



Attachment Styles, Romantic Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction among Married Individuals

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ABSTRACT

The aims of the current study were to find out relationship of attachment styles (secure, dependent & Anxious) and romantic jealousy (cognitive emotional & behavioral) with marital satisfaction. It was also aimed to explore the predictors (attachment styles, romantic jealousy) of marital satisfaction. Moreover, gender differences were also explored. These objectives were explored in two phases. The guidelines of forward-back translation (Brislin, 1976) were followed to translate the first: Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS) and Marital Satisfaction Scale (ENRICH-MSS) into Urdu language. Sample of main study consisted N = 226 married individuals Men's (N=162), Women's (N=64) with age range of 25 to 50 years (M = 33.06, SD = 8.45). They differed in their level of education from matriculation to PhD. The Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS) by Collins (1996) $\alpha = .74$, Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989) $\alpha = .93$ and The Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) $\alpha = .46$ were used. Results showed that most of the participants scored high on Close attachment, Dependent attachment and anxious attachment, 128, 115 and 117 respectively with cut of scores of 17 and 18. In the same way, they scored high on Marital satisfaction = 139 and idealistic distortion = 116 with cut of scores 31 and 18 respectively. In contrast, they had low scores on Multidimensional Jealousy scale and its three sub scales. Highly significant positive relationship was found between attachment styles and ENRICH-Marital Satisfaction ($r = .40$, $p < .001$) while inverse and significant relationship was found between ENRICH Marital Satisfaction and romantic jealousy ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$). The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that revised adult attachment and three sub-scores, multidimensional jealousy scale and three sub-scores were predictive of marital satisfaction and explained 32% of the total variance. In contrast, gender difference was not observed to be significant. The implications of the study were discussed in cultural context of Pakistan.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important relationships in adulthood and is essential for the satisfaction of biological and psychological requirements and the development of families (Larson & Holman, 1994). In addition to companionship, satisfying marriages are linked to improved physical and psychological well-being compared to being single, divorced or separated (Diener et al., 1999; Gove et al., 1983; Mookherjee, 1997; Myers, 2000; Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). But the maintenance of that satisfaction depends on how partners regulate closeness, threat and trust, which is determined by the attachment orientation and vulnerability to romantic jealousy (Erbek et al., 2005; Beştepe et al., 2005; Akar et al., 2005; Eradamlar et al., 2005; Soylu & Kağnıcı, 2015; Tutarel-Kislak & Göztepe, 2012). The present study looked at the relationship between attachment styles and romantic jealousy and how this relationship predicts marital satisfaction among the married people of Pakistan and if there is any difference in this relationship between males and females.

Attachment and Adult Romantic Relationships

Bowlby (1969) defined attachment as an enduring psychological bond that starts with the caregiver–infant bond and persists throughout life to organize proximity, comfort and security-seeking. Ainsworth (1979) expanded this model by demonstrating the transfer of working models from caregivers to peer and romantic relationships, which are qualitatively different from those of childhood (Bretherton, 1992). In adulthood, these working models appear as broad, prototypical attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant/dependent) that influence understanding of a partner's actions and affect emotion within the relationship (Brennan & Shaver, 1993; Fraley, 2010). This individual-differences model has been operationalized in the Revised Adult Attachment Scale by Collins (1996), which includes a close (secure), dependent and anxious attachment dimension that will be used to measure attachment in the present study.

Romantic attachment research suggests that attachment orientation is related to unique emotional and cognitive reactions to relationship threat, such as infidelity and relationship dissolution (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008; Simpson & Belsky, 2008). People with high attachment anxiety are more likely to perceive relational threat, less likely to perceive commitment by the partner and to report higher levels of jealousy (Kim et al., 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Sharpsteen & Kirkpatrick, 1997). There is also a theoretical basis for linking insecure attachment with negative relational functioning (Feeney & Noller, 1994), which has been demonstrated in insecure attachment to be associated with poorer communication, higher conflict, and, in extreme cases, partner violence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994; Kesner & McKenry, 1998; Mayselless, 1991).

