

**ATTACHMENT STYLES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, TRAIT MINDFULNESS AND
MARITAL QUALITY AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**



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**ATTACHMENT STYLES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, TRAIT MINDFULNESS AND
MARITAL QUALITY AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**

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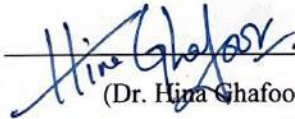
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To my whole world: My husband and my son

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Abstract

The purpose of the present research was to explore the intricate relationships among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality in married individuals. The objectives of this research involved analyzing the correlations among the study variables; exploring the differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among individuals with different attachment styles; looking for any possible gender differences with respect to these variables and testing the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality. A cross-sectional research design has been used. A sample of ($N = 311$) married individuals (Men = 56, Women = 255) having an age range of 22 to 66 years ($M = 32.37$, $SD = 6.99$) were recruited from different areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi through non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique. The data collected from the participants was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed significant correlations among all the study variables. MANOVA analysis unveiled differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among individuals with different attachment styles. Moderation analysis established trait mindfulness as a significant moderator (buffer) in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality. Independent sample t-test demonstrated that women use more conflict engagement and compliance for resolving conflicts as compared to men. Furthermore, men were found to possess higher levels of trait mindfulness. The present research has implications for clinical, practical and research domains.

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness, Marital Quality, married individuals

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Full Form
ECR-S	Experiences In Close Relationships Revised-Short Form
CRSI	Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory
MAAS	Mindful Attention Awareness Scale
DAS-7	Dyadic Adjustment Scale-7
CE	Conflict Engagement Subscale
PPS	Positive Problem-Solving Subscale

List of Symbols

Symbols	Definitions
α	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
f	Frequency
N	Total sample
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
%	Percentage
p	Significance Value
ΔR^2	R square change value
B	Unstandardized Beta
β	Standardized Beta
η^2	Partial η^2
SS	Sum of Squares
MS	Mean of Squares
SE	Standard Error
LL	Lower Limit
UL	Upper Limit
df	Degree of freedom
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Human beings are often referred as ‘social animals’ because they have an intrinsic need to form emotional connections with others (Simpson & Beckes, 2017). This is a fundamental and undeniable aspect of human nature that acts as a strong driving force throughout the course of our development. Beginning from birth, we form these emotional bonds with our parents or caregivers. Subsequently as we grow, we seek out these emotional connections with our peers, romantic partners, our own children and grandchildren and so on (McLeod, 2023). These affectionate ties equip one with a sense of belongingness, security, a purpose to live and ultimately influence one’s psychological well-being in the long run.

In our collectivist culture, the most socially acceptable and legal way to seek out an emotional bond with a romantic partner is through marriage. According to Berscheid and Regan (2005) most people tend to get married only once in their life, which is why marriage is the most important kind of relationship as compared to other types of interpersonal relations. Marriage is a complex institution especially in the context of our culture. Unlike the Western cultures who have an individualistic orientation, the meaning, purpose and practice of marriage is significantly different in a collectivist society like Pakistan. The concept of marriage in our culture involves not only the union of two individual entities but rather of two whole families. Settling down as an adult, moving to a new home (in case of women) and starting a new family by giving birth to kids before it’s too late and carrying on the family’s name; are some of the common reasons young adults are encouraged to get married. The maintenance and longevity of a marital

relationship holds utmost importance not only for the spouses themselves but also for their respective families (Arif & Fatima, 2015).

Given the fundamental position that marriage holds in our culture, it becomes reasonable to look into the factors that may determine its quality. Amongst many other factors that may contribute to marital quality, many research investigations have proved that the attachment styles (Sandberg, Bradford, & Brown, 2017), strategies of conflict resolution (Binte Muneer, 2015) and trait mindfulness (Gesell et al., 2020) of the spouses may play a pivotal role in determining their marital quality.

Attachment Theory

The emotional associations that we form with our caregivers in childhood, have an enduring impact on our emotional development and interpersonal interactions later in life. This emotional bonding that functions as a survival strategy is referred as 'attachment' (Main, 2023). This emotional attachment of a child is formed usually with his or her mother but it could also be formed with one's father or any other primary caregiver. Bowlby (1958) was the pioneer of this groundbreaking concept and presented his 'attachment theory' in this regard.

Attachment theory is a revolutionary concept that highlights the significance of one's early childhood experiences, the emotional bond that is formed between a child and his or her primary caregiver and the far-reaching influences that it can have on a person's social, emotional and psychological functioning. This emotional attachment of the child eventually gets translated into an 'internal working model' which navigates one's personal and relational functioning throughout the course of life. The expectations about the caregiver's responsiveness lay the foundation for this internal model of the individual which in turn plays a significant role in the

formation of different perceptions about oneself, one's caregiver, and other interpersonal relationships (Li, 2023). Bowlby postulated in his theory that an individual who forms a warm, affectionate, responsive and consistent attachment with one's caregiver, will have a good chance of social, emotional and psychological flourishing. On the other hand, an individual is very likely to have a myriad of socio-emotional issues in case of formation of a hostile, unresponsive and inconsistent nature of attachment with the primary caregiver (Chauhan, Awasthi, & Verma, 2014; Main, 2023). Previous studies provide evidence in this regard.

A research investigation aimed to explore the influence of parental attachment on psychosocial adjustment in a group of emerging young adults who were either currently involved in a serious romantic relationship, casually dating or were married. The findings of the research study indicated that individuals who had developed a secure attachment with both their parents were found to display more favorable psychosocial adjustment outcomes such as reduced distress and increased life satisfaction; as compared to those who had developed an insecure attachment (anxious or avoidant type) relationship with their parents. The results further showed that individuals' secure attachment to mothers was associated with better romantic relationship outcomes such as relationship satisfaction and romantic competence (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

Individuals' early childhood relationship dynamics with their primary caregiver are often mirrored later in their relationships in the adulthood phase. Sincero (2012) highlighted the fact that, based on this very idea about the connection between childhood interactions and adult relationship patterns, Ainsworth, Main and Solomon expanded Bowlby's theory and proposed the concept of 'attachment styles'. Depending upon the quality of attachment that one formed with their caregivers in childhood, individuals ultimately develop particular ways of relating to other people; known as 'attachment styles'. Although an individual's style of attachment can

change over time, the emotional connectedness formed with the caregiver in childhood is likely to persist and navigate one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behavioral responses in interpersonal relationships later throughout life (McLeod, 2023).

The extent to which primary caregivers are emotionally responsive, consistent and available for their child will lead to the development of either a secure or an insecure style of attachment in the individual across various kinds of relationships (familial, friendships, intimate etc.). The individuals whose caregivers offer consistent physical and emotional responsiveness to their child's needs, ultimately develop a secure style of attachment. Conversely, the primary caregiver's inconsistent physical and emotional responsiveness to the child's need may lead to the development of insecure attachment styles in the individual. This insecure style of attachment may manifest itself in the form of anxious/preoccupied, dismissive/avoidant or disorganized/fearful avoidant behavior (Helm, 2020). Previous research inquiries lend support to this claim. Perez (2023) demonstrated that parental nurturance in childhood was associated with decreased levels of fear of intimacy, attachment anxiety and avoidance in adulthood. Similarly, Santana et al. (2019) established that individuals' high levels of attachment anxiety, avoidance and aggressive behavior in romantic relationships had their origins in insecure attachment formed with parents in childhood.

Likewise, Gleeson and Fitzgerald (2014) discovered that young adults having a secure style of attachment in their current romantic relationship described their parents in more positive terms such as compassionate, heedful and sympathetic etc. and they were also found to be more satisfied with their romantic relationship as compared to their insecure counterparts. On the other hand, individuals who had insecure attachment styles used more negative words to describe their parents such as erratic, unreliable and uninvolved.

Attachment Styles in Marital Relationships

The present research investigated attachment styles exclusively in the context of marital relationships. Bowlby's attachment theory ideas were analyzed for the first time within the framework of romantic relationships by the pioneer scholars; Hazan and Shaver (1987). They noted that individuals' attachment styles formed in childhood as a result of different childhood experiences continue to influence their romantic relationships in adulthood (Fraley, 2018). Consequently, based on one's childhood attachment experiences, securely attached individuals have a positive internal working model for their own selves and also for others. In simpler terms, they hold positive perceptions about themselves as well as about others (Sheinbaum et al., 2015). They are less anxious and rarely display avoidant behavior. These individuals experience a consistent sense of security and responsiveness from their caregivers which enables them to function independently while getting support when necessary (Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015). In their own intimate relationships, they try to maintain the same equilibrium by making sure that they don't just seek one way support from their romantic partners whenever they need it but also reciprocate this comfort and solace to their partners in distressful situations (Fuchshuber et al., 2019).

On the other hand, individuals with an anxious/preoccupied attachment style have a positive internal working model for others but a negative internal working model about their own selves (Dewitte & De Houwer, 2011). The primary caregivers of these individuals may be responsive to their needs at one time but may appear withdrawn at other times (Ali, 2022). This inconsistent pattern of support from caregivers may get mirrored in the individual's own close relationships. This is why on one hand, these individuals may display discomfort with intimacy and closeness but on the other hand, they also fear abandonment and not being loved by their

partner. Their relationship may be marked by self-doubt, clinginess, demandingness and possessiveness. They tend to have low levels of avoidance but high levels of anxiety (Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

Similarly, dismissive/avoidant attachment style is characterized by individuals having a positive working model about themselves but a negative working model about others (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). They have high levels of avoidance but low levels of anxiety. These individuals often tend to have neglectful caregivers as a result of which, they may learn to take care of their own selves (Sherman, Rice & Cassidy, 2015). Just like anxiously attached individuals, these individuals also get uncomfortable when someone tries to get close to them, however, they do not fear abandonment (as they learned to be on their own in their childhood too). They prefer emotional distancing and isolation in situations of conflict or other intense situations (DeWitt, 2022).

Lastly, the individuals having a disorganized/fearful avoidant attachment style hold negative perceptions about themselves as well as about others (Arriaga et al., 2018). They have high levels of anxiety and avoidance (Singh, Sharma & Srivastava, 2022). Such individuals have experienced abusive, chaotic and erratic parenting from their caregivers. Consequently, these individuals may also appear to be volatile in nature and may experience sudden emotional highs and lows from time to time. They fear both closeness as well as distancing from their romantic partner due to their unpredictability; just like the one that they experienced from their caregivers in childhood (Wooddell, 2023).

Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution Strategies in Marital Relationships

Social media, fantasy novels and movies etc. often portray a very unrealistic picture of romantic relationships. They illustrate such relationships to be free of any challenging situations; depicting life as a bed of roses. In actuality, the reality of relationships is contrary to these portrayals. Conflict is an inherent and unescapable element of life. It is bound to occur sooner or later in every setting where people co-exist and establish different sorts of relationships such as colleagues, siblings, friends, acquaintances, parental figures and child etc. On the same grounds, romantic relationships such as marital relationships are not an exception (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022).

Conflict is defined as the perceived differences in interests, or the belief that the current aspirations of two or more parties cannot be achieved at the same time (Rinehart, 1993). It arises when there are differences of beliefs, opinions and outlooks between parties. Since, conflict is inevitable in intimate relationships; the manner in which the partners approach the conflict is of utter importance (Feeney & Karantzas, 2017; Gordon & Chen, 2016). Conflict resolution refers to the behaviors displayed by individuals in an effort to reconcile, mitigate or diminish conflicts (Shi, 1999). The mere 'presence' of conflicts in a relationship doesn't necessarily imply poor quality of the relationship. Rather, it is the way the partners 'approach' the conflicts that may determine the longevity and continuity of the committed relationship (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022).

Researchers like Rahim (1983), Kurdek (1994), Feldman and Gowen (1998) and Schuman (2006); to name a few, have proposed various conflict resolution strategies that may overlap with each other (Courtain & Glowacz, 2019). However, this study will focus on the different forms of conflict resolution proposed by Kurdek (1994) which include conflict

engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal and compliance. Positive problem solving involves the use of constructive approaches like compromise (sacrifices made from both sides to reach a middle ground) and negotiation (discussion of concerns to reach a mutual agreement) to resolve a given conflict. Losing one's temper or attacking someone personally e.g., character assassination of someone, is indicative of 'conflict engagement'. Disengaging oneself from the conflict situation and shutting the other partner out is referred as 'withdrawal'. These two conflict resolution styles just mentioned often tend to occur together and are referred as the 'demand-withdraw pattern'. This pattern may recur and take the form of vicious cycles which may eventually lead to escalating conflicts, emotional distancing and poor communication between the two partners (Moland, 2011). In this pattern, the more one partner makes demands in a critical and non-confrontational manner (conflict engagement style), the more the other partner tends to display stonewalling, withdrawal or disengagement (withdrawal style). Lastly, the 'compliance' form of conflict resolution involves one partner surrendering to the other partner's perspective, demands or requests and/or stop defending their position. The partner does so in an effort to avoid further escalation of conflicts and preserve harmony within the relationship (Wagner et al., 2019).

Ainsworth (1970) as well as Main and Solomon (1990) posited that individuals' childhood experiences lead to the formation of particular attachment styles which in turn give rise to their 'internal working model'. This model plays a pivotal role in the development of internalized beliefs and expectations about oneself as well about self in relation to others and steers one's individual and interpersonal functioning throughout the course of life by influencing one's cognitions, emotions and behavioral responses. This internal model endures and extends to every sphere of one's life including his or her marital relationships (Fraley, 2018). Thus, it can

be established that attachment styles may impact one's approach to conflict resolution in a romantic relationship. Previous research investigations corroborate this proposition. Ayenew (2021); Caglayan and Körük (2022) established that secure attachment style is associated with integrative and compromising conflict resolution styles (constructive conflict resolution strategies) while the insecure attachment styles are more associated with unhealthy conflict resolution styles like retreat, compliance and the conflict engagement – which in particular has also been linked with intimate partner sexual and psychological violence (Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez & Krahé, 2019).

Likewise, Castellano et al. (2014) aimed to delve into how attachment styles of adults may impact their conflict resolution styles and their marital satisfaction as they transitioned to parenthood. The research findings revealed that individuals' marital satisfaction as well their use of constructive conflict resolution strategies diminished as they became parents. The intentionally childless couples on the other hand had relatively stable levels of marital satisfaction and the use of different conflict management strategies over the course of 8 months, most likely due to the absence of the stressful transition to parenthood. However, the couples who had a secure attachment style reported better levels of marital satisfaction as they transitioned to parenthood as compared to the ones having insecure attachment styles. In contrast, the insecurely attached couples were observed to have a significant decrease in the use of cooperative conflict resolution strategies such as 'compromising' and 'integrating' and a significant increase in the use of one of the non-cooperative strategies like 'dominating'.

Similarly, Scheeren et al. (2014) observed that all the insecure styles of attachment i.e. anxious, dismissive/avoidant or disorganized/fearful avoidant are correlated with negative styles of conflict management such as compliance, conflict engagement and withdrawal, which in turn

decline their marital quality while secure style of attachment is linked with their use of healthier conflict resolution strategy —'positive problem solving' that ultimately results in their enhanced marital quality.

By this point, we can argue that different attachment styles would be associated more with certain conflict resolution behaviors than others. Individuals having a secure attachment style are more likely to use constructive conflict resolution strategies such as positive problem solving because of their enhanced perspective taking skills and lesser aggressive or avoidant behavioral tendencies for resolving conflicts. In comparison, individuals having any of the insecure attachment styles (anxious, avoidant or disorganized) are more prone to using destructive conflict resolution strategies such as 'conflict engagement' (Somohano, 2013).

Earlier researches offer evidences in this context. Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez and Krahé (2017) discovered that anxiously attached individuals are likely to display malfunctional conflict resolution strategies like conflict engagement in an effort to gain their partner's attention, validation etc. Additionally, they may also use strategy of withdrawal or compliance owing to their fear of abandonment resulting from their clingy and repeated reassurance seeking attitude with their partner. Similarly, dismissive/avoidant attachment style may also be characterized by the use of 'withdrawal' strategy in order to avoid disagreements and remain emotionally distant. However, in case of extreme escalation of conflicts, individuals having such an attachment style may also resort to 'conflict engagement' strategy for the purpose of emotional distancing from their partner. Finally, disorganized/fearful avoidant style of attachment is characterized by the use of a mixture of the conflict resolution tactics used by both avoidant and anxiously attached individuals. On the similar grounds, González-Ortega et al. (2020) illustrated that securely attached couples are more likely to use constructive conflict resolution strategies (positive

problem solving) and report a higher relationship quality while insecurely attached couples are more likely to use unhealthy conflict resolution strategies (conflict engagement, withdrawal, compliance) and have a relatively poor relationship quality.

Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution and Trait Mindfulness in Marital Relationships

Lately, there has been an increasing interest in the investigation of mindfulness in the context of close intimate relationships and their dynamics. A number of earlier studies have demonstrated the integral role that mindfulness plays in determining many outcomes of romantic relationships like satisfaction, functioning and quality of the relationship, closeness and responsiveness of romantic partners to each other, their ways of responding to stress or handling conflict etc. (Gesell et al., 2020). Kabat-Zinn (1994), the pioneer of Western mindfulness, defines mindfulness as an awareness that is achieved through purposeful and heightened focusing of one's attention to the experiences and happenings of the present moment in a non-judgmental and receptive manner. It may be characterized by directing one's focus on his/her thoughts, feelings, emotions, bodily sensations (Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; C.F). Mindfulness has been found to be associated with several positive health outcomes like reduced anxiety, depression, stress, emotional reactivity, negative affect; along with enhanced well-being and emotion regulation (Hayes & Feldman, 2004; Goldin & Gross, 2010; Mandal, Arya & Pandey, 2011).

Two types of mindfulness have been identified – state mindfulness and trait mindfulness. State mindfulness is a temporary state of being attentive and aware of the stimuli in one's environment through various emerging sensations such as that during mindful meditation exercises. It may vary across different situations (Ding et al., 2019; Goilean, Gracia & Tomás,

2023). On the other hand, trait mindfulness; also referred as ‘dispositional mindfulness’ is one’s enduring and inherent characteristic or predisposition to be mindful in everyday life, irrespective of the situation (Roberts et al., 2021; Markoff, 2023). Trait mindfulness is stable in nature and is rooted in an individual’s personality regardless of the situation whereas state mindfulness is transient in nature and may differ from situation to situation. The focus of this research investigation however, was on ‘trait mindfulness’.

As it has already been discussed that conflict is inevitable in marital relationships amongst many other kinds of relationships e.g., familial, workplace and friendships etc. The outcomes of a romantic relationship are largely determined by the manner (constructive or destructive) in which the partners deal with their conflicts in an effort to resolve them (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022). The extent to which individuals are mindfully aware of their surroundings may largely govern the way they approach situations of conflict. Earlier studies have established that trait mindfulness in partner(s) of a romantic relationship is positively associated with their use of constructive and healthy conflict resolution strategies (e.g., positive problem solving) and negatively associated with their use of destructive and unhealthy conflict resolution strategies (e.g., withdrawal, conflict engagement etc.). Harvey Knowles, Manusov and Crowley (2015); Mandal and Lip (2022) demonstrated that higher level of trait mindfulness is associated with increased use of constructive conflict resolution strategies and decreased use of destructive conflict resolution strategies among individuals involved in a romantic relationship. Moreover, trait mindfulness was identified as a significant predictor of enhanced relationship quality, satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, in a sample of married German adults who had at least one child, Gesell et al. (2020) depicted that the lesser use of conflict withdrawal strategy and greater use of the positive problem-solving strategy coupled with more interpersonal closeness

are the potential mechanisms through which romantic partners' trait mindfulness is associated with favorable relationship outcomes.

Harvey, Crowley and Woszidlo (2019) explored that how romantic partners' trait mindfulness might relate to their own and as well their intimate partner's romantic relationship satisfaction and also their choice of conflict resolution style. The analysis revealed that for both genders, trait mindfulness was positively associated with their use of constructive conflict resolution styles which in turn lead to their greater relationship satisfaction. It was also observed that greater the males' trait mindfulness, greater was the female's satisfaction with the relationship. Furthermore, increased females' trait mindfulness was found to be associated with their male partner's decreased use of destructive conflict resolution style which in turn predicted higher male relationship satisfaction

One may wonder what could be the possible reasons due to which some individuals have greater levels of trait mindfulness than others. Earlier research studies have demonstrated that one possible explanation behind this could be the different 'attachment styles' of individuals. According to the previous research inquiries, individuals having a secure style of attachment are likely to have greater level of trait mindfulness as compared to having any of the insecure attachment styles.

Chakroun-Baggioni, Shankland and Estelle (2023) indicated that the lower the attachment style of romantic partners is anxious, the higher will be their level of trait mindfulness and hence better will be their romantic relationship quality. The analysis further revealed that trait mindfulness partially mediated the relationship between individuals' avoidant attachment style and the quality of romantic relationship. The mediation was partial because of

the existence of a direct effect of avoidant attachment style on the quality of romantic relationship which implies that low level of avoidant attachment style is associated with a better quality of romantic relationship. Similarly, Pepping and Duvenage (2016) found out that adolescents' retrospective reports as well as their current experiences of perceived rejection from their parents was associated with their decreased trait mindfulness through increased attachment avoidance and anxiety. Similarly, the participants' perceived warmth from their parents was associated with their enhanced level of trait mindfulness by the virtue of reduced attachment related avoidance and anxiety.

Calvo et al. (2022) inferred that insecure attachment styles of individuals involved in an intimate relationship may increase their psychological inflexibility and exacerbate their resilience and trait mindfulness, which in turn may decline their overall psychological well-being. On the similar grounds, Kriplani and Vijayan (2023) ascertained that the more ambivalent-insecure a young adult's attachment style is, the lesser will be their resilience and trait mindfulness. Additionally, the trait mindfulness of participants had a significant and positive association with their resilience. Lastly, the individuals having a secure attachment style had the greatest amount of resilience and trait mindfulness as compared to those having insecure attachment styles.

Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality

The feelings, sentiments, and judgements that the spouses hold about their marital bond is referred as marital quality (Zamir, Gewirtz, & Zhang, 2017). Relationship quality including that of marital relationships is a complex notion involving various subjective feelings and evaluations e.g., satisfaction (Batool & Khalid, 2012), happiness (Sooki, 2021), communication (Kanter et al., 2022), adaptability (Cheguvera & Dutt, 2022), perceived partner responsiveness (Yuan, Fan

& Leng, 2022), and intimacy (Azizpoor & Safarzadeh, 2016) to name a few. Binte Muneer (2015) illustrated that marital quality may be influenced by a host of factors such as commitment of the spouses to the relationship, the ability to effectively tackle challenging situations, the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, the style of attachment of the partners and their beliefs etc., among married couples belonging to Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Spanier and Lewis (1980) have proposed particular elements of relationship quality that may largely contribute to the success of a close relationship. These include emotional expression (openly expressing one's emotions and affiliation for their partner), consensus (the perspectives of the partners about the functioning of the relationship), cohesion (participation and involvement in family life) and satisfaction (one's contentment with the relationship along with the need to remain involved in the relationship and a desire for its longevity) (Mandal & Lip, 2022).

