

**SELF-SILENCING, REJECTION SENSITIVITY,
MENTALIZATION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN
MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**



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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of Master of Science (Clinical Psychology)**

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Dedication

Alhamdulillah, all praise is due to Allah (SWT), the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, for granting me the strength, patience, and guidance to complete this work. I dedicate this thesis to my beloved father, whose unwavering guidance, love, and sacrifices have been the foundation of my personal and academic journey. His constant encouragement and belief in my abilities have inspired me to overcome challenges and pursue excellence in all my endeavors. Without his support, completing this research would not have been possible.

To my family, whose love, patience, and continuous encouragement have been my constant source of strength, I owe my deepest gratitude. Their faith in me, even during difficult times, provided the motivation to persevere and complete this thesis. Every step of this journey has been supported by their care and understanding.

I also dedicate this work to my respected supervisor, Dr. Urooj Sadiq, whose invaluable guidance, mentorship, and insightful feedback have played a pivotal role in shaping this research. Her encouragement, patience, and expert advice have not only enhanced the quality of this work but have also enriched my learning experience, making this achievement a shared success.

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Ashra Abdul Razzaq

ABSTRACT

The current research investigated the relationships existing between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction in married people in Pakistan. Although these constructs have been extensively studied in the Western setting, little has been done to examine their influence in the South Asian setting where cultural values and family structures might influence marital adjustment in different ways. The main aim was to examine the hypothesis of whether self-silencing and rejection sensitivity are negative predictors of marital satisfaction with greater certainty and lesser uncertainty in mentalization as protective variables. The study used a quantitative research design and a sample of 217 married people recruited in the community centers, workplaces, and online. Standardized self-report measures were employed: the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS), Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ), Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ-C and RFQ-U), and the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI). The analysis of data was performed with the help of SPSS with the application of the descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, multiple regression, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. Results showed that self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization uncertainty had a negative relationship with marital satisfaction and mentalization certainty was positively correlated but not significantly. Regression analysis indicated that self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and uncertainty were significant predictors of lower marital satisfaction and accounted 16.2% of the variance. The paper identifies the adverse impact of silencing behaviors, rejection fears, and poor mentalization on marital satisfaction and the significance of cultural dynamics in determining these relationships.

Keywords: Self-Silencing, Rejection Sensitivity, Mentalization, Marital Satisfaction, Married Individuals

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List of Symbols

Symbol	Meaning
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
N	Sample size
F	Frequency
%	Percentage
B	Unstandardized regression coefficient
B	Standardized regression coefficient
SE B	Standard error of B
LL	Lower Limit of 95% Confidence Interval
UL	Upper Limit of 95% Confidence Interval
R^2	Coefficient of determination
A	Cronbach's alpha (reliability coefficient)
R	Pearson's correlation coefficient
F	F-statistic (ANOVA or regression)
η^2	Eta squared (effect size)
P	Significance level

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
STSS	Silencing the Self Scale
A-RSQ	Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire
RFQ	Reflective Functioning Questionnaire
RFQ-C	Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – Certainty Subscale
RFQ-U	Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – Uncertainty Subscale
CSI	Couple Satisfaction Index
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
LL	Lower Limit
UL	Upper Limit
SD	Standard Deviation
M	Mean
n	Sample size
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
B	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient
β	Standardized Regression Coefficient

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a significant stage of life during which an individual selects a partner with a new role and desire. One critical role of adulthood is the ability to meet a passionate and righteous duty (Nitsche & Hayford, 2020). Adapting to married life is needed in order to have a decent marriage. When individuals enter into marriage, they take the different views and aspirations they have towards life when it comes to achieving happiness to the table. Nawaz et al. (2022) say that open communication, active participation, and sharing are the pillars of marital adjustment. The present study introduces a literature review and study on self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization among married persons and how these constructs contribute to the marital satisfaction among married persons.

1.1. Research Background

Successful marriage is considered an ideal in any society. According to Whisman et al. (2017), stable marriages are those in which both partners experience increased marital satisfaction and mutual understanding. Marital relationships are foundational to individual and societal well-being, yet many marriages experience dissatisfaction due to unaddressed psychological factors. Recent studies indicate that self-silencing is particularly detrimental to relationship satisfaction, as it suppresses authentic emotional expression and creates an imbalance in communication (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2013). Several global studies highlight alarming trends in marital dissatisfaction and its psychological repercussions. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), emotional distance and a failure to communicate are common causes of separation in 40-50% of American marriages (APA, 2022). In Pakistan, marriage is viewed as the

joining of two families and is more of a communal or familial affair than an intimate one. Marriage sustainability and permanency are crucial to the couple, their family, and society at large. Contributing factors to rising divorce rates include partners struggling with behavioral problems, fear rejection, or have difficulties understanding each other's perspectives and emotions (Nawaz et al., 2022).

A study on cynical hostility found that perceived partner hostility negatively affects intimacy and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that behavioral problems can lead to marital dissatisfaction (Segel-Karpas et al., 2024). Additionally, research indicates that individuals with high rejection sensitivity experience strong emotional responses, which adversely affect their relationships. Although the divorce rate in Pakistan has increased noticeably in recent years, it is still far below that of other parts of the world, remaining below one percent. Nevertheless, there is a gradual rise in the trend. Khula cases in Punjab (Pakistan) were 16,942 in 2014 and increased to 18,901 cases in 2016. In Karachi, 11,143 cases were filed in 2019, 3,800 cases were submitted in the first quarter of 2020, and 14,943 cases were filed in the one and a half years prior to June 2020. In 2019, 2,000 women divorced, which affected 2,100 children, and 4,752 of these were disposed of (Mishra et al., 2024).

A person engages in self-silencing when they repress and ignore their emotions and ideas, such as rage, the idea that their spouse is incorrect, being self-centred, or having irrational views (Robba, 2023). According to self-silencing theory, a person consciously choose to keep quiet in order to preserve a connection, which means they are giving up on their own sentiments (Patrick et al., 2019). People who rank high in self-silencing tend to be selfless and giving, but they keep their pain and difficulties hidden so they may keep or improve their connections with others. A

person's self-assurance, self-esteem, and sense of identity are all negatively impacted by this process of diminishing and suppressing their emotions and sentiments (Tariq & Yousaf, 2020).

Marital adjustment was shown to be adversely connected with self-silencing, self-demand/partner-withdraw, and partner demand/self-withdraw, according to research by Saleem and Fatima (2023). Research also suggests that individuals with high rejection sensitivity are more prone to misinterpret partners' behaviors as signs of disapproval or neglect, fostering conflict and reducing marital harmony (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2013).

Rejection sensitivity is a personality disposition characterized by oversensitivity to rejection (Gao et al., 2017). A need to be accepted by others and not to be rejected is a natural human tendency though, some people are more sensitive to rejection than others. As seen in the daily life, some individuals take rejection lightly and can be in control of their emotions, but there are individuals who respond to rejection so harshly that their relationships with the people around them may be affected. The most commonly accepted definition of rejection sensitivity (RS) is the tendency to fearfully anticipate, easily detect and severely react to possible indicators of rejection (Lou & Li, 2017). In a romantic relationship, being overly sensitive to rejection might be a maladaptive quality, even though it's sometimes a helpful defence strategy. When one spouse is more vulnerable to rejection, the relationship happiness of the other tends to suffer, according to the previous study.

Another variable affecting marital satisfaction is mentalization (O'Connor et al., 2018). When people engage in mentalisation, they are reflecting on their own experiences and developing the ability to differentiate between their own internal and external realities, as well as their own mental and emotional processes, all via their interactions with others (Fonagy et al., 2018). Mentalisation is therefore not just a genetic variation but a creation itself and formed during life

through the interaction of the mind. Mentalization allows the partners to feel compassion and fully understand the emotional state of each other, which leads to the development of understanding and satisfaction in the relationship (Fonagy et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the available literature is largely centered on the female point of view, and thus there is a major gap in comprehending how the constructs work in married males.

1.2. Research Gap

Even though the literature indicates the role of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization in relationship quality, the constructs have hardly been studied in a single framework. They have been studied individually in most studies and the interaction of these two variables on marital satisfaction has not been established. Empirical reviews (e.g., Luyten et al., 2024) in recent years show that the interaction between these constructs is a critical research area in the determination of marital outcomes. Also, the majority of the research that has been carried out is cross-sectional and therefore we cannot understand how these dynamics vary during the marriage period. There is also a limitation in comparing the genders in the comparative research and this restricts the knowledge on whether men and women are susceptible of self-silencing and rejection sensitivity in a different manner. Similarly, it is necessary to test the hypothesis that, such psychological processes are functioning in a parallel manner in collectivist and individualist societies, with the help of cross-cultural validation. Researchers have also urged application of advanced methods of statistics, including structural equation modeling, to measure the multi-way relationships between these variables, and intervention-based research to establish whether enhancing the skills of mentalization can diminish the effects of self-silencing and rejection sensitivity, and eventually lead to greater marital satisfaction. Combined, these gaps reveal the necessity of a study that would combine these constructs within one study, use more powerful

methodological designs, and investigate their extended theoretical ramifications regarding the quality of marriages.