Romantic Jealousy

The term "jealousy" is from the Greek word *zelos*, which means loyalty and possessiveness (Hupka, 1991), and the construct has been described in many different forms in many cultures. Jealousy is often thought of as a complex of emotions, thoughts and actions that occur when a valued relationship is somehow challenged by a perceived or actual competitor (Guerrero et al., 2004). White (1981) also conceptualized romantic jealousy as a constellation of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that occur when there is a threat to one's self-esteem or to the relationship itself, and Bringle and Buunk (1985) described jealousy as an aversive reaction to partner's real or perceived involvement in other relationships. In the tri-partite model used in the present study, cognitive jealousy is defined as intrusive or suspicious thoughts about the partner's fidelity, emotional jealousy is defined as feelings of anger, hurt, and insecurity at the presence of a rival, and behavioral jealousy is defined as surveillance and/or protective behaviors of the partner (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). For example, insecurely attached individuals report higher levels of jealousy, increased vigilance to relational threat, and more destructive coping responses when they are perceived as being threatened in a romantic relationship (Huelsenitz et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2014; Sharpsteen & Kirkpatrick, 1997); securely attached and dismissively attached individuals report comparatively low levels of jealousy-related reactivity. Notably, the attachment–jealousy link is not consistent across jealousy subtypes: recent evidence has shown that anxious attachment is associated with all three forms of jealousy, whereas avoidant attachment is selectively related to cognitive (suspicious) jealousy, but not to emotional or behavioral jealousy (Brauer & Proyer, 2025), supporting the importance of maintaining the tripartite jealousy structure employed in the present study, and not collapsing it into a single undifferentiated construct. Jealousy has also been linked with poorer self-esteem and irrational suspicions, in its more extreme or "morbid" expressions, without evidence (Miller et al., 2014; Tarrier, Beckett, Harwood, & Ahmed, 1989; Tarrier, Beckett, Harwood, & Bishay, 1990). Personal variables (sex, attachment style, self-esteem), interpersonal variables (relationship satisfaction, violence), and socio-cultural variables (rival characteristics, cross-cultural differences) were the main variables analyzed in the literature in a systematic review of the literature on jealousy (Martínez-León et al., 2017).

The experience of jealousy has been the subject of a lot of interest in terms of gender differences. Evolutionary explanations suggest that men are more upset by sexual infidelity, which would involve concerns about being unsure of paternity, but

women are more upset by emotional infidelity, which would involve concerns about being deprived of resources and commitment by a partner (Bendixen et al., 2015; Buss, 1995; Daly et al., 1982). But there is mixed empirical evidence for this pattern, depending on the measure, sexual orientation, and cultural context (Dijkstra et al., 2013; Green & Sabini, 2006; Harris, 2000; Scherer et al., 2013); and other demographic factors such as family structure, income, and previous relationship experiences are brought into play (Zengel et al., 2013).

Marital Satisfaction

The psychological state of marital satisfaction can be defined as the balance between perceived benefits and costs in marriage, increasing perceived costs and decreasing benefits decrease satisfaction, and increasing benefits and decreasing costs increase satisfaction (Stone & Shackelford, 2007). Shared commitment, mutual respect, sexual loyalty, and spiritual or religious commitment have been associated with the long-term satisfaction of marriage; flexible and compatible coping styles within the marriage have also been associated with the long-term satisfaction of marriage (Lauer et al., 1990; Craddock, 1991). Other correlates of satisfaction are the quality of communication, joint use of time, and personality and religious similarity (Schumm et al., 1985), and the transition to parenthood and other life events have been demonstrated to interact with satisfaction (Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993). In addition to its direct effects, marital satisfaction is also associated with other life satisfaction downstream, which spirituality was found to partially mediate in a Turkish sample (Kasapoğlu & Yabanıgöl, 2018).