Amongst the many factors that may determine the quality of a marital relationship, some important factors may include attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies and trait mindfulness of the spouses. Although these three variables have been explored in the previous researches, however, they have been studied mostly in the context of romantic relationships in general; including individuals who are dating, cohabiting, engaged, married etc. (Kimmes et al., 2018; Quickert & MacDonald, 2020; Fall & Shankland, 2021). There are hardly any earlier international studies and none of the indigenous research that have examined these variables together and exclusively in the context of marital relationships especially among those married individuals who have children (Jones et al., 2011; Tulum, 2014; Khalifian & Barry, 2016). Therefore, this exploratory study aims to scrutinize these variables together and specifically in the context of marital relationships of those individuals who have at least one child.

Individuals' attachment with their caregiver(s) in childhood leads to the development of particular attachment styles that impact their functioning in close relationships later in adulthood and thus ultimately influences the quality of such relationships in the long run. Existing literature has established that how attachment styles of individuals can determine their intimate relationship quality. A group of researchers demonstrated that insecure attachment style of individuals was associated with their poor romantic relationship quality (Meyer et al., 2015). Likewise, Amani and Khosroshahi (2020) identified secure attachment style as a significant predictor of enhanced marital quality. among young adults.

Similarly, two Pakistani researchers demonstrated a strong negative correlation between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction in a sample of married young female adults from Lahore; which signifies that the lesser the attachment style of individuals is insecure, the greater will be their marital satisfaction. Furthermore, insecure attachment styles were established as significant predictors of marital dissatisfaction (Justin & Haroon, 2019).

Sandberg et.al (2017) aimed to analyze how attachment styles and specific attachment behaviors — distinct behaviors displayed by a partner in a relationship which may in turn impact their attachment security; of couples influence their marital quality. The findings suggested that males and females' attachment styles as well as their attachment behaviors were significant positive predictors of their marital quality; which implies that greater level of secure attachment and attachment behaviors are associated with higher marital quality. The research outcomes further illustrated that the attachment behaviors of husbands were significantly and positively associated with the marital quality of their wives.

This fact has already been emphasized enough that the way the marital partners handle their disagreements and conflicts largely determines their relationship quality and previous research studies provide evidences in this regard. A group of research scientists identified strategies of conflict resolution as significant predictors of marital quality in a sample of married and cohabiting Brazilian adults having an age range of 18 to 80 years old. The use of problem-solving strategy was found to be the most significant predictor of good marital quality while conflict engagement was discovered to be the most significant predictor of bad marital quality (Wagner et al., 2019).

Similarly, some other research studies also prove that greater use of constructive conflict resolution strategies such as ‘integrating’, is associated with enhanced psychological well-being and marital satisfaction of married individuals (Ali et al., 2024) while destructive conflict resolution strategies like verbal aggression and distributive strategies of conflict resolution have been identified as significant predictors of marital dissatisfaction (Ali & Saleem, 2022).

Bisht and Tripathi (2023) have also demonstrated that a destructive and negative conflict resolution strategy such as ‘conflict engagement’ is associated with relationship dissatisfaction of romantically involved individuals. Additionally, they discovered that unmarried individuals have a greater tendency to use conflict engagement in comparison with married individuals. Furthermore, these researchers also established that there are gender differences in conflict resolution styles; with men being more likely to use avoidance type of conflict resolution as compared to females who are more inclined to use healthy conflict resolution strategies.

Lastly, the inherent predisposition of individuals to attend to the here and now in a non-judgmental and accepting fashion i.e., the trait mindfulness of spouses has also been found to be

a predictor of marital quality as per the existing research literature. For instance, Zamir et al. (2017) examined the association of a romantic partner's trait mindfulness with their own as well as their partner's perceived marital quality among a group of married individuals having 1 to 5 children. The findings suggested that higher trait mindfulness of both marital partners was associated with a better perceived marital quality of their own as well their partner's. Likewise, Kappen et al. (2018) illustrated a direct positive association between trait mindfulness and relationship satisfaction; indicating that higher level of trait mindfulness will be associated with increased romantic relationship satisfaction.

Another group of research scholars were interested in exploring the association between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction; along with the mediating role that forgiveness might play in this relationship. Higher level of trait mindfulness was found to be associated with an increased level of relationship satisfaction in female participants and also with an increased tendency to forgive one's partner for their transgressions. Moreover, forgiveness was found to mediate the relationship between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction of these couples (Roberts et al., 2021).

Similarly, Adair, Boulton and Algoe (2018) assessed the possible mediating role of perceived partner responsiveness (perception of a partner being considerate and responsive to one's emotional, physical needs etc.) between trait mindfulness and relationship satisfaction among heterosexual romantic partners. The study findings indicated that individuals who had high levels of trait mindfulness perceived their romantic partners to be more responsive and in turn had greater satisfaction with their romantic relationship. Moreover, the results also suggested that individuals who scored higher on the 'acting with awareness' dimension of trait

mindfulness, were perceived by their romantic partner as being more considerate and responsive and resultantly reported greater satisfaction with the romantic relationship.

To sum up, based on one's childhood experiences with their primary caregivers, individuals may develop certain ways of relating to and interacting with other people known as attachment styles. These attachment styles may eventually change a little bit with time; however, the impact of the childhood experiences with one's caregivers through which these styles are developed; is often enduring and hence have the capability of influencing one's relationships during adulthood including marital relationships. Two people living together in close proximity may not always see eye to eye on everything as they're likely to have different ideas, opinions, beliefs etc. about at least some of life matters; which if not discussed effectively may give rise to conflicts. Past researches have demonstrated that marital quality of individuals may not rely only on conflicts but rather the way the marital partners approach that dispute through the use of different conflict resolution strategies. The individuals' choice of particular conflict resolution strategies may depend at least for some part on their attachment styles; which may ultimately affect their marital quality. The inherent predisposition to be aware of the current experiences in a non-judgmental and accepting manner known as trait mindfulness, may also determine one's choice of conflict resolution strategy and have an ultimate impact on their marital quality. Married individuals having a secure attachment style are likely to use positive conflict resolution strategies (positive problem solving), have higher level of trait mindfulness and enhanced marital quality. On the other hand, the married individuals having insecure attachment styles (disorganized, anxious, avoidant) have a greater probability of using relatively negative conflict resolution strategies (conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance), have lesser levels of trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Hypothetical Model showing the influence of Attachment Styles on Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality

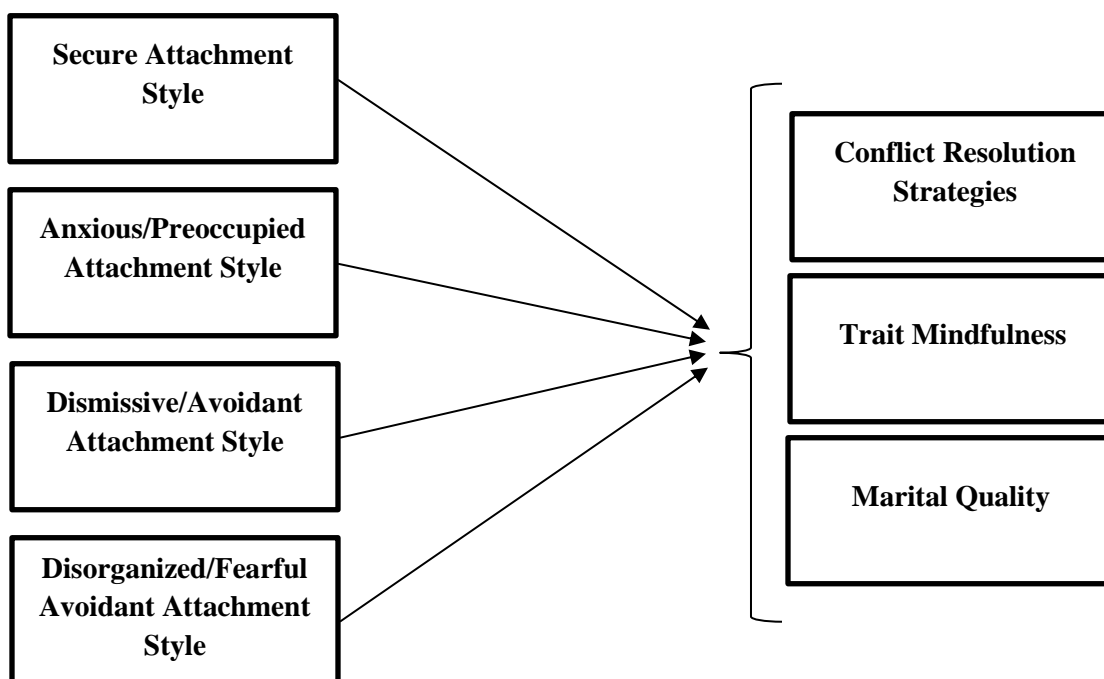
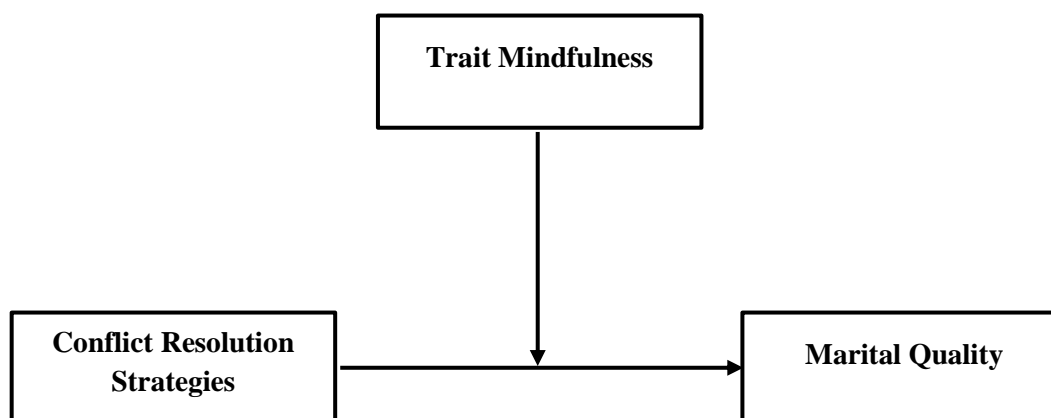


Figure 2

Hypothetical Model showing the Moderating role of Trait Mindfulness between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Marital Quality



Rationale

Earlier research explorations have proved mindfulness to be associated with a wide variety of health and well-being related outcomes such as reduced anxiety and depression, improved emotion regulation, enhanced autonomy, higher self-esteem, resilience, self-compassion, empathy and healthy thinking patterns free of ruminations and worries (Bloch et al., 2017; Quinn-Nilas, 2020; Rizal et al., 2020; Nadeem & Koschmann, 2021). However, relatively fewer research investigations have been carried out that explore mindfulness in the realm of intimate relationship functioning and its outcomes (Harvey et al., 2019; Don & Algoe, 2020; Mandal & Lip, 2022). There is hardly any indigenous research literature available in this context. Although some native research investigations have been conducted that examine the link between attachment styles and marital relationship outcomes (Arif & Fatima, 2015; Zahra, 2022); however, there is a scarcity of indigenous research about the association of attachment styles with the dynamics of a romantic relationship e.g., conflict resolution strategies of romantic partners (Yaqoob & Bano, 2020). Furthermore, there are hardly any studies that have demonstrated ‘trait mindfulness’ as a moderator in the relationship of intimate partners’ conflict resolution strategies and their relationship outcomes (Smedley et al., 2021). Additionally, instead of exploring multiple elements (e.g. cohesion, consensus between the partners etc.) that collectively may contribute to the quality of a romantic relationship; earlier researches have assessed conflict resolution strategies and mindfulness with sole focus on a single dimension of romantic relationship quality i.e. satisfaction with the relationship (Perrone-McGovern et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2020).

In light of the aforementioned unaddressed areas in the existing research literature, the objective of the present research study involved analysis of the interplay among attachment

styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals in the Pakistani context.

Objectives

The present research had the following objectives:

1. The study aimed to explore the intricate patterns of relationships among individuals' attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and their marital quality.
2. Another aim of the present study was to examine the differences among married individuals with different attachment styles, in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.
3. The study had an objective of testing the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality among married individuals.
4. The study also had an objective of exploring gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality.

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses of the current study were analyzed:

1. There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality of individuals.
2. There would be differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among individuals with different attachment styles.

3. The relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality will be moderated by trait mindfulness among married individuals.
4. There will be gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals.

Chapter 2

Method

A cross-sectional survey research design was employed to collect a sample of ($N = 311$) married individuals, including $n = 56$ married men and $n = 255$ married women with their ages ranging from 22 through 66 years using non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique. The sample size was selected using G-power (version 3.1) indicating that the sample size allows identifying medium effects with power = .95 and alpha = .05 for a-priori directional regression to assess the associations among the psychological variables (Faul et al., 2009). The individuals who were married, had at least one child, were willing to share their marital relationship dynamics and had the ability to comprehend English Language were included in the sample. On the other hand, the married individuals who did not have any children were excluded from the research sample.

Operational Definitions

Attachment Styles

On the basis of attachment related ‘anxiety’ and ‘avoidance’, four different attachment styles have been identified including secure – develop healthy relationships free of fear of abandonment with other people later in adulthood (Relajo-Howell, 2022), anxious/preoccupied – have ambivalent attitudes towards other people later in their adulthood, dismissive/avoidant – remain distant and isolated from other people especially during situations of conflict (Ackerman, 2018) and disorganized/fearful avoidant – fear emotional closeness as well as distancing from their romantic partner due to a fear of getting hurt. The three styles other than the ‘secure’ type are referred as ‘insecure’ attachment styles (Main, 2023).

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Kurdek (1994) identified four strategies of conflict resolution which include positive problem solving (negotiation and compromise with one's partner), conflict engagement (loss of one's temper and humiliating the partner), withdrawal (disengagement and shutting out from the conflict) and compliance (giving in to the partner without defending one's position). 'Positive problem solving' is classified as a constructive conflict resolution strategy while the remaining three types are categorized as destructive or maladaptive conflict resolution strategies (Adriani & Ratnasari, 2021).

Trait Mindfulness

A state of awareness that is achieved through purposeful and heightened focusing of one's attention to the experiences and happenings of the present moment in a non-judgmental and receptive manner is defined as mindfulness (Adair et al., 2018). This study was concerned with 'trait' mindfulness which is defined as one's enduring and inherent characteristic or 'predisposition' to be mindful (and not mindless) in everyday life, irrespective of the situation (Roberts et al., 2021; Markoff, 2023).

Marital Quality

The feelings, sentiments, and judgements that the spouses hold about their marital bond is referred as marital quality (Zamir et al., 2017). The good or poor quality of individuals' marital relationship was measured through their degree of consensus or agreement with each other's perspectives, the extent of cohesion between them during different activities and their degree of happiness with the relationship (Hunsley et.al, 2001; Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

Psychological Questionnaires

Demographic Information Sheet

A demographic information sheet was developed and used in order to collect basic background information about the participants. Participants were asked about their gender, age, birth order, residential area, religion, ethnicity, educational level, employment status, type of family system, relationship among family members and number of children.

Experiences in Close Relationship Scale–short form (ECR-S; Wei et al., 2007)

This self-report instrument is based on Bowlby's attachment theory; which lays the groundwork for this research inquiry. This questionnaire is a shorter form of the original revised version and comprises a total of 12 items. It has a 7-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Slightly Disagree, 4 – Neutral, 5 – Slightly Agree, 6 – Agree and 7 – Strongly Agree. This instrument assesses individuals' pattern of attachment and emotional responses in their close relationships e.g., in familial relationships, friendships, romantic relationships etc. The approximate administration time for the instrument is 3 to 4 minutes. ECR-S has two subscales: attachment related 'anxiety' and 'avoidance'. The scores obtained on these two subscales can be used collectively to classify individuals across four styles of attachment – secure, anxious/preoccupied, dismissive/avoidant and disorganized/fearful avoidant. The minimum obtainable score on each of the subscales is 7 while the maximum possible score is 42. Item number 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 constitute the 'attachment avoidance subscale' while item number 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 encompass the 'attachment anxiety subscale'. Item number 1, 5, 8 and 9 of this scale are reverse scored before the calculation of average scores of each of these subscales. An average avoidance score and an average anxiety

score are computed for the purpose of obtaining individuals' attachment style index. This instrument relies on a continuous measure of scores and thus lower scores are indicative of a secure style of attachment while higher scores reflect insecure styles of attachment – avoidant, anxious or disorganized. Scores lower than the median on both anxiety and avoidance subscales indicate a 'secure attachment style' while scores equal to or higher than the median on both these subscales represent a 'disorganized/fearful avoidant attachment style'. Score equal to or higher than the median of the avoidance subscale and score lower than the median on the anxiety subscale illustrates a 'dismissive/avoidant attachment style'. Scores equal to or higher than the median of the anxiety subscale and score lower than the median of the avoidance subscale demonstrates an 'anxious/preoccupied attachment style' (Fraley, 2012). The items included in this scale comprise of statements like "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner" and "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner" etc. The internal consistency reliability coefficient ' α ' of the anxiety subscale has been found to .78 while that of the avoidance subscale has been found to be .84. The instrument also possesses an acceptable level of construct validity (Wei et al., 2007). The reliability coefficients ' α ' of the overall scale, its anxiety subscale and avoidance subscale were established as .70, .64 and .69 respectively in this research.

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994)

This instrument assesses the different strategies that individuals employ to deal with their interpersonal conflicts. The scale consists of a total of 16 items. It is based on a 5-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Often and 5 – Always. The instrument comprises of 4 subscales, each of which contains 4 items. These subscales correspond to four different conflict resolution styles (positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance) that individuals may use to tackle with

situations of conflict. The response values on each of the subscales are summed to give a total score for each subscale, which may range from 4 to 20. The scale is based on a continuous measure of scores and thus higher scores in any of the subscales correspond to greater use of that particular style for dealing with interpersonal disputes. The questionnaire includes phrases like “throwing insults and digs” and “Sitting down and discussing differences constructively” etc. (Scheeren et al., 2014). The internal consistency reliability coefficients of the subscales have been found to range from .61 to .88 (Bisht & Tripathi, 2023; Kurdek, 2001). The instrument also possesses good criterion validity (Kurdek, 1994). The reliability coefficient ‘ α ’ of the whole scale was identified as .70 in this study and that of its subscales - conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal and compliance were established as .85, .74, .80 and .70 respectively in this research.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003)

This instrument is one of the most commonly used measures of ‘trait mindfulness’. The scale measures the extent to which individuals tend to be either inherently mindful or mindless of everyday activities (Miller, 2019). The questionnaire consists of 15 items. It is based on a 6-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Almost Always, 2 – Very Frequently, 3 – Somewhat Frequently, 4 – Somewhat Infrequently, 5 – Very Infrequently and 6 – Almost Never. Considering individuals’ demeanor in daily life, the items of the scale contain statements that reflect mindlessness e.g., “I find myself doing things without paying attention”, “I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later” etc. The average score of the response values is calculated; where higher scores are indicative of greater level of trait mindfulness tendencies (Gesell et al., 2020). The average reliability coefficient of MAAS has been found to be $\alpha = .89$. The scale also exhibits good convergent and predictive validity

(Kotzé & Nel, 2016). The reliability coefficient ‘ α ’ of the scale was established as .86 in this research.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7; Hunsley et al., 2001)

This instrument is a short version of the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This scale is one of the most extensively used measures of marital quality. The instrument is comprised of 7 items; with 3 items designed to measure the degree of ‘agreement’ between the partners (spouses in this research). These items are based on a 6-point Likert Type scale and include response options; 0 – Always Disagree, 1 – Almost Always Disagree, 2 – Frequently Disagree, 3 – Occasionally Disagree, 4 – Almost Always Agree and 5 – Always Agree. Three other items examine the degree of ‘dyadic cohesion’ between the partners. These items are also based on a 6-point Likert type scale and include response options 0 – Never, 1 – Less than once a month, 2 – Once or twice a month, 3 – Once or twice a week, 4 – Once a day and 5 – More Often. The remaining last item gauges the degree of ‘dyadic happiness’ with the marital relationship. This item is based on an ordinal scale of measurement and comprises of the response options 0 –Extremely Unhappy, 1 – Fairly Unhappy, 2 – A Little Unhappy, 3 – Happy, 4 – Very Happy, 5 – Extremely Happy and 6 – Perfect. The items of the questionnaire include statements such as “Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner about the aims, goals, and things believed important” and “Please indicate how often you and your partner have a stimulating exchange of ideas” etc. The scale is based on a continuous measure of scores as the response values from all the items are simply added up; with higher values reflecting a better marital quality. The total scores obtained may range from 0 to 36; where scores below 21 may be indicative of a strained relationship (Hunsley et al., 2001). The instrument’s internal consistency reliability coefficient has been reported to be $\alpha = .86$. It

also possesses well established discriminant and criterion validity (Zamir et al., 2017). The reliability coefficient ' α ' of the scale was determined to be .85 in this research.

Procedure

First of all, an official approval was acquired from the local ethics commission of the School of Professional Psychology, Bahria University, Islamabad for conducting this research investigation. Following that, married men and women were recruited from various areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi through non-probability snowball sampling technique. They were adequately briefed about the background and purpose of this research study. An Informed Consent was taken from each of these participants in order to ensure their voluntary involvement in the research process. All the ethical etiquettes were vigilantly followed through the entire research process. The participants were also given guidelines for providing appropriate and honest responses on all the self-report measures of this research investigation. After all the data was collected from the participants, it was entered, scored and then analyzed using the IBM SPSS Version 21 software. The final step involved precise and accurate reporting of the findings of this research investigation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the course of research investigation. The rights of the research participants were acknowledged at each stage of the research process. They were briefed about the purpose and the rationale behind this research study along with a short overview of Bowlby and Ainsworth's theory of attachment; which lays the foundation of this research exploration. The participants were informed about their ethical rights that they inherently possess in the research process; including the confidentiality of their

provided responses, the freedom to withdraw their participation at any time during the research process, and the foremost prioritization of their safety and well-being. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to ask queries and clarify their confusions regarding the research. The participants were required to sign an informed consent prior to their engagement with the research questionnaires.

