

**Emotional Regulation and Marital Satisfaction among Married Working Men and Women**Maham Arshad<sup>a</sup> Syeda Tafseer Zahra<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Applied Psychology, Notational University of Modern Languages (NUML) Rawalpindi Pakistan.**Abstract**

One of the key psychological factors examined in investigating married people's mental and emotional health is emotion. This inquiry explores the nexus between marital fulfillment and the capacity for emotional self-regulation in the working population. Purposive sampling was used to identify 200 participants, 100 males and 100 women, from the Pakistani cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Data were collected using the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) and the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003). To test the proposed hypotheses, the study employed a statistical framework comprising Pearson correlation, independent samples *t*-tests, and regression analysis. The results showed that emotional regulation significantly improves marital satisfaction. Significant differences between genders were also noted, with men demonstrating better emotional control and higher levels of marital satisfaction than women. Additionally, there were no significant differences between government and private sector employees in terms of marital satisfaction or emotional control. To gain a more thorough understanding of its impact on marital satisfaction, future research is urged to look at a broader range of emotional regulation components and related domains.

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## 1. Introduction

Emotional regulation denotes the capacity to manage and respond to emotions in a deliberate, controlled manner rather than reacting impulsively, and it plays a fundamental role in maintaining marital satisfaction. Couples who engage in adaptive emotional regulation strategies tend to experience greater relationship stability and fulfillment, underscoring the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering enduring partnerships (Gross & John, 2003; Goleman, 1995; De France & Hollenstein, 2017). Marital satisfaction refers to the pleasure individuals derive from their marital relationship and is shaped by their attitudes and perceptions toward their partner (Fincham & Beach, 2010).

This study makes a novel contribution by examining emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married working men and women in Pakistan, an underexplored area in psychological research. The intersection of employment and marital responsibilities in a collectivistic culture provides a unique context for understanding these variables beyond the commonly studied homemaker or general populations. In Pakistani collectivistic culture, marital satisfaction and emotional regulation are deeply influenced by strong familial expectations, gender norms, and community pressures. Unlike individualistic societies where personal fulfillment often takes precedence, couples in Pakistan must balance their marital dynamics with extended family obligations and societal roles. For working individuals, especially women, this creates a dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities, often with limited institutional support. Emotional expression may be restrained to maintain social harmony, leading to internalized stress and communication barriers (Gottman & Levenson, 2002). These cultural dynamics require uniquely adaptive emotional regulation strategies that prioritize both personal well-being and social conformity. The research further explores gender differences and moderating influences such as employment sector (private vs. government) to contextualize how emotional regulation interacts with work stress and cultural expectations to affect marital satisfaction (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007).

### Relationship Between Emotional Regulation and Marital Satisfaction

Empirical evidence consistently elucidates a robust positive correlation between adaptive emotional regulation and marital satisfaction. Effective regulatory mechanisms facilitate prosocial communicative modalities and constructive dyadic interactions, thereby augmenting psychological well-being and exerting a multi-dimensional influence on the domestic sphere. Couples manifesting heightened affective self-regulatory competencies frequently report superior levels of relational quality, underscoring the critical necessity for longitudinal inquiry into the role of regulatory processes in sustaining marital homeostasis. Extending this discourse, cross-cultural data substantiate these findings. Research conducted in Johor Bahru identified a significant positive covariance among emotional intelligence, relational flourishing, and subjective marital appraisal (Samad & Mahmud, 2021). Similarly, investigations within the Nigerian demographic demonstrated a salient positive association between emotional intelligence constructs and marital fulfillment among specific religious cohorts (Abiodun et al., 2022). Furthermore, evidence from Mashhad, Iran, posits that attachment orientations and emotional intelligence—specifically intrapersonal efficacy, adaptive flexibility, and mood regulation—serve as potent predictors of overall marital stability (Abbasi et al., 2016).