Much of the empirical research on self-silencing and rejection sensitivity has focused on Western populations, with a particular emphasis on women (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2013). However, research investigating such relationships in men is limited, particularly in collectivist, patriarchal societies like Pakistan. Within these contexts, the traditional gender norms may make men reluctant to show vulnerability, which can increase self-silencing and sensitivity to rejection in marital relationships. Although Pakistani research on marital satisfaction often focuses on structural and contextual conditions like family system, socioeconomic background, or spousal communication, it rarely touches on psychological processes like mentalization, self-silencing, and rejection sensitivity-which may be underlying marital outcomes. Such omission neglects the cultural fact that Pakistani marriages tend to be embedded in joint family structures and are subject to high societal expectations, where emotional control and relationship dynamics play a vital role. The lack of contextual specific evidence does not answer how these psychological constructs work to create marital satisfaction in Pakistani married males, hence creating a contextual gap to be filled by this study.

Existing studies also have a number of methodological gap. Majority of them rely on small or homogeneous samples, often limited to women, students or clinical populations, and thus, constrain the extrapolation of findings. By filling these methodological voids, the present study will provide a more specific and valid image of how self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization interact in their influence on marital satisfaction.

1.3. Problem Statement

Marital satisfaction is an important factor in emotional well-being and relationship stability but it is established through numerous psychological factors. Previous research has shown that self-silencing or tendency to suppress emotions and maintain a balance is associated with both decreased relationship satisfaction and emotional distress. In the same way, respondents who have high rejection sensitivity tend to react to the behavior of their partner as rejection and this results in greater relational anxiety and dissatisfaction. However, mentalisation, the ability to understand the mental state of a person and self, has been associated with improved emotional regulation and better relations with other persons (Patrick et al., 2019). The factors have been covered individually but not their combination effects on marital satisfaction particularly among married men. The purpose of this research is to investigate how mentalisation, rejection sensitivity, and self-silencing affect marital satisfaction and contribute valuable data to the field about the psychological mechanisms that determine the health of relationships.

1.4. Research Question

1. What is the relationship between self-silencing and marital satisfaction in married individuals?
2. What is the role of rejection sensitivity in marital satisfaction in married individuals?
3. What is the role of mentalization in marital satisfaction in married individuals?

1.5. Objectives

1. To analyze the relationship between self-silencing and marital satisfaction in married individuals.
2. To examine the impact of rejection sensitivity on marital satisfaction among married individuals.

3. To investigate the association between mentalization and marital satisfaction among married individuals.

1.6. Significance of Study

Enhancing awareness among couples regarding the impact of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization on marital satisfaction can promote healthier relationship dynamics. By understanding these psychological factors, couples can develop better coping strategies leading to stronger and more fulfilling relationships. The research is expected to offer empirical evidence that can assist couples to appreciate the significance of emotional expression, diminish the fear of rejection, and improve understanding of one another. Improved awareness can also help relationship counselors and psychologists in the creation of therapeutic interventions that are specifically tailored to take into account the cultural dynamics of Pakistani marriages. Besides, the results would be applicable to enhance other social interventions that may help decrease relational distress and enhance marital relations in Pakistani society.

The results can also be applied practically to the professionals dealing with couples. Through the result, therapists, counselors and psychologists can apply the result to develop interventions that directly target these psychological processes to encourage positive expression of their emotions, in reduction of fear-focused behavior, and to enhance their perception between the couples. By so doing, the research establishes a base in culturally sensitive marital therapy and relationship education. Culture-wise, the study will be a contribution to the few studies that have been conducted on the topic of marital satisfaction in the Pakistani culture. The role of family processes, gender roles and pressure is important in the culture of marriage being thought of and the complex of self silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization helps to see more closely the

interplay between cultural and psychic processes. This knowledge is essential in the development of local relevant programs to strengthen family systems and reduce relationship distress.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the field by filling in gaps in knowledge on these constructs, by examining them simultaneously in a single framework, by using validated measures, and by looking at a South Asian population that has been underrepresented in marital psychology research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the existing studies on mentalization, rejection sensitivity, and self-silencing were considered with a focus on how they impact marital satisfaction. The theoretical foundation for this research and the identification of gaps in the literature was established through a review of previous studies that have investigated these constructions in romantic and marital relationships.

2.1. Self-Silencing and Marital Satisfaction

The term "self-silencing" refers to the inclination to repress negative emotions, such as rage or jealousy, when one perceives that doing so could jeopardize one's relationships or safety (Jack, 1991). Suppressing one's sentiments, ideas, and emotions is a common tactic people use to save relationships and prevent further arguments. Because people are unable to communicate their genuine feelings, self-silencing can cause relationship discontent and unhappy outcomes. Both men and women experience depression due to the underlying issue of self-silencing inside partnerships, according to Jack and Ali (2010). This issue is exacerbated by inequality.

According to Pietromonaco and Overall (2021), women often feel pressured to suppress their emotions and needs in order to maintain or strengthen close relationships. This silence can lead to a decline in self-confidence and, ultimately, a loss of identity. Discouragement, lack of self-confidence, and silence were the results of partners' persistent restriction of one's personal views and opinions (Payne-Steele, 2021). In addition, husbands had more difficulty than wives did in expressing their thoughts and emotional abilities, showing enthusiasm for character, and communicating the feelings that impact a marriage's nature because of their function as intimacy facilitators.

According to Sillars et al. (2021), husbands typically avoided communicating with their wives and instead made demands on them. Sivagurunathan et al. (2019) also noted that men were more likely to use the term silence as compared to women. Both genders had a positive correlation in the scores of depressive symptoms and silence. In addition, the findings indicated that a substantial proportion of the variation in self-silencing was attributed to melancholy symptoms, despite the fact that social desirability did not account for a substantial increase.

According to a study by Medeiros and Rubinstein (2015), male self-silencing augments are usually prejudiced by the necessity to appear unemotional and stringent. To create an impression of credibility and independence, men are motivated to concentrate on minor or insignificant issues, to blatantly set themselves apart, and separate themselves. The research established that couples with self silencing members have lesser chances of communicating with each other resulting into increased discomfort and dissatisfaction among the two partners.

Naeem et al. (2024) studied married people to find out how factors including self-silencing, co-dependency, and mental health interacted. The study used a convenient sampling technique to pick 154 married people, with an equal number of males and women. Three instruments were used to gather data from the subjects: the Spann Fischer Co-Dependency Scale, the Mental Health Continuum Short Form, and the Self-Silencing Scale. John Pearson Product When looking at married people, moment correlation showed that self-silencing was positively correlated with codependency and negatively correlated with mental wellness. The study indicated that co-dependency is a bad indicator of psychological health. Additionally, the relationship between self-silencing and psychological health was discovered to be moderated by co-dependency.

In their study of married couples, Saleem and Fatima (2023) looked at how marital adjustment, communication patterns, and self-silencing relate to one another. Researchers in this study hypothesised a favorable correlation between marital adjustment, communication habits, and self-silencing. One hundred people from Lahore, Pakistan, whose marital status varied from single to very much married, were enlisted for the study. The research tools utilized for collection of data were the Jack (1992) Self-Silencing Scale, Spanier (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and Christesen and Shenk (1991) Communication Patterns Questionnaire. Marital adjustment was negatively correlated with self-silencing, self-demand/partner-withdraw, and partner demand/self-withdraw, according to the findings.

A fundamental human motivation is the desire to be accepted and to avoid rejection. Rejection sensitivity is associated with lower well-being and impaired interpersonal functioning, which supports this claim. Anxieties of all, a person with rejection sensitivity is the type of person who sees and reacts to rejection the way others do. The constant fear of rejection makes intimate relationships extremely difficult (Romero-Canyas et al., 2010). Even though rejection hurts, people who are sensitive to it are more likely to act aggressively or abusively against others, as well as more possessive, controlling, hostile, and unsupportive (Clarkin & De Panfilis, 2018).

2.2. Rejection Sensitivity and Marital Satisfaction

The results of the study by Robillard and Noller (2014) suggest that differences in married men's decoding deficits and biases were related to both their wife-directed abuse and their rejection sensitivity. Marital violence is associated with lower accuracy for positive and neutral messages from a spouse and higher accuracy for negative messages from a partner, according to research that replicates and expands upon prior empathic accuracy studies. And compared to nonviolent husbands, they were more likely to believe that their wives' communications were hostile, critical,

and rejecting. Furthermore, building on earlier studies, we discovered that men who were aggressive in their marriages and very sensitive to partner rejection were even less accurate at reading their wives' positive messages, but better at reading their negative ones. Like other males, men who are very sensitive to rejection from partners in marriage are more likely to interpret their wives' communications negatively and rejectively than other men. These findings support the suggestion in the preface of this volume that an individual might not be always motivated to read the thoughts and feelings of another accurately in the context of violent and violent high rejection-sensitive men, it seems that these men can be interpersonally sensitive in one case but insensitive in a different case, depending upon the kind of message that his wife is sending to him and the connotation that he is getting. This is an interesting proposition that can be subject to further empirical studies.

A research study by Richter et al. (2024) showed that men are more likely to experience rejection during conflictual situations or when their status is at stake. Rejection-sensitive men are more likely to display increased jealousy, controlling behaviors, and aggression in response to rejection.

