

**IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD ON MARITAL SATISFACTION: MODERATING ROLE
OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCES AMONG MARRIED COUPLES**



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MARRIED COUPLES**

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By

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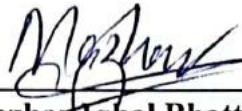
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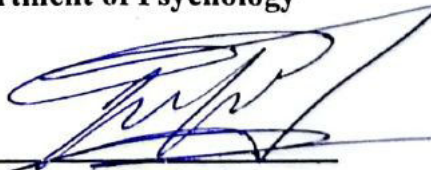
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DECLARATION

I, Mr. Muhib Ullah, Registration No. 508-FSS/MSCP/F23 student of MS in Clinical Psychology, session 2023-2025, hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis titled: 'IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD ON MARITAL SATISFACTION: MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCES AMONG MARRIED COUPLES' is my own work and has not been printed, published and submitted as research work, thesis or publication in any form in any University, Research Institution etc in Pakistan or abroad.

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Certified that the research work contained in this thesis titled: 'IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD ON MARITAL SATISFACTION: MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCES AMONG MARRIED COUPLES `has been carried out and completed by Mr. Muhib Ullah, Registration No: 508-FSS/MSCP/F23 under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

All praise and gratitude are due to Almighty Allah (SWT), the Most Beneficent and Merciful, whose divine will and blessings enabled me to reach this significant milestone in my academic journey. It is through His guidance, the heartfelt prayers of my parents, and the unwavering support and dedication of my teachers that I have been able to successfully complete my MS thesis. I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved parents and my supervisor, whose crucial roles and constant support have been instrumental throughout this endeavor. I am deeply thankful to my supervisor, Incharge M/F program, Dr. Mazhar Iqbal Bhatti, for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the course of this research. His mentorship has been a cornerstone in the completion of this thesis. My sincere appreciation also extends to my peer group for their encouragement, cooperation, and warm wishes, which have kept me motivated. I am especially grateful to my family for their endless support, love, and motivation that carried me through challenging times

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I solemnly declare that the current research entitled: “IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD ON MARITAL SATISFACTION: MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCES AMONG MARRIED COUPLES ` is my personal work. It is not plagiarized nor copied from any other sources, and that I have followed all the research and ethical protocols. I am submitting this research to Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University Islamabad as a partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of MS in Clinical Psychology. I also declare that I will not use this research for my degree program in future.

Abstract

Marital satisfaction plays a crucial role in the stability and well-being of couples, and it can be influenced by various life transitions, including parenthood. Emotional intelligence, as an individual's ability to recognize, manage, and express emotions effectively, may help couples navigate the challenges associated with parenting. The present study aimed to examine the impact of parenthood on marital satisfaction, with emotional intelligence as a moderating variable among married couples. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 50 married couples through a purposive sampling technique. Standardized instruments, including the Parental Sense of Competence Scale, the Couple Satisfaction Index, and the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, were administered to assess the key variables. Findings revealed that parenthood was positively associated with emotional intelligence but showed no significant relationship with marital satisfaction. Emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction. These results suggest that while parenting experiences may enhance emotional competencies, other interpersonal and contextual factors may play a stronger role in determining marital satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of promoting emotional understanding, shared responsibilities, and effective communication within couples to maintain healthy marital relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage looks different for everyone, but for a lot of people, it brings real satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. Omage (2013) points out that when marriage is going well, it actually helps people handle stress and tough times. But if things turn sour and the relationship feels unstable or unsatisfying, it can drag down both your physical and mental health. So, a healthy marriage isn't just about sticking together it's about having a strong, supportive connection that actually makes both partners feel satisfied. When people talk about marital satisfaction, they mean how happy someone feels in their marriage. It's that sense of contentment you get when your relationship meets your emotional needs and expectations (Ja'farzadeh, 2011). In this study, marital satisfaction is all about a person's own view of how well their marriage is working for them whether they feel their needs are met and their feelings are valued. But there's more to it. Parental stress plays a big part in how satisfied people feel in their marriages. Juggling parenting, especially when you have young kids or a child with special needs, can really put a strain on a relationship. That kind of stress often chips away at emotional closeness and leaves couples feeling less connected (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Here's where emotional intelligence comes in. Parents who are emotionally intelligent handle stress better, stay calmer, and communicate more clearly with each other. They're just better at tackling the tough stuff together, and that helps keep their marriage strong even when parenting gets rough (Brackett et al., 2011)

In Pakistan, marriage is a big deal, no matter how it happens. Arranged marriages have always been the norm, but things are changing. More and more young people are choosing love over tradition. Back in 2021, Gallup Pakistan found that 94% of people still believed in arranged

marriages. Even so, among 18 to 24-year-olds, 42% said they wanted to marry for love. Fast forward to 2024, and the numbers look pretty different. Now, 62% say they get married for love, while 38% stick with arranged marriages.

When it comes to picking a partner, Hamon and Ingoldsby (2003) talked about three main ways: marriage by capture, arranged marriage, and free-choice (love) marriage. Nobody really accepts marriage by capture anymore it's basically forcing women into marriage without their consent. Zadeh (2003) broke things down even further: there are totally arranged marriages, partially arranged marriages, partially love marriages, and completely love-based marriages. Arif (2012) spotted three common types in Pakistan: fully arranged marriages, marriages by choice with parents' blessing, and marriages by choice without parents' approval. Both arranged and love marriages happen all over the world, but they play out very differently and have unique impacts on people's lives (Dost, Shafi, Shaheen & Khan, 2011).

Family System

Family shapes just about everything when it comes to parenthood, marriage, and how couples handle emotions. In Pakistan where traditions run deep and families often stay close, whether in big joint households or smaller nuclear ones your family setup changes the way you deal with daily life, relationships, and the ups and downs of marriage (Qadir et al., 2005). Pakistani families put a lot of value on living together, respecting elders, and sharing responsibilities (Ahmed & Bano, 2021). So, to really understand what couples go through while raising kids or keeping their relationship strong, you have to look at the bigger family picture.

Family systems theory says everyone in a family is emotionally tied together, and when one person changes, it ripples through the whole group (Bowen, 1978). In Pakistan, where

people tend to stick together, this idea shows up everywhere from how parents treat their kids, to how couples talk to each other (Hassan & Malik, 2015).

Joint Family System

The joint families, for example. Here, you'll find parents, their married kids, and grandkids all under one roof. Everyone shares chores, money, and major decisions, usually with elders (often the men) calling the shots (Waqas et al., 2024). Parenting works differently here. Elders help with raising kids, which can make life easier and take some pressure off. But there's a flip side: they might step in too much, leaving parents especially mothers or daughters-in-law feeling like they don't have a say in how to raise their own children (Habiba & Kamal, 2022; Atif). That loss of control can build stress and lead to marital arguments.

Studies from Pakistan show that joint families aren't always a dream. Sure, there's extra help and more hands to pitch in, but living with lots of relatives brings its own drama arguments over who's in charge, in-law interference, and fights about who should listen to whom. This mess can make it hard for couples to talk privately or connect emotionally (Ali et al., 2021). In fact, many couples say they feel stuck between making their spouse happy and following what their parents or in-laws want (Rubab & Aslam, 2022). Constant company from siblings or elders means less alone time, and pretty often, different ideas about loyalty spark fights (Lodhi et al., 2019).

But it's not all bad. Living with more people means dealing with a wider mix of personalities, which can actually help you get better at managing your emotions and reading others. Some research says joint families teach empathy and social skills, though they can also

make it tough to be your own person since the group's wishes usually come first (Jamil, Kakar, Habib & Sultan, 2024; Mumtaz, Ayaz & Kamrani, 2023).