Relationship between Attachment, Jealousy, and Marital Satisfaction

There is a developing body of research regarding the relationship between attachment security and relational and sexual satisfaction. However, a study by Butzer and Campbell (2008) of couples in Canada between the ages of 21 and 75 found that anxious and avoidant attachments were linked to lower sexual satisfaction, and that a relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction was stronger among more anxious couples. Attachment insecurity is also associated with intimate partner violence (IPV) (McClellan & Killeen, 2000), and attachment orientation is also predictive of communication-technology use in romantic relationships, with avoidant attachment orientation being related to lower intimacy-related communication channels and anxious attachment orientation being related to higher levels of conflict over electronic communication (Morey et al., 2013). Reactive (emotional) jealousy is more likely to be described as relationally protective, while suspicious (cognitive) jealousy is more likely to be described as relationally dissatisfying (Attridge, 2013). The longitudinal studies of marital satisfaction have found that satisfaction tends to drop during the first 15 years of parenthood, irrespective of the level of initial attachment security, with initial attachment security predicting the extent of the drop (Hirschberger et al., 2009); and five decades of attachment studies in general have found that early attachment experience is associated with later psychopathology, physical health, and relationship functioning (Cassidy et al., 2013).

This picture has been continuously elaborated by more recent research. In married students, the results of a structural equation modeling study indicated that positive relational behaviors (warmness and constructive conflict resolution) mediated the relationship between secure attachment and marital satisfaction while anxious and avoidant attachment had a similar pattern with negative relational behaviors (Amani et al., 2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis of 17 studies and over 13,000 participants conducted in 2023 also found that attachment anxiety and avoidance were strong correlates of marital infidelity, with fearful and dismissive attachment as the strongest correlates, highlighting the continued clinical importance of attachment-based models of marital risk (Ghiassi et al., 2023). Cross-cultural work also reminds us to be aware of the potential for transfer of attachment-satisfaction paths to collectivist contexts; cross-cultural research on couples between Pakistan and Western countries demonstrated that Pakistanis placed comparatively higher importance on extended-family relationship standards than on the dyadic, couple centered standards highlighted in Western attachment research, which has implications for the ways in which satisfaction is defined and sought out (Ayub et al., 2023). In the Pakistani context, it is found that together trust and romantic love predict marital satisfaction in both love and arranged marriages, and that wives in arranged marriage report high satisfaction, indicating that culturally specific relational resources can buffer against or replace the attachment-based pathways found in Western samples (Kausar et al., 2024).

Romantic jealousy research has also entered into new empirical area. Richter, Schlegel, Thomas, and Troche (2022) further validated that attachment anxiety is a robust individual difference predictor of jealousy after controlling for general personality traits, using a combined personality and attachment approach that included personality dimensions (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral subtypes). A large replication and meta-analytic study also confirmed that the effects of rival attractiveness on jealousy are small, reliable, and vary by sex, while the effects of rival dominance are small and not consistent across sex (Pollet & Saxton, 2020), further supporting the idea that there are reliable, but small and context-dependent, evolutionary sex differences in jealousy. The digital dimension of jealousy has also gained in prominence with the growing popularity of research on this topic, which showed that social media-related jealousy was associated with an increase

in electronic partner surveillance and a decrease in relationship satisfaction 1 year later in a two-year longitudinal study of young couples (Métellus et al., 2025); the digital route to relationship satisfaction was also found to significantly account for the previously reported relationship between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction. The present study did not examine social media use, but this new literature indicates that the pathways between attachment insecurity and jealousy and dissatisfaction are likely to be manifested more and more through digital surveillance and online monitoring, which is a medium that is becoming more prevalent in the region with the rising use of smartphones and social media.