The study by Mishra et al. (2024) was aimed at analyzing the effects of rejection sensitivity on the outcomes of romantic relationships through the lenses of the actors and the partners. The questionnaire measures were completed by one hundred and twenty participants who comprised of one hundred mixed-sex couples with average age of $36.17 + 11.11$ years. Personal rejection sensitivity, rather than partner rejection sensitivity, was found to predict self-report relationship outcomes for both men and women after controlling for participant age and relationship time. Relationship satisfaction and commitment were shown to be lower in those with higher rejection sensitivity, while jealousy and self-silencing behavior were found to be higher. There was no

correlation between rejection sensitivity and relationship investment. Multiple models of mediation have demonstrated that anxious and avoidant attachment styles moderate the association between rejection sensitivity and relationship outcomes. Analyses of couple similarities in rejection sensitivity show that relationships suffer when both partners score high on the trait.

Richter and Schoebi (2023) found that rejection sensitivity (RS) in women indirectly contributed to men experiencing more feelings of rejection in the relationship. Although RS was not directly linked to personal feelings of rejection, it influenced how men perceived rejection within the relationship through significant partner effects. Women with high RS, due to their constant fear of rejection, tended to display more hostility and withdraw emotional support, leading men to feel less valued and cared for. These negative interactions in the long term built a cycle where the men felt more rejected and this slowly strained the relationship.

De Rubeis et al. (2017) examined how Rejection Sensitivity (RS) is a marker of vulnerability to the worsening of depressive symptoms in men, especially following inpatient depression treatment. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was used to assess the symptoms of depression at admission, end-of-treatment, and six-month follow-up; the sample consisted of 72 male inpatients whose depressive spectrum disorders were measured. Intake RS was tested. The findings reduced the depressive symptoms six months post-therapy, but even with the adjustment of the level of depression at the baseline, RS continued to be a robust predictor of the worsening depressive symptoms. The results indicate that men of high rejection sensitivity are more likely to relapse into depression because they are hypersensitive to rejection, which causes them to experience negative thoughts and feelings, including self-blame, social withdrawal, and aggression, which result in rejection and exacerbation of depressive symptoms.

2.3. Mentalization and Marital Satisfaction

"Mentalization is the ability to recognise and imagine their own internal mental states and those of others. According to DiMaggio (2020), this process is comparable to theory of mind, empathy, and metacognition. Being self-aware and actively engaging in mentalization are both necessary as people negotiate various types of interpersonal connections, since mentalization is not a static component of human thought. One of the most important skills for learning to control one's own emotions and actions is the ability to mentally visualize one's own and other people's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

According to Ware et al. (2016), mentalization limitations are associated with interpersonal conflict, dissatisfaction, and other mental diseases. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) lists pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal connections as a sign of borderline personality disorder (BPD). Other symptoms include inappropriate and severe angry outbursts that cause frequent interpersonal conflict. Nevertheless, the connection between mentalization and happy or successful relationships has received less attention in the scientific literature. By looking at how RF relates to marital happiness, this study fills a need in the literature.

DiMaggio (2020) investigated the role of attachment style, mentalization ability, and emotion regulation in predicting marital satisfaction among 198 married individuals. Using self-report measures the study found that low attachment anxiety and stronger emotion regulation strategies were linked with greater marital satisfaction, while lower mentalization abilities were associated with reduced satisfaction. Regression analysis further showed that passion, emotional support, and perceptions of honesty were key predictors of marital quality. Overall, the study emphasized the importance of psychological and interpersonal processes in shaping marital

satisfaction and highlighted the need to consider both early attachment experiences and present relational dynamics.

Kim and Woo (2025) explored the structural relationships among family of origin health, self-differentiation, mentalization, and marital satisfaction, focusing on indirect effects and gender differences. Data from 400 married Korean adults aged 30-49 were analyzed using structural equation modeling and multigroup analysis. Results revealed that all paths were significant except the direct impact of family-of-origin health on marital satisfaction. Indirect effects analyses confirmed significant individual and sequential indirect effects of self-differentiation and mentalization. Gender differences emerged: mentalization significantly influenced marital satisfaction in men but not in women, while family of origin health directly impacted marital satisfaction in women but not in men.

Akbari et al. (2023) investigate the relationship between behavioral activation/inhibition systems and marital satisfaction with the mediation of mentalization. The research was conducted using a correlation method, and the statistical population comprised married individuals residing in Tehran in 2021. Of these, a sample size of 370 was selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling method and administered a demographic questionnaire, the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, the Behavioral Activation and Inhibition Scale, and the mentalization Questionnaire. The results of the path analysis indicated that the behavioral inhibition system with the mediation of mentalization is effective in marital satisfaction, and the inhibition system has a negative and meaningful relationship with marital satisfaction and mentalization. Conversely, there was direct, positive and significant influence of mentalization on marital satisfaction.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This study relies on the combination of multiple psychological theories which elucidate interpersonal relations and marital satisfaction:

2.4.1. Self-Silencing Theory

Silencing the Self theory (Jack & Dill 1992) explains the mechanism by which individuals suppress their thoughts, inner feelings and needs in order to maintain the intimate relationships at the expense of their psychological well being. This discontent may result in discontent and depression in long-term, especially the intimate relationships. This may lead to imbalanced allocation of power in that one of the spouses would never be reluctant to accommodate the other by constantly silencing oneself. Such dynamism is a source of resentment, depressive symptoms and dissatisfaction with marriage. To the new perceptions, it has been noted that self-silencing behaviors are more common in people who fear rejection or people who have cultural values that focus much on relational conformity. In such a manner self-silencing is significant in knowing how a couple may be stable to the outside world, yet internally they experience emotional dislocation.

2.4.2. Rejection Sensitivity Model

In the Rejection Sensitivity Theory, Downey and Feldman (1996) explain that individuals who are very sensitive to rejection tend to perceive ambiguous or non-threatening social interactions as a rejection. This hypersensitiveness in marriage can lead to withdrawal of emotions, misunderstandings and constant fights. In the long-term, this process results in a communication breakdown and the loss of confidence between the partners. Consequently, marriages with high rejection-sensitivity partners would be more emotional unstable, experience conflict management

issues and lack intimacy hence this model ought to be taken into account as a significant framework in the dissatisfaction of marriages.

2.4.3. Mentalization Theory

Mentalization Theory is a term that has been coined by Fonagy and Bateman (2006) to explain the process of interpreting the thoughts, feelings and intentions of self and others. Mentalization is crucial to maintaining healthy relationships with others because it allows one to be empathetic, control their emotions, and handle conflicts. In marriage, more competent mentalization could be used to make individuals comprehend the behavior and emotional expression of the other in a relationship and enrich their emotional intimacy and limit misunderstanding. Mentalization deficits are also linked to rejection sensitivity and self-silencing behaviors, and it suggests that the theory is connected with others in the determination of marital satisfaction.

2.4.4. Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction

According to the Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction, which was put forward by Li and Fung (2011), people have a multiplicity of goals to be achieved in marriage. These marital objectives could be grouped into three; the goals of personal growth, the goals of companionship and the goals of instrumentality. The priorities of these goals vary through the stages of development, culture and life stressors. One such example is that younger couples would attach more importance to personal growth and companionship and older couples to companionship and instrumental support. Marital satisfaction arises when the objectives of the spouses are agreeable and they feel they are achieving together but whenever there is disagreement, dissatisfaction usually ensues. This theory places an emphasis on the malleability of marital expectations and the significance of the flexibility and goal bargaining in long term relationships.

2.4.5. Research Model and Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature, this study proposes a conceptual model examining the relationship between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization and marital satisfaction.

Primary Hypothesis

H1: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between self-silencing and marital satisfaction.

H2: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and marital satisfaction

H3: There will be a statistically significant positive correlation between high mentalization ability (as evaluated by RFQ_C) and marital satisfaction

H4: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between low mentalization ability (as evaluated by RFQ_U) and marital satisfaction.

2.5. Gap in Literature

Based on the above literature, it can be said that self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization play a significant role in the adjustment that married couples take when a conflict occurs between them. The rate of divorce in the present societies has created interest in the maintenance, enhanced intimacy and marital adjustment among couples because marital maladjustments are the outcomes of dissatisfaction. This area of interest has been long the subject of research in the West and Western countries. Nevertheless, the subject has not been thoroughly researched in Pakistan and there is a significant need to conduct studies on different variables within the scope of marital adjustment. The objective of the present study was to

identify the degree of marital satisfaction in terms of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization in Pakistani society. This research is an attempt to identify the impact of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization on the marital adjustment of married people.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Strategy

For this study, quantitative research design was used to examine the relationships between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction in married individuals. The research employs a survey method, as it is well-suited for collecting large-scale quantitative data within a specific timeframe. The survey method enables the measurement of psychological constructs using validated scales and ensures data reliability and validity.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population consists of married individuals in Pakistan. A non-probability convenience sampling technique is used to recruit participants from various online and physical platforms. The sample size consists of 300 participants recruited from community centers and workplaces.

Inclusion Criteria

- Married Individuals residing in Pakistan.
- Individuals aged 20 years and above
- Participants who have been married for at least 2 year
- The education of the participants is at least 12 years.

Exclusion Criteria

- Unmarried individuals or those who are divorced/widowed.

- Individuals below the age of 20 years.
- Those married for less than 2 years.
- Individuals whose education is below 12 years.