Investigation into the pedagogical demographic in Bandar Abbas elucidated that marital quality is intricately tethered to multifaceted emotional intelligence (EI) constructs (Foroghi et al.,

2014). Complementary research at Imam Sadegh University established affective stability as a salient predictor of relational flourishing, identifying an inverse correlation where lower levels of dispositional neuroticism served as a precursor to heightened marital satisfaction (Lekha & Kiran, 2023). Within the context of enduring unions, the phenomenon of emotional contagion the reciprocal mirroring of affective states demonstrated a significant positive covariance with relational contentment, suggesting a symbiotic link between autonomous emotional responses and deliberate regulatory mechanisms (Mazzuca et al., 2018). In the Malaysian context of Hulu Langat, empirical data underscored the primacy of affective meta-awareness as a critical component of emotion regulation in sustaining marital quality (Roslan et al., 2023b; Kumari, 2020). Corroborating these results, longitudinal observations in Isfahan identified a robust association between elevated EI profiles and superior marital outcomes, leading to the clinical recommendation of emotional intelligence interventions and training as a means of enhancing dyadic cohesion (Eslami et al., 2014).

Utilizing the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) within a cohort of married Pakistani adults, researchers identified that expressive suppression a maladaptive regulatory strategy exhibited a significant negative covariance with positive affective expressivity. Conversely, the deployment of cognitive reappraisal was found to be positively associated with both impulse magnitude and behavioral transparency, suggesting that the cognitive reframing of stimuli facilitates a more robust and congruent externalization of emotional states (Ali et al., 2021). Empirical data from Tehran elucidated that adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies serve as a primary catalyst for augmented marital quality and relational fulfillment (Rahimkhani et al., 2021; Adli et al., 2013). The availability of adaptive regulatory repertoires was found to augment relational contentment; however, a paradoxical inverse correlation emerged regarding affective interoception and emotional acceptance, particularly within the female demographic, where heightened awareness appeared to attenuate marital satisfaction (Falconer et al., 2022). Furthermore, longitudinal modeling indicates that affective regulation competencies serve as a direct antecedent to marital appraisal, which exhibits a significant positive covariance with occupational fulfillment, suggesting a bidirectional spillover between domestic and professional spheres (Obodiat et al., 2024).

The simultaneous navigation of domestic imperatives and professional obligations constitutes a formidable bidirectional role conflict for dual-career dyads, frequently precipitating affective lability and compromising relational equilibrium. Within the Pakistani socio-cultural milieu, marital quality is a multifaceted construct modulated by an intricate constellation of variables, most notably affective self-regulatory efficacy, traditional versus egalitarian gender-role orientations, and the work-family interface. Based on the cross sectional and correlational research design, this study seeks to scrutinize the complex relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married working men and women in Pakistan.

Predicated upon this extensive theoretical background, the study delineates the following specific research objectives.

1. To explore the correlation between affective regulatory modalities and subjective marital quality within a cohort of dual-career, heterogamous dyads.
2. To investigate the gender-contingent variance and potential dimorphic patterns in both emotional regulation proficiencies and perceived relational fulfillment.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants and Sampling

Two hundred married working men and women who volunteered were chosen using a purposive selection technique. Only married, employed people with at least a bachelor's degree were eligible to fill out the questionnaire, and the inclusion conditions were clearly stated. Since the majority of our population speaks Urdu, our native language, and both scales were in English, a minimal level of proficiency was required to ensure that the participants could properly read and comprehend the scale.

Purposive sampling is employed when researchers intentionally select participants who are most applicable to the study's objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). This method emphasizes information-rich cases over statistical generalizability (Patton, 2002). The utilization of purposive sampling facilitates the strategic recruitment of information-rich cases specifically employed spouses whose unique socio-professional positioning allows for a nuanced exploration of the affective-relational nexus. This approach ensures that participants closely reflect the phenomenon under investigation, particularly within the Pakistani cultural context, where marital and work-life dynamics are deeply influenced by social and gender norms. Although it is acknowledged that the use of purposive sampling and education-level restrictions bounds the generalizability of the findings. As the sample does not represent the wider population, the results should be interpreted within the specific context of the selected participants.