Yet, to date, few studies have investigated how attachment styles and romantic jealousy interact to predict marital satisfaction specifically within the context of arranged marriages and the potential for culturally specific factors like alcohol use and dating to influence the relationship between romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction, as well as the possibility of family attachment patterns influencing or modifying the relationship between romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction, which are more prevalent in Pakistan than in other Western cultures, and in which alcohol and dating-related correlates of romantic jealousy studied elsewhere (DiBello et al., 2015) may have a different impact (Ayub et al., 2023). The aim of the present study was to fill this gap.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to investigate the correlation of attachment styles (secure, dependent, anxious) and romantic jealousies (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) with marital satisfaction, to find out whether the attachment styles and romantic jealousies predict marital satisfaction, and to compare the gender differences in attachment styles, romantic jealousies and marital satisfaction.

Hypotheses

H1: Secure attachment will be positively related to marital satisfaction, whereas dependent and anxious attachment and romantic jealousy (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) will be negatively related to marital satisfaction.

H2: Attachment styles and romantic jealousy will predict marital satisfaction among married individuals.

H3: Men will score higher than women on secure attachment and marital satisfaction.

H4: Women will score higher than men on dependent and anxious attachment and on romantic jealousy (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral).

Method

Research Design

The design of the study was correlational, cross sectional. Predictor variables were attachment styles (secure, dependent, and anxious) and romantic jealousy (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) while marital satisfaction (idealistic distortion and marital satisfaction) was the outcome variable.

Translation and Adaptation of Instruments

Since Urdu versions of Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS) (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989) and ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (MS) (Fowers & Olson, 1993) were not available, both scales were translated and culturally adapted according to the forward-back translation method described by Brislin (1970). Five bilingual experts had permission from the original authors to independently translate the English to Urdu. The five versions were then analyzed for cultural appropriateness, conceptual equivalence and linguistic economy by a bilingual committee. The Urdu version was then back-translated and compared by three independent bilingual experts and the discrepancies in meaning were discussed in the committee and resolved; item wording was then refined by two Urdu language experts for cultural fit. The revised translations were returned to the original scale authors who did not ask for substantive changes. Urdu versions were then pretested with 10 married women to check the items which were not clear, then pretested with larger sample of $n = 30$ per scale and then the items were clarified before the main study, where 90% of participants found the items easy to understand in Urdu.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used for the recruitment of participants and GPower was used to estimate the sample size. Of the 400 people who were initially approached, 144 questionnaires were discarded because they were incomplete or had invariant responses (e.g., always selecting the same response option), leaving an analytic sample of $N = 226$ married persons (162 males, 64 females) aged 25-50 ($M = 33.06$, $SD = 8.45$). Training was from matric to doctoral. Married people with 12 years or

more of education were studied, those with less than 12 years were not. The complete demographic description of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 226)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	162	72
Female	64	28
Education		
Middle–Matric	40	18
F.A.–B.A.	61	27
M.A.–M.Phil.	117	52
PhD	8	4
Profession		
Working	199	88
Not working	27	12
Family system		
Joint	163	72
Nuclear	63	28
Area of residence		
Urban	153	68
Rural	73	32
Type of marriage		
Love marriage	86	38
Arranged marriage	140	62
Duration of marriage		
6 months–1 year	60	27
2–5 years	128	57
6–10 years	38	16

Note: Age was recorded as a continuous variable ($M = 33.06$, $SD = 8.45$) and is not represented as a frequency category above.

Measures

Demographic Information Proforma. The data was collected using a demographic form, which included questions about age, gender, education, profession, marital status, type of marriage (love or arranged) and experience of romantic love.

Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS): The RAAS (Collins, 1996) is an 18-item measure of adult attachment that has three sub scales: close/secure attachment, dependent attachment, and anxious attachment. Items are scored on a 5 point scale: not at all characteristic of me to very much characteristic of me; 8 items are reverse-scored. In the present sample, the scale was found to be reliable (see Table 2).

Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS). The MJS (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989), which is a 28-item instrument, consists of three subscales for cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy, with items scored on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The cognitive jealousy subscale was reverse scored before analysis. As seen in Table 2, there was good reliability within the current sample.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS). The EMS (Fowers & Olson, 1993) consists of 15 items that are divided into two subscales: idealistic distortion (5 items) and marital satisfaction (10 items) that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with 6 items reverse-scored. The scale showed adequate to good reliability in the present sample (see Table 2).