3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through self-report questionnaires, administered both online and in physical settings to maximize reach and participant diversity. Standardized instruments adapted from validated psychological scales were used to measure self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction. The online survey was distributed via social media platforms and relevant forums, while physical data collection occurred in community centers and workplaces where married individuals can be approached.

The following validated measures was used for data collection:

Silencing the Self Scale (STSS; Jack & Dill, 1992)- An individual's level of self-silencing in their interpersonal connections may be assessed using the self-report measure known as the Self-Silencing Scale, which was created by Jack (1992). Higher scores indicate a stronger inclination towards self-silencing; the 31 items that make up the STSS are scored on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. STSS has shown high level of reliability and validity in the various cultural backgrounds and is quite often used in studies investigating marital satisfaction, relationship processes and mental health consequences. Internal consistency of the STSS was also acceptable ($\alpha = .747$) in the current study, which validates its applicability in measuring self-silencing behaviors in the given sample of married people.

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ; Berenson et al., 2009)- The rejection sensitivity was determined using The 9-item RS-Adult questionnaire (A-RSQ). In an attempt to

assess RS in adults, researchers came up with adaption of the RSQ known as A-RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Every item is a hypothetical social situation and has two subitems: the first is the degree of anxiety or concern of the possible rejection by the person, and the other is the perceived probability of acceptance. Responses are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, and scores are computed by multiplying concern with the reverse of acceptance ratings. Higher scores indicate greater rejection sensitivity. Good reliability was indicated in the scale ($\alpha = .727$), which contributes to using the scale in measuring rejection sensitivity within the marital context.

Mentalization Scale (RFQ-Fonagy et al., 2016)- The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ) is a self-report instrument that was created to measure the level of mentalization or reflective functioning in an individual (Fonagy et al., 2016). The RFQ includes eight questions, and each question consists of seven points on the Likert scale, starting with 1 (strongly disagree) and ending with 7 (strongly agree). The RFQ consists of two discrete loading scales, RFQ certainty (RFQ C) and RFQ uncertainty (RFQ U) relative to mental states. Two items are specific to each scale, while four items are shared by the RFQ_C and RFQ_U, making a total of six items. Scores that demonstrate high levels of adaptive mentalization ability, including enhanced empathy, mindfulness, and perspective taking, are reflected in the coding of the RFQ_C questions. On the other hand, mentalization impairment, or "hypomentalization" as it is called by Fonagy and colleagues (2016), is indicated by high RFQ_U scores. There is a positive correlation between the RFQ_U and other measures that evaluate impaired mentalization abilities; these impairments are associated with anxiety, depression, impulsivity, and specific personality disorders (Fonagy et al., 2016). Both subscales revealed satisfactory levels of internal consistency in the present research (RFQ-C: $\alpha = .607$; RFQ-U: $\alpha = .689$).

Marital Satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007)- The Couple Satisfaction Index was used to gauge marital satisfaction (CSI). The CSI is a self-report instrument that measures the level of satisfaction in a romantic relationship. It consists of 32 items. Respondents on the CSI can choose from six possible Likert scales: 0 for Very Unhappy, 1 for Always Disagree, 2 for Never, and 3 for Not at All True. Low scores indicate less satisfaction with one's relationships, whereas high scores indicate more contentment (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI ranges from 0 to 160. By combining item response theory with principal component analysis, Funk and Rogge (2007) created the CSI. With a strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .775$), the CSI proved to be a reliable indicator of marital happiness in this particular study's sample.

3.3.1 Operational Definitions of Measures

3.3.1.1. Self-silencing

Goldblatt and Ronningstam (2023) define self-silencing as a form of nonverbal communication that is either autonomic or culturally syntonetic. It is employed to maintain a relationship with a significant other by renouncing self-interest and ensuring independence and safety within the interpersonal framework.

3.3.1.2. Rejection Sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity is characterised by an excessive sense of anxiety, readiness to perceive, and rejection in response to waiting. It is a trait that makes a person expect, perceive, and react intensely to real or perceived rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

3.3.1.3. Mentalization

The ability to mentally represent one's own and other people's actions in relation to their stated and unstated purposes, as well as their feelings, wants, beliefs, objectives, and requirements, is known as mentalisation (Fonagy et al., 2018).

3.3.1.4. Marital Satisfaction

An individual's perspective regarding their marriage relationship is referred to as marital satisfaction. A husband and wife experience a genuine sense of delight, satisfaction, and pleasure when they contemplate all aspects of their marriage (Taghani et al., 2019).

3.5 Procedure

The research process began with a pilot study to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaires on a small subset of the population. Adjustments were made based on feedback. The main study follows, involving recruitment of participants, obtaining informed consent, and distributing surveys. For physical data collection in workplaces and community centers, prior permission was obtained from the respective authorities before approaching their members for participation. Once organizational or community-level approval is granted, individuals within these settings were invited to participate. Each participant was provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, ensuring they fully understand the nature of their involvement. Individual informed consent was then obtained before they proceed with completing the questionnaire. The survey was conducted either in person or online, according to the participant's preference. To ensure confidentiality, the data was anonymized and all responses stored securely for analysis.

3.6. Data Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyze the collected data to ensure accurate statistical interpretation. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the data analysis.

3.6.1. Descriptive Statistics

The demographic characteristics of participants were summarized using descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to summarize the demographic characteristics of participants. All key variables were summarized using mean, standard deviation and frequency distributions (percentages) to create an overall profile of the dataset. To assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring that each scale demonstrated acceptable reliability before proceeding with further analyses.

3.6.2. Inferential Statistics

To test the study hypotheses and examine relationships between variables, the following statistical analyses was conducted:

Correlation Analysis was used to assess the relationships between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization and marital satisfaction. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) determined the direction and strength of associations.

Regression Analysis was performed to identify significant predictors of marital satisfaction, examining the extent to which self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization contribute to variations in satisfaction levels.

Independent sample t-tests were performed to assess gender differences in self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction.

A one-way ANOVA was used to evaluate whether marital satisfaction differed across groups based on marital duration. In case of necessity, the specific group differences were investigated using post-hoc tests.

3.7 Research Ethics

Informed consent was obtained by all the participants and their answers were maintained in confidence and participants were given the opportunity to withdraw freely. Institutional review boards were followed so as to conduct the study and ensure that no harm is caused to the participants or they do not suffer any psychological distress. Data were kept in a safe way and the results were reported in a transparent and honest manner without fabrication or manipulation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The findings of the study thus conducted to test the relationships between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization and marital satisfaction among married individuals are reported in this chapter. The analysis objectives will be to test the hypotheses through the applicable statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression.

Descriptive statistics is used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and following this the psychometric properties of the measurement tools are determined. Correlation tests are employed to obtain relationships between the study variables and multiple regression is employed to obtain predictive roles of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization on marital satisfaction. The findings are given in accordance with the objectives and hypotheses of the study and all the relevant findings are given with tables attached in an attempt to make them understandable.

4.1 Descriptive and Demographic Analysis

In this section, the demographic information of the participants was presented, including their age, gender, education, socioeconomic background, family structure, and marital history. These descriptive statistics provide an overall picture of the sample and help establish the context for understanding the results reported in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Table 4.1: *Frequencies and Percentages of demographic characteristics of the Participants**(N=217)*

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Age		
20-25	32	14.7
26-30	61	28.1
31-35	49	22.6
36-40	44	2.3
Above 40	31	14.3
Gender		
Male	98	41
Female	119	50
Religion		
Islam	217	91
Area of Residence		
Village	81	34
City	136	57
Education		
Intermediate	46	19.3
Bachelor's Degree	69	29
Master's Degree	61	25.6
PhD	38	16

Employment Status		
Employed full-time	70	29.0
Employed part-time	30	12.6
Unemployed	45	18.9
Retired	39	16.4
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower class	39	16.4
Lower-Middle class	49	20.6
Middle class	62	26.1
Upper-middle class	48	20.2
Upper class	19	8.0
Household Information		
Type of House		
Own	107	45
Rented	68	28.6
Other	42	17.6
Number of Family Members living in same house		
1-5	35	14.7
6-10	67	28.2
11-15	63	26.5
Above 15	52	21.8
Number of Earning Members in Family		
1	66	27.7

2	69	29
3	52	21.8
More than 3	30	12.6
Approximately Monthly Income		
Below 50000	47	19.7
500000-100000	84	35.3
1500000-200000	27	11.3
2500000-300000	30	12.6
3500000-400000	22	9.2
Above 400000	7	2.9
Current Marital Status		
Married	200	85
Remarried	17	15.4
Marriage Type		
Love Marriage	134	56.3
Arrange Marriage		
Was Marriage within family or outside the family?		
Within the family	100	42.9
Outside the family	117	49.2
Duration of Current Marriage in years		
2-4	110	46.2
5-7	26	10.9
8-10	39	16.4

More than 10	42	17.6
Age at the time of Marriage		
Below 20	22	9.2
20-25	76	31.9
26-30	62	26.1
31-35	40	16.8
Above 35	17	7.1
Duration of relationship before marriage		
1-5 months	73	30.7
6 months -1 year	70	29.4
2-3	40	16.8
More than 3 year	21	8.8
Age gap between you and your partner		
No age gap	8	3.4
Below 1 year	10	4.2
1-2	56	23.5
3-4	71	29.8
More than 4 years	73	30.7
Number of Children		
1	44	18.5
2	47	19.7
3	35	14.7
4	31	13.0