Nuclear Family System

Now, nuclear families just the parents and their kids work pretty differently. Some studies in Pakistan say couples in nuclear families feel closer to each other, probably because they get more privacy and freedom from outside opinions (Jabeen et al., 2024). Other research points out that joint families can be more satisfying, but only when there's enough support and independence (Lodhi et al., 2019). So, it's not a clear win for either side there's a real trade-off between support and stress.

Overall, studies show Pakistani couples in nuclear families usually have more say over their own lives, talk more openly, and score higher on family functioning (Liaqat & Khalid, 2022). This setup gives them more space to express emotions, sort out conflicts, and support each other pretty much the core of a solid relationship.

Some studies from Pakistan say joint families give people more social support and practical help, while nuclear families offer more privacy and independence. That extra space and freedom usually lead to a better view of marriage overall (Jamil et al., 2021). But not everyone agrees with other research finds people in joint families actually report higher satisfaction (Lodhi et al., 2019). So, there's this ongoing push and pull between support and stress, depending on which family structure you look at.

Digging a bit deeper, research shows that couples in nuclear families often enjoy more autonomy, open communication, and higher scores when it comes to how their families function (Liaqat & Khalid, 2022; Lodhi et al., 2019). This kind of environment makes it easier for people

to express how they feel, resolve conflicts, and support each other all key parts of emotional intelligence.

In Pakistan, family structure, emotional habits, and marital satisfaction all mix together in interesting ways. Nuclear families encourage independence and emotional closeness, while joint families bring stability and a sense of shared support (Lodhi et al., 2019). But in the end, a couple's ability to succeed no matter the setup really comes down to how well they handle their emotions and work out their roles at home (Khalid et al., 2021). Getting a grip on these dynamics matters a lot if you want to really understand how parenthood affects marriage, especially when you factor in emotional intelligence.

Gender

Gender really shapes a lot of what happens in relationships. Women and men just see marital satisfaction differently. Women often feel more stressed out by parenting, mostly because they end up with more child-rearing duties. This extra pressure drags down their sense of satisfaction in marriage. Men, especially in arranged marriages, get hit with a different kind of stress. They worry about living up to society's expectations and providing financially, and that takes its own toll on the relationship (Riaz et al., 2016).

Cultural expectations don't make things any easier for women in arranged marriages. They often feel weighed down by all the demands from extended family, which sparks conflict and leaves them less happy in their marriage (Ali & Fatima, 2018). On the other hand, women in love marriages show more resilience when it comes to parental stress they have stronger emotional bonds with their partners, and that seems to help. But men in love marriages

sometimes get frustrated when parenting stress messes with their sense of independence (Ahmed & Khan, 2020).

Intergenerational conflicts just pile on. Women usually end up carrying most of that load, especially in arranged marriages, while men find themselves stuck in the middle, trying to keep peace between their parents and their spouses. All of this just adds even more strain to the marriage (Zaidi & Nadeem, 2022).

Parenthood

Becoming a parent isn't just about having a baby it changes who you are, how you see yourself, and the way you relate to others. Suddenly, your world shifts. You start thinking less about your own plans and more about raising, guiding, and caring for your child. It's not just your day-to-day routines that change, either. Relationships with your partner, how you handle your emotions, and the whole family atmosphere can feel different (Feinberg, 2002). On the one hand, parenthood can give life new meaning and purpose. On the other, it brings its own set of challenges, and you need to be flexible, patient, and ready to solve problems together (Nelson et al., 2014). Every couple experiences this transition differently. Things like emotional maturity, how well you communicate, your financial situation, and the strength of your relationship before the baby all play a role (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). That's why looking at parenthood in the context of marriage matters so much it helps explain how couples manage the changes, whether they pull together or grow apart.

Researchers break down parenthood into a few overlapping areas. First, there's the emotional side showing affection, being available, comforting your child. Kids thrive when parents are tuned in to their feelings (Goagoses et al., 2023). Then comes the cognitive

dimension: what parents believe, how they make decisions, and the way they plan for their child's future. These beliefs shape how parents act, and that ripples out to affect the child (Bornstein, 2017). The behavioral side is about the daily grind feeding, routines, setting boundaries, and how parents interact with their kids. When routines are predictable and parents stay engaged, families run smoother (Goagoses et al., 2023). Finally, there's the relational piece. The shift to parenthood changes the couple's relationship, brings new roles and responsibilities, and reshapes the family dynamic (Cano, 2022). Put together, these dimensions give a clearer picture of how parents influence their children and the family as a whole.

Research in Pakistan paints a vivid picture of how culture, family, and social expectations shape what it's like to be a parent and what that means for marriage. Repeatedly, studies point to the family structure, gender roles, and what society expects as big factors in how couples adjust to raising kids.

Parental competence is a multifaceted construct that reflects the skills, knowledge, and behaviors parents use to effectively nurture, protect, and support their children's development. It encompasses practical abilities in caregiving and decision making as well as positive parenting practices that promote healthy psychosocial outcomes (Barudy & Dantagnan, as cited in Martínez-González et al., 2021). Research distinguishes parental competence from parental self-efficacy: while self-efficacy refers to a parent's belief in their ability to manage parenting tasks, competence captures actual behaviors and strategies that align with developmental needs and societal expectations (Jones & Prinz, 2005; de Montigny & Lacharité, 2005). Higher parental competence has been linked with better child outcomes and lower levels of parental stress, suggesting its central role in adaptive family functioning (Educația 21 study, 2023).

Consequently, enhancing parental competence through targeted interventions is considered critical in supporting both children's development and family well-being.

For instance, Atif, Ahmed, and Khan in 2021. They looked at Pakistani couples and found that those living in nuclear families usually feel more satisfied in their marriages than couples in joint families. Why? It mostly comes down to privacy, who gets to make decisions, and the expectations around each person's role. Joint families, common in Pakistan bring their own headaches: extended family members can get involved in ways that add stress, and caregiving often ends up falling more on mothers. That takes a toll on how happy moms feel in their marriages. Habiba's 2022 study dives deeper into the gender gap. She found that mothers, not surprisingly, feel more stress from parenting and are less satisfied in their marriages, while fathers' satisfaction depends more on whether they feel emotionally supported by their partners and family. Her research makes it clear that marital satisfaction isn't just about the two people in the marriage. It's tangled up with bigger cultural and family patterns. Ali and Saeed, back in 2019, also zoomed in on how extended families and traditional values can be a double-edged sword.

Sometimes, support from the family helps, but things like family interference, rigid decision-making hierarchies, and strict gender roles can make things worse. Couples who figure out how to talk through these pressures and share parenting tasks usually end up happier, even with all the extra stress that comes with having kids.

So, what is the big takeaway from all these Pakistani studies? Parenthood brings more stress and can chip away at marital satisfaction that's universal.

But in Pakistan, the outcome really depends on the family setup, cultural expectations, and things like emotional intelligence. All these factors set the stage for how parenthood shapes marriage. Looking at research from other countries, the story is similar in some ways. Becoming parents can be both a boost and a challenge to a marriage. A big meta-analysis found that couples' marital satisfaction drops a bit from pregnancy through the first year after the baby and keeps declining a little in the second year for both moms and dads.

Several mechanisms help explain this decline:

- **Increased Conflict and Division of Labour**

Arguments often pop up about who should handle childcare and housework. In one long-term study, when women felt their partners weren't pitching in as much as expected, they felt more upset and less satisfied in their marriages.

- **Role Overload / Work–Family Demands**

New parents are juggling more at home and at work, which leads to feeling overwhelmed and tired. A Canadian study found that this sense of overload explains why couples often feel less satisfied with parenting.

- **Reduced Intimacy and Physical/Emotional Connection**

Sex and intimacy take a hit too. Right after the baby is born, couples often report less sex, less desire, and less physical closeness especially mothers, who are dealing with exhaustion, changes in their bodies, and nonstop caretaking.

