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## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED ACADEMICIANS

Farahat Ali<sup>1</sup> & Noshina Saleem<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar, School of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Professor, School of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p>Conflict Resolution Styles, Marital Satisfaction, Married Academics, Verbal Aggression Style, Physical Aggression Style</p>	<p>This study is intended to shed light on broader question of which conflict resolution strategies are most effective in married life, with a special focus on the effectiveness of five conflict resolution styles (Integrative, avoidance, distributive, verbal aggression and physical aggression). Extant literature within this domain has produced mixed findings. A total of 350 married dual-earner academicians were taken as the sample for current study and purposive sampling technique was used. Results showed that there was a significant difference between men and women in terms of the conflict resolution styles, with women being more likely to use an integrative style, while men were more likely to use an avoidance, distributive, and verbal aggression conflict resolution style. There was also a significant difference between men and women in terms of the marital satisfaction, with women being more likely to report the higher levels of satisfaction. Integrative and avoidance styles were found to be positively related to marital satisfaction while distributive and verbal aggression styles were found to be negatively related. Physical aggression was not found to be a predictor of the marital satisfaction.</p>
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<p>Corresponding Author</p>	<p>Farahat Ali: <a href="mailto:farahatali08@gmail.com">farahatali08@gmail.com</a></p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a social institution that has been improving individuals' general health conditions, helping them derive satisfaction from life, and assisting them in earning social stability for long time. If a person marries at an early age and invests in this relationship, he/she will be happier and healthier (Hayward & Zhang 2006; Uecker, 2012). Marriage can be defined as a social and legal union of individuals, generally on the basis of amity (love, affection), consent between the parties involved and approval of third parties. In broadest sense, it can refer to any social union of people (whether sexual or not) that binds them interdependently while they associate with each other socially. More usually, marriage is understood as lasting commitment amid individuals

that is solemnized via ritual or legally recognized. Institution of marriage has certain objectives to pursue: family and society (Sirin & Deniz, 2016). The purpose of marriage is to maintain a stable family unit by providing intimate and exclusive environments, as well as the independent living, to raise children and sustain a community. Marital satisfaction is a measure of happiness and stress in a married relationship. In research conducted, it has been found that the marital satisfaction is important measurement within marital relationships (Çetinkaya & Gençdoğan, 2014).

Marital satisfaction is the good feelings that partners have for each other in a marriage. Marital satisfaction is typically reached through interaction of behaviors, such as marital interaction with its external and internal environment. It is often measured as “harmony” in interaction, i.e., “for better or for worse” within the context of marriage. The marital satisfaction measures the wife and husband's perceived quality of their relationship. It is generally measured by asking one or both partners about various dimensions that describe their view of the marriage. The dimensions typically include such dimensions as trust, affection, commitment, understanding, communication, and conflict (Rusbult & Lange, 2003). The marital satisfaction is a term that indicates the responses and emotions generated by the marriage between two people, i.e. how they feel and how they act toward each other. “Marital Satisfaction” relies upon causes such as various aspects of life, socio-demographic characteristics of couples, as well as the interaction processes between them and with the external environment. The satisfaction with marriage and satisfaction with alternatives have commonly been found to influence decision to end marriage (DeLongis & Zwicker, 2017; Hirschberger et al., 2009). For example, the relative importance of alternatives, access to resources and strategic bargaining play central roles in satisfaction with marriage.

Scholars and researchers have conducted researches about what factors can lead to marital dissatisfaction and domestic violence (Naeem et al., 2008; Okhakhume et al., 2016). Most of factors that may lead to the domestic violence and marital dissatisfaction is the unsatisfactory relationship or communication problems between spouses. Spouses' communication problems are thought to be the primary factor that influences the couple's satisfaction level with their relationship (Litzinger & Gordon 2005; Miller et al., 2003). Thus, these problems may also contribute to domestic violence in some relationships (Litzinger & Gordon 2005; Miller et al. 2003). Difficulties with communication may be present in all types of the relationships, but research has shown that open, honest and frequent conversations about sensitive topics such as money, sex, and housework is important for a healthy and satisfying relationship (Litzinger & Gordon 2005; Montesi et al., 2013; Yoo et al., 2013). Additionally, communication can be hard at times when emotions run high. But, the poor communication leads to misunderstandings and can cause problems in the relationship, which over time can lead to many negative outcomes. It is believed that couples establish a "mutual world" when they can perceive problems and share them with each other. When the problems are not expressed by a couple, communication gets worse.