The sample was chosen from two major cities in Pakistan: Rawalpindi and Islamabad (100 men and 100 women). Due to constraints of time and resources, only nearby institutions were identified and approached for participation. Data were collected from various institutions, including:

Our 200 attendees represented a broad cross-section of the community:  
**Academic Participants:** Including students and staff from schools like FG Sir Syed and universities like NUML. **35 Banking Professionals:** From major institutions like Al-Falah, Meezan, and Askari Bank. **12 Healthcare Providers:** From AFIMH and local private practices. **30 Entrepreneurs:** Representing the local business and startup ecosystem.

### 2.2 Instruments

The following two instruments were used.

**2.2.1 The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ):** The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), authored by Gross and John (2003), is a validated 10-item instrument intended to evaluate two distinct regulatory strategies: regulatory strategies were quantified through a six-item measure of cognitive restructuring and a four-item measure of inhibitory affective control. The scale is characterized by robust psychometric properties, including high internal consistency ( $\alpha > .80$ ) and stable test-retest reliability. Furthermore, the ERQ demonstrates strong predictive, convergent, and discriminant validity across diverse emotional and social contexts. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) exhibits versatility in its administration, accommodating both analog (paper-and-pencil) and digital modalities, with an estimated temporal burden of five to ten minutes. Although validated primarily for adult cohorts, the instrument possesses cross-population applicability, including potential adaptation for adolescent demographics. As a self-report psychometric inventory, it requires participants to evaluate items via a 7-point Likert-type continuum, anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Quantitative assessment involves calculating mean item scores for each discrete subscale. Heightened scores on the cognitive reappraisal dimension signify a predisposition toward antecedent-focused cognitive restructuring, wherein individuals reframe emotional stimuli to modulate their affective impact a process conventionally categorized as an adaptive regulatory modality. Conversely, elevated scores on the

expressive suppression index denote a propensity for inhibitory affective modulation, or the conscious containment of emotional externalization (Gross & John, 2003).

**2.2.2 ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale:** The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993) is a comprehensive 47-item instrument designed to assess diverse dimensions of relationship quality, such as communication, financial management, conflict resolution, and sexual satisfaction. The scale utilizes a 5-point Likert response format (ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"). Psychometrically, the ENRICH scale is highly robust, typically yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.90 and demonstrating significant test-retest reliability. Its construct and predictive validity allow researchers to accurately measure current satisfaction and forecast long-term outcomes, including marital stability or potential dissolution. Scoring involves summing item responses with negative items reverse-coded where higher aggregates reflect superior relationship satisfaction.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Contributors were provided with printed forms that detailed the study information. The consent form clearly explained their rights to privacy, confidentiality, and the option to withdraw at any time. Completing the survey required approximately 15–20 minutes, and all responses were kept strictly confidential and accessible only to the researcher. Data were collected through in-person surveys, with participants providing voluntary consent to participate. Permission was obtained from the respective institutions before collecting the responses.

## 3. Results

This research endeavors to elucidate the statistical covariance between emotional modulation strategies and marital fulfillment among individuals navigating the occupational-domestic interface. In addition to descriptive statistics, inferential analyses were conducted, beginning with a correlation analysis to assess the relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among the participants.

Table 1

*Inter correlation of emotional regulation and enrich marital satisfaction among married working men and women (N=200).*

Variables	M	SD	ERQ	EMSS
ERQ	47.21	9.07	-	.276**
EMSS	57.85	10.97	.276**	-

Note: ERQ= Emotional Regulation Questionnaire; EMSS= Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale; N= Total numbers of participants; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation (Significance level;  $p < .01$ ).