More than 5	60	25.2
Family System		
Nuclear Family	88	37.0
Joint Family	110	46.2
Other	18	7.6
Living Arrangement with Spouse		
Living together in same house	138	58.0
Living separately due to work and study	79	33.2
Have you experienced conflict separation during that time-period		
Yes	87	36.6
No	130	54.6
Have you ever received treatment for psychological illness		
Yes	74	31.1
No	142	59.7
Do you or your spouse have a history of trauma?		
Yes	56	23.5
No	108	45.4
Prefer no to say	53	22.3

Note: f=Frequency and %=Percentage

Table 4.1 shows the demographic distribution of the sample. A total of 217 married individuals participated, with 41% males (n = 98) and 59% females (n = 119). The majority of participants were Muslims (91%). Most participants resided in cities (57%), while 34% lived in

villages. In terms of education, 29% held a bachelor's degree, 25.6% a master's, and 19.3% had completed intermediate education. Employment status varied: 29% were employed full-time, 12.6% part-time, while 18.9% were unemployed. Regarding socioeconomic status, 26.1% identified as middle class, while 20.6% reported lower-middle-class status. Most participants lived in their own homes (45%), and 28.6% in rented houses. Household size showed diversity: 28.2% lived with 6–10 family members, and 21.8% with more than 15 members.

Marriage-related information revealed that 85% were currently married, while 15% were remarried. Love marriages accounted for 34.9%, while 56.3% were arranged. Nearly half of the marriages (42.9%) were within the family. Concerning marital duration, 46.2% had been married for 2–4 years, while 17.6% had been married for more than 10 years. The most common age at marriage was between 20–25 years (31.9%). With regard to family systems, 46.2% lived in joint families, and 37% in nuclear families. More than half (58%) reported living together with their spouse in the same house, while 33.2% lived separately due to work or study. About 36.6% had experienced conflict separation at some point. Finally, 31.1% had received treatment for psychological illness, and 23.5% reported a personal or spousal history of trauma.

4.2: Reliability and Validity Analysis

This section presents the reliability and validity of the instruments used in the study to measure self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha values, while normality indices were examined to ensure suitability for further statistical analyses.

Table 4.2: *Psychometric Properties for Normality Distribution for Scales (N=217)*

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>		α	<i>Skewness</i>
				<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>		
STSS	31	98.12	14.16	64	127	.74	-.11
ARSQ	9	72.85	30.86	44	180	.72	0.2
RFQ-C	6	4.39	3.51	0	13	.60	0.1
RFQ-U	6	3.39	3.41	0	12	.68	.28
CSI	32	85.76	18.4	44	140	.72	-0.0

Note: STSS = Silencing the Self Scale, ARSQ = Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, RFQ-C = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Certainty, RFQ-U = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Uncertainty, CSI = Couple Satisfaction, k = No. of items of scale, α =Reliability coefficient, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

This table presents the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and normality indices for the study variables. All scales demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α ranging from .60 to .77). The Couple Satisfaction Index ($\alpha = .72$) and Silencing the Self Scale ($\alpha = .74$) showed good internal consistency. The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire ($\alpha = .72$) also showed adequate reliability. Both certainty (RFQ-C, $\alpha = .60$) and uncertainty (RFQ-U, $\alpha = .68$) dimensions of mentalization were acceptable given the small number of items. The skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable ranges, indicating normal distribution of data. The mean score for marital satisfaction ($M = 85.76$, $SD = 18.40$) suggested moderate satisfaction levels in the sample.

4.3: Testing the Main Hypothesis

This section describes the correlation and regression analysis between independent and dependent variables.

H1: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between self-silencing and marital satisfaction.

H2: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and marital satisfaction

H3: There will be a statistically significant positive correlation between high mentalization ability (as evaluated by RFQ_C) and marital satisfaction

H4: There will be a statistically significant negative correlation between low mentalization ability (as evaluated by RFQ_U) and marital satisfaction.

4.3.1. Correlation Analysis

The correlational analysis examined the strength and direction of relationships among self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction.

Table 4.3: *Correlation among Self-Silencing, Rejection Sensitivity, Mentalization and Marital Satisfaction in Married Individuals (N=217)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. STSS	95.2	11.09	—	.02	-.14*	.03	-.14*
2. ARSQ	105.55	24.72		—	-.04	.09	-.23**
3. RFQ-C	4.44	2.99			—	-.26**	.12
4. RFQ-U	4.49	3.04				—	-.22**
5. CSI	85.76	18.40					—

Note: STSS = Silencing the Self Scale, ARSQ = Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, RFQ-C = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Certainty, RFQ-U = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Uncertainty, CSI = Couple Satisfaction Index (Marital Satisfaction), M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$.

Table 4.3 reports the Pearson correlations between the variables. Self-silencing (STSS) showed a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction ($r = -.14, p < .05$), indicating that higher self-silencing was associated with lower marital satisfaction. Similarly, rejection sensitivity (ARSQ) was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = -.236, p < .01$).

A statistically significant link was found when the relationship between low mentalisation (as assessed by the RFQ_U subscale) and CSI scores was examined in the correlation analysis. A substantial negative association ($r = -.22, p < .01$) was seen between the RFQ_U subscale and CSI scores. The RFQ_C subscale did not show a statistically significant association with CSI scores ($r = .12, p > .05$), hence the correlation analysis did not yield a statistically meaningful result.

4.3.2. Regression Analysis

The regression analysis assessed the predictive influence of self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization (certainty and uncertainty) on couple satisfaction, using a multiple regression approach to evaluate the contribution of each variable within the model.

Table 4.4: *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Couple Satisfaction (N = 217)*

Predictors	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F
		LL	UL					
Constant						.16	.14	10.26
STSS	-0.27*	-0.48	-0.06	0.11	-.16			
ARSQ	-0.16**	-0.26	-0.07	0.05	-.22			
RFQ_C	1.40	-2.20	-0.60	0.41	-.23			
RFQ_U	-1.58**	-2.36	-0.80	0.40	-.26			

Note: STSS = Silencing the Self Scale, ARSQ = Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, RFQ-C = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Certainty, RFQ-U = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Uncertainty, CSI = Couple Satisfaction Index (Marital Satisfaction) B = unstandardized regression coefficient; LL= lower limit; UL = upper limit; β = standardized regression coefficient; R² = coefficient of determination (variance explained); $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

Table 4.4 reports the regression results examining predictors of marital satisfaction. The model was statistically significant in predicting marital satisfaction scores (Couple Satisfaction Index, CSI). The overall model explained 16.2% of the variance in CSI ($R^2 = .16$, $F(4,212) = 4.21$, $p < .001$), indicating that the predictors collectively contributed to differences in marital satisfaction within the sample. However, the strength of influence varied across the independent variables.

Self-silencing was a significant negative predictor of CSI ($B = -0.27$, $\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$), showing that participants with higher self-silencing tendencies reported lower marital satisfaction. Similarly, rejection sensitivity significantly predicted reduced satisfaction ($B = -0.16$, $\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals who anxiously expected rejection from their partners tended to rate their marriages less favorably. These findings highlight the role of relational vulnerabilities in diminishing satisfaction.

The two dimensions of mentalization showed opposing effects. Certainty about mental states (RFQ-C) appeared as a positive predictor in the regression model ($B = 1.40$, $\beta = .23$) but not significant and uncertainty about mental states was a significant negative predictor ($B = -1.58$, $\beta = -.26$, $p < .01$), showing that individuals with greater confusion or doubt about emotions experienced lower satisfaction in their marriages.

4.4. Testing the Secondary Hypothesis

This section presents the results of independent samples t-tests across gender, and one-way ANOVA across marital duration for self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction.

H5: There will be a significant gender difference in self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction.

4.4.1. Independent Sample t-Test Analysis

The independent samples t-test compared male and female participants across key study variables, examining gender differences in self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction.

4.4.2. One-Way Anova Analysis

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether marital duration groups differed significantly in self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and couple satisfaction. This test was chosen because it allows comparison of mean scores across more than two independent groups, helping identify whether these psychological variables vary meaningfully across different stages of marriage.

Table 4.5: *One-Way ANOVA Results Based on Relationship Duration (N=217)*

Measure	2-4 Years		5-7 years		8-10		10 year		F(3, 251)	p	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
STSS	96.66	13.10	95.08	6.15	92.46	8.63	93.60	9.21	1.74	.16	.02
ARSQ	101.1	21.40	115.0	27.0	107.3	24.10	109.4	29.88	2.93	.03*	.04
	8		8		1		8				
RFQ-C	3.96	3.12	4.31	2.19	5.56	3.18	4.71	2.69	2.98	.03*	.04
RFQ-U	3.85	3.18	5.54	2.83	4.51	2.79	5.48	2.62	4.31	.00**	.06
CSI	91.68	22.08	78.77	12.72	81.77	10.41	78.29	9.54	8.84	.00***	.11

*Note: STSS = Silencing the Self Scale, ARSQ = Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, RFQ-C = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Certainty, RFQ-U = Reflective Functioning Questionnaire of Uncertainty, CSI = Couple Satisfaction Index (Marital Satisfaction) F = One-way ANOVA statistic; η^2 = effect size (eta squared)
p < .05*, p < .01**.*

Table 4.6 presents the one-way ANOVA results examining differences in self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction across four marital duration groups (2–4 years, 5–7 years, 8–10 years, and more than 10 years). Results

revealed significant differences in rejection sensitivity ($F = 2.93, p < .05$), mentalization certainty ($F = 2.98, p < .05$), mentalization uncertainty ($F = 4.31, p < .01$), and marital satisfaction ($F = 8.84, p < .001$). No significant differences were observed for self-silencing.