The findings above, though based mostly on research with relatively young couples. There is very little research however on whether such interactional patterns are present in older married couples from different cultures. Although, the conflict management style was found to vary from culture to culture it seemed to be related more to the gender than age. Moreover, most of these studies were conducted on couples in Western countries. Moreover, the studies conducted in

Pakistan have measured effects of demographic and ethnics factors on conflict communication styles (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Riaz et al., 2016), emotional intelligence and the conflict styles (Asghar & Pervaiz, 2019), dissatisfied married couples conflict styles (Dildar et al., 2013), and conflict styles and organizational commitment (Akhtar & Hassan, 2021). Thus, the association between conflict communication tactics and marital satisfaction in the context of the married individuals who are working in the academia has not been measured. This study extends the relationship between conflict communication tactics and marital satisfaction of academically employed (dual earner) married couples. Based on these studies, this research is designed as follows: 1) To investigate the influence of conflict communication styles on dual earner married individual marital satisfaction level. 2) To investigate whether or not the marital satisfaction level and conflict communication styles are different for each different/diverse demographic characteristic.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conflict Resolution Styles

Conflict is defined differently. A conflict can be described as when two opposing parties disagree on something or feel differently about the same thing. For example, Thomas (1976) stated that conflict is process in which one party feels frustrated by other one's behavior. An interpersonal conflict results from interactions between two or more individuals when they try to fulfill their needs, wants, and desires in ways that are incompatible, or that otherwise disturb one another. Conflicts between two people (dyad) or within group of people (collective) can be consequence of divergent interests, perspectives or personality traits (Johnson, 1990). Interpersonal conflict arises when two or more individuals share the goal, desire, or value to the extent that they feel unsatisfied as long as the other has it as well. Thus, the interpersonal conflict can exist between different people, opponents, allies and even indifferent bystanders, if they perceive themselves in a situation of the incompatible interests. It's happened when people are dependent on one another and they have conflicts over fulfilling their dire needs and achieving their own interests (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). There are several strategies couples can employ in resolving conflict. Gottman (1994) has identified two different types of the marital conflict: constructive as well as destructive.

Kurdek (1994) found four strategies: the positive problem solving, withdrawal, compliance and conflict engagement. The findings of this study are only generalizable to white and educated gay, lesbian, nonparent heterosexual and parent heterosexual couples. In another study, Schulman et al. (2006) have found three conflict resolution style: integrative, downplaying and conflictive among adolescent. In the meta-analysis study, Laursen et al. (2001) found that three conflict resolution strategies (negotiation, coercion, disengagement) are prevalent among children and young adults. They noted that coercion is a more prevalent conflict resolution among children, while negotiation is commonly used by young adults. In another study, Hokoda et al. (2012) found that adolescent (9th and 11th graders) uses more positive conflict resolution strategies than younger (7th grader). Flora and Segrin (2015) has also classified the conflict resolution style as constructive and destructive. Kim et al. (2015) defines partner forgiveness and partner contempt as two approaches to conflict management and resolution. The partner forgiveness includes managing the conflicts that have arisen, but trying to maintain the relationship or continuing to develop it. The partner contempt includes ceasing communication or pursuing

further conflict. Thus, classified the conflict resolution styles as partner forgiveness and partner contempt.

Sillars et al. (2004) proposed that the conflict behavior could be categorized on the basis of cooperativeness and directness. Collaborative conflict behaviors take into account the goals of both parties and is characterized by agreeableness. Competitive conflict behaviors are used more in concern for self and are generally motivated by self-interest. Direct conflict behaviors involve behavior or actions designed to control other's behavior. Examples include touching, grabbing and direct insults. Indirect conflicts involve avoidance of situations in which people confront each other. Direct conflict occurs when we openly argue, while indirect conflict occurs when we avoid the conflict and try to ignore it. All conflict typologies distinguish between four (Sillars et al., 2004) or five (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1983, 1990) basic styles of dealing with conflict. To understand the consequences of the interpersonal conflict, one should take into account different styles in which individuals deal with conflicts. Major styles include initiating, avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating. Different studies have used diverse conflict communication styles to predict marital satisfaction. Cheng (2010) led a survey-based study on Taiwanese married men and their foreign wives in which Rahim (1983) conflict management styles (competing, obliging, compromising, avoiding, & integrating) were used.