Chapter 3

Results

The major objective of this research investigation was to explore the relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals ($N= 311$). Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 21 (SPSS-21) was used for data analysis in order to test the hypotheses of this research study. The reliability analyses of the measures used in this study were conducted. Descriptive statistics were used to obtain the frequencies and percentages of the categorical variables, means and standard deviations of the continuous demographic variables of this research. MANOVA was conducted to determine the differences among individuals with different attachment styles in terms of their conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness, and marital quality. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationship among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Moderation Analysis was carried out using Andrew F. Hayes PROCESS v4.2 to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality of the individuals. Independent sample t-test was used for analyzing gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Independent sample t-test was also utilized for analyzing the study variables in relation to the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability for all the scores on Scales (N=311)

Scales	k	α	M	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
ECR-S	12	.70	38.04	11.78	12-75	0.38	-0.04
Anxiety Subscale	6	.64	22.60	7.75	6-42	0.27	-0.49
Avoidance Subscale	6	.69	15.44	7.04	6-37	0.71	0.08
CRSI	16	.70	46.06	8.69	22-80	0.52	0.86
CE Subscale	4	.85	9.27	4.25	4-20	0.65	-0.37
PPS Subscale	4	.74	14.82	3.49	4-20	-0.75	0.47
Withdrawal Subscale	4	.80	10.84	4.18	4-20	0.28	-0.87
Compliance Subscale	4	.70	11.13	3.55	4-20	0.08	-0.25
MAAS	15	.87	58.19	14.40	15-90	-0.26	-0.25
DAS-7	7	.86	24.32	7.41	0-36	-0.67	-0.03

Note. ECR-S = Experiences in Close Relationships Scale -Short form, CRSI = Conflict Resolution Style Inventory, CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem-Solving, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, DAS-7 = Dyadic Adjustment Scale-7, k = number of items, α = Reliability Coefficient, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 3.1 shows the alpha reliabilities of the overall scales and subscales of ECR-S, CRSI, MAAS and DAS-7. The reliabilities of these scales and subscales ranged from .64 to .87, implying good to high reliability. The ECR-S Scale and its subscales – Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance had good reliabilities; .70, .64 and .69 respectively. The CRSI Scale had a very good reliability of .70 and its subscales – Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem-Solving, Withdrawal and Compliance had even better reliabilities than the overall scale; .85, .74, .80 and .70 respectively. The DAS-7 Scale had a high reliability of .86 while MAAS had the highest reliability of .87 amongst all the other scales and their subscales.

The standard deviations are moderate for MAAS scale, CRSI scale and its PPS Subscale relative to their mean values. The standard deviations are high for DAS-7 scale, ECR-S scale and

its anxiety subscale relative to their respective mean values. The standard deviations for Withdrawal and Compliance subscales of CRSI are also high relative to their means. The Standard deviations for Avoidance subscale of ECR-S and CE subscale of CRSI are very high relative to their mean values. The data for all the scales and their subscales is not skewed, as their skewness values fall between -1 to 1. The data for all these scales is also not platykurtic or leptokurtic, as their kurtosis values fall with the range of -3 to 3 (Bulmer, 1979; George & Mallery, 2018; Hatem et al., 2022; Demir, 2022).

Table 3.2

Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N = 311)

Characteristics of Participants		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Men	56	18
	Women	255	82
Birth Order	First Born	111	35.7%
	Second Born	62	19.9%
	Middle Child	73	23.5%
	Youngest Child	59	19%
	Only Child	6	1.9%
Religion	Muslim	309	99.4%
	Non-Muslim	2	6%
Ethnicity	Punjabi	208	66.2%
	Pashtun	46	14.8%
	Sindhi	2	0.6%
	Balochi	1	0.3%
	Other	56	18%
Employment Status	Employed	153	49.2%
	Unemployed	158	50.8%
Relationships among family members	Bad	12	3.9%
	Normal	105	33.8%
	Pleasant	194	62.4%
Type of Family System	Nuclear Family System	145	46.6%
	Joint Family System	166	53.4%

Note. f = frequency, % = percentage

Table 3.2 shows the frequencies and percentages of demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample size was 311. The table shows that married women constituted a vast majority (82%) of this sample as compared to men who were much less in number (18%). A large number of the research participants were first born (35.7%) while the least number of participants (19%) were the youngest child in their families. The participants of this sample were predominantly Muslims (99.4%). The ethnicity of most of the participants was Punjabi (66.2%) while only a small percentage of participants were Balochis (0.3%). There was quite a small difference in the number of employed and unemployed participants; with employed individuals constituting 49.2% and unemployed individuals making up 50.85% of the sample. There was also not much of a difference in the number of married individuals belonging to nuclear and joint family systems; with the nuclear family system accounting for 46.6% and the joint family system for 53.4%. A great fraction of participants described the relationship among their family member as pleasant (62.4%) while a moderate percentage of participants described their familial relationships as normal (33.8%) and only a small quotient described their familial bonds as bad (3.9%). The sample comprised of married individuals from various areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, all of whom had at least one child. All the participants were educated with qualification as low as Matriculation and as high as Master's and Doctorate degrees.

Table 3.3

*Independent sample t-test showing differences between Employed and Unemployed Individuals
(N=311)*

Variables	Employed (n=153)		Unemployed (n=158)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen' <i>s d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Anxiety	21.15	7.19	24.00	8.03	-3.29	.001***	-4.55	-1.15	0.37
Avoidance	14.92	6.94	15.95	7.12	-1.28	.19	-2.59	0.54	0.15
CE	8.97	4.19	9.56	4.30	-1.22	.22	-1.53	0.35	0.14
PPS	14.99	3.02	14.65	3.90	0.84	.39	-0.44	1.11	0.09
Withdrawal	10.39	4.35	11.27	3.96	-1.86	.06	-1.80	0.04	0.21
Compliance	10.68	3.42	11.57	3.61	-2.22	.02*	-1.67	-0.10	0.25
Mindfulness	58.16	13.77	58.21	15.03	-0.02	.97	-3.26	3.17	0.00
MQ	24.97	7.34	23.70	7.43	1.50	.13	-0.38	2.91	0.17

*Note. CE= Conflict Engagement, PPS= Positive Problem Solving, MQ = Marital Quality, M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, Cohen's d = Effect size, * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$*

Table 3.3 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was executed to examine differences in attachment related anxiety and avoidance, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality between employed and unemployed individuals. The results indicated that employed individuals ($M = 21.15$, $SD = 7.19$) and unemployed individuals ($M = 24.00$, $SD = 8.03$) have a significant difference in their attachment related anxiety. Mean values suggested that unemployed individuals have more attachment related anxiety as compared to employed individuals. The value of Cohen's d (0.37) signifies a small effect size. The results further showed that employed individuals ($M = 10.68$, $SD = 3.42$) and unemployed individuals ($M = 11.57$, $SD = 3.61$) have significant differences in their usage of compliance strategy for resolving conflicts. Mean values indicates that unemployed individuals use more compliance

strategy as compared to employed individuals. The effect size in this case was also small as indicated by Cohen's *d* value of 0.25.

Table 3.4

Independent sample t-test showing differences between Married Individuals belonging to Nuclear and Joint Families (N=311)

Variables	Nuclear (n=145)		Joint (n=166)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Anxiety	21.80	7.56	23.30	7.86	-1.70	.09	-3.22	0.23	0.19
Avoidance	15.14	7.04	15.71	7.05	-0.71	.47	-2.15	1.00	0.08
CE	8.70	3.74	9.78	4.60	-2.28	.02*	-2.01	-0.14	0.26
PPS	15.30	3.12	14.40	3.75	2.30	.02*	0.13	1.66	0.26
Withdrawal	10.48	4.22	11.15	4.12	-1.40	.16	-1.60	0.26	0.16
Compliance	10.60	3.40	11.60	3.61	-2.49	.01**	-1.78	-0.20	0.28
Mindfulness	59.84	14.45	56.74	14.24	1.90	.05*	-0.10	6.30	0.22
MQ	25.04	7.33	23.70	7.44	1.59	.11	-0.31	2.99	0.18

*Note. CE= Conflict Engagement, PPS= Positive Problem Solving, MQ = Marital Quality, M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, Cohen's d = Effect size, *p < .05, **p < .01*

Table 3.4 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was performed to examine differences in attachment related anxiety and avoidance, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality between married individuals belonging to nuclear and joint families. The results suggested that married individuals from nuclear families ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 3.74$) and those from joint families ($M = 9.78$, $SD = 4.60$) have significant differences in their conflict resolution strategies. Mean values implied that married individuals from joint families

demonstrate more conflict engagement as compared to married individuals from nuclear families. The effect size was small (0.26). Mean values further indicated that married individuals from nuclear families ($M = 15.30$, $SD = 3.12$) employ more positive problem solving for resolving conflicts than married individuals from joint families ($M = 14.40$, $SD = 3.75$). The value of Cohen's d (0.26) signifies a small effect size. The results further showed that married individuals from joint families ($M = 11.60$, $SD = 3.61$) utilize more compliance strategy for resolving conflicts than individuals from nuclear families ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 3.40$). Cohen's d value of 0.28 implies a small effect size.

Moreover, the findings showed significant differences in levels of trait mindfulness between married individuals belonging to nuclear ($M = 59.84$, $SD = 14.45$) and joint families ($M = 56.74$, $SD = 14.24$). Mean values demonstrated that married individuals from nuclear families possess greater levels of trait mindfulness as compared to those from joint families. The effect size in this case was also small as indicated by Cohen's d value of 0.22.

Table 3.5

Correlation matrix for Study variables (N = 311)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Anxiety	-							
2. Avoidance	.26**	-						
3. CE	.34**	.23**	-					
4. PPS	-.26**	-.41**	-.38**	-				
5. Withdrawal	.41**	.36**	.45**	-.24**	-			
6. Compliance	.39**	.27**	.33**	-.24**	.46**	-		
7. Mindfulness	-.34**	-.30**	-.32**	.28**	-.34**	-.34**	-	
8. Marital Quality	-.27**	-.50**	-.42**	.52**	-.41**	-.28**	.35**	-

*Note. CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem Solving, ** $p < .01$*

Table 3.5 shows the results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, which was used to analyze the correlations among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait

mindfulness and marital quality of married individuals. The analysis shows that attachment related anxiety has a significant and weak positive correlation with attachment related avoidance ($r = .26, p < .01$) and the unhealthy conflict resolution strategies including conflict engagement ($r = .34, p < .01$), withdrawal ($r = .41, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = .39, p < .01$) strategies. This suggests that higher attachment anxiety is associated with higher attachment avoidance and a greater use of the unhealthy conflict resolution strategies. The findings also demonstrate that attachment anxiety has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$), marital quality ($r = -.27, p < .01$) and positive problem-solving strategy ($r = -.26, p < .01$); which is a healthy strategy for resolving conflicts. From this it can be inferred that, higher attachment anxiety is associated with diminished levels of trait mindfulness, marital quality and a decreased use of positive problem-solving strategy.

The analysis further reveals that attachment avoidance has a significant and weak positive correlation with conflict engagement ($r = .23, p < .01$), withdrawal ($r = .36, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = .27, p < .01$) strategy. This denotes that higher attachment avoidance is associated with increased utility of conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts. Attachment avoidance was also found to have a significant and weak negative correlation with positive problem solving ($r = -.41, p < .01$), trait mindfulness ($r = -.30, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate negative correlation with marital quality ($r = -.50, p < .01$). This implies that higher attachment avoidance is associated with lesser use of positive problem solving and reduced levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.

Moreover, the results show that one of the destructive conflict resolution strategies i.e. conflict engagement has a significant and weak positive correlation with compliance ($r = .33, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate positive correlation with withdrawal ($r = .45, p < .01$). This

implies that married individuals who employ more conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts are also more likely to use compliance and withdrawal. Moreover, conflict engagement strategy has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.32, p < .01$), marital quality ($r = -.42, p < .01$) and positive problem solving ($r = -.38, p < .01$). This indicates that increased use of conflict engagement strategy is associated with diminished levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality along with a decreased use of positive problem solving.

The findings further indicate that positive problem solving has a significant and weak negative correlation with withdrawal ($r = -.24, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = -.24, p < .01$). This suggests that individuals who use more positive problem-solving strategy have a lesser probability of using compliance and withdrawal strategy for conflict resolution. Furthermore, positive problem solving has a significant and weak positive correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = .28, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate positive correlation with marital quality ($r = .52, p < .01$); implying that individuals' higher use of positive problem-solving strategy for resolving conflicts is associated with enhanced trait mindfulness and marital quality.

The withdrawal strategy has a significant and moderate positive correlation with compliance strategy ($r = .46, p < .01$); signifying that individuals' increased usage of this conflict resolution strategy is associated with their increased usage of compliance strategy. The analysis further demonstrates that withdrawal strategy has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$) and marital quality ($r = -.41, p < .01$) of individuals. Moreover, compliance strategy was also found to have a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$) and marital quality ($r = -.28, p < .01$). This implies that married individuals who have a high usage of withdrawal and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts are likely to have lower levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.

Trait mindfulness of individuals has a significant positive correlation with marital quality ($r = .35, p < .01$); which indicates that higher level of trait mindfulness is associated with their enhanced marital quality.

Table 3.6

MANOVA for differences in Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality among individuals with different Attachment Styles (N = 311)

Source	Dependent						
	Variable	SS	df	MS	F	<i>p</i>	η^2
Attachment	CE	563.143	3	187.714	11.43	.00***	0.10
Styles	PPS	438.511	3	146.170	13.37	.00***	0.11
	Withdrawal	855.495	3	285.165	19.21	.00***	0.15
	Compliance	572.631	3	190.877	17.59	.00***	0.14
	Mindfulness	7333.503	3	2444.501	13.17	.00***	0.11
	Marital Quality	3593.927	3	1197.976	27.40	.00***	0.211

*Note. CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem Solving, SS = Sum of Squares, MS = Mean Square, η^2 = Partial Eta Squared, *** $p < .001$*

Table 3.6 shows the results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), which was conducted to find the differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals with different attachment styles. The results demonstrated that there was a significant main effect of individuals' attachment styles (secure, disorganized, anxious and avoidant) on conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality, $F(18, 854) = 7.33, p < .001$; Wilks' $\lambda = .66$; partial $\eta^2 = .12$. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008 showed that the individuals having any of the four attachment styles differed significantly with respect to their usage of conflict engagement strategy, $F(3, 307) = 11.43, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, with the highest use associated with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 10.89, SD = .41$) as compared to the

anxious ($M = 9.65$, $SD = .49$), avoidant ($M = 8.82$, $SD = .52$) and secure attachment style ($M = 7.47$, $SD = .43$).

Similarly, individuals with distinct attachment styles differed significantly in terms of their usage of positive problem-solving strategy, $F(3, 307) = 13.37$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$, with the greatest use associated with the secure attachment style ($M = 16.40$, $SD = .35$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 15.14$, $SD = .41$), avoidant ($M = 14.55$, $SD = .43$) and disorganized attachment styles ($M = 13.35$, $SD = .33$).

Likewise, individuals with different attachment styles differed significantly in relation to their use of withdrawal strategy, $F(3, 307) = 19.21$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$, with the highest use associated with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 12.95$, $SD = .39$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 10.91$, $SD = .47$), avoidant ($M = 10.47$, $SD = .49$) and secure attachment style ($M = 8.67$, $SD = .41$).

Individuals with different attachment styles also differed significantly with regard to their use of compliance strategy, $F(3, 307) = 17.59$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$, with the greatest use linked with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 12.86$, $SD = .33$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 11.32$, $SD = .40$), avoidant ($M = 10.63$, $SD = .42$) and secure attachment style ($M = 9.39$, $SD = .35$).

The results also identified that the individuals with different attachment styles had distinct levels of trait mindfulness, $F(3, 307) = 13.17$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$, with the secure attachment style associated with the highest level ($M = 64.85$, $SD = 1.46$) as compared to the avoidant ($M = 58.88$, $SD = 1.76$), anxious ($M = 57.53$, $SD = 1.67$) and disorganized attachment style ($M = 52.29$, $SD = 1.38$).

Lastly, the individuals with different attachment styles also had varying degrees of marital quality, $F(3, 307) = 27.41, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$, with an enhanced level of marital quality linked with secure attachment style ($M = 28.93, SD = .71$) as compared to anxious ($M = 25.56, SD = .81$), avoidant ($M = 22.62, SD = .85$) and disorganized attachment style ($M = 20.45, SD = .67$).

Table 3.7

Multiple Comparisons for analyzing differences in Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality among individuals with different Attachment Styles (N = 311)

Dependent Variables	Attachment Styles		Mean Difference	SE	<i>p</i>
CE	Secure	Disorganized	-3.43	0.597	.000
	Secure	Anxious	-2.18	0.661	.007
	Disorganized	Secure	3.43	0.597	.000
	Anxious	Secure	2.18	0.661	.007
PPS	Secure	Disorganized	3.05	0.487	.000
	Secure	Avoidant	1.85	0.555	.006
	Disorganized	Secure	-3.05	0.487	.000
	Disorganized	Anxious	-1.78	0.526	.005
	Avoidant	Secure	-1.85	0.555	.006
	Anxious	Disorganized	1.78	0.526	.005
Withdrawal	Secure	Disorganized	-4.28	0.567	.000
	Secure	Anxious	-2.24	0.629	.003
	Disorganized	Secure	4.28	0.567	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	2.48	0.632	.001
	Disorganized	Anxious	2.04	0.613	.006
	Avoidant	Disorganized	-2.48	0.632	.001
	Anxious	Secure	2.24	0.629	.003
	Anxious	Disorganized	-2.04	0.613	.006
Compliance	Secure	Disorganized	-3.47	0.485	.000
	Secure	Anxious	-1.93	0.538	.002
	Disorganized	Secure	3.47	0.485	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	2.22	0.54	.000

Dependent Variables	Attachment Styles		Mean Difference	SE	p
	Avoidant	Disorganized	-2.22	0.54	.000
	Anxious	Secure	1.93	0.538	.002
Mindfulness	Secure	Disorganized	12.56	2.007	.000
	Secure	Anxious	7.32	2.224	.007
	Disorganized	Secure	-12.56	2.007	.000
	Anxious	Secure	-7.32	2.224	.007
Marital Quality	Secure	Disorganized	8.48	0.974	.000
	Secure	Avoidant	6.31	1.109	.000
	Disorganized	Secure	-8.48	0.974	.000
	Disorganized	Anxious	-5.11	1.053	.000
	Avoidant	Secure	-6.31	1.109	.000
	Anxious	Disorganized	5.11	1.053	.000

Note. Only significant differences are reported; *CE* = Conflict Engagement, *PPS* = Positive Problem Solving

Table 3.7 shows the results of multiple comparisons (Post hoc tests), which were carried out using the Bonferroni method for further analyzing the differences among individuals with different attachment styles in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. The results demonstrated that individuals with different attachment styles were significantly different in terms of their use of the ‘destructive’ conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts. The mean differences indicated that individuals with secure attachment style use significantly less conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts as compared to those with disorganized and anxious attachment styles. Individuals with disorganized attachment style and anxious attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly more than those with a secure attachment style.

Moreover, the mean differences implied that individuals with a secure attachment style use the ‘constructive’ positive problem-solving strategy significantly more than those with disorganized and avoidant attachment styles. Similarly, the individuals with disorganized

attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly less than those with secure and anxious attachment styles. The individuals with avoidant attachment use this strategy less than securely attached individuals. While the individuals with anxious attachment style use this strategy more than those with disorganized attachment style.

Furthermore, the mean differences indicated that the individuals with secure attachment style use the 'destructive' withdrawal strategy for resolving conflicts significantly less than those with disorganized and anxious attachment styles. The individuals with disorganized attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly more than those with secure, avoidant and anxious attachment styles. Likewise, the individuals with avoidant and anxious attachment styles use this strategy significantly less than the ones with disorganized attachment style. The individuals with anxious attachment style use this strategy significantly more than securely attached individuals.

The analysis further showed that securely attached individuals use the 'destructive' compliance strategy for resolving conflicts significantly less than those with disorganized and anxious attachment styles. Likewise, the individuals with disorganized attachment style use this strategy significantly more than those with secure and avoidant attachment styles. The individuals with avoidant attachment style use this strategy significantly less than those with disorganized attachment. While the individuals with anxious attachment style use this strategy significantly more than securely attached individuals.

The findings also demonstrated that securely attached individuals have significantly higher levels of trait mindfulness than those with disorganized and anxious attachment styles. On the other hand, the individuals with disorganized and anxious attachment styles have significantly lower levels of trait mindfulness than those with secure attachment styles.

Lastly, the marital quality of securely attached individuals was found to be significantly enhanced as compared to those with disorganized and avoidant attachment styles. On the contrary, the individuals with a disorganized attachment style were found to have significantly diminished marital quality as compared to those with secure and anxious attachment styles. The individuals with avoidant attachment style had significantly diminished marital quality as compared to securely attached individuals. Moreover, the anxiously attached individuals were also identified to have significantly higher marital quality than those individuals with disorganized attachment style.

Table 3.8

Moderating Role of Trait Mindfulness between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
CRSI	0.30	0.16	1.84	.06	-0.02	0.63
MAAS	0.55	0.13	4.05	.00	0.28	0.81
Interaction	-0.01	0.003	-3.07	.002	-0.01	-0.00
CRSI x MAAS						
F = 9.45 R ² = .186*** ΔR ² = .025**						

*Note. CRSI = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

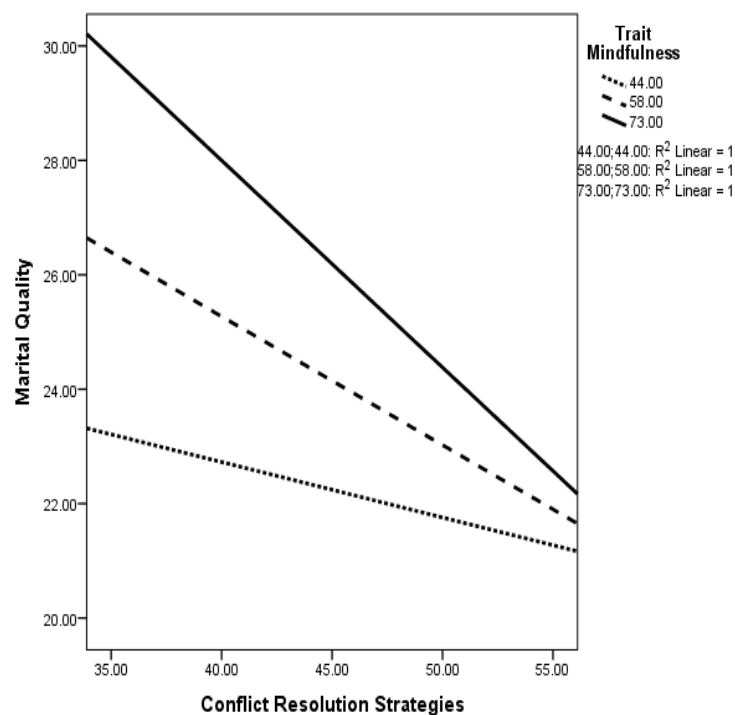
Table 3.8 shows the results of moderation analysis, which was carried out to test whether trait mindfulness moderated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality of individuals. The results depicted that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality while conflict resolution strategies were non-significant predictors of

marital quality. However, the interaction effect of conflict resolution strategies and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 18.6 % whereas the unique variance of the CRSI x MAAS was 2.5%.