Procedure

The participants were approached via personal and interpersonal networks and gave informed consent to participate in the study, which was voluntary and confidential, after approval from their department and after approval from the original scale authors. Participants were asked to fill out the demographic form, RAAS, MJS and EMS in one go and it takes about an average of 20-25 mins. Ethical issues related to data collection with human subjects were followed, such as informed consent and confidentiality.

Results

Reliability Analysis

Table 2

Scale/Subscale	k	α
Revised Adult Attachment Scale	18	.74
Secure (close) attachment	6	.49
Dependent attachment	6	.41
Anxious attachment	6	.41
Multidimensional Jealousy Scale	24	.93
Cognitive jealousy	8	.90
Emotional jealousy	8	.87
Behavioral jealousy	8	.83
ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale	15	.46
Idealistic distortion	5	.47
Marital satisfaction	10	.77

Note: k = number of items; α = Cronbach's alpha.

The internal consistency coefficients for the study measures are shown in Table 2. The Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS) showed satisfactory internal consistency for the total scale ($\alpha = .74$), but the internal consistency for the Close ($\alpha = .49$), Dependent ($\alpha = .41$), and Anxious ($\alpha = .41$) subscales were somewhat low ($\alpha < .70$) indicating low internal consistency. The Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS) had good internal consistency for the total scale ($\alpha = .93$), and decent reliability for the Cognitive ($\alpha = .90$), Emotional ($\alpha = .87$), and Behavioral ($\alpha = .83$) subscale scores. The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale had very low internal consistency for the total scale ($\alpha = .46$) and Idealistic Distortion subscale ($\alpha = .47$), but the Marital Satisfaction subscale had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .77$). Thus, results of the overall ENRICH score and Idealistic Distortion should be interpreted with care.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants Less and High Scores on different Variables (N = 256)

Table 3

Variables	Cut of Scores	Minimum scores	Maximum scores
RAAS			
Close	17	98	128
Dependent	18	111	115
Anxiety	18	109	117
MJS			
Cognitive	12	157	69
Behavioral	16	151	75
Emotional	15	149	77
MS			
Idealistic	18	87	139
Satisfaction	31	110	116

More than half of the participants indicated scores higher than the midpoint for all of the following subscales: Close attachment (56.6%), Dependent attachment (50.9%), Anxious attachment (51.8%), Marital Satisfaction (51.3%), and Idealistic Distortion (61.5%). On the other hand, most of the participants had scores lower than the median for cognitive, behavioral, and emotional jealousy, suggesting low levels of romantic jealousy in the sample.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Correlations Among the Revised Adult Attachment Scale, ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, and Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (N = 226)

	Variable	1	2	3
1	RAAS	-	.40**	-.13
2	ENRICH-MSS		-	-.16*
3	MJS			-

Note. RAAS = Revised Adult Attachment Scale; ENRICH-MSS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale; MJS = Multidimensional Jealousy Scale. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is shown in Table 3 indicates that adult attachment was positively correlated with marital satisfaction, $r(224) = .40$, $p < .001$, such that more secure attachment was associated with greater marital satisfaction. Adult attachment was not significantly associated with romantic jealousy, $r(224) = -.13$, $p > .05$. Marital satisfaction was negatively correlated with romantic jealousy $r(224) = -.16$, $p < .05$, indicating that higher levels of romantic jealousy were associated with lower marital satisfaction. This results only partially fits with Hypothesis 1.