Participants married for 2–4 years reported the highest marital satisfaction ($M = 91.68$), whereas those married for more than 10 years reported the lowest ($M = 78.29$), suggesting a decline in satisfaction as marriage length increases. Rejection sensitivity was highest among those married for 5–7 years ($M = 115.08$), indicating heightened relational sensitivity during this stage.

For mentalization, certainty scores were highest among participants married for 8–10 years ($M = 5.56$), while uncertainty was highest among those married for 5–7 years ($M = 5.54$). These findings suggest that marital duration influences both cognitive-emotional understanding and satisfaction, with earlier years marked by greater satisfaction but mid-duration marriages showing heightened rejection sensitivity and uncertainty in mentalization.

Summary of Findings

- The study examined associations between self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization (certainty and uncertainty), and marital satisfaction among 217 married individuals in Pakistan. The sample included both males and females, mostly middle-aged adults, representing diverse educational, socioeconomic, and family backgrounds.
- Psychometric evaluation confirmed that all instruments demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and normality. The reliability coefficients were moderate to good, with the highest consistency being in the Couple Satisfaction Index and Self-Silencing Scale.
- Correlation analysis indicated that self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization uncertainty were significantly negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, and mentalization certainty was positively but not significantly correlated. These findings

demonstrate the negative effect of silencing behaviors and emotional uncertainty on marital outcomes.

- The multiple regression analysis has shown that self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization uncertainty were significant predictors of lower marital satisfaction. Mentalization certainty was a positive predictor, but not statistically significant. Collectively, the regression model explained 16.2 percent of the variance in marital satisfaction, which highlights the overall effect of these psychological variables.
- One-way ANOVA based on marital duration indicated significant differences among the groups. The marital satisfaction was greatest at the 2-4 years of marriage and lowest at the 10 years and above of marriage, meaning that it decreases gradually. Rejection sensitivity and mentalization uncertainty were greatest in the 5-7 year group, whereas mentalization certainty was greatest in the 8-10 year group, indicating changing psychological dynamics across marital stages.
- In general, the results indicate that greater self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization uncertainty are the primary psychological processes that lead to less marital satisfaction, whereas marital duration further influences the ways in which these processes occur over the lifetime of a relationship.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter critically interprets the results presented in Chapter 4, discussing each of the research objectives and hypotheses. The statistical findings are combined with the pertinent theoretical considerations and are discussed in the context of past empirical research, highlighting the areas of correlation as well as areas of disagreement. In so doing, the discussion critically reviews the findings whilst considering methodological issues that could have contributed to the findings. The chapter is concluded by drawing the major strengths and limitations of the study and presenting its theoretical and practical implications as well as proposing the directions of further studies.

The results of the current study confirmed the first hypothesis, as there was a significant and negative relationship between self-silencing and marital satisfaction. In particular, the stronger the self-silencing tendencies, the lower the scores on the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), which proves that the individuals who suppress their self-expression in the marital setting are more likely to report poor relationship quality. This result is directly in line with the first objective of the study that sought to explore the influence of intrapersonal processes, namely self-silencing, on the quality of marital relationships within the South Asian cultural context. The finding supports theoretical propositions that self-silencing undermines relational authenticity, emotional expression, and responsiveness to each other- all of which are necessary to marital satisfaction.

The idea of self-silencing, first postulated by Jack (1991) in her theory of the Silencing the Self schema, highlights how individuals, mostly women but increasingly men, suppress their needs, feelings and perspectives to preserve harmony in the relationship. According to Jack and Dill (1992), this form of relational regulation may prevent open conflict in the short term but erodes

intimacy, trust, and satisfaction in the long term. Consistent with this framework, the present findings show that individuals who habitually silence themselves within their marriages are less likely to experience satisfaction. The result is theoretically significant because it extends the silencing framework beyond its historical emphasis on women, demonstrating that in Pakistan, both married men and women may adopt self-silencing patterns, leading to diminished marital satisfaction.

Recent empirical evidence supports this interpretation. For instance, Traeen et al. (2023) found that self-silencing predicted lower relational satisfaction among German couples, particularly when one partner consistently avoided expressing anger or disappointment. Similarly, Carrillo (2022) reported that couples with high levels of self-silencing showed greater relational stress and lower marital quality, especially when silencing was motivated by fear of conflict. More recently, Kaya and Kaya(2023) found that relational self-silencing was a strong predictor of dissatisfaction across both Western and Eastern European samples, underscoring the universality of the phenomenon. These studies, in conjunction with the present results, reinforce the robustness of the negative association between self-silencing and marital satisfaction.

The second hypothesis of this study proposed that higher levels of rejection sensitivity would be associated with lower marital satisfaction among married individuals. The results confirmed this hypothesis: rejection sensitivity, as measured by the Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (ARSQ), was significantly and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Furthermore, regression analysis revealed rejection sensitivity as a significant negative predictor of satisfaction, even when controlling for self-silencing and mentalization. This finding directly advances the second objective of the study, which aimed to explore how interpersonal vulnerabilities specifically, rejection sensitivity affect the quality of marital relationships.

Rejection sensitivity (RS) refers to the cognitive-affective disposition to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to interpersonal rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Individuals high in rejection sensitivity are hypervigilant to cues of disapproval, often interpret ambiguous partner behaviors as rejection, and react with hostility or withdrawal. Over time, these maladaptive cycles erode intimacy and increase relational dissatisfaction (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998). The present findings corroborate these theoretical propositions, showing that Pakistani individuals with higher rejection sensitivity reported significantly lower marital satisfaction.

This result resonates with prior research. Romero-Canyas and Downey (2013) showed that rejection-sensitive individuals often silence themselves in relationships to prevent anticipated rejection, which paradoxically leads to emotional distance and dissatisfaction. In a longitudinal study, Rudert et al. (2019) demonstrated that rejection sensitivity predicted lower relationship quality over time by fueling negative attributions about partner behavior and escalating conflicts. Similarly, Richter et al. (2025) found that rejection sensitivity was linked to greater emotional reactivity during marital disagreements, leading to poorer relational outcomes. The convergence of these findings with the current study underscores the robustness of the negative association between rejection sensitivity and marital satisfaction.

The third hypothesis of the study proposed that higher levels of mentalization certainty (as measured by the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire—Certainty, RFQ-C) would be positively associated with marital satisfaction. The findings of the present study did not provide support for this hypothesis. Specifically, the correlation between mentalization certainty and marital satisfaction was positive but not statistically significant. In the regression analysis, mentalization certainty emerged as a positive predictor of marital satisfaction ($B = 1.40$, $\beta = .23$), but this effect

did not reach significance. Mentalization, defined as the ability to understand one's own and others' mental states (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002), is widely regarded as a critical determinant of interpersonal functioning. Certainty in mentalization refers to confidence in interpreting emotions, intentions, and beliefs in oneself and others. According to Luyten et al. (2020), individuals with high levels of mentalization certainty are better equipped to regulate conflict, show empathy, and sustain intimacy, all of which should theoretically enhance marital satisfaction. Thus, the non-significant relationship observed in the present study may reflect contextual or cultural factors that moderate the expression of mentalization in marital settings.

One possible explanation is that in collectivist and patriarchal cultures such as Pakistan, where gender roles and emotional expression are socially constrained, mentalization certainty may not translate directly into higher marital satisfaction. Even if an individual is confident in reading their partner's mental states, structural barriers such as power imbalances, extended family pressures, and limited avenues for open communication may prevent this ability from improving relational outcomes (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). In such contexts, relational quality may be determined less by individual cognitive-emotional capacities and more by external sociocultural dynamics. The non-significant result also resonates with recent debates in the literature. While some studies show strong associations between mentalization and relationship quality, others suggest that the relationship may be conditional. For instance, According to Shaffer et al. (2021), reflective functioning was a predictor of marital satisfaction in the cases where both partners were equally involved in mentalizing. These results indicate that the impact of mentalization on marital satisfaction is conditional on the reciprocity in the relationship and the interpersonal context, which could be the reason of the reduced association in this study.

The fourth hypothesis was that low mentalization ability as measured by higher uncertainty scores on the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ-U) would be significantly and negatively related to marital satisfaction. The findings of the present research confirmed this hypothesis. Specifically, the uncertainty about own and others mental states were found to be a potent negative predictor of marital satisfaction in the correlation and the regression model. This aligns with the fourth aim of the research which was to determine how issues in the mentalization process impact the quality of relationships in the Pakistani marriage. These findings reinforce the hypothesis that more mentally uncertain people, meaning people who have a poor understanding and interpretation of inner life, are less content with their marriage relations.