Figure 3

Interaction Plot of Conflict Resolution Strategies and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above graphical plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies on marital quality; leading to an enhanced marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait

mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies on trait mindfulness; consequently, diminishing marital quality.

Further moderation analyses were conducted to explore the moderating role of trait mindfulness between the subscales of Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (IV) and marital quality (DV) of individuals.

Table 3.9

Moderating Role of Trait Mindfulness between Conflict Engagement Strategy and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
CE	0.01	0.33	0.04	.96	-0.64	0.67
MAAS	0.22	0.05	3.77	.00***	0.11	0.34
Interaction	-0.01	0.01	-1.91	.05*	-1.09	-0.53
CE x MAAS						
F = 3.63 R ² = .235*** ΔR ² = .009**						

Note. CE = Conflict Engagement, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

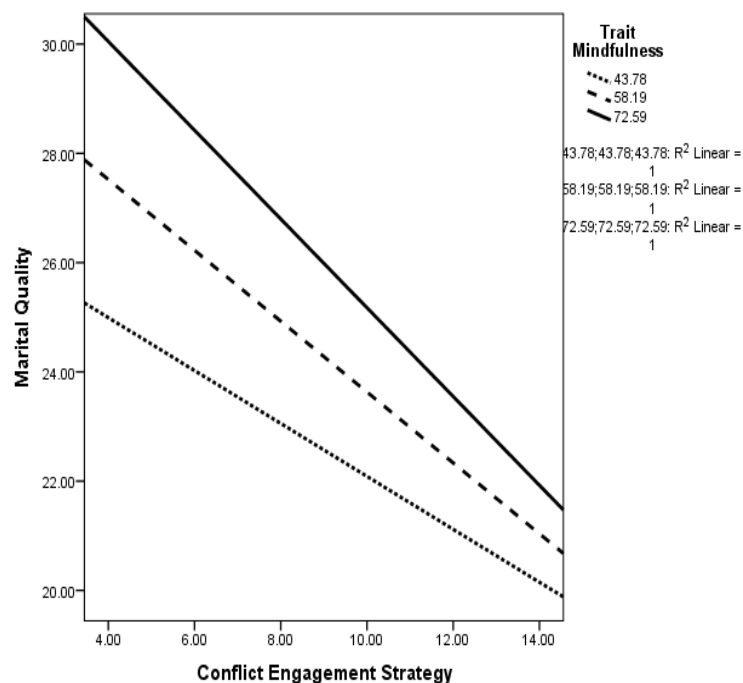
Table 3.9 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the conflict engagement subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality while the conflict engagement strategy was a non-significant predictor of marital quality. However, the interaction effect of conflict engagement strategy and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant

and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 23.5 % whereas the unique variance of the CE x MAAS was 0.9 %.

Figure 4

Interaction Plot of Conflict Engagement Strategy and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above interaction plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of conflict engagement strategy on marital quality; resulting in an improved marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of conflict engagement strategy on trait mindfulness; thereby reducing marital quality.

Table 3.10

Moderating Role of Trait Mindfulness between Positive Problem Solving Strategy and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
PPS	0.54	0.37	1.46	.14	-0.18	1.26
MAAS	-0.00	0.09	-0.03	.97	-0.19	0.19
Interaction	0.01	0.01	1.20	.23	-0.00	0.02
PPS x MAAS						
F = 1.43 R ² = .314 ΔR ² = .003						

Note. PPS = Positive Problem Solving, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale

Table 3.10 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the positive problem-solving subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that both, trait mindfulness and positive problem-solving strategy were non-significant predictors of marital quality. Similarly, the interaction effect of trait mindfulness and positive problem-solving strategy on marital quality was also found to be non-significant. Thus, it can be inferred that moderation doesn't exist as no variable emerged as a significant moderator in this model.

Table 3.11

*Moderating Role of Trait Mindfulness between Withdrawal Strategy and Marital Quality
(N=311)*

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
Withdrawal	0.30	0.34	0.87	.38	-0.38	0.98
MAAS	0.28	0.07	4.21	.00***	0.15	0.42
Interaction	-0.02	0.01	-2.67	.01**	-0.03	-0.02
With. x MAAS						
F = 7.13 R ² = .235*** ΔR ² = .018**						

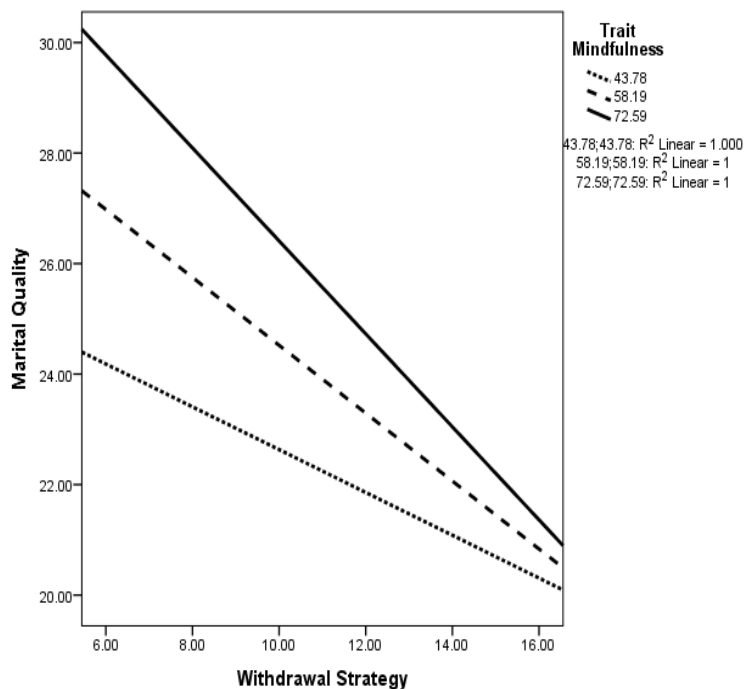
*Note. With. = Withdrawal, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

Table 3.11 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the withdrawal subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality while the withdrawal strategy was a non-significant predictor of marital quality. However, the interaction effect of withdrawal strategy and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 23.5 % whereas the unique variance of the With. x MAAS was 1.8 %.

Figure 5

Interaction Plot of Withdrawal Strategy and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above graphical plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of withdrawal strategy on marital quality; leading to better marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of withdrawal strategy on trait mindfulness; bringing about reduced marital quality.

Table 3.12*Moderating Role of Trait Mindfulness between Compliance Strategy and Marital Quality**(N=311)*

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
Compliance	0.33	0.40	0.82	.41	-0.46	1.13
MAAS	0.28	0.08	3.50	.00***	0.13	0.45
Interaction	-0.01	0.01	-1.84	.06	-0.03	0.00
Comp. x MAAS						
F = 3.40 R ² = .159 ΔR ² = .009						

Note. *Comp.* = *Compliance*, *MAAS* = *Mindful Attention Awareness Scale*, ****p* < .001

Table 3.12 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the compliance subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality whereas the compliance strategy was found to be a non-significant predictor of marital quality. Moreover, the interaction effect of trait mindfulness and compliance strategy on marital quality was also found to be non-significant. Thus, it can be inferred that moderation doesn't exist as no variable emerged as a significant moderator in this model.

Table 3.13*Independent sample t-test showing gender differences (N=311)*

Variables	Men (n=56)		Women (n=255)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
CE	6.93	3.45	9.79	4.24	-5.37	.00***	-3.91	-1.80	0.74
PPS	15.61	3.50	14.64	3.48	1.87	.06	-0.05	1.97	0.28
Withdrawal	9.91	4.38	11.04	4.11	-1.84	.06	-2.34	0.08	0.27
Compliance	10.13	3.64	11.35	3.49	-2.36	.01**	-2.25	-0.21	0.34
Mindfulness	62.30	13.72	57.28	14.42	2.38	.01**	0.87	9.17	0.35
MQ	25.79	7.68	24.00	7.32	1.63	0.1	-0.36	3.93	0.24

Note. CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem-Solving, MQ= Marital Quality, *M*= mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *LL* = Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit, ***p* <.01, ****p* < .001, Cohen's *d* = Effect size

Table 3.13 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was conducted to examine gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality of married individuals. The results indicated that men ($M = 6.93$, $SD = 3.45$) and women ($M = 9.79$, $SD = 4.24$) have a significant difference in their usage of conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts. Mean values suggested that women utilize more conflict engagement as compared to men. The value of Cohen's *d* (0.74) signifies a medium effect size. The results further showed that men ($M = 10.13$, $SD = 3.64$) and women ($M = 11.35$, $SD = 3.49$) have significant differences in their usage of compliance strategy. Mean values indicate that women employ more compliance as compared to men. The effect size in this case was small as indicated by its magnitude of 0.34. Furthermore, the results showed that men ($M = 62.30$, $SD = 13.72$) and women ($M = 57.28$, $SD = 14.42$) differ in their levels of trait mindfulness. Mean values indicated

that men have greater levels of trait mindfulness as compared to women; with a small effect size as Cohen's d value is 0.35.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The major aim of the present study involved the exploration of the interplay among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality in married individuals having at least one child. For this purpose, four hypotheses were formulated and then tested through various statistical analyses.

The first hypothesis of this research was that there would be a significant relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.5). The analysis showed that attachment anxiety has a significant positive correlation with attachment avoidance. Moreover, attachment anxiety and avoidance were discovered to have a significant positive correlation with destructive conflict resolution strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance. Both attachment anxiety and avoidance were also found to have a significant negative correlation with trait mindfulness, marital quality and constructive conflict resolution strategy – positive problem solving. The analysis further showed that unhealthy conflict resolution strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance have a significant positive correlation with each other while a significant negative correlation with trait mindfulness and marital quality. Furthermore, conflict engagement was found to have a significant negative correlation with positive problem solving. Lastly, trait mindfulness was found to have a significant positive correlation with marital quality. All these correlations ranged from weak to moderate in magnitude.

All of these findings of the correlation analysis align with the existing researches. Domingue and Mollen (2009) found that secure couples use constructive modes of conflict resolution while insecure couples use unhealthy conflict resolution strategies characterized by withdrawal, compliance and conflict engagement. Gesell and colleagues (2020) demonstrated trait mindfulness to have a significant positive correlation with partnership quality and positive problem solving while a significant negative correlation with withdrawal and compliance strategies. The results of another previous research indicated that insecure attachment styles have a negative correlation with positive problem solving and marital quality, while secure attachment styles of married individuals have a positive association with constructive conflict resolution strategies and marital quality (Scheeren et al., 2014). Meta-analyses conducted by Stevenson, Emerson, and Millings (2017) established significant negative correlations between both the insecure attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and levels of trait mindfulness. The effect sizes of the correlations ranged from small to medium. Similarly, Fall and Shankland (2021) found trait mindfulness to have significant negative correlations between anxious and avoidant attachment styles while a significant positive correlation with secure attachment style.

The second hypothesis of this study was that the individuals with different attachment styles would differ in terms of their conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was carried out to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.6). The analysis proved this hypothesis correct. The findings demonstrated that there is a significant main effect of individuals' attachment styles on their conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. The analysis of each individual dependent variable showed that the highest use of positive problem solving (constructive conflict resolution strategy) is associated with secure attachment style while the destructive conflict resolution

strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance are associated with the insecure attachment styles i.e. anxious, avoidant and disorganized. The greatest use of these unhealthy conflict resolution strategies was found to be linked with the disorganized attachment style. Moreover, the highest level of trait mindfulness and the most enhanced marital quality was found to be linked with secure attachment style while lower levels of trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality were identified among anxious, avoidant and the disorganized attachment style; which was discovered to have the least levels of both variables. The results of post-hoc analysis using the Bonferroni method, generated multiple comparisons between the four attachment styles of individuals across conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. The results of this analysis provided further support for the hypothesis (see Table 3.7).

Existing research literature supports the findings of this hypothesis. Prior research studies have demonstrated that secure attachment style is associated with increased use of positive problem-solving strategy and enhanced relationship quality. While the insecure attachment styles – anxious, avoidant and disorganized are associated with diminished relationship quality and maladaptive conflict resolution strategies- conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance (Tulum, 2014; González-Ortega et al., 2020; Azizi, 2023). Trait mindfulness has been found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between attachment styles and romantic relationship quality; where insecure attachment styles were associated with diminished marital quality through decreased levels of trait mindfulness (Chakroun-Baggioni et al., 2023). Insecure attachment styles have been found to be linked with reduced trait mindfulness while secure attachment style has been found to be associated with increased trait mindfulness (Calvo et al., 2022; Kriplani & Vijayan, 2023).

The likely explanation behind the results obtained from both the aforementioned hypotheses could be that individuals with a secure attachment style have positive internal working models due to which they have positive perception about themselves as well as about others around them. As a result of this, they have feelings of trust and security in their intimate relationships which allows them to have open and effective communications with their intimate partner (Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015); which in turn are integral for constructive conflict resolution. Securely attached individuals also have enhanced ability to regulate their emotions due to which they have higher trait mindfulness which facilitates effective conflict resolution (Pepping, Davis & O'Donovan, 2015). The constructive conflict resolution and higher trait mindfulness collectively contribute to better marital quality in securely attached individuals (Harvey et al., 2019; Li & Chan, 2012). On the other hand, individuals with insecure attachment styles (anxious, avoidant and disorganized) have negative internal working models about themselves or others or both, which leads to consistent feelings of anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty in their intimate relationships (Wooddell, 2023; DeWitt, 2022; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). These negative experiences coupled with poor emotional regulation lead to destructive conflict resolution, lower trait mindfulness and relatively poor marital quality (Cillessen, Luyckx, & Luyten, 2022; Brassard et al., 2020).

The third hypothesis of the present research stated that the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality will be moderated by trait mindfulness among married individuals. Moderation analysis was carried out to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.8). The results of this analysis showed that trait mindfulness significantly moderated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality. Specifically, trait mindfulness moderated the relationship between the 'conflict engagement' and 'withdrawal' strategies for

resolving conflicts and marital quality of individuals (see Table 3.9 and 3.11). Trait mindfulness emerged as a buffer in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality. The probable explanation for this appears to be that as the levels of trait mindfulness of individuals increased, the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies on marital quality (as 3 out of 4 strategies are destructive in nature; making the overall relationship negative) was weakened; thereby enhancing their marital quality.

The results of this hypothesis are partially inconsistent with the existing limited research literature. According to Smedley et al. (2021), trait mindfulness did not significantly moderate the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and sexual and relationship satisfaction. A feasible explanation for this discrepancy could be the unique cultural characteristics of the sample, differences in sample size, data analysis, research methodology and slightly different variables (the variables examined in the mentioned previous research were ‘sexual and relationship satisfaction,’ while that measured in this current research is ‘relationship quality’). Additional prior research studies that assumed trait mindfulness as a moderator between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality could not be found, forming one of the rationales for the present study to fill this gap in the research literature.

However, some previous research studies align with our research results on the basis of the fact that trait mindfulness is one of the important determinants of both conflict resolution strategies and marital/relationship quality. Mandal and Lip (2022) established trait mindfulness and constructive conflict resolution strategies like dialogue as predictors of enhanced relationship quality. Moreover, they identified trait mindfulness to have a significant positive association with ‘dialogue’ while a negative association with unhealthy conflict resolution strategies e.g. conflict escalation, withdrawal etc. Jones et al. (2011) demonstrated trait

mindfulness to have a positive association with marital ‘satisfaction’, which is one of the integral components of marital quality. Similarly, higher levels of trait mindfulness have been found to be associated with enhanced relationship satisfaction and use of positive conflict resolution strategies while lower trait mindfulness levels have found to be associated with increased use of negative conflict resolution strategies and diminished marital quality (Kozlowski, 2013; Harvey Knowles et al., 2015; Harvey et al., 2019). The plausible explanation behind this hypothesis’ result could be that trait mindfulness is associated with reduced emotional reactivity, negative affect, stress and also with improved emotional regulation and well-being (Mandal, Arya & Pandey, 2011; Goldin & Gross, 2010; Hayes & Feldman, 2004). Owing to the association with such positive outcomes, individuals’ trait mindfulness buffers the negative effects of destructive conflict resolution strategies on marital quality; thereby enhancing marital quality (Khaddouma, 2015; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

The fourth hypothesis of this research suggested gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals; involving 255 married men and 56 women. Independent sample t-test was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.13). The findings showed that women use more conflict engagement and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts as compared to men. Moreover, men were also found to have higher levels of trait mindfulness as compared to women. The results of this hypothesis are not consistent, at least for the most part, with the previous research investigations. One possible explanation behind this could be the highly disproportionate gender ratio in the research sample. The limited number of previous researches that have been carried out to explore gender differences in conflict resolution and trait mindfulness; found no significant gender differences (Yang & Yang, 2021; Al-Hamdan et al., 2019). On the other hand, Dildar and Amjad (2017)

demonstrated that women use compliance for resolving conflicts while men are more likely to engage in conflicts. Mandal and Lip (2022) found no significant gender differences in trait mindfulness; however, women were found to use more conflict engagement while men were found to use passive strategies for resolving conflicts.

The potential explanation behind the results of this hypothesis could be that in our culture, majority of women are brought up in a traditional way to be compromising and to prioritize familial harmony over personal interests and preferences; which may explain their greater use of compliance strategy in marital relationships as compared to men (Majeed, Raza, & Azeem, 2016). On the other hand, women's greater use of the conflict engagement strategy might be due to their generally emotionally expressive nature and over sensitivity to the relationship dynamics especially when any relationship issues emerge. This oversensitivity might manifest as a confrontational approach in situations of conflict to preserve relational harmony in the long run (Cross & Madson, 2014). Furthermore, according to previous researches, men in our culture are brought up in a way to be less emotionally reactive and maintain a calm demeanor especially during conflict situations. This may in turn lead to better emotion regulation skills and hence higher trait mindfulness (Kashif & Aziz, 2018; Nauman & Bennet, 2014).

Conclusion

. There were significant yet weak to moderate correlations among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Married individuals with different attachment styles differed in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality; with secure attachment style associated with healthy conflict resolution strategies, higher trait mindfulness and enhanced marital quality while

insecure attachment styles – anxious, avoidant and disorganized; were found to be linked with unhealthy conflict resolution strategies, reduced trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality. Trait mindfulness significantly moderated (as a buffer) the relationship between conflict resolution strategies (conflict engagement and withdrawal strategy) and marital quality in married individuals. Married women employed more conflict engagement and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts. Furthermore, married men were found to possess greater levels of trait mindfulness. This research study is helpful in illuminating the long-lasting impact of one's childhood experiences on multiple psychosocial facets of adulthood. Amongst all the study variables, 'trait mindfulness' in relation to marital quality has been explored to a relatively lesser extent in indigenous and international researches. Therefore, the association of trait mindfulness and marital quality along with other integral psychosocial factors needs to be scrutinized.

Limitations

Given the stringent inclusion criteria of this research, the male to female ratio was highly disproportionate in the sample; which may have impacted some of the results of this research; particularly the ones involving gender related analyses. Another limitation of this study was that it involved only those married individuals who have at least one child which makes the generalizability of results questionable for those married individuals who do not have any children. Moreover, in an effort to avoid the influence of extraneous variables, the sample participants were recruited only from Islamabad and Rawalpindi; which may limit the generalizability of the research results across other regions within or outside the country. Furthermore, some additional factors such as socio-economic status, extended family's involvement and expectations, gender roles etc. may also impact participants' marital quality in our culture; which have not been accounted for by this research.

Future Recommendations

There are hardly any international and indigenous studies regarding the quality of marital relationships and other intimate relationships in relation to 'trait mindfulness'. So, the future researches may explore such relationships in this context. Moreover, future research explorations may recruit a more culturally diverse and larger sample size, which includes married individuals with and without children. Comparisons regarding the dynamics and outcomes of their marital relationships could be drawn. Furthermore, there is a paucity of indigenous and international qualitative research regarding the study variables. So, the future researches may involve qualitative analysis. This may mitigate the factor of participants' socially desirable responses and may yield more rich data based on participants' lived experiences. Additionally, future researches may try to ensure a proportionate gender ratio to avoid influencing the research results at least from this perspective. Some additional demographic and cultural factors that may influence marital quality may be studied in relation to it in future researches.

Implications

The present research can have implications in clinical settings, in the area of research as well as in practical life. This study could be helpful for therapists in clinical settings, especially those who practice couples' counseling. The therapists may address the clients how their intimate relationship problems could arise possibly due to their problematic attachment styles, conflict resolution and/or trait mindfulness related factors. This exploratory study can also be helpful for therapists who practice family therapy. The therapists can enlighten their clients (parents or children) about the long-lasting impact that early childhood experiences could have on individuals' functioning later in life. The results of this research also have practical significance

for Mindfulness Based-Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which are designed to augment and maintain individuals' mindfulness skills. Such therapies can be used to mitigate the negative influences of any unhealthy conflict resolution strategies or any other detrimental relational tactics that individuals might already be using.