Table 5: Correlations Among the RAAS Subscales and ENRICH-MSS Subscales (N = 226)

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	RAAS	-	.49**	.56**	.32**	.36**	.42**	-.15*
2	CA		-	-.01	-.07	.17*	.12	-.03
3	DA			-	.08	.11	.08	-.16*
4	AA				-	.01	.11	-.13
5	MSS					-	.55**	.35**
6	ID						-	.13
7	MS							-

Note. RAAS = Revised Adult Attachment Scale; CA = Close/Secure Attachment; DA = Dependent Attachment; AA = Anxious Attachment; MSS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale; ID = Idealistic Distortion; MS = Marital Satisfaction subscale. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

The correlations between the dimensions of attachment and marital satisfaction are shown in Table 4. Overall marital satisfaction was positively associated with close attachment, albeit weakly, $r(224) = .17$, $p < .05$, indicating that the more comfortable one was with being close to their partner, the more satisfied the relationship was. There was a negative correlation between the Marital Satisfaction subscale and dependent attachment, $r(224) = -.16$, $p < .05$. The dependent attachment was negatively correlated with the Marital Satisfaction subscale, $r(224) = -.16$, $p < .05$, with higher levels of dependent attachment being associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. Neither anxious attachment nor idealistic distortion was significantly related to marital satisfaction. The results overall were only partially supportive of the hypothesized relationships between the dimensions of attachment and marital satisfaction.

Table 6: Correlations Among the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale Subscales and ENRICH-MSS Subscales (N = 226)

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	MJS	-	-.13	.84**	.69**	-.16*	-.15*	-.01
2	Cognitive		-	-.37**	-.52**	.23**	.26**	.03
3	Behavior			-	.60**	-.22**	-.23**	.10
4	Emotional				-	-.36**	-.35**	-.10
5	MSS					-	.97**	.66**
6	MS						-	.55**
7	ID							-

Note. MJS = Multidimensional Jealousy Scale, MSS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale; MS = Marital Satisfaction Subscale; ID = Idealistic Distortion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Overall romantic jealousy was negatively related to marital satisfaction, $r(224) = -.16$, $p < .05$ (see Table 5). Overall marital satisfaction and the Marital Satisfaction subscale were negatively correlated with behavioral jealousy, $r(224) = -.22$, $p < .001$, and $r(224) = -.23$, $p < .001$, respectively. Likewise, emotional jealousy had moderate negative correlations with overall

marital satisfaction, $r(224) = -.36, p < .001$, and the Marital Satisfaction subscale, $r(224) = -.35, p < .001$. Contrary to expectations, cognitive jealousy was positively associated with overall marital satisfaction, $r(224) = .23, p < .001$, and the Marital Satisfaction subscale, $r(224) = .26, p < .001$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported.

Table 7: Stepwise Multiple Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction (N = 226)

Step / Predictor	B	SE	β	p	ΔR^2
Step 1					.14
RAAS	.69	.12	.39	< .001	
Step 2					.09
Emotional jealousy	-.46	.11	-.29	< .001	
Step 3					.03
Dependent attachment	-.65	.25	-.21	.009	
Step 4					.03
Anxious attachment	-.54	.18	-.25	.004	
Step 5					.02
Close (secure) attachment	-.74	.28	-.22	.009	

To find out if adult attachment and romantic jealousy had a significant effect on marital satisfaction, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was carried out. As presented in Table 6, adult attachment was the strongest predictor and explained 14% of the variance in marital satisfaction, $\Delta R^2 = .14, F(1, 186) = 32.52, p < .001$. In the second step, emotional jealousy added 9% to the explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .09, p < .001$). The incremental variance in subsequent steps for dependent attachment, anxious attachment, and close attachment were significant ($\Delta R^2 = .03, .03, \text{ and } .02$, respectively).

The final regression model was statistically significant and accounted for 32% of the variance in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .32, F(5, 186) = 16.89, p < .001$). Emotional jealousy ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$), dependent attachment ($\beta = -.21, p = .009$), anxious attachment ($\beta = -.25, p = .004$), and close attachment ($\beta = -.22, p = .009$) negatively predicted marital satisfaction, controlling for the other predictors. The negative regression coefficient for close attachment, although positive at the zero-order correlation level, may be due to a suppression effect caused by the overlap in the attachment dimensions. In general, the results of this study confirmed Hypothesis 2.