In an experimental study, Noshi et al. (2021) has used same scale (Rahim, 1983) to measure interpersonal conflict among married women in Iran. In a survey study, Frisby and Westerman (2010) used the same scale to measure conflict styles of romantic partners. In another study, Carroll et al. (2013) has used Gottman (1994) the styles (flooding, defensiveness, stonewalling contempt & criticism) for the destructive communication, and Busby et al. (2007) styles (clear sending, empathy, and self-soothing) for constructive communication for full-time employed married individuals. In a longitudinal study, Li et al. (2019) used Kerig (1996) marital conflict resolution strategies (avoidance, physical aggression, verbal aggression, collaboration & stalemate) scale to measure marital conflict resolution styles among married Chinese couple. In a recent study, Işık and Kaya (2022) used the Özen (2006) styles (Negative, positive, subordination and retreat) to measure the conflict resolution style for heterosexual married couples. Besides these studies, some studies have used Kilmann and Thomas's styles (1977), Sillars styles (1980) and Gottman (1994) typology to measure the conflict resolution styles (Monteiro & Balogun, 2015; Navidian et al., 2014; Stinson et al., 2017). In this regard, the current study is going to use Kerig two (verbal and physical aggression) as well as sillar's three style (avoidant, integrative, and distributive).

An "integrative conflict communication style" is where people seek solutions to interpersonal conflicts. The "avoidance conflict communication style" is one in which individuals communicate to try to avoid any conflict. Distributive conflict is form of conflict in which group or individual seeks only their own share of limited resources. Verbal aggression conflict communication style is communication style in which people are provoked into blaming one another. Direct conflict behaviors involve behavior or actions designed to control other's behavior. Examples include touching, grabbing and direct insults. The indirect conflicts involve avoidance of situations in which people confront each other. The verbal aggression includes behaviors such as criticism, threats, shouting and verbal abuse. Partner contempt includes ceasing communication or pursuing further conflict. Physical aggression conflict communication style is a conflict negotiation style

in which parties opt for aggressive actions, such as violence. People in marital conflict responds to his/her partner in a way that is inappropriate, argumentative, and shows intent to hurt their partner. It is form of behavior in which person believes that he must use physical force to resolve conflicts.

### **Marital Satisfaction**

Studies of marital conflict often focus on its links to negative outcomes like marital satisfaction and divorce, and on ways to help couples who are in the distress (Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Deylami et al., 2021; Yekta et al., 2022). Previous research has shown that marital disputes can leads to psychiatric disorders (Kasalová et al., 2018), lower marital quality (Monk et al., 2020) physiological and child adjustment (Ngozi et al., 2013), physical abuse (Goldsmith et al., 2016), negative health outcomes (Fincham, 2003; Roels et al., 2022), and depression (Whisman et al., 2021). A few studies have investigated the satisfaction of academicians in their married life. One reason is that fewer couples fit this lifestyle. This lifestyle is prevalent among advanced, western economies and very little in developing countries since family support and flexibility at work. But now, in developing countries, work pressure is increasing with rate of urbanization, fewer vacation days, less sick leaves, and permanent contracts increasingly get replaced by the short-term employment. In this connection, numerous past studies have found that certain variables (such as age at marriage, education and attitudes about work and gender roles) to be strong predictors of marital satisfaction in the diverse situations (Anahita et al., 2016; Carlson, 2022; Jackson et al., 2014; Kanter et al., 2022; Madanian & Mansor, 2013; Ohlsson-Wijk et al., 2022).

Another study has found that positive and negative behaviors, shared activities and companionship predict marital satisfaction (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). In a sample of 365 couples, Mirhosseini et al (2020) study determined that marital satisfaction is predicted by the wife's age, education, and occupation. More specifically, younger ages for wives (average of the husband and wife's ages) are associated with significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction. The study conducted by Yucel and Koydemir (2015) employed a survey which contained three domains as measures: sexual satisfaction, communication, and division of household labor. The found that married couples living in Northern Cyprus have better communication and better division of household labor compared to couples that were immigrants (Yucel & Koydemir, 2015). Moreover, another research has shown that couples who have high emotional intelligence and are good at conflict resolution are more likely to have a happier marriage whatsoever the circumstance (Bayrami et al., 2013). In this linking, although there have been many improvements in this area, there is still little research that identifies how the conflict resolution styles interact with the relational outcomes.

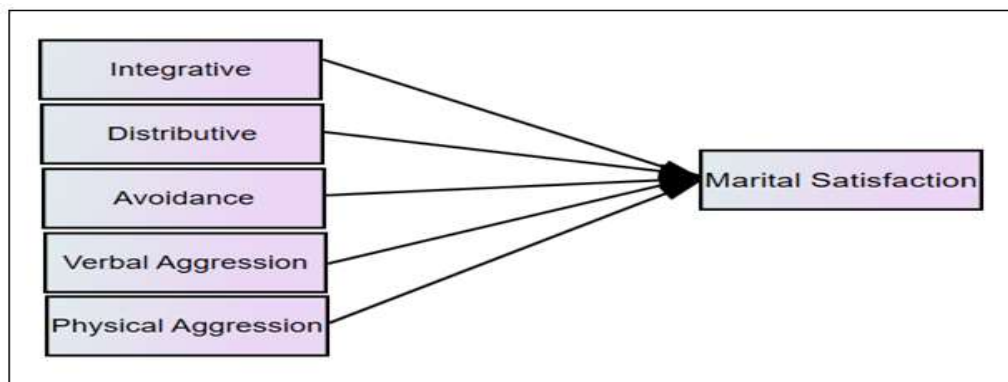
### **Conflict Resolution Styles & Marital Satisfaction**

