

**TRUST AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN SECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE
AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT IN MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the current study was to examine the mediating effect of trust between secure attachment style and marital adjustment in married individuals. The sample of 238 married individuals including 100 males and 138 females with age ranges from 20-60 years ($M = 35.9$, $SD = 9.69$) were recruited purposefully from different areas of Karachi-Pakistan. Measures used in the study along with demographic form were Trust in Close Relationship Scale (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985), Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990) and Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Results of mediation analysis indicate that trust significantly mediated the association between secure attachment style and marital adjustment. Study findings highlight the importance of trust linking secure attachment style with marital adjustment in married individuals. Moreover, in clinical practice the marital therapists can use research findings related to trust and secured attachment to plan interventions to help the couples get over their marital problems.

Keywords: Secured Attachment, Trust, Marital Adjustment, Married Individuals

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INTRODUCTION

Trust is a feeling and belief about other person in which positive anticipation is present. Trust is a strong belief about gratification of any objective regardless of one's inevitability of future (Deutsch, 1973). Trust is basically a reliance of people on one another in terms of promise, attachment, and commitment (Rotter, 1980). Trust is very important building block of any close relationship, while exchanging emotions. Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz (1972) suggested that when trust is developed in an intimate relationship, it mostly results in the bond of marriage.

When an infant born, he develops trusting relation with mother and wants to stay close to mother for survival, infants are completely dependent on others, they are helpless and needs someone to take care of them. It is attachment and an emotional bond between mother and child. Parental help and style of bonding with the infants shape the attachment styles of an individual. Attachment styles along with trust are considered to be very significant in maintaining long-lasting relationships. Therefore, several researches emphasized on attachment styles and trust in marital relationships and adjustments. Marital adjustment is an overall satisfaction between husband and wife that includes strong attachment, compatibility, commitment, care, concern, and love. In successful marriages both partners accommodate and complement each other, helping in fulfilling responsibilities, and take care of each other needs and desires. They both rely on each other to accomplish satisfactory and adjusted marital life (Lidz, 1976).

Robust research has indicated the crucial role of secure attachment style in marital adjustment Trust is a standout among most desirable characteristic in any close relationship, securely attached individuals have trust in their relations (Simpson, 2007). Secure attachment style plays a key role in marital adjustment (Ozmen & Atik, 2010) and shows a significant predictive association with marital satisfaction (Banse, 2004; Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001 Sadeghi, Mazaheri, & Moutabi, 2011). As individuals with secure attachment are more confident and comfortable in closed relationships with the positive view of self and others; they are compassionate, helper, and emotionally positive, and have good imaginative capacities, flexible, and decisive in nature (Banse, 2004; Forness, 2003; Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Hibbard, 2001; Iboro & Akpan, 2011; Rivera, 1999; Sadeghi, et al, 2011;). Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggested that romantic love is more prevalent in secure individuals because they are not inclined to pessimism and less likely to feel disappointments. They use self-

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disclosure because they perceive their partners to be receptive and by doing self-disclosure, they have positive and a strong association (Domingue & Mollen, 2009; Hazan & Shaver 1987; Mikulincer, 1998; Morrison, Goodlin-Jones, & Urquiza, 1997).

An individual's attachment style can affect marital satisfaction through various possible ways and trust is one of the important pathways through which attachment can be linked with marital satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). Individuals having secure attachment style show greater degree of dyadic trust and less fear of closeness (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), they have trust related experiences and they are comfortable in getting close to others (Mikulincer, 1998). Trust together with secure attachment leads to a good bond and improves marital satisfaction. Securely attached individuals are more likely to show closeness, commitment, and acceptance in interpersonal relationships. Thus, such individuals are having higher degrees of trust in their partners and they greatly satisfied in their relationships (Fraley, 2004; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer, 1998; Morrison et al., 1997).

Difficulties in marital maladjustment affect individual's wellbeing directly or indirectly. Reluctance in sharing about the marital issues affects the couple, children and whole family. In Pakistan, there is a scarce of work addressing the role of trust in attachment styles and marital adjustment. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the mediating role of trust in the relationship of secured attachment style and marital adjustment among couples.

It was hypothesized that:

1. Trust would mediate the relationship between secure attachment style and marital adjustment in married individuals.

METHOD

Participants

Sample consisted of 238 married individuals including 100 males and 138 females with age range from 20 to 60 years ($M = 35.9$, $SD = 9.69$). Participants took part in this study as volunteers and were taken from different areas of Karachi, Pakistan by purposive sampling. Their minimum education was Intermediate, all of

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them were married for at least one year. Individuals with divorce marital status, infertility, psychological disturbance, and physical disability were excluded.