This result is theoretically consistent with the conceptualization of mentalization proposed by Fonagy and colleagues (2002) since the ability to attribute mental states to self and others. Mentalization uncertainty is an unconfident or maladaptive capacity to sense emotions, intentions, and desires and can be displayed by the lack of understanding, miscommunication, and augmented conflict in relationships (Bateman and Fonagy, 2019). In a situation in which the partners cannot comprehend or trust their feelings and their spouses feelings, it becomes difficult to develop intimacy, conflict effectively and feel a sense of trust. This undermines happiness in the matrimonial context as it brings about insecurity in the marriage, coldness and miscommunication. The current work extends this model by demonstrating that in South Asian marriages, mentalization uncertainty is a good predictor of relationship quality impairment.

Such findings are supported with empirical evidence of the study that has been made recently. Taubner et al. (2016) demonstrated that low reflective functioning was related to poorer intimacy and satisfaction in romantic relationships, particularly when the partners were feeling stressors. DiMaggio (2020) also reported the same, stating reflective functioning plays a critical

role in a working dyadic coping process and that the greater the mentalization ability of a couple, the more likely it would cope with stress empathically and understandingly, resulting in greater satisfaction. The similarity of these findings means that the ambiguity of mentalization is a predictive lowering of the relational well being under different cultural circumstances.

The one-way ANOVA results showed that the marital length played a substantial role in defining psychological mechanisms and relationships. Overall, marital satisfaction in the first years of marriage was greater as compared to the later years, a finding that can be attributed to the fact that, other longitudinal studies have already established that the cumulative stressors and unfulfilled expectations decrease marital satisfaction over time in long-term marriages (Karney and Bradbury, 2020). The marriages of the middle-duration seemed to be characterized by more relational difficulties, e.g., increased rejection sensitivity and more uncertainty about the mental state of oneself and the partner, which might be due to the transitional stressors of child-rearing, economic demands, and negotiating family roles (Jackson et al. 2017). Nevertheless, reflective functioning appeared to increase with experience, with couples gaining greater empathy and dyadic coping, in accordance with evidence that high mentalization abilities lead to relational stability. These results indicate that dynamic processes of marital life progress over time and initial enthusiasm fades into stress at the middle of marriage and finally, adaptation, but long-term partnership can still be a challenge that disrupts happiness.

5.1. Implications of the Study

The current research also contributes to several theoretical, practical, and policy level through the research on self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, mentalization, and marital satisfaction among married people in the Pakistani context.

In terms of theory, the results can be considered to be an extension of the extant relational theories, in that intrapersonal vulnerabilities, including self-silencing and rejection sensitivity, have negative impacts on marital satisfaction, and reflective functioning especially the certainty and uncertainty dimension is a protective or risk-enhancing factor. A large part of the previous research on self-silencing (Jack and Dill, 1992; Romero-Canyas and Downey, 2013) has focused on female groups, and the effect is viewed as a genderized reaction to a patriarchal system. The existing findings, however, suggest that self-silencing is practiced by both men and women in Pakistan and the tendency can greatly predict reduced marital satisfaction. This expands the silencing theory due to the fact that scripts that restrict expression of emotions are not at all exclusive to women but are internalized by men as well, especially in cultures that are patriarchal and where expressing emotions is discouraged in both sexes. Also,, there is strong predictive value of rejection sensitivity that also agrees the theory of rejection-vulnerable individuals which is proposed by Downey and Feldman (1996) whereby the individuals perceive partner actions in a negative and distorted manner that thwarts intimacy. Another important fact to note about the paper is that the cultural and relational conditions of South Asia which only add to the horror of rejection and disapproval further contribute to the executions of these processes also, as recorded in the paper.

There are also the theories of mentalization that can be said to contribute towards the fact that higher levels of satisfaction were found to accompany certainty as to the cognition of the mental state of self and other than the uncertainty as to marital quality. These results support the reflective functioning model (Fonagy et al., 2017) that the aptitude to generate mental states sufficiently is a forerunner of the conservation of the relational well-being. In other words, marital satisfaction, in theory, is not merely a consequence of the attachment or external behavior but a

consequence of metacognitive processes, which are controlled by emotion and inter-personal cognition. The combination of these constructs could be employed to emphasize the significance of the combination of theories of self-regulation, social cognition and cultural psychology in the study of marital satisfaction as it is in the study.

The implications of the research on relationship counseling and mental health intervention are a number of implications. These patterns of negative relations of self-silencing and rejection sensitivity to marital satisfaction are always assuming the possibility of the therapeutic methods that promote open expression of emotions, assertiveness and more constructive patterns of communication. Incidentally, the partners could be helped by cognitive-behavioral interventions of couple therapy (restructuring maladaptive beliefs concerning conflict and rejection, and establishing adaptive self-disclosure practice) which are likely to help the couple effectively deal with conflicts (Christensen et al., 2020). The outcomes also show that the aspect of reflective functioning and mentalization-based strategies training (Bateman and Fonagy, 2019) is a potential enhancement of the skill to find an understanding of the feelings of the other partner, thereby eradicating misunderstandings, which are the roots of disappointment. Considering the Pakistani cultural scenario, where collectivistic values may tend to lean toward family harmony at the cost of an individual, counselors may be forced to modify interventions that would not only honor the cultural values but would also promote the presence and authenticity of individuals in marriage. Practical programs might also be created in premarital and marital education to provide couples with skills to overcome self-silencing tendencies, to respond to rejection sensitively and to develop reflective capacities.

On the policy level, the research can offer concepts that can be useful in the context of marital and family welfare programs. The dissatisfaction of the marriage is commonly associated

with the growth of family conflict, separation, and negative effects in children (Amato, 2014). The results indicate that preventive programs that address family communication obstacles and emotional regulation may reinforce family functioning. Psychoeducational modules about self-silencing, rejection sensitivity and mentalization may be incorporated by policy makers and non-governmental organizations in the establishment of community-based interventions in the field of family welfare. Also, workplace well-being programs might be extended to marital and family well-being, especially in urban Pakistan, where changing social roles and economic pressures increase relational pressure. Relational distress may be further reduced by the use of policies that encourage people to seek couple therapy and lessen the stigma of seeking psychological help. As the power of patriarchal rules is high, educational efforts questioning the adverse gendered attitudes to the expression of emotions could also decrease the self-silencing behaviors and its adverse outcomes on marriage.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization were significantly associated with marital satisfaction, it is not possible to determine the directionality of these relationships. Longitudinal designs would be better suited to track changes in these constructs over time and establish causal pathways. Second, the reliance on self-report questionnaires introduces the possibility of response biases such as social desirability and self-presentation effects. In collectivist cultures like Pakistan, participants may underreport vulnerabilities such as rejection sensitivity or self-silencing, perceiving them as socially undesirable. Third, the sampling strategy was restricted to married individuals willing to participate in online or offline surveys, which may not fully capture the

diversity of marital experiences across socioeconomic, rural, and marginalized groups. Probability sampling methods would enhance representativeness.

5.3. Future Research Directions

Future research should address these limitations in several ways. First, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how self-silencing, rejection sensitivity, and mentalization interact with marital satisfaction over time. Such designs would clarify whether these factors are antecedents or consequences of marital distress, or whether reciprocal cycles exist.

Second, future research could adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews or observational data to capture the nuanced dynamics of self-silencing and mentalization in everyday marital interactions. This would enrich understanding of how these processes unfold in real relational contexts, beyond standardized survey responses.

Third, expanding the diversity of samples is crucial. Including rural, low-income, and minority groups would ensure that findings reflect the heterogeneity of marital experiences in Pakistan. Comparative studies across cultural contexts would also clarify whether the observed associations are universal or culture-specific.

Fourth, there is scope to explore the moderating and mediating mechanisms underlying the observed relationships. For instance, does emotional regulation mediate the link between rejection sensitivity and marital satisfaction? Does cultural orientation moderate the effects of self-silencing? Advanced statistical methods such as structural equation modeling could be employed to test these pathways.

Fifth, future studies could investigate gender-specific trajectories, particularly whether self-silencing and rejection sensitivity affect men and women differently in patriarchal societies. Additionally, research could explore whether interventions designed to improve mentalization

(e.g., mentalization-based therapy) directly enhance marital satisfaction in experimental or clinical settings.

5.4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the present study, several intrapersonal and interpersonal variables were found to have significant relationships with marital satisfaction. The findings provide further evidence for the negative impact of self-silencing and rejection sensitivity on marital satisfaction in adulthood. Specifically, individuals who suppress their thoughts and feelings or who are highly sensitive to rejection tend to report lower satisfaction in their marital relationships. Additionally, the study highlights the role of mentalization, showing that uncertainty in understanding one's own and others' mental states is associated with diminished marital satisfaction, whereas certainty in mentalization showed a positive, albeit non-significant, relationship. Such findings are consistent with the theoretical propositions to the effect that emotional expression, relational authenticity and cognitive-emotional understanding are important in maintaining marital quality. It is also argued during the discussion that the larger affiliation and cultural arrangement is also a predeterminer of marital contentment to the same extent as the individual psychological inclination. Consistent with the existing models, the postulates of the findings are the concept that emotional vulnerability of self-silencing and rejection sensitivity kills intimacy and trust, and the reflective ability of mentalization nurtures the stability of the relationships. The significant effect of the certitude of mentalization, however, can be contingent upon the situational aspects like cultural norms and gender roles as well as social responsiveness. On balance, the discussion supports the premise that marital satisfaction represent a complex framework of process integration of the emotional management, process of interpersonal understanding and relations mediated through cultures. The implications of such findings are enormous in terms of counseling and therapy as well as the

community based interventions so as to ensure that marriages attain healthy orientations within the collectivist and patriarchal societies.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Permissions from Authors

1. Permission for Silencing the Self Scale (STSS) Questionnaire

The Silencing the Self Scale

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2. Permission for Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ)

To whom it may concern,

The Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ; Berenson et al., 2009) is freely available to the public. Everyone has permission to use, adapt, and/or translate this measure as they wish, and every student has permission to reproduce the measure in their thesis.

