with the therapist and cross-cultural researchers in order to enhance marital satisfaction through love languages. This study further found the indirect impact of differentiated-self over conjugal satisfaction via four love languages. In another study the love languages were used to assess marital satisfaction basically a comparative study was obtained between the concepts from popular psychology and the scientific evidence (Frederick, 2020).

The researchers keenly focused on the role of five love languages in marital satisfaction among 10 African American couples age ranging from 26-55 years were

assessed using the mixed method approach. The couples showed satisfaction towards their marriages and the score is positively related to the love languages. Seven themes were obtained during the interviewing phase and it was found out that the African American marriages do survive even though couple suffers difficulties (Lee, 2021).

In another study 981 heterosexual couples were recruited through an online survey and the regression analysis was carried out to check the impact of preferred love languages would increase the partners love or not. The results obtained show that women who thought their partners are using the thought of love language has the greater affection and feeling of love as compared to their male counterparts. Thus, it was discussed that teaching and inculcating the preferred love language enhance the marital satisfaction, adjustment and lastly develops stronger feeling of love (Hughes & Camden, 2020).

Bakhshi and Sadeghi (2023) had examined the differences in marital adjustment while using five love languages among married people. He also explored the link of love languages with its placement and marital satisfaction among couples. The mail survey method was used data collection from 162 couples but the response was reduced to 104 participants. It was found that the difference was not significant between all of the studied variables and rejected the hypotheses. Hughes and Camden (2020) used love language theory of Chapman to find out the correlation of love with satisfaction of relation among couples. They conducted online survey on nine hundred and eighty-one individuals. The conclusion of the study had confirmed the hypothesis that there is relationship between studied variables and females who reported their spouses were expressing the desired love language showed higher love than the males.

Another researcher named (Basharpoor & Sheykholeslami, 2015) determined the association between marital adjustment and

attitudes of love. He was eager to find out the five marital life cycles in 40 married spouses. The results showed strong positive association between marital adjustment and love attitudes which mean spouses have empathetic relationship with each other and they are satisfied with their roles. Marriage is seen by (Sarkhel, 2009) as the second-most significant event in a person's life after birth. It has often been seen as the most important and heavenly social tradition to meet the security and emotional needs of an adult. This study sees married couple in term of psychological well-being subscales of mental, social, emotional, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing. If these detriments are present in higher level in couples, we can say that they are happy, so it is important to quote following study specially its second part. The study by (Qadir et al., 2013) was used to study and compare adjustment between couples with marital histories of 5 years and those with histories of 15 years or more. Researching and contrasting psychological well-being sub-scale between couples with a five-year marriage and those with a fifteen-year marriage or more, the Well Being Scale created by Singh and Gupta measures all aspects of physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional health in 2001. The participants for the stated study were chosen using a random sampling procedure. There were 60 couples in the sample 30 couples of 5 years marital life and 30 couples of 15 years and above marital life. Different parts of the Ahmadabad District were sampled. In terms of adjustment and the psychological well-being subscales of mental, social, emotional, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, there is a considerable difference between couples who have been married for five years and those who have been married for fifteen years or more.

Following is the study which states marital adjustment, life satisfaction, and mental health and those factors related to a few key demographic factors. It is important to include this study as life satisfaction and mental health will lead to road of happiness.

This study looked at how the Santal community in Bangladesh was doing in terms of marital adjustment, life satisfaction, and mental health as well as how those factors related to a few key demographic factors including age, age at marriage, length of marriage, family size, and monthly income. From various neighborhoods in Bangladesh's Naogaon District, 200 couples in all were chosen at random. Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) were given to the respondents in order to gather the data. Results showed a favorable association between marital adjustment, life satisfaction, and mental health in the Santals community that was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The findings also showed that many demographic factors were significantly associated with marital adjustment, life happiness, and mental health in Santals communities. According to the results of this study, the marital adjustment, life satisfaction, and mental health levels of Santals were not sufficient, necessitating particular efforts to put into place efficient measures to raise the status of Santal communities (Rahul, 2018).