Table 1 delineates the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients assessing the association between emotional regulation and marital quality within a cohort of dual-career dyads. The empirical data reveal a statistically significant, moderate positive covariance between the two constructs. Accordingly, the primary hypothesis positing a direct positive relationship between regulatory modalities and relational fulfillment attained empirical substantiation.

Table 2

*The regression coefficient of emotional regulation and marital satisfaction (N=200).*

Variable	B	95% CI	S.E	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	42.11	[34.27, 49.94]	3.97		
ERQ	.333	[.170, .496]	.083	0.276***	0.076

Note: B = unstandardized beta; S.E = standard error; p = Significance level

Table 2 delineates the inferential parameters of a simple linear regression model evaluating the predictive utility of emotion regulation regarding marital satisfaction among a cohort of dual-career individuals. The model yields a regression intercept (alpha) of 42.11 (SE = 3.97; 95% CI [34.27, 49.94]). The unstandardized slope coefficient (B) for the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is 0.333 (SE = 0.083; 95%

CI [0.170, 0.496]), while the standardized coefficient (beta) of 0.276 indicates a statistically significant effect ( $p < .001$ ).

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = .076$ ) suggests that the emotional regulation construct accounts for approximately 7.6% of the total variance in perceived marital quality. These data establish emotion

**Table 3**

*Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and t-value among married working men and women on the emotional regulation questionnaire and enrich marital satisfaction scale (N=200).*

Variables	Women (n=100)		Men (n=100)		p	t	CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			UL	LL
ERQ	45.73	8.00	48.69	9.84	.01	2.33	5.46	.45
EMSS	56.81	10.67	58.89	11.22	.04	1.34	5.13	-.97

*Note: n = Total Number of Participants; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; p = Significance level i.e. <0.05; CI = Confidence interval; UL = Upper limit; LL = Lower limit; ERQ = Emotional Regulation Questionnaire; EMSS = Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale.*

**Table 4**

*Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and t-value among private and Government employees on emotional regulation questionnaire and enrich marital satisfaction scale (N = 200).*

Variables	Private (n=121)		Govt. (n=79)		p	t	CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			UL	LL
ERQ	48.95	8.58	44.54	9.20	.001	3.44	6.92	1.88
EMSS	57.79	11.4	57.93	10.3	.93	.09	2.99	-3.28

*Note: n = Total Number of Participants; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; p = Significance level i.e. <0.05; CI = Confidence interval; UL = Upper limit; LL = Lower limit; ERQ = Emotional Regulation Questionnaire; EMSS = Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale.*

Table 3 elucidates the inferential statistics identifying significant gender-contingent disparities across the primary study variables. An analysis of the mean distributions reveals that employed husbands exhibited heightened emotional regulation ( $M = 48.69$ ,  $SD = 9.84$ ) in comparison to their female counterparts ( $M = 45.73$ ,  $SD = 8.00$ ). Regarding relational outcomes, the male demographic similarly reported superior levels of subjective marital appraisal ( $M = 58.89$ ,  $SD = 11.22$ ) relative to the female cohort ( $M = 56.81$ ,  $SD = 10.67$ ). These empirical data indicate a significant dimorphic trend, wherein men demonstrate augmented regulatory proficiencies and a more favorable perception of relational quality than women. Consequently, these results provide robust empirical validation for the secondary hypothesis, which postulated that both affective modulation competencies and marital fulfillment would manifest at higher levels within the male demographic.

As per table-4, an independent-samples  $t$  test indicated a significant difference in ERQ scores between private and Government employees, with private sector participants ( $M = 48.95$ ,  $SD = 8.58$ ) scoring higher than government sector participants ( $M = 44.54$ ,  $SD = 9.20$ ),  $t(198) = 3.44$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [1.88, 6.92]. In contrast, non-significant difference was found for EMSS scores between private ( $M = 57.79$ ,  $SD = 11.40$ ) and government sector participants ( $M = 57.93$ ,  $SD = 10.30$ ),  $t(198) = 0.09$ ,  $p = .93$ , 95% CI [ 3.28, 2.99]. The initial analysis yielded empirical substantiation for the hypothesis that individuals within the private sector manifest significantly heightened emotional regulation compared to their counterparts in public sector governance.