- **Identity Shifts and Self-Concept Changes**

All in all, becoming parents shakes up just about everything: daily routines, roles, even how people see themselves. Qualitative research points out a few big themes: the whole

“adjustment phase,” focusing almost entirely on the baby, and big changes in how couples talk and connect with each other.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction really matters for a healthy relationship. It’s about how each person rates their marriage, how well their emotional, physical, and psychological needs get met (Ja’farzadeh, 2011). This is a personal thing, shaped by emotional closeness, communication, respect, and support. And it’s not a fixed marital satisfaction changes over time, depending on how couples handle life’s curveballs and outside pressures (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). When people feel good about their marriages, they usually feel close, supported, and happy with their partners. Omage (2013) even says a good marriage can protect against mental health problems, like anxiety and depression. On the other hand, when marriages don’t feel satisfying, people are more likely to struggle with stress, low self-esteem, and even chronic health issues (DeVries et al., 2015).

When couples feel unhappy in their marriage, it usually comes down to a few big things. They talk about feeling disconnected, not really talking to each other, and letting arguments hang in the air without ever sorting them out. Stuff like this shakes the foundation of a marriage and makes things feel unstable.

Out of all the factors that shape how satisfied couples feel, communication and conflict resolution stand out the most. When couples actually talk to each other really talk, not just exchange pleasantries they start to build trust, understanding, and that deeper emotional bond that makes a marriage feel strong. Couples who are honest with each other end up closer, and they can tackle life’s messiness as a team. On the other hand, the way couples fight matters a lot.

If they can argue without tearing each other down or running away from the problem, they're more likely to feel satisfied in their marriage (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

Social support plays a big part too. When couples get help from family, friends, or their community, they feel more secure together. Supportive people can lighten the load, whether it's about raising kids, work stress, or money problems. It's not just about emotional support it's the practical stuff too. And when couples have shared goals and values, they feel like they're moving in the same direction, which brings even more satisfaction (Lammers et al., 2011).

Looking at Pakistan, things get a bit more layered. Marital satisfaction here isn't just about feelings, it's shaped by money, tradition, culture, and emotions all tangled together. Research in Pakistan shows that marital satisfaction is real and measurable, and local couples care about the same things as couples everywhere: communication, respect, intimacy, and support (Qadir, 2005). But there are some unique twists. Socioeconomic status, family setups, and basic demographics all play a role. Women's satisfaction, for example, often changes depending on dowry expectations, how old they were when they got married, and whether they live in a joint or nuclear family (Habiba, 2022). Joint families can mean more interference from relatives and less privacy, which strains intimacy, while nuclear families might get more privacy but also deal with more financial stress. Plus, the old-school gender roles still matter. When household chores or big decisions aren't shared fairly, dissatisfaction creeps in.

Psychological factors matter too. Emotional intelligence and the ability to handle your own feelings have a big impact on marital quality in Pakistan. Partners who score high on emotional intelligence tend to handle stress better and keep their communication positive (Batool & Khalid, 2010). Later studies back this up, emotional competence helps couples empathize,

respect each other, and solve problems together (Batoool & Khalid, 2010; Irshad, 2023). Other research points out that things like job stress, struggles with infertility, and the daily grind of parenting can drag down marital satisfaction unless couples have good coping skills (Mushtaq, 2024). For parents of kids with special needs, stress and exhaustion can really hurt marital harmony, linking the ups and downs of parenting directly to the health of the marriage (Irshad, 2023).

All in all, in Pakistan, where family expectations, gender roles, and money pressures shape daily life, emotional intelligence really stands out as a lifeline for couples. It helps them stay stable and satisfied, even when life throws curveballs. That's why it makes sense to look at how emotional intelligence might help couples juggle parenthood and marriage, giving us a clearer picture of what keeps relationships strong in such a complex environment.

Marital satisfaction isn't something you just stumble into and keep without trying. It takes real, ongoing effort from both people. Every couple deals with their own quirks, outside stress, and the everyday challenge of staying connected. But when both partners make it a point to nurture their relationship, adapt to whatever life throws their way, and really care about keeping their bond strong, they're much more likely to stay happy together for the long haul.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence basically, the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own feelings and those of others matters a lot here (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Salovey and Mayer (1990) described emotional intelligence as having a few key parts: noticing emotions, making sense of them, and using that understanding to guide how you think and interact. In marriage, this skill set is huge. When partners are emotionally intelligent, they're better at talking

things out, showing empathy, and handling tough feelings in a way that helps, not hurts, the relationship. It turns out, marital satisfaction has a lot to do with how well people deal with emotions, especially when things get rough. Emotional intelligence helps people manage anger, frustration, jealousy all those feelings that can easily stir up trouble in a relationship (Goleman, 1995). Skills like empathy, self-control, and open communication help partners understand what the other person needs emotionally. This creates more support and teamwork (Ciarrochi, Forgas, & Mayer, 2001).

Studies show folks with higher emotional intelligence are more tuned in to their partner's moods and better at working through conflicts (Vadnais, 2005). It really helps when couples need to tackle tricky topics like parenting, money, or their sex life issues that often cause stress (Schutte et al., 2001). Emotional intelligence doesn't just make things better between partners it helps with parenting too, which then circles back and boosts marital satisfaction. Parents with high EI are more sensitive to their kids, model healthy coping, and handle conflicts with the kids more smoothly (Brackett et al., 2006). This lowers stress at home and makes co-parenting go more smoothly, which in turn helps the marriage. EI also helps parents get on the same page about discipline or school decisions, so they argue less about the kids (Goleman, 1998). Research shows emotionally intelligent couples keep up good communication, stay supportive of each other, and keep their closeness even as parenting brings new challenges.

Masood and Mazahir (2015) found something pretty interesting: couples who communicate well and show emotional intelligence tend to be happier in their marriages, no matter if they're in big joint families or just the two of them. Samad and Mahmud (2023) came to a similar conclusion there's a strong connection between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. One study tracked couples for a whole decade (Nasiri et al., 2015) and found that

emotional intelligence explained about 40% of the difference in how happy people felt in their marriages over those ten years. So, it's not just a theory emotional intelligence helps couples get through all kinds of challenges, whether it's parenting stress or the daily ups and downs, without losing their sense of closeness. It matters in every corner of the relationship: intimacy, respect, emotional support.

When couples have higher EI, they're better at riding out rough patches and keeping a positive feeling between them. And honestly, being happy together isn't just about not fighting. It's about creating a space where both partners feel close, valued, and truly understood (Najam, 2005).

When parenting gets stressful, couples with higher EI don't just survive, they actually manage it well. They keep their cool, talk things out, and back each other up, even when life gets chaotic (Brackett et al., 2011). This keeps stress from eating away at their relationship. High EI helps parents handle their own emotions, so things don't get out of hand and spill over into their marriage (Brackett et al., 2006). That ability to regulate emotions makes a huge difference it keeps couples connected and supportive, even when parenting gets tough. But it's not just about solving problems. Emotional intelligence shapes the whole mood of the relationship.

Couples with high EI build a culture of respect, validation, and understanding (Najam, 2005; Ratra & Kaur, 2004). This atmosphere is especially important during parenthood. It cushions the stress of raising kids and, at the same time, shows children what emotional strength looks like. In short, EI helps couples get through relationship and parenting challenges without losing touch with each other. There's more—recent research digs into how EI works in different family setups. In Pakistan, for example, where nuclear and joint families both exist, emotional

intelligence helps couples manage things like advice or interference from extended family, negotiate chores, and keep their own relationship strong during the shift to parenthood (Lodhi et al., 2019).

In joint families, EI helps spouses handle input from relatives in a healthy way, keeping stress down and their marriage intact (Siddiqui et al., 2023). In nuclear families, EI gives couples the tools to deal with parenting challenges on their own, while still staying close and communicating well. When researchers compared these family systems, the results got interesting.