Since there is a dearth of indigenous research literature on the exploration of marital relationships and even other close relationships in the context of trait mindfulness; the findings of this research may add to the body of knowledge regarding the study variables and can serve as a precursor for future research investigations in this area. Moreover, research scholars can undertake longitudinal research studies by building upon the findings of this research. They can observe how these study variables evolve over time and impact each other. In addition, this study can be useful for creating awareness among the general community about the enduring influences of early childhood experiences on several aspects of relationship functioning later in life through seminars, workshops, discussion groups etc.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

Bahria University Islamabad supports the practice of protection of human rights and participation in research. The goal of my research is to explore the quality of marital relationship in married individuals. In order to participate in this research study, it is necessary that you give your informed consent. By selecting the 'Accept' option, you are affirming that you understand the nature of this research study and your role, thereby agreeing to participate. Please do consider the following points before accepting:

1. I understand that I am participating in a psychological research;
2. I understand that confidentiality of identity will be established and maintained throughout the research process and any personal information I provide will be kept safe and private except for the answers I willingly provide for research purposes;
3. I understand that participation in this research is not compulsory and is rather voluntary. I hold the authority to back out during the questionnaire filling process;
4. I understand the purpose of this research and agree to share my honest and authentic input during the process;
5. I understand that there are no risks and benefits involved with the participation of the study, and no demand for any sort of compensation will be entertained. This is a purely educational venture and I agree to the consummation of my time for scientific purposes.

Your cooperation and participation in this research study is highly appreciated.

I agree to participate in this research project Agree Disagree

Appendix B

Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information Sheet

1. Gender: a) Male b) Female

2. Age -----

3. Birth Order: a) First born b) Second born c) Middle child d) Youngest child e) Only child

4. Residential Area -----

5. Religion: a) Muslim b) Non-Muslim

6. Ethnicity: a) Punjabi b) Pashtun c) Sindhi d) Balochi e) Other _____

7. Educational Level -----

8. Employment Status: a) Employed b) Unemployed

9. What is your Family System? a) Nuclear b) Joint

10. Relationship among family members: a) Pleasant b) Normal c) Bad

11. Number of children -----

Appendix C

Sample Copy of Questionnaires

Experiences in Close Relationships Revised - Short Form (ECR-S)

Instructions The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. Please respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I don't worry about being abandoned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I worry that romantic partner won't care about me as much as I care about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI)

Conflict Engagement Subscale: Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
1. Launching personal attacks.					
2. Exploding and getting out of control.					
3. Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.					
4. Throwing insults and digs.					

Positive Problem Solving Subscale: Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
5. Focusing on the problem at hand.					
6. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.					
7. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.					
8. Negotiating and compromising.					

Withdrawal Subscale: Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
9. Remaining silent for long periods of time.					
10. Reaching a limit, shutting down, and refusing to talk any further.					
11. Tuning the other person out.					
12. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.					

Compliance Subscale: Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
13. Not being willing to stick up for myself.					
14. Being too compliant.					
15. Not defending my position.					
16. Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.					

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

Instructions Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
almost always	very frequently	somewhat frequently	somewhat infrequently	very infrequently	almost never

- _____ 1. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.
- _____ 2. I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.
- _____ 3. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- _____ 4. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.
- _____ 5. I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
- _____ 6. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.
- _____ 7. It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.
- _____ 8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
- _____ 9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.
- _____ 10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.
- _____ 11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
- _____ 12. I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.
- _____ 13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.
- _____ 14. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
- _____ 15. I snack without being aware that I'm eating.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale -7 (DAS-7)

Instructions Most persons 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.

1. Philosophy of life ____
2. Aims, goals, and things believed important ____
3. Amount of time spent together ____

0	1	2	3	4	5
Always Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Occasionally Disagree	Almost Always Agree	Always Agree

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

4. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas ____
5. Calmly discuss something together ____
6. Work together on a project ____

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

7. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

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

Appendix D

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Human beings are often referred as 'social animals' because they have an intrinsic need to form emotional connections with others (Simpson & Beckes, 2017). This is a fundamental and undeniable aspect of human nature that acts as a strong driving force throughout the course of our development. Beginning from birth, we form these emotional bonds with our parents or caregivers. Subsequently as we grow, we seek out these emotional connections with our peers, romantic partners, our own children and grandchildren and so on (McLeod, 2023). These affectionate ties equip one with a sense of belongingness, security, a purpose to live and ultimately influence one's psychological well-being in the long run.

In our collectivist culture, the most socially acceptable and legal way to seek out an emotional bond with a romantic partner is through marriage. According to Berscheid and Regan (2005) most people tend to get married only once in their life, which is why marriage is the most important kind of relationship as compared to other types of interpersonal relations. Marriage is a complex institution especially in the context of our culture. Unlike the Western cultures who have an individualistic orientation, the meaning, purpose and practice of marriage is significantly different in a collectivist society like Pakistan. The concept of marriage in our culture involves not only the union of two individual entities but rather of two whole families. Settling down as an adult, moving to a new home (in case of women) and starting a family by giving birth to kids before it's too late and carrying on the family's name; are some of the common reasons young adults are encouraged to get married. The maintenance and longevity of a marital relationship holds utmost importance not only for the spouses themselves but also for their respective families (Arif & Fatima, 2015).

Given the fundamental position that marriage holds in our culture, it becomes reasonable to look into the factors that may determine its quality. Amongst many other factors that may contribute to the quality of a marital relationship, many research investigations have proved that the attachment styles (Sandberg, Bradford, & Brown, 2017), strategies of conflict resolution (Binte Muneer, 2015) and trait mindfulness (Gesell et al., 2020) of the spouses ³⁰ may play a pivotal role in determining the quality of their marital relationship.

1.1. Theory of Attachment Styles

The emotional associations that we form with our caregivers in childhood, have an enduring impact on our emotional development and interpersonal interactions later in life. This emotional bonding that functions as a survival strategy is referred as 'attachment' (Main, 2023). This emotional attachment of a child is formed usually with his or her mother but it could also be formed with one's father or any other primary caregiver. Bowlby (1958) was the pioneer of this groundbreaking concept and presented his 'attachment theory' in this regard.

Attachment theory is a revolutionary concept that highlights the significance of one's early childhood experiences, the emotional bond that is formed ¹¹ between a child and his or her primary caregiver and the far-reaching influences that it can have on a person's social, emotional and psychological functioning. This emotional attachment of the child eventually gets translated into an 'internal working model' which navigates one's personal and relational functioning throughout the course of life. The expectations about the caregiver's responsiveness lay the foundation for this internal model of the individual ⁸⁰ which in turn plays a significant role in the formation of different perceptions about oneself, one's caregiver, and other interpersonal relationships (Li, 2023). Bowlby postulated in his theory that an

individual who forms a warm, affectionate, responsive and consistent attachment with one's caregiver, will have a good chance of social, emotional and psychological flourishing. On the other hand, an individual is very likely to have a myriad of socio-emotional issues in case of formation of a hostile, unresponsive and inconsistent nature of attachment with the primary caregiver (Chauhan, Awasthi, & Verma, 2014; Main, 2023). Previous studies provide evidence in this regard.

A research investigation aimed to explore ¹⁹ the influence of parental attachment on psychosocial adjustment in a group of emerging young adults who were either currently ⁹² involved in a serious romantic relationship, casually dating or were married. The findings of ⁹² this research study indicated that individuals who had developed a secure attachment with both their parents were found to display more favorable psychosocial adjustment outcomes such as reduced distress and increased life satisfaction; as compared to those who had developed an insecure attachment (anxious or avoidant type) relationship with their parents. The results further showed that individuals' ⁸⁸ secure attachment to mothers was associated with ⁸⁸ better romantic relationship outcomes such as relationship satisfaction and romantic competence (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

Individuals' early childhood relationship dynamics with their primary caregiver are often mirrored later in their relationships in the adulthood phase. Sincero (2012) highlighted the fact that based on this very idea about the connection between childhood interactions and adult relationship patterns, Ainsworth, Main and Solomon further expanded Bowlby's theory and proposed the concept of 'attachment styles'. Depending upon the quality of attachment that one formed with their caregivers in childhood, individuals ultimately develop particular ways of relating to other people; known as 'attachment styles'. Although an individual's style of attachment can change over time, the emotional connectedness formed with the caregiver

in childhood is likely to persist and navigate one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behavioral responses in interpersonal relationships later throughout life (McLeod, 2023).

The extent to which primary caregivers are emotionally responsive, consistent and available for their child will lead to ²⁴ the development of either a secure or an insecure style of attachment in the individual across various kinds of relationships (familial, friendships, intimate etc.). The individuals whose caregivers offer a consistent physical and emotional responsiveness to their child's needs, ultimately develop a secure style of attachment.

Conversely, the primary caregiver's inconsistent physical and emotional responsiveness to the child's need may lead to ²⁴ the development of insecure attachment styles in the individual.

This insecure style of attachment may manifest itself in the form of ⁴⁸ anxious/preoccupied, dismissive/avoidant or disorganized/fearful avoidant behavior (Helm, 2020). Previous research inquiries lend support to this claim. Perez (2023) demonstrated that parental nurturance in childhood was associated with decreased levels of fear of intimacy, attachment anxiety and avoidance in adulthood. Similarly, Santona et.al. (2019) established that individuals' high levels of attachment anxiety, avoidance and aggressive behavior in romantic relationships had their origins in insecure attachment formed with parents in childhood.

Likewise, Gleeson and Fitzgerald (2014) discovered that young adults having a secure style of attachment in their current romantic relationship described their parents in more positive terms such as compassionate, heedful and sympathetic etc. and they were also ⁸⁷ found to be more satisfied with their romantic relationship as compared to their insecure counterparts. ¹¹ On the other hand, individuals who had insecure attachment styles used more negative words to describe their parents such as erratic, unreliable and uninvolved.

1.2. Attachment Styles in Marital Relationships

The present research investigated attachment styles exclusively ²⁴ in the context of marital relationships. Bowlby's attachment theory ideas were analyzed for the first time within the framework of romantic relationships by the pioneer scholars; ¹¹² Hazan and Shaver (1987). They noted that individuals' attachment styles formed in childhood as a result of different childhood experiences continue to influence their romantic relationships in adulthood (Fraley, 2018). Consequently, based on one's childhood attachment experiences, securely attached individuals hold positive perceptions about themselves as well of others (Sheinbaum et.al., 2015). They are less anxious and rarely display avoidant behavior. These individuals experience a consistent sense of security and responsiveness from their caregivers which enables them to function independently while getting support when necessary (Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015). In their own intimate relationships, they try to maintain the same equilibrium by making sure that they don't just seek one way support from their romantic partners whenever they need it but also reciprocate this comfort and solace to their partners in distressful situations (Fuchshuber ¹¹⁷ et.al., 2019).

⁵⁰ On the other hand, individuals with an anxious/preoccupied attachment style have a positive internal working model for others but a negative internal working model about their own selves (Dewitte & De Houwer, 2011). The primary caregivers of these individuals may be responsive to their needs at one time but may appear withdrawn at other times (Ali, 2022). This inconsistent pattern of support from caregivers may get mirrored in the individual's own close relationships. This is why on one hand, these individuals may display discomfort with ⁹⁹ intimacy and closeness but on the other hand, they also fear abandonment and not being loved by their partner. Their relationship may be marked by self-doubt, clinginess, demandingness and possessiveness. They tend to have ¹⁷ low levels of avoidance but high levels of anxiety (Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

Similarly, dismissive/avoidant attachment style is characterized by individuals having a ⁷³ positive working model about themselves but a negative working model about others (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). They have ³⁵ high levels of avoidance but low levels of anxiety. These individuals often tend to have neglectful caregivers as a result of which, they may learn to take care of their own selves (Sherman, Rice & Cassidy, 2015). Just like anxiously attached individuals, these individuals also get uncomfortable when someone tried to get close to them, however, they do not fear abandonment (as they learned to be on their own in their childhood too). They prefer emotional distancing and isolation in situations of conflict or other intense situations (DeWitt, 2022).

Lastly, the individuals having a disorganized/fearful avoidant attachment style hold negative perceptions about themselves as well as about others (Arriaga et.al., 2018). They have high levels of anxiety and avoidance (Singh, Sharma & Srivastava, 2022). Such individuals have experienced abusive, chaotic and erratic parenting from their caregivers. Consequently, these individuals may also appear to be volatile in nature and may experience sudden emotional highs and lows from time to time. They fear both closeness as well as distancing from their romantic partner due to their unpredictability; just like the one that they experienced from their caregivers in childhood (Wooddell, 2023).

⁴ 1.3. Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution Strategies in Marital Relationships

Social media, fantasy novels and movies often portray a very unrealistic picture of romantic relationships. They illustrate such relationships to be free of any challenging situations; depicting life as a bed of roses. In actuality, the reality of relationships is contrary to these portrayals. Conflict is an inherent and unescapable element of life. It is bound to occur sooner or later in every setting where people co-exist and establish different sorts of relationships such as colleagues, siblings, friends, acquaintances, parental figures and child

etc. On the same grounds, romantic relationships such as marital relationships are not an exception (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022).

Conflict is defined as the ⁴²perceived differences in interests or the belief that the current aspirations of two or more parties cannot be achieved at the same time (Rinehart, 1993). It arises when there are differences of beliefs, opinions and outlooks between parties. Since, conflict is inevitable in intimate relationships; the manner in which the partners approach the conflict is of utter importance (Feeney & Karantzas, 2017; Gordon & Chen, 2016). Conflict resolution refers to the behaviors displayed by individuals in an effort to reconcile, mitigate or diminish conflicts (Shi, 1999). The mere 'presence' of conflicts in a relationship doesn't necessarily imply poor quality of the relationship. Rather, it is the way the partners 'approach' the conflicts that may determine the longevity and continuity of the committed relationship (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022).

Researchers like Rahim (1983), Kurdek (1994), Feldman and Gowen (1998) and Schuman (2006); to name a few, have proposed various conflict resolution strategies that may overlap with each other (Courtain & Glowacz, 2019). However, this study will focus on the different forms of conflict resolution proposed by Kurdek (1994) which include conflict engagement, productive problem solving, withdrawal and compliance. Positive problem solving involves the use of constructive approaches like compromise (sacrifices made from both sides to reach a middle ground) and negotiation (discussion of concerns to reach a mutual agreement) to resolve a given conflict. Losing one's temper or attacking someone personally e.g., character assassination of someone, is indicative of 'conflict engagement'. Disengaging oneself from the conflict situation and shutting the other partner out is referred as 'withdrawal'. These two conflict resolution styles just mentioned often tend to occur together and are referred as the 'demand-withdraw pattern'. This pattern may recur and take the form of vicious cycles which may eventually lead to escalating conflicts, emotional

distancing and poor communication between the two partners (Moland, 2011). In this pattern, the more one partner makes demands in a critical and non-confrontational manner (conflict engagement style), the more the other partner tends to display stonewalling, withdrawal or disengagement (withdrawal style). Lastly, the 'compliance' form of conflict resolution involves one partner surrendering to the other partner's perspective, demands or requests and/or stop defending their position. The partner does so in an effort to avoid further escalation of conflicts and preserve harmony within the relationship (Wagner et.al., 2019).

Ainsworth (1970) as well as Main and Solomon (1990) posited that individuals' childhood ⁷⁸ experiences lead to the formation of particular attachment styles which in turn give rise ¹⁰⁴ to their 'internal working model'. This model plays a pivotal role in the development of internalized beliefs and expectations about oneself as well about self in relation to others and steers one's individual and interpersonal functioning throughout the course of life by influencing one's cognitions, emotions and behavioral responses. This internal model endures and extends to every sphere of one's life including his or her marital relationships (Fraley, 2018). Thus, it can be established that attachment styles may impact one's approach to conflict resolution in a romantic relationship. Previous research investigations corroborate this proposition. Ayenew (2021); Caglayan and Körük (2022) established that secure attachment style is associated with integrative and compromising conflict resolution styles (constructive conflict resolution strategies) while the insecure attachment styles are more associated with unhealthy conflict resolution styles like retreat, compliance and the conflict engagement – which in particular has also been linked with intimate partner sexual and psychological violence (Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez & Krahe, 2019).

Likewise, Castellano et.al. (2014) aimed to delve into how attachment styles of adults may impact their ¹⁴ conflict resolution styles and their marital satisfaction as they transitioned to parenthood. The research findings revealed that individuals' ¹⁴ marital satisfaction as well their

use of constructive conflict resolution strategies diminished as they became parents. The intentionally childless couples on the other hand had relatively stable levels of marital satisfaction and the use of different conflict management strategies over the course of 8 months, most likely due to the absence of the stressful transition to parenthood. However, the couples who had a secure attachment style reported better levels of marital satisfaction as they transitioned to parenthood as compared to the ones having insecure attachment styles. The insecurely attached couples were also observed to have a significant decrease in the use of cooperative conflict resolution strategies such as 'compromising' and 'integrating' and a significant increase in the use of one of the non-cooperative strategies like 'dominating'.

Similarly, Scheeren et.al. (2014) observed that all the insecure styles of attachment i.e. anxious, dismissive/avoidant or disorganized/fearful avoidant are correlated with negative styles of conflict management such as compliance, conflict engagement and withdrawal, which in turn decline their marital quality while secure style of attachment is linked with their use of healthier conflict resolution strategy —'positive problem solving' that ultimately results in their enhanced marital quality.

By this point, we can argue that different attachment styles would be associated more with certain conflict resolution behaviors than others. Individuals having a secure attachment style are more likely to use constructive conflict resolution strategies such as positive problem solving because of their enhanced perspective taking skills and lesser aggressive or avoidant behavioral tendencies whilst resolving. In comparison, individuals having any of the insecure attachment styles (anxious, avoidant or disorganized) are more prone to using destructive conflict resolution strategies such as 'conflict engagement' (Somohano, 2013).

Earlier researches offer evidences in this context. Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez and Krahe (2017) discovered that anxiously attached individuals are likely to display

malfunctional **conflict resolution strategies** like conflict engagement in an effort to gain their partner's attention, validation etc. Additionally, they may also use strategy of withdrawal or compliance owing to their fear of abandonment resulting from their clingy and repeated reassurance seeking attitude with their partner. Similarly, dismissive/avoidant attachment style may also be characterized by the use of 'withdrawal' strategy in order to avoid disagreements and remain emotionally distant. However, in case of extreme escalation of conflicts, individuals having such an attachment style may also resort to 'conflict engagement' strategy for the purpose of emotional distancing from their partner. Finally, disorganized/fearful avoidant style of attachment is characterized by **the use of a mixture of the conflict resolution tactics used by both avoidant and anxiously attached individuals**. On the similar grounds, González-Ortega et.al. (2020) illustrated that securely attached couples **are more likely to use constructive conflict resolution strategies (positive problem solving) and report a higher relationship quality while insecurely attached couples are more likely to use unhealthy conflict resolution strategies (conflict engagement, withdrawal, compliance) and have a relatively poor relationship quality.**

1.4. Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution and Trait Mindfulness in Marital

Relationships

Lately, **there has been an increasing interest in the investigation of mindfulness in the context of close intimate relationships and their dynamics. A number of earlier studies have demonstrated the integral role that mindfulness plays in determining many outcomes of romantic relationships like satisfaction, functioning and quality of the relationship, closeness and responsiveness of romantic partners to each other, their ways of responding to stress or handling conflict etc. (Gesell et.al.2020). Kabat-Zinn (1994), the pioneer of Western mindfulness, defines mindfulness as an awareness that is achieved through purposeful and heightened focusing of one's attention to the experiences and happenings of the present**

moment in a non-judgmental and receptive manner. It may be characterized by directing one's focus on his/her thoughts, feelings, emotions, bodily sensations (Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; C.F). Mindfulness has been found to be associated with several positive health outcomes like reduced anxiety, depression, stress, emotional reactivity, negative affect, enhanced well-being and emotion regulation (Hayes & Feldman, 2004; Goldin & Gross, 2010; Mandal, Arya & Pandey, 2011).

Two types of mindfulness have been identified – state mindfulness and trait mindfulness. State mindfulness is a temporary state of being attentive and aware of the stimuli in one's environment through various emerging sensations such as that during mindful meditation exercises. It may vary across different situations (Ding et.al., 2019; Goilean, Gracia & Tomás, 2023). On the other hand, trait mindfulness; also referred as 'dispositional mindfulness' is one's enduring and inherent characteristic or 'predisposition' to be mindful in everyday life, irrespective of the situation (Roberts et.al., 2021; Markoff, 2023). Trait mindfulness is stable in nature and is rooted in an individual's personality regardless of the situation whereas state mindfulness is transient in nature and may differ from situation to situation. The focus of this research investigation however, was on 'trait mindfulness'.

As it has already been discussed that conflict is inevitable in marital relationships amongst many other kinds of relationships e.g., familial, workplace and friendships etc. The outcomes of a romantic relationship are largely determined by the manner (constructive or destructive) in which the partners deal with their conflicts in an effort to resolve them (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022). The extent to which individuals are mindfully aware of their surroundings may largely govern the way they approach situations of conflict. Earlier studies have established that trait mindfulness in partner(s) of a romantic relationship is positively associated with their use of constructive and healthy conflict resolution strategies (e.g.,

positive problem solving) and negatively associated with their use of destructive and unhealthy ³ conflict resolution strategies (e.g., withdrawal, conflict engagement etc.). Harvey Knowles, Manusov & Crowley (2015); Mandal & Lip (2022) demonstrated ²³ that higher level of trait mindfulness is associated with increased use of constructive conflict resolution strategies and decreased use of destructive conflict resolution strategies among individuals involved in a romantic relationship. Moreover, trait mindfulness was identified as a significant predictor of enhanced relationship quality, satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, in a sample of married German adults who had at least one child, Gesell et.al. (2020) depicted that the lesser use of conflict withdrawal strategy and ⁵⁴ greater use of the positive problem-solving strategy coupled with more interpersonal closeness are the potential mechanisms through which romantic partners' trait mindfulness is associated with favorable relationship outcomes.

Harvey, Crowley & Woszidlo (2019) explored that how romantic partners' trait mindfulness might relate to their own and as well their intimate partner's romantic ⁵ relationship satisfaction and also their choice of conflict resolution style. The analysis revealed that for both genders, trait mindfulness ⁴¹ was positively associated with their use of constructive ⁴¹ conflict resolution styles which in turn lead to their greater relationship satisfaction. It was also observed that greater the males' trait mindfulness, greater was the female's satisfaction with the relationship. Furthermore, increased females' ¹⁰ trait mindfulness was found to be associated with their male partner's decreased use of destructive ²⁵ conflict resolution style which in turn predicted higher male relationship satisfaction

One may wonder what could be the possible reasons due to which some individuals have greater levels of trait mindfulness than others. Earlier research studies have demonstrated that one possible explanation behind this could be the different 'attachment styles' of individuals. According to the previous research inquiries, individuals having a

secure style of attachment are likely to have greater level of trait mindfulness as compared to having any of the insecure attachment styles.