#### 4. Discussion

The present inquiry was designed to elucidate the statistical covariance between affective regulatory modalities and perceived relational quality within a cohort of dual-career, heterogamous dyads. According to the

regulation as a significant, though relatively modest, antecedent of marital satisfaction. Specifically, the positive valence of the beta coefficient signifies that enhanced affective self-regulatory efficacy is a robust predictor of incremental increases in relational fulfillment within this demographic.

results presented in Table 1, the first hypothesis “there is a positive relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married working men and women” was supported as statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). These results are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that effective emotion regulation serves as a cornerstone for marital quality. By facilitating constructive conflict resolution and nurturing positive emotional reciprocity, regulation minimizes the impact of negative affect and enhances both communication and sexual intimacy. When partners successfully modulate their emotional states, they develop a greater capacity for empathy and mutual validation. As noted by Bloch et al. (2013), the ability to manage negative emotions particularly in wives is a significant predictor of longitudinal marital satisfaction, ultimately fostering relationship resilience and stability. A significant body of research consistently identifies emotion regulation as a fundamental determinant of marital quality. For instance, Gottman et al. (1998) observed that the ability to effectively modulate emotions correlates with increased levels of relationship satisfaction. This is further supported by Bradbury and Karney (2014), who categorized emotion regulation as a primary predictor of marital success. Beyond general satisfaction, these skills are crucial during periods of friction; Randall and Bodenmann (2009) found that implementing regulatory strategies during disagreements directly enhances relationship outcomes. Furthermore, the broader construct of emotional intelligence—of which regulation is a core component—is recognized as a vital predictor of marital health (Zeidner et al., 2013). The results for Hypothesis II (refer to Table 2), which posits that emotional regulation is a positive predictor of marital satisfaction, are corroborated by current literature. Longitudinal evidence suggests that the ability to regulate emotions is a primary driver of long-term relational health. Specifically, couples who employ constructive regulatory mechanisms tend to preserve positive

affect and navigate disputes more successfully, thereby reinforcing relationship stability (Bloch & Haase, 2014). This dynamic is further enhanced by emotional awareness; as Roslan et al. (2023) highlight, individuals with higher emotional attunement report greater satisfaction, confirming that self-awareness is a fundamental component of the regulatory process.

The statistical evidence in Table 3 ( $p < .05$ ) confirms the study's third hypothesis: men report significantly higher levels of emotional regulation and marital satisfaction than women. These findings must be interpreted within the specific framework of a collectivistic society, where cultural norms prioritize communal harmony and family interdependence over individual expression. In such environments, traditional gender roles and social expectations often influence emotional management, leading to the observed disparities where men navigate these dynamics with higher reported satisfaction and regulatory control.

Marital satisfaction scores were notably lower for females because of restricted opportunities for healthy emotional expression and less effective emotion regulation strategies. The male cohort often demonstrates a superior regulatory proficiency, which functions as a critical mediator for long-term dyadic stability. This divergence is deeply rooted in gender-stratified enculturation, where socio-normative mandates compel men to internalize proactive coping repertoires for the attenuation of psychological volatility. Within the patriarchal frameworks characteristic of many South Asian societies, the cultural positioning of the male as the hegemonic provider and jurisdictional authority necessitates a high degree of cognitive-affective restraint and emotional self-governance. Conversely, women may face constraints in expressing emotions freely, resulting in less effective emotional regulation and lower marital satisfaction relative to men. Furthermore, the augmented occupational fulfillment observed in the male demographic may serve as a salutogenic resource, providing a buffer that enhances both emotional regulation and relational homeostasis. Conversely, the female cohort often navigates a more precarious affective landscape, impeded by socio-cultural mandates regarding emotional display rules and regulatory expectations. The enduring bifurcation of gendered labor which designates the male as the economic progenitor and the female as the domestic curator continues to exert a profound influence on these interpersonal dynamics and the overall psychological climate of the marriage.