As there is rise significant rise in divorce rates today, it is more important than ever to assess a couple's happiness and dyadic adjustment. A total of 910 women were contacted for the study, and 772 married women consented to take part. Women's ability to adjust to dyadic relationships and be content with spouses is mild. Dyadic adjustment and relationship happiness are influenced by socio demographic parameters such financial status, age, age at first marriage, number of children, length of marriage, education levels of the wife and the husband, and kind of marriage. In the context of primary healthcare, it is advised that women be monitored for dyadic adjustment and variables impacting dyadic adjustment, as well as for happiness, and that couples who are at risk should get counseling services. (Gökçearslan & Günbatar, 2012).

Positive couple relationships are a qualitatively different environment for the partners to live in than unhappy couple relationships. They don't merely differ in the degree or frequency of specific behaviors from unhappy couple relationships. The Sound Relationship House model of enduringly healthy relationships was created by John Gottman after more than 30 years of research on thousands of couples, both happy and unhappy. It explains the essential elements of enduring, fulfilling partnerships that are also rewarding to the two people involved, using his research and model as a guide. Understanding of the characteristics of healthy relationships related to friendship, conflict, and shared meaning is improved by more study on happy marriages in many cultures, positivity in relationships, thriving partnerships, and secure attachments (Meunier & Baker, 2011).

Literature review will not be compressive without talking about marital adjustment and spiritual well-being as spiritual well-being is an important aspect to happiness. In one pilot study, the association between marital adjustment and spiritual well-being which was defined as a fully integrated internal religious orientation was examined. As indices of adjustment are determined by Dyadic Adjustment Scale, the subscale variables of satisfaction, cohesiveness, consensus, and effectual expression were also employed. These scale results were compared to the results of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale developed by (Ellison, 1983) to assess religious, existential, and spiritual well-being. 147 married adults from Southern Californian served as the participants. The responses demonstrated a substantial association between spiritual well-being and marital adjustment, with difference depending on the how long they have been married i.e., those who had been married 10 to 40 years had a larger correlation than those who had been married beyond 40 years. At most phases of marriage, ratings on existential well-being had a strong correlation with scores on

marital adjustment. The idea that this provides some evidence for leaving spirituality plays a significant role in how happy couples perceive their marriages to be (Aman et al., 2019).

Rationale

There has been limited research on love languages as its role in mediating marital adjustment and happiness in Pakistan. As divorce rate in Pakistan is hitting all time high as stated by 2019 survey carried out by Gallup Pakistan (Yousaf, 2021). It is high time to study marriage, marital adjustment, happiness and role of Love languages of couples of Pakistan. This study will help to know how much people are adjusted and happy. It is important to know do love language mediates marital adjustment and happiness so we can work on educating couples to reflect their and their partner love languages so both of them and understand each other preferences well.

Objectives of Study

1. To find relationship between marital adjustment, happiness and love languages.
2. To find that act of service love language plays a mediating role in Subjective happiness and marital adjustment.
3. To find the gender difference among different types of love languages.

Hypotheses of Study

1. There is a positive relationship between marital adjustment, subjective happiness and love languages.
2. Love languages mediate the link between marital adjustment and happiness.
3. There are significant gender differences in love languages among males and females.

Methodology

Phase 1

Research Design

In this study, the descriptive quantitative research design is used. The cross-sectional nature of the study using correlational design assessed the mediating role of love languages in marital adjustment and happiness along with other demographic factors including their age, gender etc.

Sampling Strategy

This research has adopted non-probability sampling and under this category it used purposive sampling. The reason for this sampling method was population research targeted was married young adults and adults which can be easily accessed by purposive sampling also resources were limited which made it impossible to select random sample. The sample size was collected on the basis of total population of Punjab.

Inclusion Criteria

Married heterosexual individuals were selected as the part of the sample. People with minimum 2 years of marriage duration and lastly those who were willing to participate.

Exclusion Criteria

The couples with the history of abuse were excluded or those with severe mental health issues were not the part of the study.