Gottman (1994) found that marital satisfaction is affected by conflict management style that partners use within their relationship. Certain conflict management styles (avoiding conflict, being competitive, or putting one's feelings/opinions before that of the others) are negatively associated with the marital satisfaction (Canary, 2003; Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2006). Following Karney and Bradbury (1995), couples that feature less the negatively toned conflict styles (e.g., accommodation and problem solving) enjoy higher levels of marital happiness than couples that feature more negatively toned conflict styles (criticism & stonewalling). Couples are more likely to engage in positively toned conflict management when their relationship status is secure, after a prolonged period of the cohabitation, and when the couple has sufficiently agreed upon

a common set of life goals. In this connection, there is research evidence that husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction may be influenced by the conflict resolution tendencies and styles of both spouses (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2006; Kurdek, 1995). Thus, they found that ratings of the husbands' marital satisfactions were not affected by the conflicts management styles of their wives.

Communication is key in any human relationship. Many researchers posit that communication is the key ingredient to a healthy marriage, with positive and negative behavior contributing to marital satisfaction or breakup (Haris & Kumar, 2018; Lavner et al., 2016; Shafer et al., 2014). Spouses' constructive communication patterns have been associated with their relationship satisfaction. However, couples are likely to have diverse communication styles. The couples that are generally satisfied with their relationship tend to share more constructive communication patterns than couples that are not generally satisfied with relationship (Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010; Birchler & Webb, 1977; Bradbury & Fincham, 1992; Houts et al., 2008). It follows that, when couples are not able to come to solutions to the problems they are facing, the nature of their communication may change in some way, with the consequence that there is less intimacy in the relationship (Eldridge et al., 2007; Pearce & Halford, 2008). Partners that can resolve issues together tend to show more satisfaction (South et al., 2010). In other words, if a couple is unable to solve their conflicts, this may lead to a stressful and unhappy relationship. The same does not apply to happy couples because they manage to tackle their communication problems together.

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework*



Number of studies of found that almost all conflict communication styles are negatively related with marital satisfaction (Cramer, 2000; Greeff & Bruyne, 2000; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Schaap et al., 1988; Yu, 2021) except problem solving/collaborative/integrative style (Cramer, 2000; Yu, 2021; Greeff & Bruyne, 2000; Schaap et al., 1988). On other hand, Ünal and Akgün (2020) study found that all four conflict styles (Negative, positive, subordination & retreat) are significantly and positively related with marital satisfaction. They found that subordination among husband was positively related to the satisfaction. Some studies have found that some of conflict tactics (avoidance) increase the satisfaction (Gottman, 1993) and conflict resolution is not always increase the satisfaction (Rands et al., 1981). Based on the above literature following

hypotheses were constructed. (1) There is difference in men and women conflict resolution styles & marital satisfaction. 2) (a) distributive, (b) avoidance, (c) verbal and (d) physical aggression styles would negatively predict marital satisfaction. 3) Integrative style positively predict marital satisfaction.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants & Data Collection**

The purpose of this study was to examine effect of men and women's conflict communication styles on their marital satisfaction level by using a quantitative research design. A total of 350 married academicians teaching in private universities of Lahore were surveyed. The survey was conducted during the month of March 2022. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Only those academicians who had been teaching at the lecturers, senior lecturers and assistant professors' position in the universities were selected for the study. This fact was taken into the consideration because these academics had more work pressure than the other academicians since they were teaching more than 40 students per lecture and thus they have to teach three of four courses per semester. Moreover, their work pressure is greater than that of other higher position academicians because they have to do a lot of teaching and administrative works as well as research activities. They are more prone to suffer from the depression when compared to their teaching level colleagues, who face less teaching/administrative stress. Most of them are doing their PhD while teaching at the university and have at least one child at the home.