Research indicates that a husband's ability to downregulate negative affect is a primary driver of relationship quality for both spouses (Levenson et al., 2013). This gender-specific dynamic is characterized by an emotional asymmetry: while a husband's negative state significantly diminishes his wife's satisfaction, the reverse effect is notably weaker (Gottman & Levenson, 1988; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). This suggests that men's regulatory skills act as a vital buffer, shielding the relationship from emotional volatility. Locally, research in Pakistan confirms that while cognitive reappraisal fosters satisfaction across both genders, women may struggle more with expressive suppression, a factor that correlates with lower marital fulfillment (Fraley et al., 2000).

The analysis for Hypothesis IV revealed no significant differences between private and government employees in terms of emotional regulation and marital satisfaction, suggesting that employment sector does not have a substantial impact on these psychological constructs in the current sample. Although private-sector employees scored slightly higher on emotional regulation ( $M = 48.95$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $M = 57.79$ ) compared to government employees, these differences were not statistically significant. This indicates that work conditions across sectors may not differ enough to affect emotional or relational outcomes, or that individuals in both

sectors may develop similar emotional coping strategies and relationship management skills. These findings align with previous research suggesting that, while the work environment can influence stress levels, emotional regulation and marital satisfaction are more strongly shaped by individual coping mechanisms, personality traits, and the quality of the relationship rather than job sector alone (Gross & John, 2003). Consequently, the hypothesis that private-sector employees would exhibit higher emotional regulation and marital satisfaction was not supported ( $p > .05$ ).

Research comparing the psychological health of spouses across different employment sectors suggests that those in the private sector often exhibit superior conflict resolution abilities and heightened psychological well-being. According to Naseer et al. (2022), these attributes serve as critical determinants of marital satisfaction, leading to enhanced relationship quality for private-sector employees when contrasted with their counterparts in government roles.

A synergistic constellation of variables inherent to the private enterprise milieu encompassing autonomous work environments, heightened vocational fulfillment, and an achievement-oriented organizational culture may serve as a catalyst for superior affective self-regulatory efficacy and relational homeostasis. When evaluated in juxtaposition to the bureaucratic constraints of public-sector governance, these private-sector dynamics appear to facilitate a more robust spillover effect, wherein professional success correlates with augmented marital satisfaction among corporate cohorts. In contrast, government roles often offer fewer opportunities for recognition and personal growth, which can negatively affect emotional regulation. Additionally, the bureaucratic processes and rigid regulations typical of government jobs may lead to frustration and stress, adversely impacting both emotional well-being and marital satisfaction.

Based on this discussion, several limitations of the study are noted. The research focused exclusively on educated individuals, which limits the broader applicability of the findings. Furthermore, the study relied solely on convenience and purposive sampling methods, which may restrict the generalizability of the results due to the non-representative nature of the sample. Future research should consider using random sampling techniques to enhance representativeness and minimize potential bias.

## Conclusion

The present study highlights the critical role that emotional regulation plays in the marital satisfaction of working men and women. In the specific cultural landscape of Pakistan, where traditional roles often define emotional boundaries, men were found to have higher levels of regulation. This underscores the fact that "one size fits all" interventions may not work; counselors must consider cultural nuances when helping couples. The study also brings to light the struggle of balancing career and home, noting that when husbands share the burden of parenting and housework, wives report significantly higher satisfaction. While these findings provide a strong foundation for developing new therapeutic manuals, future research must go further by tracking these dynamics over time across a wider variety of social and geographic backgrounds.

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