Measures

Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

It was developed by Locke-Wallace in 1959 (Locke & Wallace, 1959). It was developed to figure out adjustment problems between couple, marital quality and satisfaction, and conflicts. It consists of 15 items with a highest score of 158 and a cut off score of 100. The reliability range was reported as 0.72-0.83. (Jiang et al., 2013). The translation for this scale was done by panel. The Alpha for reliability for translated scale was 0.70.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

It was developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper in 1999, also known as General Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Its purpose was to help Individuals to measure happiness through self-evaluation. It consists of 4 items self-report measure. Its stability reliability was 0.72, implying satisfied convergent validity (Almaleki, 2021). The Urdu version of the scale is used. The alpha of subjective happiness scale was 0.71 which is good enough to use this scale.

Champan's Five Love Languages (LLs)

It was developed by Gary Chapman in 1992 (Egbert & Polk, 2006). It was developed to figure out the way how individuals communicate during their relationship including act of service, words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts and physical touch. It consists of 31 items. The coefficient reliability of this test was 0.88. It has sufficient validity having Correlation equal to 0.25 (Pett et al., 2022). The translation for this scale was done by panel. The reliability for translated version was 0.79.

Procedure

The study was conducted in two phases. In phase two of the scales were translated and pilot study was done.

Permission and Translation

Step I: Authors of Love Languages Personal Profile for couples and Marital Adjustment Test were approached and permission to use and translation was obtained.

Step II: Two scales were translated by seven people. All seven of them were native Urdu speaker and were fluent in English. The professionals were assistant professors and professors of Urdu department with minimum 10 years experiences.

Step III: In several sitting supervisor approved the modified version of scale ready for pilot study.

Step IV: The each scale was administered to 40 participants which were married adults and older adults from Bahawalpur. Demographics like age, gender, education, number of children's, occupational status and family structure. Scales were administered according to Ethical concerns guideline by APA.

Step V: The 40 participant that filled love language scale and 40 participants which filled marital adjustment scale were entered in SPSS respectively. The data then was used to devise Cronbach's Alpha for both scales. After that, main study was conducted by using all three scales.

Ethical Concerns

This research followed APA ethics guidelines for research by the American Psychological Association given in 2003.

The confidentiality and informed consent were followed thoroughly. The SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Results

Table 1

Psychometric Properties of Scales (N=400)

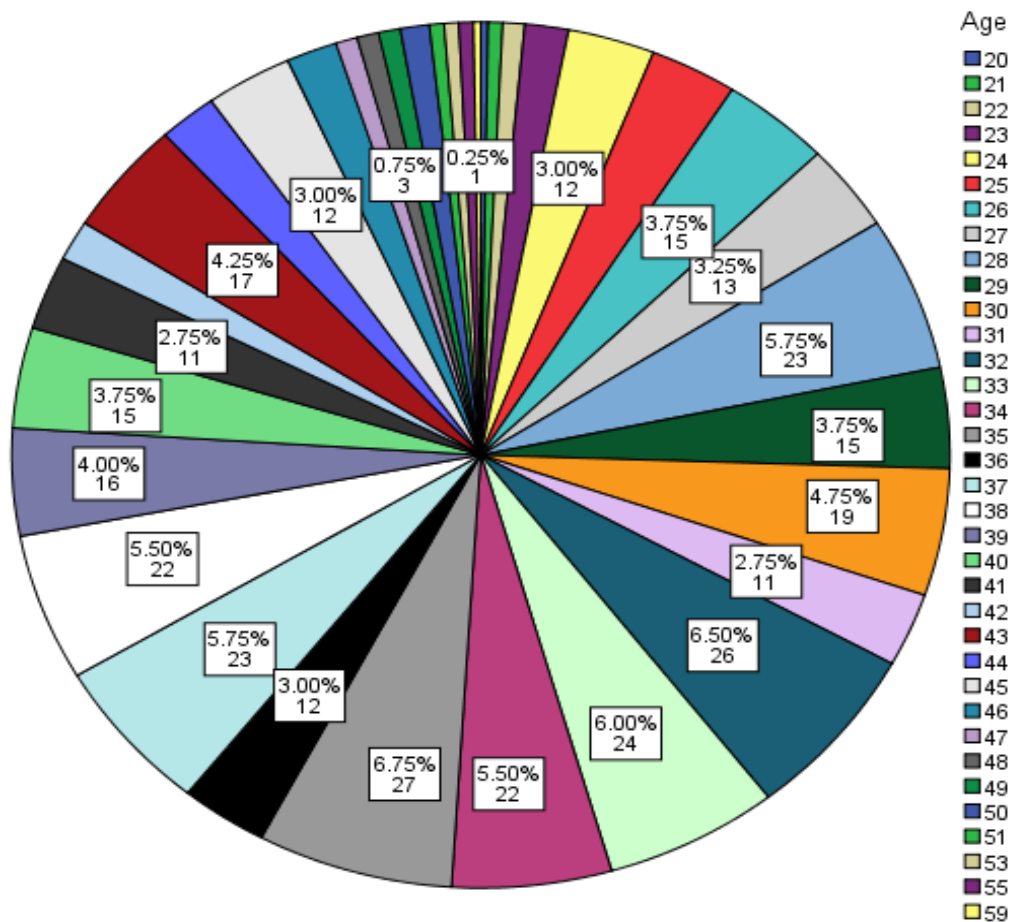
Scales	M	SD	Potential Range	Actual Range	Cronbach' α
Marital Adjustment	77.20	20	33-116	53	0.70
Subjective Happiness	19	5.48	9-55	46	0.72
Love Languages	90	9.61	63-121	58	0.71

The Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, range and Cronbach's alpha is 0.70 for marital adjustment and 0.72 for subjective happiness and 0.71 for love languages as per the values suggested (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The results

showed that Love Languages Personal Profile for couples has reliability of 0.79 which is moderately acceptable range. Cronbach Alpha for Marital Adjustment Test was 0.70 which shows good reliability.

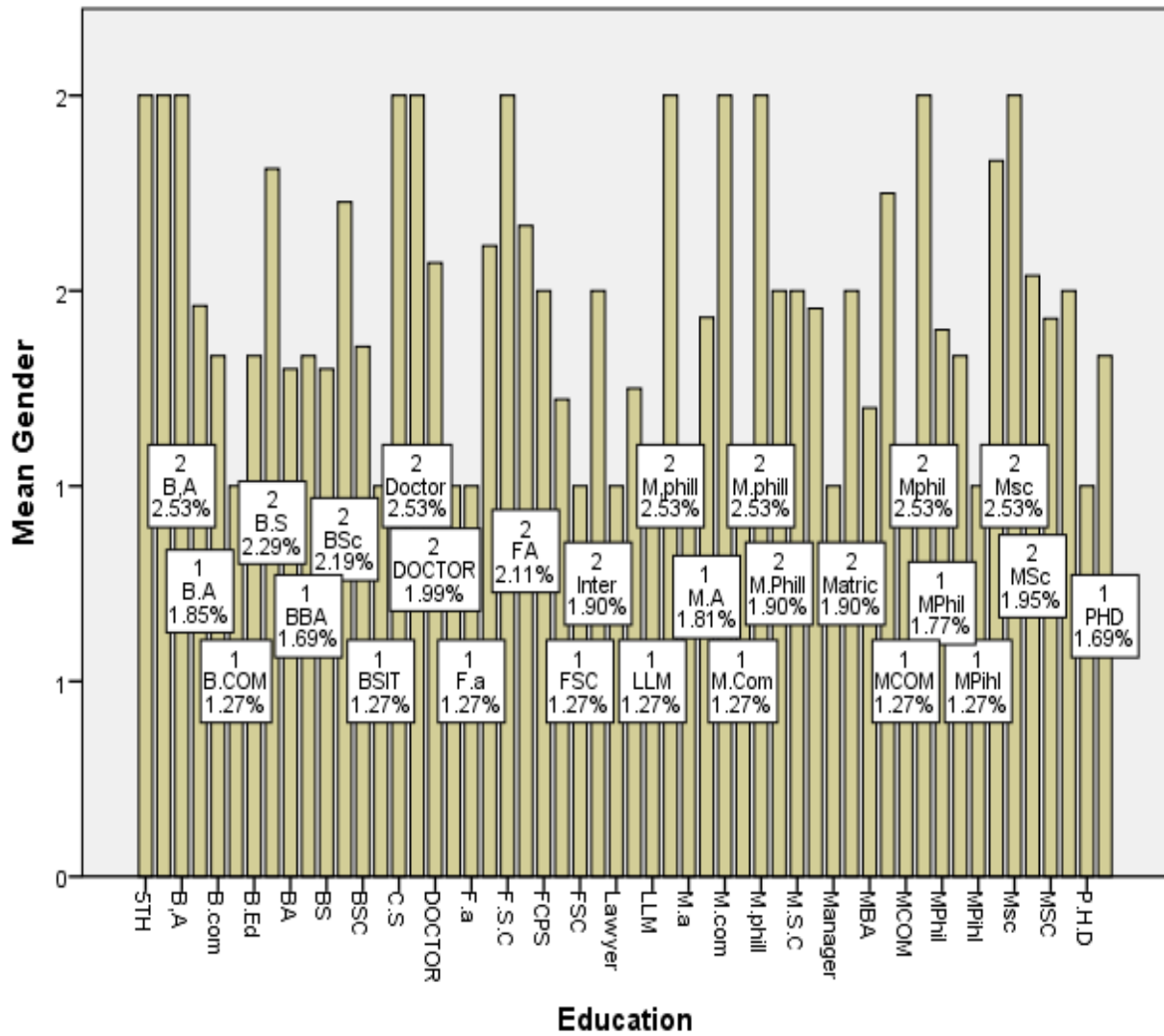
Figure 1

Pie Chart showing Distribution of Age



Note. Figure 1 shows the pie chart of age of the sample used in the study.

Figure 2
Bar Graph Showing Gender and Mean Education of Participants



Note. Figure 2 shows the bar graph of the gender and mean education of the participants.

Table 2*Correlation between Marital Adjustment, Subjective Happiness and Love Languages (N=400)*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
Marital Adjustment	77.2	20	-		
Subjective Happiness	19	5.48	0.57**	-	
Love Languages	1.72	3.54	0.65**	0.55**	-

** $p < .01$

Table 2 indicates a positive linear relationship between marital adjustment and happiness (0.57**). There is a significantly positive relationship between happiness and love languages (0.55**). The

marital adjustment and love languages itself have positive relationship (0.65**). Overall, the results are positive when the variables are correlated against each other.

Table 3*Mediating Role of Love Language 'Act of Service' in Marital Adjustment and Happiness (N=400)*