Please be sure to read the scoring instructions and relevant literature (see <http://berenson.sites.gettysburg.edu/a-rsq/>).

Sincerely,

Kathy R. Berenson, Ph.D.

Psychology Department, Gettysburg College

3. Permission for Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ-C and RFQ-U)

Availability

The RFQ is freely available to download for research purposes. The measure is not yet suited for clinical purposes.

4. Permission for Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) Questionnaire

PERMISSION FOR USE: We developed the CSI scales to be freely available for research and clinical use. No further permission is required beyond this form and the authors will not generate study-specific permission letters.

Appendix B

Approval Letter from University

BULC/PSY/2025/188



Bahria University
Discovering Knowledge

13th May 2025

Permission Letter

Subject: Request for Cooperation for Collecting Research Data

To Whom It May Concern

Respected Sir/Ma'am,

Bahria University is a Federally Chartered Public Sector University. Bahria University was established by the Pakistan Navy in 2000. Since then, it has steadily grown into one of Pakistan's leading higher education institutions with campuses in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore.

The Department of Professional Psychology (DPP) was established in 2018. The Department offers both BS Psychology and MS Clinical Psychology Programs, aims to give quality education, and promotes ethical and competent psychology practice in Pakistan.

Ms. Ashra Abdul Razzaq a student of Bahria University Lahore Campus, currently enrolled in MS Clinical Psychology, IV Semester. She is conducting final year research entitled "*Self-Silencing, Rejection Sensitivity Mentalization and Marital Satisfaction in Married Individuals*"

For this purpose, she needs to collect data from your institute/organization. The information provided will remain confidential, and we will ensure the ethical responsibility of all our participants. The results concluded from the collected data will be used only for educational purposes. The identity of any participant will not be disclosed at any time.

We would like to seek your cooperation in conducting this research. Your assistance in our scientific pursuit will be highly appreciated and acknowledged.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Supervisor

Urooj Sadiq
Dr. Urooj Sadiq
Sr. Associate Professor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Khawer".

Dr. Khawer Bilal Baig
Senior Associate Professor/Head of the Department
Department of Professional Psychology
Bahria University Lahore Campus

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

I am Ashra Abdul Razzaq, student of MS Clinical Psychology from Bahria University Lahore Campus. I am conducting research on "**Self-Silencing, Rejection Sensitivity, Mentalization and Marital Satisfaction in Married Individuals**", under supervision of Dr. Urooj Sadiq. This Questionnaire will take 15-20 minutes. It is to assure that all the information taken from you will be kept confidential and will only be used for research **purposes**. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any point. If you agree to participate kindly sign the form

Participant's Signature: _____

Appendix D
Demographic Information

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Religion _____

Area of Residence: Village City

Highest Level of Education

Intermediate

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

PhD

Other (please specify): _____

Employment Status

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Unemployed

Retired

Other: _____

Socioeconomic Status

Lower class

Lower-middle class

Middle class

Upper-middle class

Upper class

Household Information

Type of House (Owned/Rented/Other): _____

Number of Family Members Living in the Same Household: _____

Number of Earning Members in the Family: _____

Approximate Monthly Family Income: _____

Marital Information

Current Marital Status: Married Remarried Separated Divorced Other: _____

Marriage Type: Love Marriage Arranged Marriage Other: _____

Was the marriage within the family or outside the family?

Within the family Outside the family

Length of Current Marriage (in years): _____

Age at Time of Marriage: _____

Length of Relationship Before Marriage(in years/months): _____

Age Gap Between You and Your Partner (in years): _____

Number of Children: _____

Family System Nuclear Family Joint Family Other: _____

Living Arrangement with Spouse: Living together in the same home Living separately

due to work/study

Have you experienced conflict or separation during this time period of marriage?

Yes

No

Have you ever received treatment for any psychological illness in the past?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify (optional): _____

Do you or your spouse have a history of trauma (e.g., abuse, loss)?

Yes No Prefer not to say

If yes, please specify (optional): _____

Appendix E

Silencing the Self Scale (STSS) Questionnaire

Questionnaire 1 (SS)

Please circle the number that best describes how you feel about each of the statements listed below.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. I think it is best to put myself first because no one else will look out for me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Caring means putting the other person's needs in front of my own.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find it is harder to be myself when I am in a close relationship than when I am on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel dissatisfied with myself because I should be able to do all the things people are	1	2	3	4	5

supposed to be able to do these days.					
8. When my partner's needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
9. In a close relationship, my responsibility is to make the other person happy	1	2	3	4	5
10. Caring means choosing to do what the other person wants, even when I want to do something different.	1	2	3	4	5
11. In order to feel good about myself, I need to feel independent and self-sufficient.	1	2	3	4	5
12. One of the worst things I can do is to be selfish.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Instead of risking confrontations in close relationships, I would rather not rock the boat.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I speak my feelings with my partner, even when it leads to problems or disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious.	1	2	3	4	5

17. In order for my partner to love me, I cannot reveal certain things about myself to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
18. When my partner's needs or opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
19. When I am in a close relationship I lose my sense of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When it looks as though certain of my needs can't be met in a relationship, I usually realize that they weren't very important anyway.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My partner loves and appreciates me for who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Doing things just for myself is selfish.	1	2	3	4	5
23. When I make decisions, other people's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I rarely express my anger at those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel that my partner does not know my real self.	1	2	3	4	5

26. I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my partner's.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I often feel responsible for other people's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I find it hard to know what I think and feel because I spend a lot of time thinking about how other people are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
29. In a close relationship I don't usually care what we do, as long as the other person is happy.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble in my close relationship(s).	1	2	3	4	5
31. I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F

Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ)

Questionnaire 2 (RS)

The items below describe situations in which people sometimes ask things of others.

For each item, **imagine that you are in the situation, and then answer the questions that follow it**

1. You ask your parents or another family member for a loan to help you through a difficult financial time.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your family would want to help you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that they would agree to help as much as they can.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk with you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me to try to work things out.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. You bring up the issue of sexual protection with your significant other and tell him/her how important you think it is.

How concerned or anxious would you be over his/her reaction?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would be willing to discuss our possible options without getting defensive.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. You ask your supervisor for help with a problem you have been having at work.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to help you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to try to help me out.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. After a bitter argument, you call or approach your significant other because you want to make up.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to make up with you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would be at least as eager to make up as I would be.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. You ask your parents or other family members to come to an occasion important to you.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not they would want to come?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that they would want to come.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. At a party, you notice someone on the other side of the room that you'd like to get to know, and you approach him or her to try to start a conversation.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to talk with you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Lately you've been noticing some distance between yourself and your significant other, and you ask him/her if there is something wrong.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not he/she still loves you and wants to be with you?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she will show sincere love and commitment to our relationship no matter what else may be going on.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. You call a friend when there is something on your mind that you feel you really need to talk about.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to listen?	very unconcerned					very concerned
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would listen and support me.	very unlikely					very likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix G

Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ-C and RFQ-U)

Questionnaire 3 (Ments)

Please work through the next 8 statements. For each statement, choose a number between 1 and 7 to say how much you disagree or agree with the statement, and write it beside the statement. Do not think too much about it – your initial responses are usually the best. Thank you.

Use the following scale from 1 to 7:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
1. People's thoughts are a mystery to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. I don't always know why I do what I do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. When I get angry I say things without really knowing why I am saying them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. When I get angry I say things that I later regret	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. If I feel insecure I can behave in ways that put others' backs up	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. Sometimes I do things without really knowing why	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. I always know what I feel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. Strong feelings often cloud my thinking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Appendix H

Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) Questionnaire

Questionnaire 4 (CSI)

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

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

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

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

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

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

18. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does	0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix I
Plagiarism Report







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Top Sources

- 6%  Internet sources
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Top Sources

- 6%  Internet sources
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Appendix J

AI Report



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AI detection scores under 20%, which we do not surface in new reports, have a higher likelihood of false positives. To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, no score or highlights are attributed and are indicated with an asterisk in the report (*%).

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What does 'qualifying text' mean?

Our model only processes qualifying text in the form of long-form writing. Long-form writing means individual sentences contained in paragraphs that make up a longer piece of written work, such as an essay, a dissertation, or an article, etc. Qualifying text that has been determined to be likely AI-generated will be highlighted in cyan in the submission, and likely AI-generated and then likely AI-paraphrased will be highlighted purple.

Non-qualifying text, such as bullet points, annotated bibliographies, etc., will not be processed and can create disparity between the submission highlights and the percentage shown.