Mumtaz et al. (2023) found that kids' emotional intelligence didn't really differ between joint and nuclear families, which suggests that it's not just the family setup that shapes EI. On the other hand, Siddiqui et al., (2023) found that married women in joint families with higher EI adjusted better to married life, showing how important emotional skills are for navigating complex family situations. Lodhi et al. (2019) spotted higher overall relationship satisfaction in joint families, but Masood & Mazahir (2015) pointed out that it's the mix of family structure, emotional intelligence, and communication that really predicts how happy couples are.

So, the takeaway here? Family setup sets the scene, but it's the couple's emotional skills, especially EI, that help them make the most of their situation, whether that means leaning on family support or handling stress. And let's not forget conflict resolution. EI gives couples the tools to work through disagreements about parenting without falling into criticism or shutting down (Goleman, 1998).

Couples with high EI communicate better, work together, and keep things constructive. That lifts the quality of the marriage and creates a more stable, emotionally supportive home for

everyone. This not only improves the quality of the marriage but also contributes to a more stable and emotionally supportive family environment. Therefore, emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in reducing the detrimental effects of parental stress and enhancing both marital satisfaction and the overall quality of family life.

Literature Review

Parenthood is widely recognized as one of the most transformative life experiences for couples, bringing significant changes in emotional, relational, and practical domains. The transition from being partners to becoming parents often introduces new demands, responsibilities, and expectations that can alter the dynamics of marital relationships. Researchers have extensively examined whether and how parenthood affects marital satisfaction, with most findings indicating that this period can be both rewarding and challenging for couples (Foster et al., 2003). While the birth of a child can increase emotional closeness and a sense of shared purpose, it can also lead to heightened stress, fatigue, and conflict, potentially reducing overall relationship satisfaction (Mitnick et al., 2009). The degree to which couples navigate these changes successfully often depends on various factors, including individual characteristics such as emotional intelligence, which may help partners regulate emotions, manage stress, and maintain relationship quality (Brackett et al., 2006).

Theoretical perspectives such as role theory and role strain explain that the addition of the parental role can create conflict between being a spouse and a parent (Biddle, 1986). As partners adjust to new roles, the imbalance of responsibilities or unmet expectations can result in strain that negatively impacts marital satisfaction. The stress-spillover model also helps clarify this process, suggesting that stress in one domain (such as parenting) can spill over into marital

interactions, reducing positive communication and increasing conflict (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). Conversely, the stress-buffering model proposes that personal resources such as emotional intelligence may protect couples from such negative effects (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Family systems theory further emphasizes the interdependence between partners, asserting that the adjustment of one spouse directly influences the emotional and relational well-being of the other (Cox & Paley, 1997). These frameworks together provide a foundation for understanding how parenthood and emotional intelligence interact to shape marital outcomes.

Empirical research over several decades has consistently found that parenthood tends to be associated with decreases in marital satisfaction, although this decline is not uniform across all couples. Meta-analytic reviews have shown that, on average, parents report slightly lower marital satisfaction than nonparents (Twenge et al., 2003). More recent studies reinforce these findings, showing that the first year after childbirth is especially critical, with notable decreases in relationship satisfaction (Doss & Rhoades, 2017). However, these studies also highlight substantial variability, with some couples maintaining or even improving their relationship satisfaction depending on factors such as pre-parenthood relationship quality, co-parenting cooperation, and emotional support systems (Don & Mickelson, 2014).

Longitudinal research has deepened the understanding of these patterns by identifying distinct trajectories of marital satisfaction across the parenting transition. Some couples experience sharp declines in satisfaction immediately after childbirth but recover over time, while others show more gradual declines or sustained stability (Lawrence et al., 2008). Predictors of these trajectories include pre-existing relationship satisfaction, parenting stress, division of labor, and socio-economic factors (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998). Studies also indicate that parenting stress not only mediates the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction but also

operates bidirectionally—low marital satisfaction can exacerbate parenting stress, creating a cyclical dynamic that can strain the relationship over time (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

Several moderators influence the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction. The child's age and developmental stage are significant factors, as declines in marital satisfaction are most pronounced during pregnancy and the first postpartum year (Kluwer, 2010). Gender differences have also been documented, with mothers often reporting greater decreases in satisfaction than fathers, likely due to disproportionate caregiving responsibilities and societal expectations (Meijer & van den Wittenboer, 2007). Furthermore, inequitable division of household and childcare duties consistently predicts lower marital satisfaction, particularly among women (Coltrane, 2000). Parenting stress, mental health issues such as postpartum depression, and the quality of co-parenting also play central roles in determining whether the experience of parenthood strengthens or weakens the marital bond (Durtschi et al., 2017). Cultural context is another crucial moderator, as research in non-Western settings such as Pakistan, Iran, and Indonesia suggests that cultural values, extended family structures, and social support systems can buffer or exacerbate the effects of parenthood on marital satisfaction (Nezhad & Goodarzi, 2011).

A considerable amount of empirical evidence has explored the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction, consistently demonstrating that the transition to parenthood often brings measurable changes to couple relationships. Meta-analytic reviews have shown that marital satisfaction tends to decline following the birth of a child, particularly during the early years of parenting (Mitnick et al., 2009). Lawrence et al., (2008) conducted a longitudinal study revealing that couples generally experience a decrease in marital satisfaction over time, with the steepest declines occurring shortly after childbirth. Similarly, Don and Mickelson (2014) found

that relationship satisfaction decreased significantly during the postpartum period, especially when partners faced heightened parenting stress and role conflicts. Recent meta-analytic work by Bogdan et al. (2022) confirmed these trends, indicating that declines in satisfaction are most pronounced within the first two years after childbirth and are influenced by factors such as gender, division of household labor, and pre-parenthood relationship quality. Kluwer (2010) further emphasized that mothers often report greater declines in satisfaction compared to fathers, largely due to unequal caregiving responsibilities and societal expectations surrounding motherhood. Overall, these studies suggest that while parenthood can enrich couples' lives through shared purpose and emotional connection, it also introduces stressors that may challenge relationship quality. The extent of these changes, however, varies widely depending on the couple's emotional resources, co-parenting cooperation, and social support systems, highlighting the complexity of the parenthood–marital satisfaction relationship.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as an important individual characteristic that may shape how partners experience and respond to the challenges of parenthood. EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and in others (Mayer et al., 2004). It encompasses emotional awareness, empathy, regulation, and social skills all of which are crucial for maintaining satisfying relationships. Theoretical models and empirical evidence suggest that individuals with higher EI are better able to communicate, manage conflicts, and maintain emotional balance, which contributes to greater relationship satisfaction (Malouff et al., 2014). Studies consistently show that higher EI is positively associated with marital and relationship satisfaction. For example, emotionally intelligent partners tend to experience fewer conflicts, report greater intimacy, and demonstrate more adaptive coping strategies during stressful periods (Schutte et al., 2001).

The mechanisms through which EI enhances marital satisfaction are multifaceted. High EI individuals are better at regulating their own emotions, preventing negative emotions such as anger or frustration from escalating during conflicts (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). They are also more empathic, allowing them to understand their partner's perspective and respond with sensitivity (Schutte et al., 2001). These individuals are more likely to use constructive communication strategies, resolve disagreements effectively, and support their partners emotionally (Malouff et al., 2014). This emotional competence becomes particularly valuable during the transition to parenthood, when couples face increased stress, fatigue, and new responsibilities that can easily disrupt harmony.