To our best knowledge, this can be first work focusing on such a sample that was taken from the private universities dual earner married couples. Among our surveyed participants, over 40% were still undergoing PhD and hold teaching positions. Picture changed a bit for assistant professor, almost half of surveyed respondents (43%) had completed their PhD while remaining 17% were not enrolled in the PhD program in any university. Participants, after having signed the consent forms, completed a set of questionnaires in which they reported how much they are satisfied with their marriage and what conflict resolution styles they used to resolve the marital conflicts. Thus, the questionnaire was filled by 186 (53%) men and 165 (47%) women married academicians. The average age of the male teachers was 36.4 and the average age for female teachers was 33.2. Average working experience for male teachers was 7 years while the average working experience for female teachers was 5.8. All private universities have a fixed working hour; therefore, respondents were not asked about their average working hours in university. All respondents reported that they have at least one child at home. A little more than one third of respondents (78%) were full-time employee and remaining 22% were working on contractual job.

### **Measures**

#### **Conflict Resolution Styles**

Conflicts and Problem-Solving Scale (CPS) is scale that assesses partner's use of collaboration, avoidance, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and stalemate in marital conflict resolution strategies. The CPS is a questionnaire designed to measure several behaviors related to anger and aggressive conflict (Kerig, 1996). It measures how frequently one hit partner or spouse, how frequently their partner hit them, how often they threw something at partner or spouse, how often they pushed or shoved their partner or spouse, how often they used a weapon against

their partner or spouse, and motivations behind the use of violence. Although there has been a lot of debate about conflict resolution strategies and effectiveness at achieving relationship satisfaction, there is no clear consensus on how to analyze them in isolation from one another (Kerig, 1996). Likewise, it is not clear how to categorise different types of the conflict resolution strategy (Kerig, 1996). Therefore, this scale avoids some of previously documented issues by measuring a broad typology of marital conflict resolution strategies (Zacchilli et al., 2009). This study has also used Sillars (1980) avoidant, integrative and distributive scales. All the subscales (avoidant, integrative, distributive, verbal and physical aggression) have shown good reliability ( $>.70$ ).

### **Marital Satisfaction**

Norton (1983) developed a six-item scale to measure quality marriage index, which is designed to determine marital happiness. Six items determine how well marriage is doing. Participants were instructed to answer items on a five-point scale ranging from “very strong disagreement” (1) to “very strong agreement” (5), with optional “no opinion” response (3). Couple reported having an ideal marriage and the results of several items assessing marital quality showed this to be true. The Cronbach’s Alpha score of .70 indicated that couples believed that they were in high quality marriages (willingness-to-continuously-invest-in-the-marriage subscale) and high alpha was retained for husbands ( $\alpha=.76$ ) and wives ( $\alpha=.82$ ) across items measuring marital quality.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using statistical package SPSS to compare difference between variables of interest. Independent sample t-test was performed to compare marital satisfaction and conflict resolution styles scores for men and women. Multiple linear regression was performed to measure impact of conflict communication styles on marital satisfaction in dual earner married couples.

### **RESULT OF STUDY**

To determine whether husbands and wives have different ways of handling conflicts, we use the independent sample t-test. The independent sample t-test can be used to test whether means of two groups are statistically different given an assumed statistical significance level ( $\alpha=.05$ ). The first hypothesis is that there are significant differences in each conflict resolution style between married men and women teaching in different private universities of Lahore. We can see from information given in table 1 that there is large difference exist between the two groups. There is significant difference amid men and women scores on integrative conflict resolution scale ( $t(348) = 3.01, p < .05$ ). The mean score for men on the integrative conflict resolution scale was 3.15, compared to 3.43 for women. The findings suggest that in marriage women resolve conflict in a more integrative manner than men. Scores on avoidance conflict resolution scale show significant difference between men and women ( $t(378) = 2.89, p < .05$ ). For example, the mean score for men on the avoidance conflict resolution scale was 4.20, compared to 3.74 for women. Findings suggest that in marriage men resolve conflict in a more avoiding manner than women.

The scores on the distributive conflict resolution scale show that men and women differ in their distributive conflict resolution strategy ( $t(348) = 2.96, p < .05$ ). For example, the mean score for men on the distributive conflict resolution scale was 3.98, compared to 3.35 for women. The findings suggest that in marriage men resolve conflict in a distributive manner than women.



The score differences between men and women on verbal aggression conflict resolution scale show that they resolve conflict differently ( $t(348) = 3.44, p < .05$ ). For example, the mean score for men on verbal aggression conflict resolution scale was 3.86, compared to 3.13 for women. The findings suggest that in marriage men use more verbal aggression-based conflict tactics than women do. There is no score difference between men and women on physical aggression conflict resolution scale ( $t(348) = 0.98, p > .05$ ). For example, mean score for men on physical aggression conflict resolution scale was 2.67, compared to 2.49 for women. The result of the study suggests that there were no sex-based differences in physical aggression during marital conflict. The score differences between men and women on the marital satisfaction scale show that both have different level of satisfaction ( $t(348) = 3.34, p < .05$ ). For example, mean score for men on verbal aggression conflict resolution scale was 3.69, compared to 4.10 for women. Findings suggest that in marriage men use verbal aggression-based conflict tactics than women do. Thus, our H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d and H1f are supported by data. While, H1e is not supported by data.