Chakroun-Baggioni, Shankland and Estelle (2023) indicated that the lower the attachment style of romantic partners is anxious, the higher will be their level of trait mindfulness and hence better will be their romantic relationship quality. The analysis further revealed that trait mindfulness partially mediated the ⁶² relationship between individuals' avoidant attachment style and the quality of romantic relationship. The mediation was partial because of the existence of a direct ¹⁷ effect of avoidant attachment style on the quality of ¹¹³ romantic relationship which implies that low level of avoidant attachment style is associated with a better quality of romantic relationship. Similarly, Pepping and Duvenage (2016) found out that adolescents' retrospective reports as well as their current experiences of perceived rejection from their parents was associated with their decreased trait mindfulness through increased attachment avoidance and anxiety. Similarly, the participants' perceived warmth from their parents was associated with their enhanced level of trait mindfulness by the virtue of reduced attachment related avoidance and anxiety.

⁷ Calvo et.al. (2022) inferred that insecure attachment styles of individuals involved in an intimate relationship may increase their psychological inflexibility and exacerbate their resilience and trait mindfulness, which in turn may decline their overall psychological well-being. On the similar grounds, Kriplani & Vijayan (2023) ascertained that the more ambivalent-insecure a young adult's attachment style is, the lesser will be their resilience and trait mindfulness. Additionally, the trait mindfulness of participants had a significant and positive association with their resilience. Lastly, the individuals having a secure attachment style had the greatest amount of resilience and trait mindfulness as compared to those having insecure attachment styles.

1.5. Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality

The feelings, sentiments, and judgements that the spouses hold about their marital bond is referred as marital quality (Zamir, Gewirtz, & Zhang, 2017). Relationship quality including that of marital relationships is a complex notion involving various subjective feelings and evaluations e.g., satisfaction (Batool & Khalid, 2012), happiness (Sooki, 2021), communication (Kanter et.al., 2022), adaptability (Cheguvera & Dutt, 2022), perceived partner responsiveness (Yuan, Fan & Leng, 2022), and intimacy (Azizpoor & Safarzadeh, 2016) to name a few. Binte Muneer (2015) illustrated that marital quality may be influenced by a host of factors such as commitment of the spouses to the relationship, the ability to effectively tackle challenging situations, the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, the style of attachment of the partners and their beliefs etc., among married couples belonging to Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Spanier and Lewis (1980) have proposed particular elements of relationship quality that may largely contribute to the success of a close relationship. These include emotional expression (openly expressing one's emotions and affiliation for their partner), consensus (the perspectives of the partners about the functioning of the relationship), cohesion (participation and involvement in family life) and satisfaction (one's contentment with the relationship along with the need to remain involved in the relationship and a desire for its longevity) (Mandal & Lip, 2022).

Amongst the many factors that may determine the quality of a marital relationship, some important factors may include attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies and trait mindfulness of the spouses. Although these three variables have been explored in the previous researches, however, they have been studied mostly in the context of romantic relationships in general; including individuals who are dating, cohabiting, engaged, married

etc. (Kimmes et.al., 2018; Quickert & MacDonald, 2020; Fall & Shankland, 2021). Very few earlier international studies and none of the indigenous research have examined these variables together and exclusively in the context of marital relationships especially among those individuals who have children (Jones et.al., 2011; Tulum, 2014; Khalifian & Barry, 2016). Therefore, this exploratory study aims to scrutinize these variables together and specifically in the context of marital relationships of those individuals who have at least one child.

Individuals' attachment with ⁴⁷ their caregiver(s) in childhood leads to the development of particular attachment styles that impact their functioning in close relationships later in adulthood and thus ultimately influences the quality of relationship in the long run. Existing literature has established that how attachment styles of individuals can determine relationship quality. A group of researchers demonstrated that insecure attachment style of individuals was associated with their poor romantic relationship quality (Meyer et.al., 2015). Likewise, Amani and Khosroshahi (2020) identified secure attachment style as a significant predictor of enhanced marital quality. among young adults.

Similarly, two Pakistani researchers demonstrated a strong ¹⁹ negative correlation between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction in a sample of married young female adults from Lahore; which signifies that the lesser the attachment style of individuals is insecure, the greater will be their marital satisfaction. Furthermore, insecure attachment styles were established as significant predictors of marital dissatisfaction (Justin & Haroon, 2019).

Sandberg et.al (2017) aimed to analyze how attachment styles and specific attachment behaviors — distinct behaviors displayed by a partner in a relationship which may in turn impact their attachment security; of couples influence their marital quality. The findings

suggested that males and females' attachment styles as well as their attachment behaviors were significant positive predictors of their marital quality; which implies that greater level of secure attachment and attachment behaviors are associated with higher marital satisfaction. The research outcomes further illustrated that the attachment ¹⁷ behaviors of husbands were significantly and ² positively associated with the marital quality ¹¹⁰ of their wives.

This fact has already been emphasized enough that the way the marital partners handle their disagreements and conflicts largely determines their relationship quality and previous research studies provide evidences in this regard. A group of research scientists identified strategies of ²¹ conflict resolution as significant ² predictors of marital quality in a ¹¹⁰ sample of married and cohabitating Brazilian adults having an age range of 18 to 80 years old. The use of problem-solving strategy was found to be the most significant predictor of good marital quality while conflict engagement was discovered to be the most significant predictor of bad marital quality (Wagner et.al., 2019).

Similarly, some other research studies also prove that ⁵⁴ greater use of constructive conflict resolution strategies such as 'integrating', is associated with enhanced psychological well-being and marital satisfaction of married individuals (Ali et.al., 2024) while destructive conflict resolution strategies like verbal aggression and distributive strategies of conflict resolution have been identified as significant predictors of marital dissatisfaction (Ali & Saleem, 2022).

Bisht and Tripathi (2023) have also demonstrated that another destructive conflict resolution strategy i.e. 'conflict engagement' is associated with relationship dissatisfaction of romantically involved individuals. Additionally, they discovered that that unmarried individuals have a greater tendency to use conflict engagement (a negative conflict resolution style) in comparison with married individuals. Furthermore, these researchers also established

that there are gender differences in conflict resolution styles; with men being more likely to use avoidance type of conflict resolution as compared to females who are more inclined to use healthy conflict resolution strategies.

Lastly, the inherent predisposition of individuals to attend to the here and now in a non-judgmental and accepting fashion i.e., the trait mindfulness of spouses has also been found to be a predictor of marital quality as per the existing research literature. For instance, Zamir et.al. (2017) examined the association of a romantic partner's trait mindfulness with their own as well as their partner's perceived marital quality among a group of married individuals having 1 to 5 children. The findings suggested that higher trait mindfulness of both marital partners was associated with a better perceived marital quality of their own as well as their partner's. Likewise, Kappen et.al. (2018) illustrated a direct positive association between trait mindfulness and relationship satisfaction; indicating that higher level of trait mindfulness will be associated with increased romantic relationship satisfaction.

Another group of research scholars were interested in exploring the association between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction; along with the mediating role that forgiveness might play in this relationship. Higher level of trait mindfulness was found to be associated with an increased level of relationship satisfaction in female participants and also with an increased tendency to forgive one's partner for their transgressions. Moreover, forgiveness was found to mediate the relationship between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction of these couples (Roberts et.al., 2021).

Similarly, Adair, Boulton and Algoe (2018) assessed the possible mediating role of perceived partner responsiveness (perception of a partner being considerate and responsive to one's emotional, physical needs etc.) between trait mindfulness and relationship satisfaction among heterosexual romantic partners. The study findings indicated that individuals who had

high levels of ⁵⁶ trait mindfulness perceived their romantic partners to be more responsive and in turn had greater satisfaction with their romantic relationship. Moreover, the results also suggested that individuals who scored higher on the 'acting with awareness' dimension of trait mindfulness, were perceived by their romantic partner as being more considerate and responsive and resultantly reported greater satisfaction with the romantic relationship.

To sum up, based on one's childhood experiences with their caregivers, individuals may develop certain ways of relating to and interacting with other people known as attachment styles. These attachment styles may eventually change a little bit with time; however, the impact of the childhood experiences with caregivers through which these styles are developed; is often enduring and hence have the capability of influencing one's relationships during adulthood including marital relationships. Two people living together in close proximity may not always see eye to eye on everything as they're likely to have different ideas, opinions, beliefs about at least some of life matters which if not discussed effectively may give rise to conflicts. Past researches have demonstrated that marital quality of individuals may not rely only on conflicts but rather the way the marital partners approach that dispute through the ⁸⁴ use of different conflict resolution strategies. The individuals' choice of particular conflict resolution strategies may depend at least for some part on their attachment styles; which may ultimately affect their marital quality. The inherent predisposition to be aware of the current experiences in a non-judgmental manner known as trait mindfulness, may also determine one's choice of conflict resolution strategy and have an ultimate impact on marital quality. Married individuals having a secure attachment style are ³ likely to use positive conflict resolution strategies (positive problem solving), have higher level of trait mindfulness and enhanced marital quality. ¹¹ On the other hand, the married individuals having insecure attachment styles (disorganized, anxious, avoidant) have a greater

probability of using relatively negative resolution strategies (conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance), have lesser levels of trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality.

1.6. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Hypothetical Model showing the Moderation Effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Marital Quality

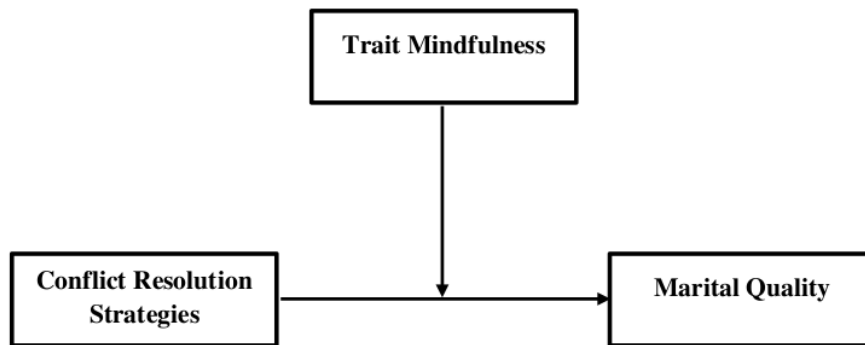
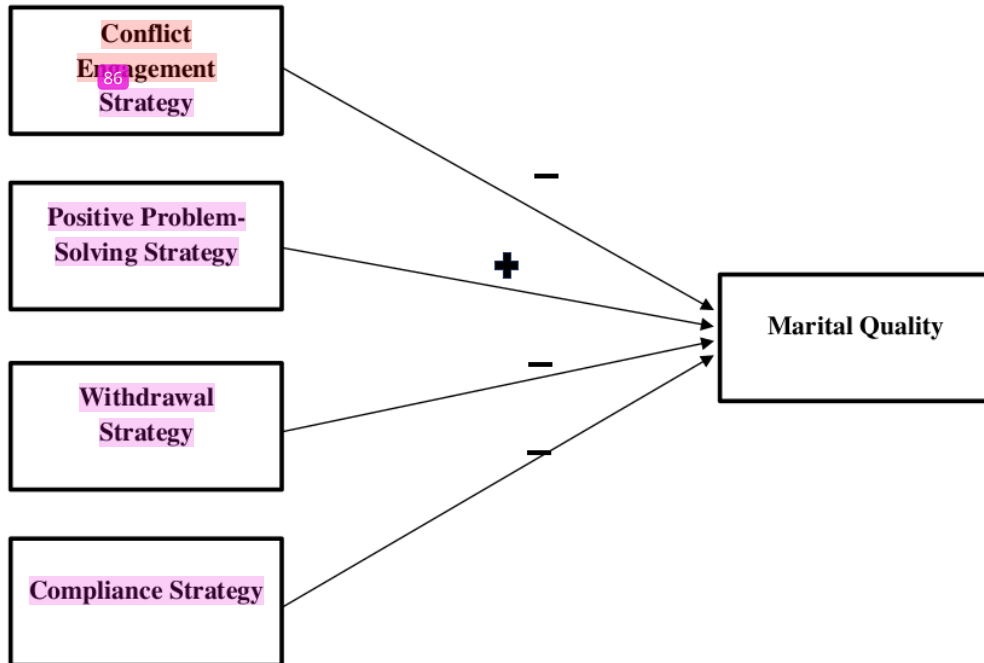


Figure 2

Hypothetical Model showing the Relationship between ²⁵ Conflict Resolution Strategies (Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem Solving, Withdrawal and Compliance) and Marital Quality



1.7. Rationale

Earlier research explorations have proved ²⁷ mindfulness to be associated with a wide variety of health and well-being related outcomes such as reduced anxiety and depression, improved emotion regulation, enhanced autonomy, higher self-esteem, resilience, self-compassion, empathy and healthy thinking patterns free of ruminations and worries (Bloch et al., 2017; Quinn-Nilas, 2020; Rizal et al., 2020; Nadeem & Koschmann, 2021). However, relatively fewer research investigations have been carried out that explore mindfulness in the realm of intimate relationship functioning and its outcomes (Harvey et.al., 2019; Don & Algoe, 2020; Mandal & Lip, 2022). There is hardly any indigenous research literature available in this context. Although some native research investigations ⁴¹ have been conducted that examine the link between attachment styles and marital relationship outcomes (Arif &

Fatima, 2015; Zahra, 2022); however, there is a scarcity of indigenous research about the association of attachment styles with the dynamics of a romantic relationship e.g., conflict resolution strategies of romantic partners. Furthermore, there are hardly any studies that have demonstrated 'trait mindfulness' as a moderator in the relationship of intimate partners' conflict resolution strategies and their relationship outcomes (Smedley et al., 2021). Additionally, instead of exploring multiple elements (e.g. cohesion, consensus between the partners etc.) that collectively may contribute to the quality of a romantic relationship; earlier researches have assessed conflict resolution strategies and mindfulness with sole focus on a single dimension of romantic relationship quality i.e. satisfaction with the relationship (Perrone-McGovern et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2020).

In light of the aforementioned unaddressed areas in the existing research literature, the objective of the present research study involved analysis of the interplay among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and quality of marital relationships in married individuals in the Pakistani context.

Chapter 2

Method

⁸³ A cross-sectional survey research design was employed to collect a sample of ($N = 300$), including $n = 56$ married men and $n = 255$ married women with their ages ranging from 22 through 66 years using non-probability snowball sampling technique. ¹² The sample size was selected using G-power (version 3.1) indicating that the sample size allows identifying medium effects with power = .95 and alpha = .05 for a-priori directional regression to assess ¹ the associations among the psychological variables (Faul et.al., 2009). The individuals who were married and had at least one child, were included in the sample. In addition, only those participants were recruited for the study who were willing to share their marital relationship dynamics and had the ability to comprehend English Language. On the other hand, the married individuals who did not have any children were excluded from the research sample.

2.1. Objectives

The present research had the following objectives:

1. The study aimed to examine the differences among married individuals having different attachment styles in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.
2. Another ⁷⁵ aim of the present study was to explore the intricate patterns of relationships among individuals' attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and the quality of their marital relationship.
3. The study had an objective of testing the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in ² the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality among married individuals.

4. The study also had an objective of exploring ⁴ gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality.

2.2. Hypotheses

Following hypotheses of the current study were analyzed:

1. Individuals having different attachment styles would differ in terms of their conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality.
2. ³⁵ There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality of individuals.
3. ² The relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality will be moderated by trait mindfulness among married individuals.
4. There will be ⁴ gender differences in terms of conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality.

2.3. Operational Definitions

2.3.1. Attachment Styles

On the basis of attachment related ‘anxiety’ and ‘avoidance’, four different attachment styles have been identified including secure – develop healthy relationships free of fear of abandonment with other people later in adulthood (Reajo-Howell, 2022), anxious/preoccupied – have ambivalent attitudes towards other people later in their adulthood, dismissive/avoidant – remain distant and isolated from other people especially during situations of conflict (Ackerman, 2018) and disorganized/fearful avoidant – fear emotional closeness as well as distancing from their romantic partner due to a fear of getting hurt. The three styles other than the ‘secure’ type are referred as ‘insecure’ attachment styles (Main, 2023).

2.3.2. Conflict Resolution Strategies

Kurdek (1995) identified four strategies of conflict resolution which include positive problem solving (negotiation and compromise with one's partner), conflict engagement (loss of one's temper and humiliating the partner), withdrawal (disengagement and shutting out from the conflict) and compliance (giving in to the partner without defending one's position). 'Positive ¹⁰² problem solving' is classified as a constructive conflict resolution strategy while the remaining three types are categorized as destructive or maladaptive conflict resolution strategies (Adriani & Ratnasari, 2021).

2.3.3. Trait Mindfulness

A state of awareness that is achieved through purposeful and heightened focusing of ²⁷ one's attention to the experiences and happenings of the present moment in a non-judgmental and receptive manner is defined as mindfulness (Adair et.al., 2018). This study was concerned with 'trait' mindfulness which is defined as one's enduring and inherent characteristic or 'predisposition' to be mindful (and not mindless) in everyday life, irrespective of the situation (Roberts et.al., 2021; Markoff, 2023).

2.3.4. Marital Quality

The feelings, sentiments, and judgements that the spouses hold about their marital bond is referred as marital quality (Zamir et.al., 2017). The good or poor quality of individuals' marital relationship was measured through their degree of consensus or agreement with each other's perspectives, the extent of cohesion between them during different activities and their degree of happiness with the relationship.

2.4. Psychological Questionnaires

2.4.1. Demographic Information Sheet

A demographic information sheet was developed and used in order to collect basic background information about the participants. Participants were asked about their gender, age, residential area, birth order, religion, ethnicity, educational level, employment status, occupation, number of family members, number of earning members, type of family system, the head of the family, and relationship among family members.

2.4.2. The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale–short form (ECR-S; Wei et al., 2007)

This self-report instrument is based on Bowlby's attachment theory; which lays the groundwork for this research inquiry. This questionnaire is a shorter form of the original revised version and comprises a total of 12 items. It has a 7-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Slightly Disagree, 4 – Neutral, 5 – Slightly Agree, 6 – Agree and 7 – Strongly Agree. The minimum obtainable score on this scale is 7 while the maximum possible score is 42. This instrument assesses individuals' pattern of attachment and emotional responses in their close relationships e.g., in familial relationships, friendships, romantic relationships etc. The approximate administration time for the instrument is 3 to 4 minutes. ECR-S has two subscales: attachment related 'anxiety' and 'avoidance'. The scores obtained on these two subscales can be used collectively to classify individuals across four styles of attachment – secure, anxious/preoccupied, dismissive/avoidant and disorganized/fearful avoidant. Item number 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 constitute the 'attachment avoidance subscale' while item number 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 encompass the 'attachment anxiety subscale'. An average avoidance score and an average anxiety score are computed for the purpose of obtaining individuals' attachment style index. Item number 1, 5, 8 and 9 of this scale are reverse scored before the calculation of

average scores of each of these subscales. This instrument relies on a continuous measure of scores and thus lower scores are indicative of a secure style of attachment while higher scores reflect insecure styles of attachment – avoidant, anxious or disorganized. Scores lower than the median on both anxiety and avoidance subscales indicate a ‘secure attachment style’ while scores equal to or higher than the median on both these subscales represent a ‘disorganized/fearful avoidant attachment style’. Score equal to or higher than the median of the avoidance subscale and score lower than the median on the anxiety subscale illustrates a ‘dismissive/avoidant attachment style’. Score equal to or higher than the median of the anxiety subscale and score lower than the median of the avoidance subscale demonstrates an ‘anxious/preoccupied attachment style’ (Fraley, 2012). The items included in this scale comprise of statements like “I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner” and “I try to avoid getting too close to my partner” etc. The internal consistency reliability coefficient ‘ α ’ of the anxiety subscale has been found to .78 while that of the avoidance subscale has been found to be .84. The instrument also possesses an acceptable level of construct validity (Wei et.al., 2007). The reliability coefficients ‘ α ’ of the overall scale, its anxiety subscale and avoidance subscale were established as .70, .64 and .69 respectively in this research.

2.4.3. Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994)

This instrument assesses the different strategies that individuals employ to deal with their interpersonal conflicts. The scale consists of a total of 16 items. It is based on a 5-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Often and 5 – Always. The instrument comprises of 4 subscales, each of which contains 4 items. These subscales correspond to four different conflict resolution styles (positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance) that individuals may use to tackle with situations of conflict. The response values on each of the subscales are summed

up and give a total of four scores in the end which may range from 4 to 20. The scale is based on a continuous measure of scores and thus higher scores in any of the subscales correspond to greater use of that particular style for dealing with interpersonal disputes. The questionnaire includes phrases like “throwing insults and digs” and “Sitting down and discussing differences constructively” etc. (Scheeren et.al., 2014). The internal consistency reliability coefficients of the subscales have been found to range from .61 to .88 (Bisht & Tripathi, 2023; Kurdek, 2001). The instrument also possesses good criterion validity (Kurdek, 1994). The reliability coefficient ‘ α ’ of the whole scale was identified as .70 in this study and that of its subscales - conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal and compliance were established as .85, .74, .80 and .70 respectively in this research.

2.4.4. Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003)

This instrument is one of the most commonly used measures of ‘trait mindfulness’. The scale measures the extent to which individuals tend to be either inherently mindful or mindless of everyday activities (Miller, 2019). The questionnaire consists of 15 items. It is based on a 6-point Likert type scale and includes response options; 1 – Almost Always, 2 – Very Frequently, 3 – Somewhat Frequently, 4 – Somewhat Infrequently, 5 – Very Infrequently and 6 – Almost Never. Considering individuals’ demeanor in daily life, the items of the scale contain statements that reflect mindlessness e.g., “I find myself doing things without paying attention”, “I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later” etc. The average score of the response values is calculated; where higher scores are indicative of greater level of trait mindfulness tendencies (Gesell et.al., 2020). The average reliability coefficient of MAAS has been found to be $\alpha = .89$. The scale also exhibits good convergent and predictive validity (Kotzé & Nel, 2016). The reliability coefficient ‘ α ’ of the scale was established as .86 in this research.