Although the link between EI and marital satisfaction is well established, fewer studies have examined EI as a moderator between parenthood and marital satisfaction. Theoretical reasoning suggests that EI should buffer couples from the negative effects of parenting stress as a high-EI partner would be more capable of managing stress, communicating needs, and maintaining emotional connection, thereby preserving marital satisfaction (Ciarrochi et al., 2006). Some empirical studies have explored this moderating effect, showing that EI can mitigate the adverse impact of stress or interparental conflict on relationship satisfaction (Smith, Ciarrochi, & Heaven, 2008). However, most of these studies are cross-sectional, limiting conclusions about causality, and many rely on convenience samples or single cultural contexts. There is a need for more rigorous, longitudinal, and dyadic studies that examine how EI functions as a protective factor within the dynamics of parenthood and marital satisfaction (Brasseur et al., 2013).

Existing literature therefore highlights several important gaps. First, there is limited longitudinal research that tests EI as a moderator in the relationship between parenthood and

marital satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2008). Most available studies rely on self-report and single-timepoint data, which restricts understanding of temporal patterns. Second, most research measures EI at the individual rather than dyadic level, overlooking how one partner's emotional intelligence may influence the other's satisfaction a limitation that could be addressed through actor-partner interdependence models (Kenny et al., 2006). Third, inconsistencies in EI measurement across studies complicate synthesis and comparison; some use trait-based tools like the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998), while others use ability-based measures such as the MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2004). Fourth, there remains a lack of cultural diversity in this research area, as most studies are based in Western contexts. Given the cultural differences in family roles, gender expectations, and social support systems, studies in South Asian contexts like Pakistan are crucial to understanding these relationships more comprehensively (Ali & Bibi, 2020).

Overall, the literature indicates that while parenthood often corresponds with declines in marital satisfaction, these effects are neither universal nor inevitable. Individual and relational resources—especially emotional intelligence—play a significant role in determining how couples adapt to the demands of parenting. Emotionally intelligent partners are more likely to manage stress constructively, maintain emotional connection, and resolve conflicts effectively, thereby protecting their relationship quality (Malouff et al., 2014). However, the moderating role of EI in the link between parenthood and marital satisfaction remains underexplored, particularly in non-Western samples and dyadic frameworks. The present study seeks to address these gaps by examining whether emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction among married couples. Using validated scales such as the Parental Sense of Competence Scale (Johnston & Mash, 1989), the Couple Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge,

2007), and the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998), this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how emotional intelligence shapes marital dynamics within the context of parenting. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical advancement and practical interventions aimed at enhancing marital satisfaction among parents.

Rationale of the study

Marital satisfaction influences not only couples but the overall emotional and mental well-being of the family. While much research focuses on individual experiences, less attention is given to how family systems shape marital relationships (Bodenmann, 2005). In Pakistan, where cultural expectations and family involvement play major roles in marriage, this study explores how parenthood, family structure (joint vs. nuclear), and emotional intelligence interact to affect marital satisfaction (Azhar et al., 2013).

Family structure significantly influences marital dynamics joint families may provide support but also bring interference and reduced privacy, while nuclear families offer independence but less assistance with childcare (Hussain & Hayee, 2024). Emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and manage emotions, helps couples handle conflicts and maintain relationship quality (Rehman et al., 2015).

Thus, this study examines how parenthood impacts marital satisfaction among Pakistani couples, considering family system and emotional intelligence as key factors. The findings aim to deepen understanding of marital relationships in family-oriented cultures and inform culturally sensitive interventions for couples in Pakistan.

Problem Statement

The transition to parenthood represents a critical period of change that can profoundly influence the quality of marital relationships. While becoming parents can strengthen emotional bonds and create shared meaning, research consistently indicates that it is also associated with declines in marital satisfaction due to increased stress, role strain, and shifting responsibilities.. Emotional intelligence, as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, may serve as a protective factor that helps couples navigate the challenges of parenting while maintaining relationship satisfaction. Despite growing evidence on each construct individually, limited research has examined the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction, particularly within non-Western cultural contexts such as Pakistan. This gap highlights the need to explore how emotional intelligence influences the impact of parenthood on marital satisfaction among married couples.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen the understanding of how emotional intelligence shapes the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction among married couples. While previous research has documented that parenthood often leads to declines in marital satisfaction, limited attention has been given to the factors that may buffer these negative effects. By examining emotional intelligence as a moderating variable, this study provides valuable insights into how couples can manage the emotional and relational challenges that arise during the parenting transition. The findings can contribute to both theory and practice by highlighting EI as a key interpersonal resource that promotes healthier and more satisfying marital relationships. Furthermore, this research adds to the limited body of literature on marital

dynamics in non-Western contexts, particularly in Pakistan, where cultural norms, gender roles, and family systems differ significantly from those in Western societies. The study's results can inform counselors, family therapists, and educators in developing culturally relevant interventions and training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among parents, ultimately supporting stronger family relationships and well-being.

Objectives

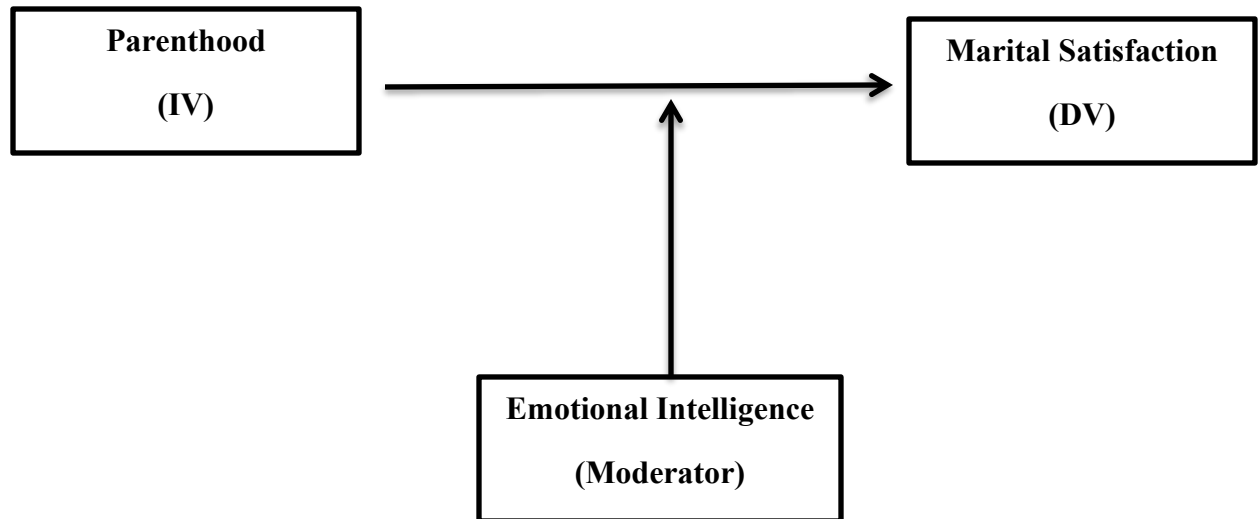
This present study aims to.

1. To assess the relationship between parenthood, marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence among married couples.
2. To examine the moderating role of emotional intelligence on the relationship parenthood and marital satisfaction

Hypothesis

1. There is a significant negative relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction among married couples.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between parenthood and emotional intelligence among married couples.
3. Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction such that higher emotional intelligence reduces the negative impact of parenthood on marital satisfaction.
4. There is a significant mean difference in marital satisfaction between couples living in joint and nuclear family systems.
5. Demographic variables significantly predict parenthood among couples.

Conceptual Framework



Method

Research design

The study will be quantitative cross-sectional design for examining the relationship between parental stress on marital satisfaction and moderating role of emotional intelligence among love and arrange marriage couples.

Population

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of parental stress on marital satisfaction among love and arrange marriage couples. The target populations for this research are married couples living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Due to constraints such as resources, time and availability, it is impractical to examine the entire population. In order to accurately represent the population as whole, 50 couples will be selected for this research.