**Table 1**  
*Difference in Men and Women Conflict Resolution Styles and Marital Satisfaction*

Variables	Men		Women		df	t	p	Lower	Upper
	M	SD	M	SD					
Integrative	3.15	0.44	3.43	0.87	348	3.01	0.006	.066	.910
Avoidance	4.20	0.53	3.74	0.58	348	2.89	0.003	.160	1.265
Distributive	3.98	0.58	3.35	0.76	348	2.96	0.004	-1.167	-.876
Verbal Aggression	3.86	0.67	3.13	0.60	348	3.44	0.001	-2.210	-.843
Physical Aggression	2.67	0.61	2.49	0.50	348	0.98	0.071	-.620	1.483
Marital Satisfaction	3.69	0.78	4.10	0.63	348	3.34	<0.00	-4.253	-.567

### Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression test was used in order to calculate predictions of level of marital satisfaction based on the use of different conflict-management tactics (avoidance, integrative, distributive, verbal aggression & physical aggression) in men and women and complete model was tested as a whole. We tested the ability of five predictors for predicting dependent variable and found the result to be significant, at 5% level of significance,  $p = 0.05$ . The multiple linear regression test was used to make testable inferences from empirical data on second research hypothesis. Five conflict resolution was entered as independent variables (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal & physical aggression) in prediction model while marital satisfaction was entered as dependent variable. Results demonstrate that the overall model was highly significant ( $F(5, 345) = 98.17, p < 0.05$ ). This equation was significant and can be used to predict marital satisfaction over conflict resolution styles (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal & physical aggression).

It was found that conflict resolution styles had the significant influence on marital satisfaction, accounting for 53.2% of the variance in outcome. Here the coefficient of determination value is  $R^2 = .532$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is used in general linear regression, it denotes the proportion of variation in dependent variable (here marital satisfaction) that is accounted for by predictor variable (here conflict resolution styles). While, adjusted  $R^2$  value was .272. Moreover, the beta weights of independent variables show that integrative conflict resolution style has received higher beta weight ( $\beta = .40, p < .01$ ), followed by avoidance ( $\beta = .33, p < .01$ ),

distributive ( $\beta=-.31$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and verbal aggression conflict resolution style ( $\beta=-.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The physical aggression conflict resolution style ( $\beta=-.045$ ,  $p=.914$ ) has received lowest beta weight and could not significantly predict marital satisfaction. This model was tested as a whole. Thus, hypothesis H2a, H2c, and H2d was supported by data. While, H2b and H2e was not supported by data.

**Table 2**

*Conflict Resolution Styles Predicting A Dependent Variable (Marital Satisfaction)*

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	38.132	11.6		3.287	0.009
Integrative	-0.487	0.39	0.40	-1.25	0.003
Avoidance	0.332	0.284	0.33	1.171	0.012
Distributive	-0.25	0.438	-0.31	-0.571	0.008
Verbal Aggression	-0.624	0.455	-0.14	-1.372	0.001
Physical Aggression	0.061	0.554	-.045	0.111	0.914
R2			.532		
F			98.17		

The next step was to test the same model separately for men and women to determine whether certain conflict resolution styles are prevalent for one gender or other. Five conflict resolution was entered as independent variables (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal aggression & physical aggression) in prediction model while marital satisfaction was entered as dependent variable for men. The results demonstrate that overall model was highly significant ( $F(5, 180) = 36.013$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that this equation was significant and can be used to predict marital satisfaction over conflict resolution styles (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal aggression and physical aggression) in men. It was found that conflict resolution styles had the significant influence on marital satisfaction, accounting for 28.5% of the variance in outcome. Here the coefficient of determination value is  $R^2 = .285$ . Beta weights of independent variables show that avoidance conflict resolution style has received higher beta weight ( $\beta = .336$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by the verbal aggression ( $\beta = -.192$ ,  $p < .01$ ), integrative ( $\beta = -.119$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and distributive conflict resolution style ( $\beta = -.110$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, physical aggression conflict resolution style ( $\beta = -.070$ ,  $p = .647$ ) has received lowest beta weight and could not significantly predict marital satisfaction.