Table 8: Gender Differences on the RAAS, MJS, and ENRICH-MSS (N = 226)

Variable	Men		Women		t(224)	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RAAS (total)	51.7	13.3	53.45	14.6	-0.82	.416
Close attachment	16.60	4.76	17.92	5.9	-1.63	.106
Dependent attachment	19.32	5.29	18.13	5.52	0.96	.340
Anxious attachment	17.72	4.90	17.39	5.8	0.39	.695
MJS (total)	51.6	22.2	54.31	26.2	-0.71	.476
Cognitive jealousy	17.20	9.8	17.19	10.3	0.01	.990
Behavioral jealousy	17.40	9.11	19.8	11.06	-1.48	.140
Emotional jealousy	16.8	8.44	17.34	9.09	-0.45	.652
ENRICH-MSS (total)	48.9	8.62	48.9	7.57	0.01	.989
Marital satisfaction	31.62	6.05	31.43	5.42	0.18	.859
Idealistic distortion	17.27	4.62	17.48	3.10	-0.30	.768

Independent-samples *t* tests were used to check for gender differences in attachment, romantic jealousy, and marital satisfaction (Table 7). There were no statistically significant gender differences in the total scores or any of the subscores for attachment, romantic jealousy or marital satisfaction (all $p > .05$). Thus, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were rejected.

The differences were not statistically significant, but women had slightly higher mean scores on close attachment, behavioral jealousy, emotional jealousy, total jealousy, and idealistic distortion than did men, while men had slightly higher mean scores on dependent attachment, anxious attachment, and marital satisfaction. The differences observed were minor and could be due to sampling variation.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between attachment styles, romantic jealousy, marital satisfaction among married individuals in Pakistan, test the prediction of attachment and romantic jealousy for marital satisfaction and examined gender differences in these constructs.

Attaching, Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction

Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. As predicted by earlier research on attachment and marital quality (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Sharpsteen & Kirkpatrick, 1997), and consistent with other attachment-based theories of relationship functioning, secure attachment was positively associated with marital satisfaction, whereas dependent attachment was negatively associated with the subscale of marital satisfaction. Overall romantic jealousy along with its behavioral and emotional dimensions – was also negatively correlated with satisfaction, similar to theoretical accounts proposing that jealousy erodes relational trust and security (Guerrero et al., 2004; Miller et al., 2014) and to a latest meta-analysis of the connection between attachment insecurity and chances for marital infidelity via comparable mechanisms of trust erosion (Ghiasi et al., 2023). The unexpected positive relationship between cognitive jealousy and marital satisfaction, however, was not consistent with western findings and might have been caused by either cultural differences in how suspicions are expressed in arranged and joint-family marital contexts in Pakistan, where family-level relationship standards, rather than only dyadic ones, influence how vigilance is understood (Ayub et al., 2023), or a measurement artifact due to the modest reliability of the reverse-scored cognitive subscale after translation. This is consistent with past warnings that romantic jealousy is not always a negative trait and that it can be seen as a sign of continued commitment by some partners (Attridge, 2013).

Hypothesis 2 was supported; attachment styles and marital jealousy together predicted 32% of the variance in marital satisfaction, a magnitude similar to the findings of attachment research on relationship satisfaction in Western samples (Mikulincer et al., 2003) and more recent studies that found attachment anxiety to be one of the strongest individual-difference predictors of marital jealousy, even after controlling for broad personality traits (Richter et al., 2022). In fact, adult attachment entered the model first and accounted for the most variance of the model, as did secure attachment with increased marital satisfaction, and insecure attachment with decreased marital satisfaction, as reported in the literature (Kobak & Hazan, 1991). Emotional jealousy came in second, in line with the evidence that emotional (as opposed to cognitive) jealousy has the highest relational cost (Guerrero et al., 2004). Additionally, newer longitudinal studies indicate that the link between attachment insecurity and relationships over time can be partially explained by jealousy, especially when transmitted through contemporary means like social media (Métellus et al., 2025), meaning that the predictive power that jealousy has in this study might be even greater as social media plays an increasing role in marriage life in Pakistan. The negative regression weight for that close/secure attachment in Step 2 after controlling for the other attachment subscales implies a statistical suppression effect, which is best interpreted with caution because of the relatively low reliability of the subscales in this sample.