Sample

This study will utilize purposive sampling techniques. The participants will be collected through their availability, willingness to participate, and meet specific characteristics according to research. A sample size of 50 married couple participants were selected. While the result will provide valuable insights into the target population, moreover, generalizability to a broader population should be exercised with caution.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Both parents are above 20 and above age.
2. They are residence of study area.
3. Both partners able to read and understands language of questionnaires.
4. Participants should have no history of diagnosed severe mental health disorders.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Participants with a diagnosed mental health disorder.
2. Couples who have separated or divorced at the time of the study will be excluded.

Operational Definitions

Parental Sense of Competences (PSOC)

Parental Sense of Competence is basically about how capable and satisfied parents feel in their roles. Here, it's measured using the Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC) Scale (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978). This scale looks at two sides: how confident parents feel in handling their parenting duties (efficacy), and how much they actually enjoy being parents (satisfaction).

Higher PSOC scores mean a parent feels more confident and fulfilled; lower scores mean they're struggling.

Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)

The Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), developed by Funk and Rogge (2007), is a self-report questionnaire that captures how happy partners feel in their relationship. It covers emotional and physical intimacy, communication, and overall relationship quality.

Higher CSI scores mean greater satisfaction, and researchers use it to see how couples feel about their relationship as a whole.

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)

The Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) measures how well someone understands and manages emotions—their own and other people's. With 33 items, it looks at things like emotional awareness, empathy, and how well people regulate their feelings (Schutte et al., 1998).

Higher scores show stronger emotional intelligence, which are linked to better relationship satisfaction and coping with stress.

Instruments

Parental Sense of Competence

Parental Sense of Competence (PSOC) is a self-report questionnaire used to assess parents' perceived confidence, ability, and satisfaction in their parenting role. The PSOC consists of 17 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "*strongly disagree*" to 6 "*strongly agree*." The total score is obtained by summing all item responses, with higher scores indicating a greater sense of parenting competence and satisfaction, while lower scores reflect reduced confidence and fulfillment in the parenting role (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978).

Couple Satisfaction Index

Couple Satisfactory Index (CSI) is a self-reporting questionnaire that is used to assess the marital satisfaction level among couples. The CSI consists of 32 items which are rated on six-

point Likert Scale ranging from 1 “*always disagree*” to 6 “*always agree*”. The score obtains by summing the responses and overall score can range from 0 to 161 (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)

It is a self-report questionnaire used to measure emotional intelligence. The SEIS consists of 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 5 “*strongly agree*.” The scores are obtained by summing the responses, with an overall score ranging from 33 to 165 (Schutte et al., 1998).

Data Analysis

The qualitative data will be analysed using suitable statistical methods. Correlation analysis will be computed to explore the relationship between parental stress and marital satisfaction. The findings of the study will indicate a significant negative relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction. Independent Sample t-test results will suggest significant differences among joint and nuclear family systems, gender. All the data analysis will be done using IBM SPSS (25th Version).

Procedure

Data will be collected using snowball sampling techniques from married couples residing in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Prior to participation, formal consent will be obtained through a signed informed consent form. Participants will be briefed about the objectives of the study and assured that all information provided will remain confidential, anonymous, and will be used solely for research purposes.

A booklet of compromise of questionnaire on parental stress and marital satisfaction will be provided. Furthermore, they will be requested to respond to each item as honestly as possible. This will take 8 to 12 minutes to complete questionnaire booklet. The questionnaire booklet will be given to them in hard copy.

Ethical Consideration

The research will be conducted following ethical approval from the Ethical Review Board of the Department of Psychology at the International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI). We will also obtain approval from the Ethical Committee of the International Islamic University, Islamabad. All the participants will be provided with a detailed information sheet outlining the study and their rights. Written informed consent will be obtained from each participant, ensuring complete confidentiality throughout the data collection and reporting process. To guarantee participants anonymity, data will be anonymous, and names will be excluded from all the reports and files.

RESULTS

Table 1*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (n=100)*

Variables	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
Marriage Duration	2 years – 3 years	57	57.0
	4 years - 5 years	43	43.0
Family System	Joint	41	41.0
	Nuclear	59	59.0

Table 1 indicates that a total of 100 participants were included in the study. As shown the sample consisted of 50 males (50.0%) and 5 females (50.0%). With regard to marital duration, 57 participants (57.0%) reported being married for 2–3 years, while 43 participants (43.0%) reported a duration of 4–5 years. In terms of family system, 41 participants (41.0%) belonged to joint family structures, whereas a majority of 59 participants (59.0%) belonged to nuclear family systems. Overall, the demographic distribution reflects a slightly higher representation of

females and nuclear family backgrounds, with most participants married for a relatively shorter duration.

Table 2*Psychometric Properties of Study Major Variables*

Measures	k	α	Range		M	SD	Skew.	Kurt.
			Min	Max				
PSOC	17	.72	49	70	60.02	4.16	-.02	-.45
CSI	33	.68	54	104	82.44	9.89	-0.2	-.09
SEIS	33	.73	93	115	105.44	4.35	-.34	-.02

Note: PSOC: Parenting Sense of Competence scale, CSI: Couple Satisfaction Index, SEIS: Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, Skew= Skewness, Kurt= Kurtosis

Table 2 presents the psychometric properties of the major study variables, including parenthood (PSOC), marital satisfaction (CSI), and emotional intelligence (SEIS). Internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) for the scales ranged from acceptable to good. Specifically, the PSOC demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .72$), while the CSI showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .68$), and the SEIS demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .73$).

Descriptive statistics indicated that PSOC scores ranged from 49 to 70 ($M = 60.02$, $SD = 4.16$), CSI scores ranged from 54 to 104 ($M = 82.44$, $SD = 9.89$), and SEIS scores ranged from 93 to 115 ($M = 105.44$, $SD = 4.35$). Values for skewness ($-.34$ to $-.02$) and kurtosis ($-.45$ to $-.02$) across all measures fall within acceptable limits (± 1), suggesting that the distributions of the variables approximate normality (Field, 2018). Overall, the measures demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties for use in the current sample.

Table 3

Correlation of Parenthood, Marital satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence (n=100)

Variable	1	2	3
Parenthood	-		
Marital Satisfaction	.09	-	
Emotional Intelligence	.21*	-.01	-

*Note: * $p < .05$, LL= Lower limit, UL= Upper Limit*

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among parenthood, marital satisfaction, and emotional intelligence among married individuals ($N = 100$).

Results indicated that parenthood was positively and significantly correlated with emotional intelligence, $r = .21$, $p < .05$, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tended to report slightly higher parenthood scores. However, parenthood was not significantly correlated with marital satisfaction, $r = .09$, $p > .05$, and marital satisfaction was not significantly correlated with emotional intelligence, $r = -.01$, $p > .05$.

Overall, these findings suggest that while emotional intelligence is modestly associated with parenthood

Table 4

Multiple linear regression analysis demonstrating effect of Demographics on the prediction of parenthood among married couples (n=100)

Predictors	Parenthood	
	Model 1 B	95% CI LL, UL
(constant)	61.81	[58.20, 65.41]
Gender	-1.78	[-3.45, -.09]
Family System	-.40	[-2.08, 1.27]
Marriage Duration	-.16	[-1.85, 1.5]
R ²		.05
F		1.62

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether demographic variables (gender, family system, and marriage duration) significantly predicted parenthood among married couples ($N = 100$).

The overall regression model was not statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 1.62$, $p > .05$, indicating that the combination of gender, family system, and marriage duration did not significantly predict parenthood. The model explained only 5% of the variance in parenthood ($R^2 = .05$).

Examining individual predictors, gender had a negative but weak and marginally significant relationship with parenthood ($B = -1.78$, 95% CI $[-3.45, -0.09]$), suggesting that males and females may slightly differ in parenthood scores, with females scoring somewhat higher. However, family system ($B = -0.40$) and marriage duration ($B = -0.16$) were not significant predictors of parenthood.