**Table 3**

*CRS Predicting A Dependent Variable (Marital Satisfaction) for Men (N=185)*

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	17.966	22.496		5.799	.008
Integrative	.200	0.115	.119	4.01	<.001
Avoidance	.378	0.128	.336	5.95	<.001
Distributive	-.133	0.128	-.110	-6.32	<.010
Verbal Aggression	-1.172	0.624	-.192	-.721	<.001
Physical Aggression	-.691	0.293	-.070	-0.47	.647
R2			0.285		
F			36.013		

The next step was to test the same model separately for men and women to determine whether certain conflict resolution styles are more prevalent for one gender or the other. Five conflict resolution was entered as independent variables (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal aggression and physical aggression) in prediction model while marital satisfaction was entered as dependent variable for men. Results demonstrate that overall model was highly significant ( $F(5, 160) = 69.432, p < 0.05$ ). This shows that this equation was significant and can be used to predict marital satisfaction over conflict resolution styles (integrative, distributive, avoidance, verbal aggression and physical aggression). It was found that conflict resolution styles had significant influence on marital satisfaction, accounting for 31.5% of variance in outcome. Here, coefficient of determination value is  $R^2 = .315$ . Moreover, the beta weights of independent variables show that the distributive conflict resolution style has received higher beta weight ( $\beta = -.301, p < .01$ ), followed by verbal aggression ( $\beta = -.187, p < .01$ ), integrative ( $\beta = .175, p < .01$ ) and the avoidance conflict resolution style ( $\beta = -.140, p < .01$ ). Thus, the physical aggression conflict resolution style ( $\beta = -.017, p = .652$ ) has received lowest beta weight and could not significantly predict the marital satisfaction.

**Table 4**

*CRS Predicting A Dependent Variable (Marital Satisfaction) for Women (N=165)*

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	65.048	12.539		5.188	.002
Integrative	1.161	.400	.175	4.589	<.000
Avoidance	-.490	.300	-.140	-10.11	<.001
Distributive	-.587	.383	-.301	-6.609	<.001
Verbal Aggression	-.596	.626	-.187	-4.952	<.05
Physical Aggression	-2.408	.796	-.017	-0.452	0.652
R2			0.315		
F			69.432		

## DISCUSSION

Based on results of our research, we have discovered several important differences. As women and men have different conflict resolution styles, this research findings show that men engage in conflict more often than women, while the women prefer to comply with others' positions or choose to solve the problem through positive problem solving (integrative conflict resolution style). The finding that women are less associated with conflict engagement style is consistent with previous study by [Brahnam et al. \(2004\)](#) [Adegboyega et al. \(2022\)](#) who found that women are more often reported to use collaborative strategies during marital conflicts which can be likened to the "conflict engagement style" in this study. The result of this study is in line with the research by [Hanzal and Segrin \(2009\)](#) who found that women more often use the problem solving strategies such as negotiations and discussing problems together than. There are some other studies who have found similar results ([Birditt et al., 2010](#); [Woodin, 2011](#)). In addition to this, there are number of studies which report that men use more integrative conflict resolution tactics than women as women prefer to use the attacking and other styles ([Delatorre & Wagner, 2018](#); [Perrone-McGovern et al., 2014](#)). Consequently, these studies were conducted in western context.

In general, however, it is possible that women in Pakistani society may use more integrative conflict resolution tactics than men because they may face greater obstacles in terms of social

and political equality, and therefore may need to be more creative and collaborative in order to achieve their goals. Additionally, women in western world may be more likely to use attacking styles of conflict resolution because they may have more opportunities to do so without facing significant repercussions. One possible reason why women may use more integrative conflict resolution tactics than men in Pakistani society is that they may be more likely to experience targeted discrimination and violence. Women may also have less power and status than men in the Pakistani society, which could lead them to resort to more passive methods of the conflict resolution. It is generally accepted that women use more integrative conflict resolution tactics than men in Pakistani society. In this linking, this is likely due to a number of factors, including the fact that the women are typically socialized to be more cooperative and less aggressive than men, and that they tend to have a more intimate knowledge of the relationships and the social networks. Additionally, the women are often more likely to bear the brunt of violence and conflict in Pakistani society, and as such, they may have more incentive to seek out the peaceful resolutions.

We found that men use more distributive conflict resolution tactics than women. These results are in line with previous documented research (Kennedy et al., 2017, Lee et al., 2017). These studies have found that men use more unethical tactics to win their argument than women. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon. One possibility is that men in the Pakistani society are socialized to believe that they are entitled to more power and control than women, and that they should use whatever means necessary to maintain that power. This could lead them to be more likely to resort to distributive tactics in conflicts, since they see it as a way to get what they want while retaining their power over women. Another possibility is that men may simply be more aggressive than women in general, and that this propensity for aggression leads them to be more likely to use distributive tactics in conflicts. It is also possible that men in Pakistani society simply have more opportunities to use distributive tactics in conflicts than women. This could be due to number of factors, like women being less likely to be in positions of power or authority, or having less social and economic capital than men. It is clear that men in Pakistani society are more likely to use the distributive tactics in conflict situations than women. This could have a number of negative consequences for women, such as preventing them from getting what they want in the conflicts, or causing them to experience more aggression and violence.