Variable	B	95% CI	SE	B	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1						0.33 0.33***
Constant	6.86***	[5.10, 8.62]	0.08			
Marital Adjustment	.15***	0.13, 0.18]	0.01	.57***		
Step 2						0.33 0.34**
Constant	7.22	[5.44, 9]	0.90			
Marital Adjustment	.15	[0.13, 0.17]	0.01	.57***		
Act of service	-.14	[-.26, -.02]	0.06	0.93**		

Table 3 shows the mediating role of act of service between marital adjustment and happiness. In step 1, the R^2 value of .33 revealed that the marital adjustment explained 33% variance in happiness. The findings revealed that marital adjustment positively predicted the happiness ($B = .57$,

$p < .01$). In step 2, the R^2 value of .34 revealed that the marital adjustment explained 34% variance in happiness. The findings revealed that marital adjustment ($B = 0.57$, $p < .01$) and act of service predicted happiness ($B = -.93$, $p < .01$).

Table 4*t-test for Gender Differences in Five Love Languages (N=400)*

Variables	Married Males		Married Females		t (399)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Words of Affirmation	3.57	4.58	3.01	4.30	1.26	0.00	0.12
Quality Time	0.85	2.54	.95	2.68	-.39	0.43	0.03
Receiving Gifts	0.06	2.67	1.62	3.51	-2.1	0.00	0.48
Act of service	1.81	3.57	2.08	3.72	-.74	0.17	0.07
Physical touch	1.89	3.65	1.53	3.41	1.01	0.05	0.10

Table 4 indicates that there are significant gender differences among words of affirmation, receiving gifts and physical

touch. There was no difference in quality time and the acts of service. The males scored high as compared to females.