Overall, the findings suggest that demographic variables do not meaningfully predict parenthood among married couples in this sample.

Table 5*Couple Differences on mean scores of marital satisfaction*

Variable	Joint (n=41)		Nuclear (n=59)		<i>t</i> (98)	<i>p</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
CSI	82.17	11.02	82.63	9.12	-.23	.29	-4.46	3.55	.04

Note: CSI= Couple Satisfaction Index, LL= Lower Limit, UL= Upper Limit

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare marital satisfaction (CSI) between couples from joint families and nuclear families. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in marital satisfaction scores between participants from joint families ($M = 82.17$, $SD = 11.02$) and those from nuclear families ($M = 82.63$, $SD = 9.12$); $t(98) = -0.23$, $p = .29$, 95% CI [-4.46, 3.55]. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = .04$), indicating a negligible difference in marital satisfaction between the two family systems.

These findings suggest that family structure (joint vs. nuclear) does not have a meaningful impact on marital satisfaction among the participants in this sample.

Table 6*Moderating effect of emotional intelligence on parenthood and marital satisfaction (n=100)*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI <i>LL, UL</i>
Constant	82.23	1.02	80.73	.00	[80.21, 84.25]
Emotional Intelligence	-.04	.24	-.17	.86	[-.51, .43]
Parenthood	.28	.24	1.14	.25	[-.20, .78]
Parenthood*Emotional Intelligence	.05	.06	.95	.34	[-.06, .17]
<i>R</i> ²					.02
F					.66

A moderation analysis was conducted using Model 1 of Hayes' (2022) PROCESS macro to examine whether emotional intelligence (SEIS) moderates the relationship between parenthood (PSOC) and marital satisfaction (CSI) among a sample of 100 participants.

Results of the regression analysis indicated that the overall model was not statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 0.658$, $p = .580$, with an $R^2 = .020$. This suggests that approximately 2% of the variance in marital satisfaction was explained by the combined effects of parenthood, emotional intelligence, and their interaction.

Importantly, the interaction term between parenthood and emotional intelligence was also not statistically significant, $b = 0.056$, $SE = 0.059$, $t(96) = 0.951$, $p = .344$, 95% CI [-0.061,

0.173]. These results suggest that emotional intelligence does not moderate the relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction. In other words, the association between parenthood and marital satisfaction remains relatively stable regardless of individuals' levels of emotional intelligence.

Discussion

The current study is based on relationship between parenthood, marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence and predictor of parenthood. With that demographic variables were carried out with study variables.

As the “first hypothesis” of study suggests, there is a significant negative relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction among married couples. But the findings, the study revealed no noteworthy relationship between parenthood and marital satisfaction, which contrasts with a few pasts considering that marital satisfaction tends to decrease after the move to parenthood (Lawrence 2008; Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). One conceivable clarification for this irregularity is that the couples within the current sample may have created versatile coping components or benefited from solid familial and social support systems that buffer the potential stretch related to child rearing. In collectivist societies such as Pakistan, amplified family inclusion and shared childcare duties can decrease the strain on the marital relationship, in this manner keeping up fulfilment despite the challenges of parenthood. This translation is steady with inquiry about indicating out that in collectivist settings, family allocentric and connected family systems can act as defensive variables in couple relationships (Kaizm & Rafique, 2022). studies in Pakistani samples such as Arif & Fatima (2015) and Kaizm & Rafique (2022) highlight that social standards around family obligation, extended kin involvement, and religiosity may move the indicators of marital fulfilment absent from parenthood alone and toward broader socio relational components.

As the “second hypothesis” of the study, there is a significant positive relationship between parenthood and emotional intelligence among married couples. The finding of the study show that this study found a clear link between being a parent and having higher emotional intelligence ($r = .21, p < .05$). In other words, married parents usually score higher in emotional intelligence than people without kids. Honestly, that lines up with what you'd expect.

Past research backs this up. Parents often grow emotionally just by being there for their kids every day (Șițoiu, 2023). Other studies following people over time show that while your basic emotional intelligence doesn't change much, certain abilities like staying in control, showing empathy, or managing tough emotions—can shift when you become a parent (Galdiolo et al., 2020). Looking at Pakistan, one study found that emotional intelligence helps married couples adjust better to each other (Siddiqa & Majeed, 2021). Another showed that married working women had higher emotional intelligence than married men and housewives, suggesting things like gender, job, and marriage itself shape emotional intelligence (Kalsoom, 2021).

So, the connection between parenthood and emotional intelligence here fits with the idea that having kids adds to your emotional skills but doesn't totally change who you are emotionally.

The results obtained from our study is in contrast with the ‘third hypothesis’. Consistent with the present study's findings, previous research has also reported non-significant moderation effects of emotional intelligence on marital or family-related relationships. For instance, Siddiqui et al. (2023) found that although emotional intelligence was positively associated with marital adjustment among married women in a joint-family system, it did not moderate the association between parenthood and marital satisfaction. Similarly, a study conducted in Indonesia on 346

married individuals revealed that emotional intelligence did not significantly moderate the negative relationship between perceived inter-parental conflict and marital satisfaction (Rahmah et al., 2021). These results collectively suggest that while emotional intelligence is generally linked to more adaptive interpersonal functioning, it may not necessarily buffer the effects of parenting or family-related stressors on marital satisfaction. Thus, the current findings align with prior evidence indicating that the influence of emotional intelligence may be more direct rather than conditional in the context of marital relationships

The “forth hypothesis” of the study suggests that there will be a significant mean difference in marital satisfaction between couples living in joint and nuclear family systems. But the findings of the current study show that in this study, there wasn’t any real difference in marital satisfaction between couples in joint families and those in nuclear families. The numbers just aren’t that far apart, and the stats back that up—there’s basically no effect. So, at least in our group, whether you live in a joint or nuclear family doesn’t seem to change how satisfied you are in your marriage. This lines up with what others have found in Pakistan. One study through the Pakistan Psychological Research Index also saw no real difference between the two-family types when it came to marital or life satisfaction. And there’s a larger study from District Abbottabad, same story. People in both types of families reported high satisfaction, though joint families had a tiny edge (87.5% vs. 81%). But the authors there pointed out that things like income and education mattered a lot more for satisfaction than the type of family you lived in. So, our findings fit with the idea that, these days in Pakistan, just the structure of your family isn’t what determines your marital happiness.

The “hypothesis no 5” of the study suggest that Demographic variables significantly predict parenthood among couples. The finding of the study shows that the findings from current

study appear that things like gender, family system, and how long a couple has been married don't truly tell us much approximately whether they become parents ($R^2 = .05$, $F(3, 96) = 1.62$, $p > .05$). These components barely scratch the surface when it comes to clarifying who closes up having kids. Prior research in Pakistan backs this up: urban women in Lahore and Faisalabad, ages 25 to 45, were more impacted by their convictions around family life and their attitudes, like leaning toward sons when it came to having children. Essential socioeconomics, such as family pay, what the spouse did for a living, or how religious they were, didn't appear to matter much (Zafar, Passage, & Ankomah, 1995). It's a comparative story somewhere else. In Hamadan, Iran, analysts found that things like being younger, having more education, being married for a shorter time, or as of now having a girl associated to a woman's purposeful desire to have more kids. But indeed at that point, mental factors like attitudes, what individuals around them thought, and what made it simpler or harder only clarified around 16.8% of the distinction in women's intentions (Bandehehlahi, 2019). The numbers aren't that solid for socioeconomics alone. Looking further out, ponders in China found that female college students' choices around having kids for the most part came down to psychosocial stuff, feminist identity, how difficult they thought it would be to have children, and so on. More than half of them (53.6%) didn't indeed have a clear desire to become parents, and once more, socioeconomic fair didn't move the needle much (Qiao et al., 2024).