2.4.5. Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7; Hunsley et.al., 2001)

This instrument is a short version of the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This scale is one of the most extensively used measures of marital quality. The instrument is comprised of 7 items; with 3 items designed to measure the degree of 'agreement' between the partners (spouses). These items are based on a 6-point Likert Type scale and include response options; 0 – Always Disagree, 1 – Almost Always Disagree, 2 – Frequently Disagree, 3 – Occasionally Disagree, 4 – Almost Always Agree and 5 – Always Agree. Three other items examine the degree of 'dyadic cohesion' between the partners. These items are also based on a 6-point Likert type scale and include response options 0 – Never, 1 – Less than once a month, 2 – Once or twice a month, 3 – Once or twice a week, 4 – Once a day and 5 – More Often. The remaining last item gauges the degree of 'dyadic happiness' with the marital relationship. This item is based on an ordinal scale of measurement and comprises of the response options 0 –Extremely Unhappy, 1 – Fairly Unhappy, 2 – A Little Unhappy, 3 – Happy, 4 – Very Happy, 5 – Extremely Happy and 6 – Perfect. The items of the questionnaire include statements such as "Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner about the aims, goals, and things believed important" and "Please indicate how often you and your partner have a stimulating exchange of ideas" etc. The scale is based on a continuous measure of scores as the response values from all the items are simply added up; with higher values reflecting a better marital quality. The total scores obtained may range from 0 to 36; where scores below 21 may be indicative of a strained relationship (Hunsley et.al., 2001). The instrument's internal consistency reliability coefficient has been reported to be $\alpha = .86$. It also possesses well established discriminant and criterion validity (Zamir et.al., 2017). The reliability coefficient 'α' of the scale was determined to be .85 in this research.

2.5. Procedure

First of all, an official approval was acquired from ¹² the local ethics commission of the School of Professional Psychology, Bahria University, Islamabad for conducting this research investigation. Following that, married men and women were recruited from various areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi through non-probability snowball sampling technique. ⁴⁹ They were adequately briefed about the background and purpose of this research study. An Informed Consent was taken from each of these participants in order to ensure their voluntary involvement in the research process. All the ethical etiquettes were vigilantly followed through the entire research process. The participants were also given guidelines for providing appropriate and honest responses on all the self-report measures of this research investigation. After all the data was collected from the participants through google forms, it ³² was entered, scored and then analyzed using the IBM SPSS Version 21 software. The final step involved precise and accurate reporting of the findings of this research investigation.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the course of research investigation. The rights of the research participants were acknowledged at each stage of the research process. They were briefed about the purpose and the rationale behind this research study along with a short overview of Bowlby and Ainsworth's theory of attachment; which lays the foundation of this research exploration. The participants were informed about their ethical rights that they inherently possess in the research process; including the confidentiality of their provided responses, the freedom ³⁶ to withdraw their participation at any time during the research process, and the foremost prioritization of their safety and well-being. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to ask queries and clarify their

confusions regarding the research. The participants were required to sign an informed consent prior to their engagement with the research questionnaires.

Chapter 3

Results

The major objective of this research investigation was to explore the relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals ($N= 311$). Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 21 (SPSS-21) was used for data analysis in order to test the hypotheses of this research study. The psychometric properties of the measures used in this study were obtained and their reliability analyses were also conducted. Descriptive statistics was used to obtain the frequencies and percentages of the categorical variables, means and standard deviations of the continuous demographic variables of this research. MANOVA was executed to find out the differences in the four attachment styles on the basis of conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationship among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Moderation Analysis was carried out using Andrew F. Hayes PROCESS v4.2 to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality of the individuals. Independent sample t-test was used for analyzing gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Independent sample t-test was also utilized for analyzing the study variables in relation to the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 3.1*Psychometric properties of study variables of the sample*

Scales	No. of items	α	M	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
ECR-S	12	.70	38.04	11.78	12-75	0.38	-0.04
Anxiety Subscale	6	.64	22.60	7.75	6-42	0.27	-0.49
Avoidance Subscale	6	.69	15.44	7.04	6-37	0.71	0.08
CRSI	16	.70	46.06	8.69	22-80	0.52	0.86
CE Subscale	4	.85	9.27	4.25	4-20	0.65	-0.37
PPS Subscale	4	.74	14.82	3.49	4-20	-0.75	0.47
Withdrawal Subscale	4	.80	10.84	4.18	4-20	0.28	-0.87
Compliance Subscale	4	.70	11.13	3.55	4-20	0.08	-0.25
MAAS	15	.87	58.19	14.40	15-90	-0.26	-0.25
DAS-7	7	.86	24.32	7.41	0-36	-0.67	-0.03

Note: ECR-S = Experiences in Close Relationships Scale -Short form, CRSI = Conflict Resolution Style Inventory, CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem-Solving, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, DAS-7 = Dyadic Adjustment Scale-7, α = Reliability Coefficient, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 3.1 shows the alpha reliabilities of the overall scales and subscales of ECR-S, CRSI, MAAS and DAS-7. The reliabilities of these scales and subscales ranged from .64 to .87, which implies good to high reliability. The ECR-S Scale and its subscales – Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance had good reliabilities; .70, .64 and .69 respectively. The CRSI Scale had a very good reliability of .70 and its subscales – Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem-Solving, Withdrawal and Compliance had even better reliabilities than the overall scale; .85, .74, .80 and .70 respectively. The DAS-7 Scale had a high reliability of .86 while MAAS had the highest reliability of .87 amongst all the other scales and their subscales.

The standard deviations are moderate for MAAS scale, CRSI scale and its PPS Subscale relative to their mean values. The standard deviations are high for DAS-7 scale, ECR-S scale and its anxiety subscale relative to their respective mean values. The standard

deviations for Withdrawal and Compliance subscales of CRSI are also high relative to their means. The Standard deviations for Avoidance subscale of ECR-S and CE subscale of CRSI are very high relative to their mean values. The data for all the scales and their subscales is not skewed, as their skewness values fall between -1 to 1. The data for all these scales is also not platykurtic or leptokurtic, as their kurtosis values fall with the range of -3 to 3 (Bulmer, 1979; George & Mallery, 2018; Hatem et.al., 2022; Demir, 2022).

Table 3.2

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Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N = 311)

Characteristics of Participants		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Men	56	18
	Women	255	82
68 Birth Order	First Born	111	35.7%
	Second Born	62	19.9%
	Middle Child	73	23.5%
	Youngest Child	59	19%
	Only Child	6	1.9%
Religion	Muslim	309	99.4%
	Non-Muslim	2	6%
Ethnicity	Punjabi	208	66.2%
	Pashtun	46	14.8%
	Sindhi	2	0.6%
	Balochi	1	0.3%
	Other	56	18%
Employment Status	Employed	153	49.2%
	Unemployed	158	50.8%
Relationships among family members	Bad	12	3.9%
	Normal	105	33.8%
	Pleasant	194	62.4%

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Note: f = frequency, % = percentage

Table 3.2 shows the frequencies and percentages of demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample size was 311. The table shows that married women constituted a vast majority (82%) of this sample as compared to men who were much less in number (18%). A large number of the research participants were first born (35.7%) while the least number of

participants (19%) were the youngest child in their families. The participants of this sample were predominantly Muslims (99.4%). The ethnicity of most of the participants was Punjabi (66.2%) while only a small percentage of participants were Balochis (0.3%). There was quite a small difference in the number of employed and unemployed participants; with employed individuals constituting 49.2% and unemployed individuals making up 50.85% of the sample. A great fraction of participants described the relationship among their family member as pleasant (62.4%) while a moderate percentage of participants described their familial relationships as normal (33.8%) and only a small quotient described their familial bonds as bad (3.9%). The sample comprised of married individuals from various areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and were having at least one child. All the participants were educated with qualification as low as Matriculation and as high as Master's and Doctorate degrees.

Table 3.3

Independent sample t-test showing differences between Employed and Unemployed Individuals (N=311)

Variables	Employed (n=153)		Unemployed (n=158)		t	p	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Anx. Subscale	21.15	7.19	24.00	8.03	-3.29	.001	-4.55	-1.15	0.37
Avo. Subscale	14.92	6.94	15.95	7.12	-1.28	.19	-2.59	0.54	0.15
CE Subscale	8.97	4.19	9.56	4.30	-1.22	.22	-1.53	0.35	0.14
PPS Subscale	14.99	3.02	14.65	3.90	0.84	.39	-0.44	1.11	0.09
With. Subscale	10.39	4.35	11.27	3.96	-1.86	.06	-1.80	0.04	0.21
Comp. Subscale	10.68	3.42	11.57	3.61	-2.22	.02	-1.67	-0.10	0.25
Mindfulness	58.16	13.77	58.21	15.03	-0.02	.97	-3.26	3.17	0.00
MQ	24.97	7.34	23.70	7.43	1.50	.13	-0.38	2.91	0.17

Note: Anx. = Anxiety, Avo. = Avoidance, CE= Conflict Engagement, PPS= Positive Problem

Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp.= Compliance, MQ= Marital Quality, $M =$ mean, $SD =$ Standard Deviation, $LL =$ Lower Limit, $UL =$ Upper Limit, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$, Cohen's $d =$ Effect size

Table 3.3 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was executed to examine differences in attachment related anxiety and avoidance, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality between employed and unemployed individuals. The results indicated that employed individuals ($M = 21.15$, $SD = 7.19$) and unemployed individuals ($M = 24.00$, $SD = 8.03$) have a significant difference in their attachment related anxiety. Mean values suggested that unemployed individuals have more attachment related anxiety as compared to employed individuals. The value of Cohen's d (0.37) signifies a small effect size. The results further showed that employed individuals ($M = 10.68$, $SD = 3.42$) and unemployed individuals ($M = 11.57$, $SD = 3.61$) have significant differences in their usage of compliance strategy. Mean values indicates that unemployed individuals use more compliance strategy for resolving conflicts as compared to employed individuals. The effect size in this case was also small as indicated by Cohen's d value of 0.25.

Table 3.4

Independent sample t-test showing differences between Married Individuals belonging to Nuclear and Joint Families (N=311)

Variables	Nuclear (n=145)		Joint (n=166)		t	p	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Anx. Subscale	21.80	7.56	23.30	7.86	-1.70	.09	-3.22	0.23	0.19
Avo. Subscale	15.14	7.04	15.71	7.05	-0.71	.47	-2.15	1.00	0.08
CE Subscale	8.70	3.74	9.78	4.60	-2.28	.02	-2.01	-0.14	0.26
PPS Subscale	15.30	3.12	14.40	3.75	2.30	.02	0.13	1.66	0.26

With. Subscale	10.48	4.22	11.15	4.12	-1.40	.16	-1.60	0.26	0.16
Comp. Subscale	10.60	3.40	11.60	3.61	-2.49	.01	-1.78	-0.20	0.28
Mindfulness	59.84	14.45	56.74	14.24	1.90	.05	-0.10	6.30	0.22
MQ	25.04	7.33	23.70	7.44	1.59	.11	-0.31	2.99	0.18

Note: Anx. = Anxiety, Avoi. = Avoidance, CE= Conflict Engagement, PPS= Positive Problem Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp.= Compliance, MQ= Marital Quality, M= mean, SD = Standard Deviation, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, Cohen's d = Effect size

Table 3.4 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was performed to examine differences in attachment related anxiety and avoidance, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality between married individuals belonging to nuclear and joint families. The results suggested that married individuals from nuclear families and those from joint families have significant differences in their conflict resolution strategies. Mean values implied that married individuals from joint families ($M = 9.78, SD = 4.60$) demonstrate more conflict engagement as compared to married individuals from nuclear families ($M = 8.70, SD = 3.74$). The effect size was small (0.26). Mean values further indicated that married individuals from nuclear families ($M = 15.30, SD = 3.12$) employ more positive problem solving than married individuals from joint families ($M = 14.40, SD = 3.75$). The value of Cohen's d (0.26) signifies a small effect size. The results further showed that married individuals from joint families ($M = 11.60, SD = 3.61$) utilize more compliance strategy for resolving conflicts than individuals from nuclear families ($M = 10.60, SD = 3.40$). Cohen's d value of 0.28 implies a small effect size.

Moreover, the findings showed significant differences in levels of trait mindfulness between married individuals belonging to nuclear and joint families. Mean values demonstrate that married individuals from nuclear families possess greater levels of trait mindfulness ($M = 59.84, SD = 14.45$) as compared to those from joint families ($M = 56.74,$

$SD = 14.24$). The effect size in this case was also small as indicated by Cohen's d value of 0.22.

Table 3.5

MANOVA for differences in Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality among individuals having different Attachment Styles (N = 311)

Source	Dependent Variable	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Attachment Styles	CE Subscale	563.143	3	187.714	11.43	.00	0.10
	PPS Subscale	438.511	3	146.170	13.37	.00	0.11
	With. Subscale	855.495	3	285.165	19.21	.00	0.15
	Comp. Subscale	572.631	3	190.877	17.59	.00	0.14
	Mindfulness	7333.503	3	2444.501	13.17	.00	0.11
Marital Quality	3593.927	3	1197.976	27.40	.00	0.211	

Note: CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp. = Compliance, SS = Sum of Squares, MS = Mean Square, η^2 = Partial Eta Squared, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3.5 shows multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), which was conducted to find the differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals having different attachment styles. The results demonstrated that there was a significant main effect of individuals' attachment styles (secure, disorganized, anxious and avoidant) on conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality, $F(18, 854) = 7.33, p < .001$; Wilks' $\lambda = .66$; partial $\eta^2 = .12$. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.01 showed that the individuals having any of the four attachment styles differed significantly with respect to their usage of conflict engagement strategy, $F(3, 307) = 11.43, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, with the highest use associated with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 10.89, SD = .41$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 9.65, SD = .49$), avoidant ($M = 8.82, SD = .52$) and secure attachment style ($M = 7.47, SD = .43$).

Similarly, individuals with distinct attachment styles differed significantly in terms of their usage of positive problem-solving strategy, $F(3, 307) = 13.37, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$, with the greatest use associated with the secure attachment style ($M = 16.40, SD = .35$) as

compared to the anxious ($M = 15.14, SD = .41$), avoidant ($M = 14.55, SD = .43$) and disorganized attachment styles ($M = 13.35, SD = .33$).

Likewise, individuals with different attachment styles differed significantly in relation to their use of withdrawal strategy, $F(3, 307) = 19.21, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$, with the highest use associated with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 12.95, SD = .39$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 10.91, SD = .47$), avoidant ($M = 10.47, SD = .49$) and secure attachment style ($M = 8.67, SD = .41$).

Individuals with different attachment styles also differed significantly with regard to their use of compliance strategy, $F(3, 307) = 17.59, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$, with the greatest use linked with the disorganized attachment style ($M = 12.86, SD = .33$) as compared to the anxious ($M = 11.32, SD = .40$), avoidant ($M = 10.63, SD = .42$) and secure attachment style ($M = 9.39, SD = .35$).

The results also identified that the individuals with different attachment styles had distinct levels of trait mindfulness, $F(3, 307) = 13.17, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$, with the secure attachment style associated with the highest level ($M = 64.85, SD = 1.46$) as compared to the avoidant ($M = 58.88, SD = 1.76$), anxious ($M = 57.53, SD = 1.67$) and disorganized attachment style ($M = 52.29, SD = 1.38$).

Lastly, the individuals having different attachment styles also had varying degrees of marital quality, $F(3, 307) = 27.41, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$, with an enhanced level of marital quality linked with secure attachment style ($M = 28.93, SD = .71$) as compared to anxious ($M = 25.56, SD = .81$), avoidant ($M = 22.62, SD = .85$) and disorganized attachment style ($M = 20.45, SD = .67$).

Table 3.6

Multiple Comparisons for Analyzing Differences Among Attachment Styles in terms of Conflict Resolution Strategies, Trait Mindfulness and Marital Quality (N = 311)

Mean

Dependent Variables	Attachment Styles		Difference	SE	p
CE Subscale	Secure	Disorganized	-3.43	0.597	.000
	Secure	Anxious	-2.18	0.661	.007
	Disorganized	Secure	3.43	0.597	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	2.08	0.664	.011
	Avoidant	Disorganized	-2.08	0.664	.011
	Anxious	Secure	2.18	0.661	.007
PPS Subscale	Secure	Disorganized	3.05	0.487	.000
	Secure	Avoidant	1.85	0.555	.006
	Disorganized	Secure	-3.05	0.487	.000
	Disorganized	Anxious	-1.78	0.526	.005
	Avoidant	Secure	-1.85	0.555	.006
Mean					
Dependent Variables	Attachment Styles		Difference	SE	p
PPS Subscale	Anxious	Disorganized	1.78	0.526	.005
With. Subscale	Secure	Disorganized	-4.28	0.567	.000
	Secure	Avoidant	-1.8	0.646	.034
	Secure	Anxious	-2.24	0.629	.003
	Disorganized	Secure	4.28	0.567	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	2.48	0.632	.001
	Disorganized	Anxious	2.04	0.613	.006
	Avoidant	Secure	1.8	0.646	.034
	Avoidant	Disorganized	-2.48	0.632	.001
	Anxious	Secure	2.24	0.629	.003
	Anxious	Disorganized	-2.04	0.613	.006
Comp. Subscale	Secure	Disorganized	-3.47	0.485	.000
	Secure	Anxious	-1.93	0.538	.002
	Disorganized	Secure	3.47	0.485	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	2.22	0.54	.000
	Disorganized	Anxious	1.54	0.525	.022
	Avoidant	Disorganized	-2.22	0.54	.000
	Anxious	Secure	1.93	0.538	.002
	Anxious	Disorganized	-1.54	0.525	.022
Mindfulness	Secure	Disorganized	12.56	2.007	.000
	Secure	Anxious	7.32	2.224	.007
	Disorganized	Secure	-12.56	2.007	.000
	Disorganized	Avoidant	-6.6	2.233	.02
	Avoidant	Disorganized	6.6	2.233	.02
	Anxious	Secure	-7.32	2.224	.007
Marital Quality	Secure	Disorganized	8.48	0.974	.000

Secure	Avoidant	6.31	1.109	.000
Secure	Anxious	3.37	1.079	.012
Disorganized	Secure	-8.48	0.974	.000
Disorganized	Anxious	-5.11	1.053	.000
Avoidant	Secure	-6.31	1.109	.000
Anxious	Secure	-3.37	1.079	.012
Anxious	Disorganized	5.11	1.053	.000

Note: Only significant differences are reported: CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp.= Compliance

Table 3.6 shows the results of multiple comparisons (Post hoc tests), which were carried out using the Bonferroni method for further analyzing the differences among individuals having different attachment styles in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. The results demonstrated that individuals having different attachment styles were significantly different in terms of their use of the 'destructive' conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts. The mean differences indicated that individuals having secure attachment style use significantly less conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts as compared those having disorganized and anxious attachment styles. Individuals having disorganized attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly more than those having secure and avoidant attachment styles. Individuals having avoidant attachment style use this strategy significantly less than those having disorganized attachment. While individuals having anxious attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly more than securely attached individuals.

Moreover, the mean differences implied that individuals having a secure attachment style use the 'constructive' positive problem-solving strategy significantly more than those having disorganized and avoidant attachment styles. Similarly, the individuals having disorganized attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly less than those having secure and anxious attachment styles. The individuals having avoidant attachment use this strategy less than securely attached individuals. While the individuals having anxious attachment style use this strategy more than individuals having disorganized attachment style.

Furthermore, the mean differences indicated that the individuals having secure attachment style use the 'destructive' withdrawal strategy for resolving conflicts significantly less than those having disorganized, avoidant and anxious attachment styles. The individuals having disorganized attachment style use this conflict resolution strategy significantly more than those having secure, avoidant and anxious attachment styles. Likewise, the individuals having avoidant and anxious attachment styles use this strategy significantly more than securely attached and significantly less than the ones have disorganized attachment style.

The analysis further showed that securely attached individuals use the 'destructive' compliance strategy for resolving conflicts significantly less than those having disorganized and anxious attachment styles. Likewise, the individuals having disorganized attachment style use this strategy significantly more than those having secure, avoidant and anxious attachment styles. The individuals having avoidant attachment style use this strategy significantly less than those having disorganized attachment. While the individuals having anxious attachment style use this strategy significantly more than securely attached and significantly less than those having disorganized attachment style.

The findings also demonstrated that securely attached individuals have significantly higher levels of trait mindfulness than those having disorganized and anxious attachment styles. On the other hand, the individuals having disorganized attachment styles have significantly lower levels of trait mindfulness than those having secure and avoidant attachment styles. The individuals having avoidant attachment style had significantly higher trait mindfulness than those having disorganized attachment while the individuals having anxious attachment style had significantly lower trait mindfulness than securely attached individuals.

Lastly, the marital quality of securely attached individuals was found to be significantly enhanced as compared to those having disorganized, avoidant and anxious

attachment styles. On the contrary, the individuals having a disorganized attachment style were found to have significantly diminished marital quality as compared to those having secure and anxious attachment styles. The individuals having avoidant attachment style and anxious had significantly diminished marital quality as compared to securely attached individuals, Moreover, the anxiously attached individuals were also identified to have significantly higher marital quality than those individuals having disorganized attachment style.

Table 3.7

3 Correlation Matrix for Study variables (N = 311)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Anx. Subscale	-	.26**	.34**	-.26**	.41**	.39**	-.34**	-.27**
2. Avo. Subscale		-	.23**	-.41**	.36**	.27**	-.30**	-.50**
3. CE Subscale			-	-.38**	.45**	.33**	-.32**	-.42**
4. PPS Subscale				-	-.24**	-.24**	.28**	.52**
5. With. Subscale					-	.46**	-.34**	-.41**
6. Comp. Subscale						-	-.34**	-.28**
7. Mindfulness							-	.35**
8. Marital Quality								-

52
 Note: Anx. = Anxiety, Avo. = Avoidance, CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp. = Compliance, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

3
 Table 3.7 shows the results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, which **4** was used to analyze the correlations among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality of married individuals. The analysis shows that attachment related anxiety has a significant and weak positive correlation with attachment related avoidance (r = .26, p < .01) and the unhealthy conflict resolution strategies including

¹⁶ conflict engagement ($r = .34, p < .01$), withdrawal ($r = .41, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = .39, p < .01$) strategies. This suggests that higher attachment anxiety is associated with higher attachment avoidance and a greater use of the unhealthy conflict resolution strategies. ¹⁰⁵ The findings also demonstrate that attachment anxiety has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$), marital quality ($r = -.27, p < .01$) and ³⁴ positive problem-solving strategy ($r = -.26, p < .01$); which is a healthy strategy for resolving conflicts. From this it can be inferred ¹⁰⁰ that, higher attachment anxiety is associated with diminished levels of trait mindfulness, marital quality and a decreased use of positive problem-solving strategy.

The analysis further reveals that attachment avoidance has a significant and weak positive correlation with ¹⁶ conflict engagement ($r = .23, p < .01$), withdrawal ($r = .36, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = .27, p < .01$) strategy. This denotes that higher attachment avoidance is associated with increased utility of conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts. Attachment avoidance was also ³² found to have a significant and weak negative correlation with positive problem solving ($r = -.41, p < .01$), trait mindfulness ($r = -.30, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate ⁹⁰ negative correlation with marital quality ($r = -.50, p < .01$). This implies that higher attachment avoidance is associated with lesser use of positive problem solving and reduced levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.