Another thing, we have found that men use more avoidance conflicts resolution tactics than women. The finding is in line with previous study conducted in Taiwan (Cheng, 2010). Though, there are also studies that have found that women use more avoiding style than men (Bear et al., 2014). While some studies have found no significant difference between men and women (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Navidian et al., 2014). There are a number of potential reasons for this. One possibility is that Pakistani men may feel that they need to protect honor and reputation, and so they are more likely to use avoidance tactics so as to avoid any conflict or confrontation. Additionally, Pakistani men may also be socialized to believe that it is not appropriate for them to express emotions openly, and so they may use avoidance as a way to cope with or manage their feelings. Finally, it is also possible that Pakistani men may simply be more likely to resort to violence as a way to resolve conflict, and so they may use avoidance tactics in order to avoid escalation. Another interesting thing we have found that men use the verbal aggression-based conflict resolution tactics than women. In western context, women use more verbal aggression style (Delatorre & Wagner, 2018; McGovern et al., 2014) but in Pakistan context we have found

that men use more verbal aggression. One possibility is that men may view verbal aggression as a more acceptable way to resolve conflict than women. Additionally, men may be more likely to resort to verbal aggression because they perceive it as a more effective means of achieving their goals.

Finally, it is also possible that men simply have more opportunity to use verbal aggression than women due to their social status and role in Pakistani society. We found no significant difference in physical aggression conflict resolution between men and women. These findings are in line with previous research (Tolla, 2022). He found that participants were using verbal aggression more frequently than physical aggression to resolve the marital conflicts. In this study, the average level of marital satisfaction is significantly different between men and women, where women have the higher marital satisfaction than men. It suggests that the women place more emphasis on their marital status as indicated by their level of commitment to their partners as well as perceptions of spousal responsibilities. These findings are not in line with the previous work in which men reported more marital satisfaction than women (Worley & Shelton, 2020). In a survey-based study, Meltzer et al. (2014) found that men marital satisfaction was high when they have attractive and beautiful wife. In a meta-analysis, Jackson et al. (2014) found no difference in men and women marital satisfaction. Thus, some possible explanations include diverse societal expectation for men and women in Pakistan, different levels of communication and intimacy in the marriages, and different levels of the power and decision-making within marriages.

It is also possible that women simply report higher levels of satisfaction because they are more likely to express their feelings and emotions than men. One possibility is that women in Pakistan generally have lower expectations for their marriages than men do. This could mean that they are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages even if they are not perfect. Finally, it is also possible that Pakistani culture simply places a higher value on marriage for women than it does for men. This could lead to women feeling more satisfied with their marriages even if they are not perfect. Beside this, all conflict resolution styles (avoidance, integrative, distributive and verbal aggression) are significant predictor of marital satisfaction except physical aggression. Integrative and avoidance styles predicted positive change in satisfaction while distributive and verbal aggression reducing the marital satisfaction among men. These results are in line with the previous work (A'yun & Shanti, 2021; Greeff & Bruyne, 2000; Johnson, 1990; Schaap et al., 1988; Ünal & Akgün, 2020). Only integrative style is increasing marital satisfaction among women while remaining styles are negatively predicting the marital satisfaction. These results are in line with previous studies (A'yun & Shanti, 2021; Greeff & Bruyne, 2000; Ünal & Akgün, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that integrative or collaborative conflict management is most effective way to manage conflict in a marriage. It leads to the highest levels of satisfaction for both spouses, and helps to keep peace in relationship. Moreover, men also use avoidance style to get marital satisfaction during marital conflict by not escalating the issue. This study provides support for the idea that integrative conflict management is an effective way to manage conflict in a marriage and leads to the higher levels of satisfaction for both spouses. While, other styles (distributive and verbal aggression) can lead to lower marital satisfaction among married couples working in different private universities. The results of this study suggest that conflict management programs for

married couples should focus on distributive, verbal and physical aggression styles of conflict resolution. These three styles were associated with lowest satisfaction scores among spouses. The programs should aim to reduce use of these styles and promote use of more constructive styles, such as problem-solving, integrative and compromise. Results of study are limited to a population of dual earner married academicians teaching in private universities and living in metropolitan city (Lahore). This population is not representative of entire population of Lahore, or even of educated married individuals of Punjab. Results of study cannot be generalized to other populations.

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