The study also shows relapse results in which gender, family system and marriage duration together clarified as it were almost 5% of the variance in parenthood and the in general show was not statistically significant suggests that essential demographic factors alone may have small control to anticipate whether married couples become parents (or their parenthood score) in this test. On the one hand, this adjusts with writing underlining that the transition to

parenthood may be a complex, multi-faceted choice process instead of one driven essentially by demographic markers: for example, fertility intentions have been found to anticipate consequent childbearing more emphatically than many demographic components (Preis et al., 2020) and timing and setting of to begin with birth are impacted by financial and relevant factors (Dewau et al., 2021). Moreover, investigate demonstrating gender variations in reproductive intentions and behavior proposes that the negligible negative coefficient for gender females scoring slightly higher on parenthood may show a minor sex part impact (Beaujouan & Berghammer, 2019) though since the impact is powerless and minimal, it ought to be deciphered cautiously.

Parenthood comes about in Pakistan may not be well clarified by these crucial statistic determinants alone, concurring to the discoveries. Typically, reliability with considers appearing that family relationship and family frameworks have a more inconspicuous effect on reproduction outcomes. Consanguineous marriages, for instance, were connected to higher fertility, prior to begin with births, and numerous children among Pakistani ladies, according to Iqbal, Zakar, Fischer, and Zakar (2022).

Limitations and Suggestions

Following are the limitations of this study

1. The cross-sectional design prevents establishing causal relationships between parenthood, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction.
2. The small sample size of 50 couples limits statistical power and reduces the reliability of the findings.
3. The use of a non-probability snowball sampling technique restricts generalizability and may introduce sampling bias.

4. Participants recruited through personal networks may share similar demographic or social characteristics, leading to a lack of diversity in the sample.
5. Self-report questionnaires may be affected by social desirability bias, memory errors, or exaggerated responses.
6. Collecting all data through the same survey at one point in time may result in common method variance.
7. The measures of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction may not fully capture cultural nuances if not validated for the local context.
8. Treating parenthood as a single variable may oversimplify its complexity, as factors such as number of children or their ages were not considered
9. As use of self-report measures in this study which may affects the results due to response bias. It is recommended that qualitative methods should be conducted.
10. Marital satisfaction and parental experiences can change over time, but the cross-sectional approach cannot capture these dynamics.
11. The data from both partners may not be statistically independent, which could affect the accuracy of the analysis.
12. The study's findings may not generalize to populations beyond the cultural or regional context of the participants.

Following are the suggestions:

1. Future research should use a larger and more diverse sample to increase statistical power and enhance the generalizability of findings.
2. Researchers should consider employing a longitudinal design to examine changes in marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence across different stages of parenthood.

3. The use of probability sampling techniques is recommended to reduce sampling bias and improve representativeness.
4. Future studies should include objective or multi-informant measures, such as partner or observer ratings, to minimize self-report bias.
5. It is advisable to control for potential confounding variables such as socioeconomic status, length of marriage, and mental health.
6. Researchers could differentiate between types or stages of parenthood (e.g., new parents, parents of adolescents) to capture more nuanced effects.
7. The inclusion of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insight into the emotional and relational dynamics of married couples.
8. Future work should ensure that measurement instruments are culturally validated and psychometrically sound in the local context.
9. Future research can explore additional moderators or mediators, such as stress, coping strategies, or communication patterns, to understand complex relationships.
10. Researchers should reduce common method bias by collecting data from multiple sources or at different time points.

Implications of the study

This study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics between family roles, emotional capacities, and relationship quality among married couples. It highlights the importance of considering both individual and contextual factors when examining marital well-being, emphasizing that emotional skills alone may not fully account for variations in relationship satisfaction. The findings point toward the need for holistic approaches that strengthen couples' communication, mutual understanding, and adaptability within diverse

family structures. Practically, the research underscores the potential value of marital counseling and family life education programs that focus on fostering emotional awareness, shared responsibilities, and resilience in navigating the challenges of family life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how parenthood, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction interact within marital relationships. While emotional intelligence appears to be an important personal resource, it alone may not determine the quality of marital satisfaction or significantly alter the effects of parenthood on marital dynamics. The findings suggest that marital satisfaction is likely influenced by multiple interconnected factors beyond emotional capabilities, such as communication patterns, shared responsibilities, and social support. Overall, the study emphasizes the need for a broader perspective in promoting healthy marital relationships and emotional well-being among couples.

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APPENDICES

Annexure A: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study "impact of parenthood on marital satisfaction; moderating role of emotional intelligence in married couples". This study is being conducted by Muhib Ullah, MS Scholar, Department of Psychology, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Your participation involves completing a questionnaire assessing these factors. Participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. All information will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Your responses are anonymous. This will take you just 8 to 10 minutes only.

By completing the questionnaire, you indicate informed consent. If you have any queries or concerns, please feel free to contact me at muhib.mscp508@student.iiu.edu.pk.

Signature. _____

Annexure B: Demographic Sheet

Gender	1) Male	2) Female
Family System	1) Joint family	2) Nuclear family
Marriage duration	1) 2-3 years	3) 3-5 years

Annexure C: Parental Sense of Competence (PSOC)

Parenting Sense of Competence Scale

(Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978)

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Even though being a parent could be rewarding, I am frustrated now while my child is at his / her present age.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I go to bed the same way I wake up in the morning, feeling I have not accomplished a whole lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I do not know why it is, but sometimes when I'm supposed to be in control, I feel more like the one being manipulated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My mother was better prepared to be a good mother than I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I would make a fine model for a new mother to follow in order to learn what she would need to know in order to be a good parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. A difficult problem in being a parent is not knowing whether you're doing a good job or a bad one.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting anything done.	1	2	3	4	5	
10. I meet by own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. My talents and interests are in other areas, not being a parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Considering how long I've been a mother, I feel thoroughly familiar with this role.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. If being a mother of a child were only more interesting, I would be motivated to do a better job as a parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Being a parent makes me tense and anxious.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Being a good mother is a reward in itself.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Annexure D: Couple Satisfactory Index

Interventions aimed at reducing intimate partner violence.

Scale:

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
2. Amount of time spent together	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0

	All the Time	Most of the Time	More often than Not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
5. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all True	A little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
7. I still feel a strong connection with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. My relationship with my partner makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. I really feel like part of a team with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at All	A little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost completely	Completely
19. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5

21. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Worse than all others (extremely bad)					Better than all others (extremely good)
23. How good is your relationship compared to most?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More Often
24. Do you enjoy your partner's company?	0	1	2	3	4	5
25. How often do you and your partner have fun together?	0	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes *how you feel about your relationship*. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

26.	INTERESTING	5	4	3	2	1	0	BORING
27.	BAD	0	1	2	3	4	5	GOOD
28.	FULL	5	4	3	2	1	0	EMPTY
29.	LONELY	0	1	2	3	4	5	FRIENDLY
30.	STURDY	5	4	3	2	1	0	FRAGILE
31.	DISCOURAGING	0	1	2	3	4	5	HOPEFUL
32.	ENJOYABLE	5	4	3	2	1	0	MISERABLE

Annexure E: Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)

This questionnaire is designed to measure your emotional intelligence. There are 33 statements below. Please rate each statement on how well it describes you by circling the appropriate number on the scale from 1 to 5, where:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Please answer as honestly as possible.

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Other people find it easy to confide in me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I expect good things to happen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I like to share my emotions with others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I arrange events others enjoy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
14. I seek out activities that make me happy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I know why my emotions change.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I have control over my emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. I compliment others when they have done something well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. When another person tells me about an important event in their life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. I help other people feel better when they are down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Total score:					