Moreover, the results show that one of the destructive conflict resolution strategies i.e. conflict engagement has significant and weak ³³ positive correlation with compliance ($r = .33, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate positive correlation with withdrawal ($r = .45, p < .01$). ¹⁰⁵ This implies that married individuals who employ more conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts are also more likely to use compliance and withdrawal. Moreover, conflict engagement strategy has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.32, p < .01$), marital quality ($r = -.42, p < .01$) and ³⁴ positive problem solving ($r = -.38, p <$

.01). This indicates that increased use of conflict engagement strategy is associated with diminished levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality along with a decreased use of positive problem solving.

The findings further indicate that positive problem solving has a significant and weak negative correlation with withdrawal ($r = -.24, p < .01$) and compliance ($r = -.24, p < .01$). This suggests that individuals who use more positive problem-solving strategy have a lesser probability of using compliance and withdrawal strategy for conflict resolution. Furthermore, positive problem solving has a significant and weak positive correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = .28, p < .01$) and a significant and moderate positive correlation with marital quality ($r = .52, p < .01$); implying that individuals' higher use of positive problem-solving strategy for resolving conflicts is associated with enhanced trait mindfulness and marital quality.

The withdrawal strategy has a significant and moderate positive correlation with compliance strategy ($r = .46, p < .01$); signifying that individuals' increased usage of this conflict resolution strategy is associated with their increased usage of compliance strategy. The analysis further demonstrates that withdrawal strategy has a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$) and marital quality ($r = -.41, p < .01$) of individuals. Moreover, compliance strategy was also found to have a significant and weak negative correlation with trait mindfulness ($r = -.34, p < .01$) and marital quality ($r = -.28, p < .01$). This implies that married individuals who have a high usage of withdrawal and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts are likely to have lower levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality.

Trait mindfulness of individuals has a significant positive correlation with marital quality ($r = .35, p < .01$); which indicates that higher level of trait mindfulness is associated with their enhanced marital quality.

Table 3.8

Moderating effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
CRSI	0.30	0.16	1.84	.06	-0.02	0.63
MAAS	0.55	0.13	4.05	.00	0.28	0.81
Interaction CRSI x MAAS	-0.01	0.003	-3.07	.002	-0.01	-0.00
		R ² =	ΔR ² =			
	F = 9.45	.186***	.025**			

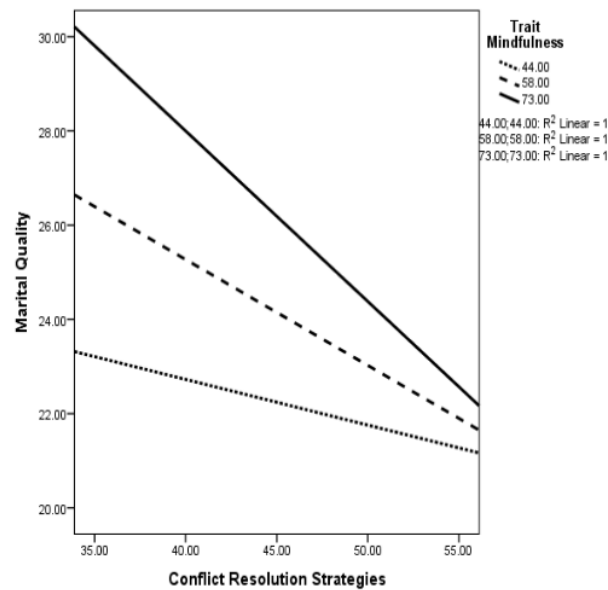
*Note: CRSI = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

Table 3.8 shows the results of moderation analysis, which was carried out to test whether trait mindfulness moderated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality of individuals. The results depicted that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality while conflict resolution strategies were non-significant predictors of marital quality. However, the interaction effect of conflict resolution strategies and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 18.6 % whereas the unique variance of the CRSI x MAAS was 2.5%.

Figure 3

Interaction Plot of Conflict Resolution Strategies and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above graphical plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies on marital quality; leading to an enhanced marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies on trait mindfulness; consequently, diminishing marital quality.

Further moderation analyses were conducted to explore the moderating effect of trait mindfulness on the relationship between the subscales of Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (IV) and marital quality (DV) of individuals.

Table 3.9

Moderating effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Conflict Engagement Strategy and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
CE Subscale	0.01	0.33	0.04	.96	-0.64	0.67
MAAS	0.22	0.05	3.77	.00	0.11	0.34
Interaction	-0.01	0.01	-1.91	.05	-0.02	0.00
CE x MAAS						
		R ² =	ΔR ² =			
	F = 3.63	.235***	.009**			

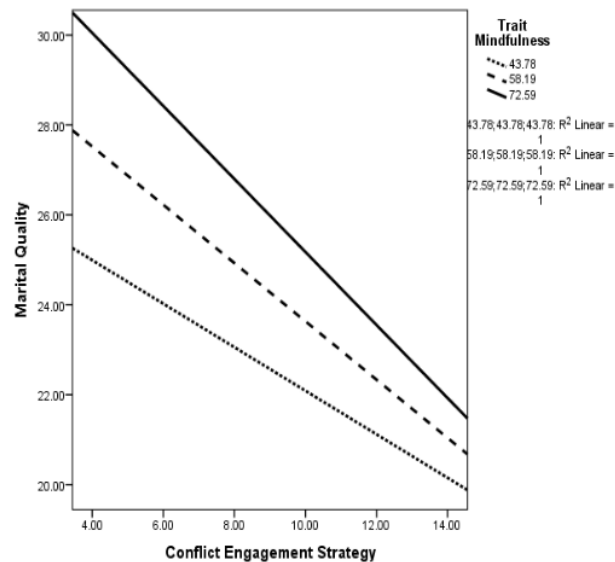
Note: CE = Conflict Engagement, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 3.9 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the conflict engagement subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a significant and positive predictor of marital quality while the conflict engagement strategy was a non-significant predictor of marital quality. However, the interaction effect of conflict engagement strategy and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 23.5 % whereas the unique variance of the CE x MAAS was 0.9 %.

Figure 4

Interaction Plot of Conflict Engagement Strategy and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above interaction plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of conflict engagement strategy on marital quality; resulting in an improved marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of conflict engagement strategy on trait mindfulness; thereby reducing marital quality.

Table 3.10

Moderating effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Positive Problem Solving Strategy and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
PPS Subscale	0.54	0.37	1.46	.14	-0.18	1.26
MAAS	-0.00	0.09	-0.03	.97	-0.19	0.19
Interaction	0.01	0.01	1.20	.23	-0.00	0.02
PPS x MAAS						
F = 1.43 R ² = .314 ΔR ² = .003						

Note: PPS = Positive Problem Solving, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale,

p < .05, **p < .01, *p < .001*

Table 3.10 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the positive problem-solving subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that both, trait mindfulness and positive problem-solving strategy were non-significant predictors of marital quality. Similarly, the interaction effect of trait mindfulness and positive problem-solving strategy on marital quality was also found to be non-significant. Thus, it can be inferred that moderation doesn't exist as no variable emerged as a significant moderator in this model.

Table 3.11

6 Moderating effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Withdrawal Strategy and Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
With. Subscale	0.30	0.34	0.87	.38	-0.38	0.98
MAAS	0.28	0.07	4.21	.00	0.15	0.42
Interaction	-0.02	0.01	-2.67	.01	-0.03	-0.00
With. x MAAS						
			$\Delta R^2 =$			
	F = 7.13	R ² = .235***	.018**			

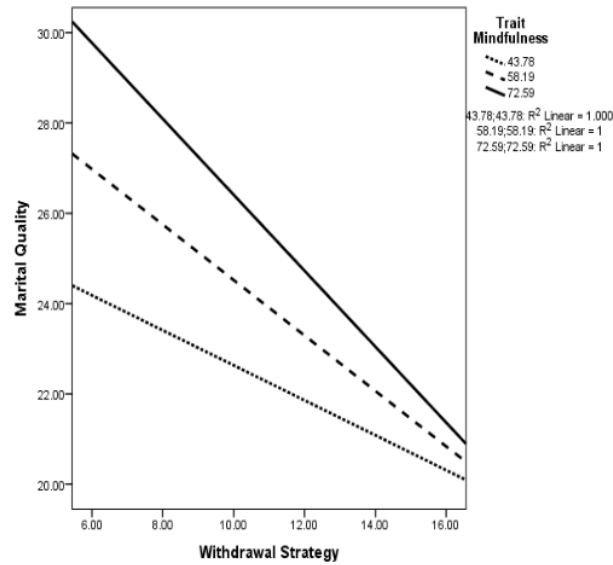
Note: With. = Withdrawal, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

13 Table 3.11 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the withdrawal subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a **20** significant and positive predictor of marital quality while the withdrawal strategy was a non-significant predictor of marital quality. However, the interaction effect of withdrawal strategy and trait mindfulness on marital quality was significant and negative. Thus, it can be inferred that a significant moderation exists as trait mindfulness emerged as a significant moderator in the form of a buffer in this model.

9 Furthermore, it was identified that the model was a good fit and the total variance in marital quality was 23.5 % whereas the unique variance of the With. x MAAS was 1.8 %.

Figure 5

Interaction Plot of Withdrawal Strategy and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Quality



The above graphical plot corresponding to this moderation analysis shows that the moderator 'trait mindfulness' is acting as a buffer. This implies that an increase in the levels of trait mindfulness is in return decreasing the negative impact of withdrawal strategy on marital quality; leading to better marital quality. Similarly, a decrease in the levels of trait mindfulness is increasing the negative impact of withdrawal strategy on trait mindfulness; bringing about reduced marital quality.

Table 3.12

6 *Moderating effect of Trait Mindfulness on the relationship between Compliance Strategy and*

Marital Quality (N=311)

Predictors	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
Main Effects						
Comp. Subscale	0.33	0.40	0.82	.41	-0.46	1.13
MAAS	0.28	0.08	3.50	.00	0.13	0.45
Interaction	-0.01	0.01	-1.84	.06	-0.03	0.00
Comp. x MAAS						
F = 3.40 R ² = .159 ΔR ² = .009						

1 *Note: Compliance, MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, *p < .05,*

***p < .01, ***p < .001*

13 Table 3.12 shows the results of moderation analysis; which was conducted to test the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between the compliance subscale of CRSI and marital quality of individuals. The results demonstrated that trait mindfulness was a **8** significant and positive predictor of marital quality whereas the compliance strategy was found to be a non-significant predictor of marital quality. Moreover, the interaction effect of trait mindfulness and compliance strategy on marital quality was also found to be non-significant. Thus, it can be inferred that moderation doesn't exist as no variable emerged as a significant moderator in this model.

Table 3.13

Independent sample t-test showing gender differences (N=311)

Variables	Men (n=56)		Women (n=255)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
CE Subscale	6.93	3.45	9.79	4.24	-5.37	.00	-3.91	-1.80	0.74
PPS Subscale	15.61	3.50	14.64	3.48	1.87	.06	-0.05	1.97	0.28
With. Subscale	9.91	4.38	11.04	4.11	-1.84	.06	-2.34	0.08	0.27
Comp. Subscale	10.13	3.64	11.35	3.49	-2.36	.01	-2.25	-0.21	0.34
Mindfulness	62.30	13.72	57.28	14.42	2.38	.01	0.87	9.17	0.35
MQ	25.79	7.68	24.00	7.32	1.63	0.1	-0.36	3.93	0.24

Note: Note: CE = Conflict Engagement, PPS = Positive Problem-Solving, With. = Withdrawal, Comp. = Compliance, MQ = Marital Quality, *M* = mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *LL* = Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001, Cohen's *d* = Effect size

Table 3.13 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test, which was conducted to examine gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality of married individuals. The results indicated that men (*M* = 6.93, *SD* = 3.45) and women (*M* = 9.79, *SD* = 4.24) have a significant difference in their usage of conflict engagement strategy for resolving conflicts. Mean values suggested that women utilize more conflict engagement as compared to men. The value of Cohen's *d* (0.74) signifies a medium effect size. The results further showed that men (*M* = 10.13, *SD* = 3.64) and women (*M* = 11.35, *SD* = 3.49) have significant differences in their usage of compliance strategy. Mean values indicate that women employ more compliance as compared to men. The effect size in this case was small as indicated by its magnitude of 0.34. Furthermore, the results showed that men (*M* = 62.30, *SD* = 13.72) and women (*M* = 57.28, *SD* = 14.42) differ in their levels of trait mindfulness. Mean values indicated that men have greater levels of trait mindfulness as compared to women; with a small effect size as Cohen's *d* value is 0.35.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The major aim of the present study involved the exploration of the interplay among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality in

married individuals having at least one child. For this purpose, four hypotheses were formulated and then tested through various statistical analyses.

The first hypothesis of this study was that the individuals having different attachment styles would differ in terms of their conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. ¹¹⁵ Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was carried out to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.5). The analysis proved this hypothesis correct. The findings demonstrated ¹⁰⁹ that there is a significant main effect of individuals' attachment styles on their ² conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. The analysis of each individual dependent variable showed that ³⁴ the highest use of positive problem solving (constructive conflict resolution strategy) is associated with secure attachment style while the destructive ¹⁸ conflict resolution strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance are associated with ⁸⁵ the insecure attachment styles i.e. anxious, avoidant and disorganized. ⁴ The greatest use of these unhealthy conflict resolution strategies was found to be linked with the disorganized attachment style. Moreover, the highest level of trait mindfulness and the most enhanced marital quality ¹⁰⁸ was found to be linked with secure attachment style while lower levels of trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality were identified among anxious, avoidant and the disorganized attachment style; which was discovered to have the least levels of both variables. ¹¹⁴ The results of post-hoc analysis using the Bonferroni method, generated multiple comparisons between the four attachment styles and provided further support to the hypothesis' results (see Table 3.6).

Existing research literature supports the findings of this hypothesis. Prior research studies have demonstrated that secure attachment style is associated with increased use of positive problem-solving strategy and enhanced relationship quality. While the insecure attachment styles – anxious, avoidant and disorganized are associated with diminished relationship quality and maladaptive ¹⁸ conflict resolution strategies- conflict engagement,

withdrawal and compliance (Tulum, 2014; González-Ortega et.al., 2020; Azizi, 2023). Trait mindfulness has been found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between attachment styles and romantic relationship quality (Chakroun-Baggioni et.al., 2023). Insecure attachment styles have been found to be linked with reduced trait mindfulness while secure attachment style has been found to be associated with increased trait mindfulness (Calvo et.al., 2022; Kriplani & Vijayan, 2023).

The second hypothesis of this research was that there would be a significant relationship between attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.7). The analysis showed that attachment anxiety has a significant positive correlation with attachment avoidance. Moreover, attachment anxiety and avoidance were discovered to have a significant positive correlation with destructive conflict resolution strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance. Both attachment anxiety and avoidance were also found to have a significant negative correlation with trait mindfulness, marital quality and constructive conflict resolution strategy – positive problem solving. The analysis further showed that unhealthy conflict resolution strategies – conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance have a significant positive correlation with each other while a significant negative correlation with trait mindfulness and marital quality. Furthermore, conflict engagement was found to have a significant negative correlation with positive problem solving. Lastly, trait mindfulness was found to have a significant positive correlation with marital quality. All these correlations ranged from weak to moderate in magnitude.

All of these findings align with the existing researches. Domingue & Mollen (2009) found that secure couples use constructive modes of conflict resolution strategies while insecure couples use unhealthy conflict resolution strategies characterized by withdrawal,

compliance and conflict engagement. Gesell and colleagues (2020) demonstrated trait mindfulness to have a significant positive correlation with partnership quality and positive problem solving while a significant negative correlation with withdrawal and compliance strategies. The results of a previous research indicated that insecure attachment styles have a negative correlation with positive problem solving and marital quality. On the other hand, secure attachment styles of married individuals had a positive association with constructive conflict resolution strategies and marital quality (Scheeren et al., 2014). Meta-analyses conducted by Stevenson, Emerson, and Millings (2017) established significant negative correlations between both the insecure attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and levels of trait mindfulness. The effect sizes of the correlations ranged from small to medium. Similarly, Fall & Shankland (2021) found trait mindfulness to have significant negative correlations between anxious and avoidant attachment styles while a significant positive correlation with secure attachment style.

The third hypothesis of the present study involved testing the moderation ability of trait mindfulness in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality of individuals. Moderation analysis was carried out to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.8). The results of this analysis showed that trait mindfulness significantly moderated the relationship between conflict resolution and marital quality. Specifically, trait mindfulness moderated the relationship between the conflict engagement and withdrawal strategies for resolving conflicts and marital quality of individuals (see Table 3.9 and 3.11). Trait mindfulness emerged as a buffer in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital quality. The plausible explanation for this appears to be that as the levels of trait mindfulness of individuals increased, the negative impact of conflict resolution strategies (as 3 out of 4 strategies are destructive in nature) on marital quality was weakened; thereby enhancing their marital quality.

Prior researches that assumed trait mindfulness as a moderator between conflict resolution and marital quality could not be traced; which forms the basis of one of the rationales of the present study to fill this research literature gap. However, some previous research studies align with our research results on the basis of the fact that trait mindfulness is one of the important determinants of both conflict resolution and marital/relationship quality. Mandal and Lip (2022) established trait mindfulness and constructive conflict resolution strategies like dialogue as predictors of enhanced relationship quality. Moreover, they identified trait mindfulness to have a significant positive association with 'dialogue' while a negative association with unhealthy conflict resolution strategies e.g. conflict escalation, withdrawal etc. Jones et.al. (2011) demonstrated trait mindfulness to have a positive association with marital 'satisfaction', which is one of the essential components of marital quality. Similarly, higher levels of trait mindfulness have been found to be associated with enhanced relationship satisfaction and use of positive conflict resolution strategies while lower trait mindfulness levels have found to be associated with increased use of negative conflict resolution strategies and diminished marital quality (Kozlowski, 2013; Harvey et.al., 2015; Harvey et.al., 2019).

The fourth hypothesis of this research involved examining gender differences in conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality among married individuals; involving 255 married men and 56 women. Independent sample t-test was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 3.13). The findings showed that women use more conflict engagement and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts as compared to men. Moreover, men were also found to have higher levels of trait mindfulness as compared to women. The results of this hypothesis are not consistent, at least for the most part, with the previous research investigations. One possible explanation behind this could be the highly disproportionate gender ratio in the research sample. The limited number of previous

researches that have carried out to explore gender differences in conflict resolution and trait mindfulness; found no significant gender differences (Yang & Yang, 2021; Al-Hamdan et.al., 2019). On the other hand, Dildar and Amjad (2017) demonstrated that women use compliance for resolving conflicts while men are more likely to engage in conflicts. Mandal and Lip (2022) found no significant gender differences in trait mindfulness; however, women were found to use more conflict engagement while men were found to use passive strategies for resolving conflicts.

4.1. Conclusion

Individuals having different attachment styles differed in terms of their use of conflict resolution strategies, levels of trait mindfulness and marital quality; with secure attachment style associated with healthy conflict resolution strategies, higher trait mindfulness and enhanced marital quality while insecure attachment styles – anxious, avoidant and disorganized; were found to be linked with unhealthy conflict resolution strategies, reduced trait mindfulness and diminished marital quality. ⁵ There was a significant yet weak to ²¹ moderate correlation among attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, trait mindfulness and marital quality. Trait mindfulness significantly moderated (as a buffer) ² the relationship between conflict resolution strategies (conflict engagement and withdrawal strategy) and marital quality of married individuals. Married women employed more conflict engagement and compliance strategy for resolving conflicts. Furthermore, married men were found to possess greater levels of trait mindfulness. This research study is helpful in illuminating the long-lasting impact of one's childhood experiences on multiple psychosocial facets of adulthood. Amongst all the study variables, 'trait mindfulness' in relation to marital quality has been explored to a relatively lesser extent in indigenous and international researches. Therefore, the association of trait mindfulness and marital quality along with other integral psychosocial factors needs to be scrutinized.

4.2. Limitations

- Given the stringent inclusion criteria of this research, the male to female ratio was highly disproportionate in the sample; which may have impacted some of the results of this research; particularly the ones involving gender related analyses.
- This study involved only those married individuals who have at least one child which makes the generalizability of results questionable for those married individuals who do not have any children.
- In an effort to avoid the influence of extraneous variables, the sample participants were recruited only from Islamabad and Rawalpindi; which may limit the generalizability of the research results across other regions within or outside the country.
- Some additional factors such as socio-economic status, extended family's involvement and expectations, gender roles etc. may also impact participants' marital quality in our culture; which have not been accounted for by this research.

4.3. Future Recommendations

- There is a limited number of international studies and hardly any indigenous studies regarding the quality of marital relationships and other intimate relationships in relation to 'trait mindfulness'. Future researches may explore marital relationships in this context.
- Future research explorations may recruit a more culturally diverse and larger sample size, which includes married individuals with and without children. Comparisons regarding the dynamics and outcomes of their marital relationships could be drawn.
- There is a paucity of indigenous and international qualitative research regarding the study variables. So future researches may involve qualitative analysis. This may

mitigate the factor of participants' socially desirable responses and may yield more rich data based on participants' lived experiences.

- Future researches may try to ensure a proportionate gender ratio to avoid influencing the research results at least from this perspective.
- Some additional demographic and cultural factors that may influence marital quality may be studied in relation to it.
- Future research may delve further into the moderation role of trait mindfulness in the relationships between marital quality and other important factors that may influence it.

4.4. Implications

The present research can have implications in clinical settings, in the area of research as well as in practical life. This study could be helpful for therapists in clinical settings especially those who practice couples' counseling. The therapists may address the clients how their intimate relationship problems could arise possibly due to their problematic attachment styles, conflict resolution and/or trait mindfulness related factors. This exploratory study can also be helpful for therapists who practice family therapy. The therapists can enlighten their clients (parents or children) about the long-lasting impact that early childhood experiences could have on individuals' functioning later in life.

Since there is a dearth of indigenous research literature on the exploration of marital relationships and even other close relationships in the context of trait mindfulness; ⁶⁴ the findings of this research may add to the body of knowledge regarding the study variables and can serve as a precursor for future research investigations in this area. Moreover, research scholars can undertake longitudinal research studies by building upon the findings of this research. They can observe how these study variables evolve over time and impact each

other. In addition, this study can be useful for creating awareness among the general community about the enduring influences of early childhood experiences on several aspects of relationship functioning later in life through seminars, workshops, discussion groups etc.

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