Discussion

This study analyzed marital adjustments and subjective happiness and also the mediating effect of love languages (five love languages) on both. One hypothesis stated that “Marital adjustment and happiness are correlated”. Marital adjustment and subjective happiness are important concepts that are correlated in the psychology of relationships and married life of couples. Literature do not present any study which show direct co relation of marital adjustment and subjective happiness however can back up our results by quoting following study. In our culture couples are very conservative about exhibiting love and it is very complexed phenomena. The marital adjustment despite the barriers showed a positive outcome.

The Rajput in 2017 conducted a study that marital adjustment and happiness is co related but some demographic factors also affect this relationship. The hypothesis was confirmed by the results and the cultural dimensions also supported this evidence. Many studies found that couples who touch each other more often tend to be happier (Jakubiak et al., 2021). The reason behind not getting higher co relation with of physical touch with happiness and marital adjustment as some literature review suggests can be cultural variation. Shyness, not enough information, very limited or no communication between spouses regarding their preferences about touch in marriage can be result of small co relation.

It was hypothesized that the love languages played the mediating role and the hypothesis was confirmed. The different types of love languages facilitated the mediation between marital adjustments and helped in bringing about the happiness. Our other hypothesis stated that there is gender difference in love languages. The results found significant gender differences in words of affirmation, receiving gifts and physical touch. There was no difference in quality time and the acts of service. Word of affirmation type love language is higher in male while quality time, receiving gifts

and act of service type of love languages showed no difference.

Distribution of Chapman love Language in couples is a study done in which they gave four cluster solution of love languages between male and female which is little different and complex then our study (Bland & McQueen, 2018). The difference can be mainly due to culture and language difference.

After the confirmation of impact of variable, the mediating role of love languages was checked while using mediation analysis. All of the five subscales were analyzed separately to find out the love language which is actually mediated the link between variables. Act of service was ruled out as the mediator between marital adjustment and happiness with significant level $p < .01$ while accepting the hypothesis. This finding proved that when spouses provide help in each other's work such as to help in office work or household chores, they are actually making their married life more enduring and satisfied. The rest of four languages were not proved as mediators in studied sample this is because the participants of the present study had their different preferred languages and did not find them as soothing and satisfying aspect of their spousal relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, marital adjustment and happiness portrayed a multifaceted view of their relationship between them. The least explored topic love languages contributed in mediating the role between the two existing phenomena. The results concluding gender differences opened a new domain for investigation when the scores of the males were higher than females in experience of different love languages. It is important to harness further researches involving areas under consideration and adding innovations to further strengthen our claim. The benefits of conducting such investigations leads to stable marital relationships and getting an insight about the relationship dynamics in general.

Limitations and Suggestions

There has been a debate on marital adjustment and the reasons behind the happy marriages since long the inclusion of the love languages played a significant role in the better adjustment of the marriages. Therefore, it is suggested for the marital counsellor and therapist to obtain the scores of the love languages and to check the languages of both partners in order to point out the intimate factors other than the financial and social factors for a well-adjusted relationship. The individuals themselves can acquire knowledge about the conformity of their love languages and thus preventing the chaos in relationship. The researchers are advised to further look upon and carry out research altering the study designs and the inclusion of attitudes-based research might be needed to perform. The study despite its strong footing lacks has some sampling and methodological issues which includes the convenient sampling technique which reduces a generalizability of the study. The methodological lacking includes limited evidence of the research topic in Pakistan. As love languages are inconsiderate in the areas like ours so there was difficulty obtaining literature in our country and region. Further limited access and people's disclosing their private life and answering it on the questionnaire was actually hard to convince people for it. Obtaining responses were actually a tiresome task. The stereotypes and open communication on such topics were main hurdles.

Implications

The results can help us know where we stand in this rate. The results can help us make a goal to find ways in which couples can stay happy and adjusted which will result in less divorce rate. In our culture, we can take stance in this regard by educating married individuals about love languages which can help them to acknowledge and understand love languages of their significant others.

Contribution of Authors

Shafaq Maryam: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Hafiza Ramsha Iqbal: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [S.M.] upon the reasonable request.

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