Gender Differences

The results were mixed for hypotheses 3 and 4, as there were no significant differences between men and women with regard to attachment, jealousy, or marital satisfaction. This null pattern contrasts with the predictions of evolutionary theory that there should be strong sex differences in jealousy (Bendixen et al., 2015; Buss, 1995) but aligns with research indicating that sex differences in jealousy are smaller when controlling for demographic and cultural factors (Green & Sabini, 2006; Zengel et al., 2013), and with a recent large-scale replication and meta-analysis of the original findings that found sex differences in jealousy to be non-existent for reactions to rival dominance, while they were significant for reactions to rival attractiveness (Pollet & Saxton, 2020). Comparisons with other dating samples, which are predominantly younger and western (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kobak & Hazan, 1991), may not be generalizable to an older, more predominantly arranged marriage Pakistani sample in which marital roles, family structure and gender norms are significantly different. Descriptively, females tended to score slightly higher than males regarding close attachment, and a bit lower regarding behavioral jealousy, which is in the same direction as previous research, but not as statistically significant (Bendixen et al., 2015); further research with larger and more balanced gender sub-samples is warranted to test these differences with sufficient statistical power.

Implications

The results indicate that attachment-based couple therapy focusing on the identification of insecure working models that lead to jealous reactions and relationship appraisals could be a viable option to improve marital satisfaction in Pakistan alongside the other models of couple relationship quality which involve communication, shared values, and mutual commitment (Lauer et al., 1990; Gottman, 1999). This could be particularly important in light of recent studies showing that the secure attachment is associated with satisfaction primarily because of the concrete positive behaviors in the relationships, which can

be targeted in therapy (Amani et al., 2024), and because of evidence showing that attachment-informed interventions may have to target new forms of digital jealousy (e.g., social media surveillance) that were not measured in the present study but are increasingly linked to relationship enjoyment elsewhere (Métellus et al., 2025). They also extend attachment-jealousy-satisfaction models, which have been developed mostly in Western, dating, or newlywed populations (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Hirschberger et al., 2009), to a collectivist cultural context of joint-family living and arranged marriage, providing initial cross-cultural evidence that the broad structure of these relationships—if not every specific association replicates across cultures, and that trust, romantic love, and family-oriented relationship standards play a unique role in marital satisfaction locally (Ayub et al., 2023; Kausar et al., 2024).

Limitations and Future Directions

These conclusions are subject to several limitations. The cross-sectional correlational design does not allow for causal inferences, and longitudinal designs would be necessary to measure the effect of attachment and jealousy on the course of marital satisfaction over time (Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993). The internal consistency of some subscales was modest after translation (especially idealistic distortion subscale of ENRICH and some subscales of RAAS) which requires further psychometric refinement in Urdu-speaking population. There was also a gender imbalance (72% male) which limited the capacity for gender comparisons: future studies should seek to recruit more balanced samples. Third, other models for understanding the relationship between attachment and satisfaction with the relationship, such as mediation and moderation models (e.g., testing romantic jealousy as a mediator of the attachment satisfaction relationship) and age, education, and marriage type (love versus arranged) comparisons, as well as qualitative approaches to capturing the lived experience of romantic jealousy, are promising directions for future research.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, marital satisfaction was positively correlated with attachment security and inversely correlated with romantic jealousy of married individuals, and both constructs explained marital satisfaction, but gender was not significant. These findings validate the cross cultural applicability of attachment theory to the understanding of marital quality (Bowlby, 1969; Collins, 1996) and indicate romantic jealousy as a modifiable relational process which can be used in couple focused intervention for the Pakistani cultural context.

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