Measures

Trust in Close Relationships Scale

Trust in Close Relationship Scale (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985) has three subscales, *Predictability*, *Dependability*, and *Faith*. In this research composite score of trust has been used which is obtained by adding the scores on all the items of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha shows sound internal consistency (.80, .72 and .70) among the items the components of trust including faith, dependability, and predictability, respectively. In addition, in the present study, the overall Cronbach's alpha of .84, with subscale reliabilities of .66, .57, and .63 for the faith, dependability, and predictability, respectively show a good internal consistency among items

Revised Adult Attachment Scale

Adult Attachment Scale by Collins and Read (1990), which was subsequently revised by Collins in 1996. This scale consisted of three subscales: Depend is related to an individual's ability to depend on others, Close is the sub scale which estimates an individual's skills for closeness in a relationship without being anxious, and the sub-scale of Anxiety deals with an individual's concern about rejection or abandonment by others in a relationship. By adding the mean of close and depend subscales the score for secure attachment style was obtained. The reliability of each subscales of the original sub- scales of Close, Depend, and Anxiety are .68, .71 and .52, respectively, however in the present study, the obtained Cronbach alphas for Close, Depend, and Anxiety are .43, .45, and .79 respectively.

Marital Adjustment Test

This test for marital adjustment by Locke and Wallace (1959), has Scores ranging from 2 to 158. The higher scores representing high satisfaction with marital life. The Cronbach's alpha for both husbands and wives ranged from .72 to .80, (Locke & Wallace, 1959). In the current study its reliability via Cronbach's alpha is .89.

Procedure

To conduct the study researcher has obtained informed consent and the purpose of the study was briefed, confidentiality of the information was reassured. Researcher has discussed participants' right to withdraw the process if willing to discontinue without any loss. After getting consent the individuals were interviewed related to the demographic information and relationship details according to the pre-established inclusion/exclusion criteria. Measures of the study were then administered one after the other with an interval of 2-3 minutes. After completion of the process of administration the participants were appreciated for their participation and addressed many of their queries related to the provided information and other personal mental health and marital adjustment related concerns.

The aims and objectives of the current study, the procedure employed in the study and the material of the study were entirely examined and approved by the Advance Studies and Research Board (ASBR). Participants were selected for the study with their consent and ascertained about confidentiality of their shared information in the study. The participants of the study were given the right to leave the study if they need to withdraw during the administration of the measures.

Statistical Analysis

All the measures were scored according to standard procedures and data was analyzed with the help of SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample. The PROCESS macro (ProcessV3.4) (Hayes, 2018) was used to test the formulated hypotheses. For Bootstrapping method 10,000 samples were set with 95% Confidence interval, Linear Regression analysis was conducted to determine the significance of individual pathways between trust, secure attachment style and marital adjustment in order to establish mediation criteria suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986)

RESULTS

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 238)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	100	42
Female	138	58
Qualification		
Intermediate	47	19.7
Graduation	83	34.9
Masters	76	31.9
M.Phil	19	8.0
PhD	08	3.4
Others (Diploma)	05	2.1
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	35.9	9.69

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of Study Measures (N=238)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>
Secure Attachment Style	3.07	.61	.32
Trust	5.12	.94	.83
Marital Adjustment	6.51	3.05	.88

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Table 3
Linear Regression Analysis of Secure Attachment Style as Predictor of Marital Adjustment and Trust

Outcome Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
MA	1.53	.74	.15	.04	2.38	.04*
Trust	0.65	.21	.20	.16	12.18	.00*

* $p < .05$, $df = 1, 236$

Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis with Trust as Predictor of Marital Adjustment

Outcome Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
MA	1.33	.21	.41	.17	40.44	.00*

* $p < .05$, $df = 1, 236$

Table 5
Mediation Model of Trust in the Association between Secure Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>LLCI</i>	95% <i>ULCI</i>
Path c Secure Attachment Style predicts Marital Adjustment	.544	.32	.09	-.086	1.176
Path a Secure Attachment Style predicts Trust	.437	.10	.00*	.248	.626
Path b Trust predicts Marital Adjustment	1.359	.20	.00*	.966	1.752
Path c' Trust as mediator between Secure Attachment Style & Marital Adjustment	-.050	.31	.87	-.653	.552

* $p < .05$

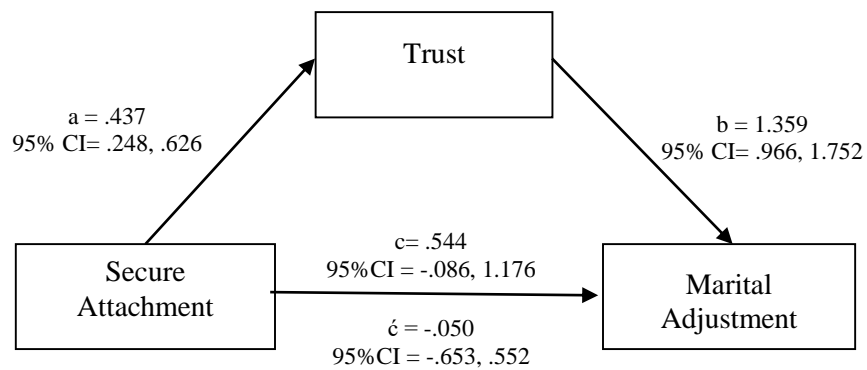


Figure-1: Mediating role of Trust in relationship between Secure Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to investigate the effect of trust as a mediator between secure attachment style and marital adjustment in married individuals. The path analysis (Table 5, Figure 1) describes the mediational effect of trust onto the relationship of secure attachment and marital adjustment. In the given table (Table 5) 'path c' indicates an insignificant predictive association among independent variable of secure attachment and the outcome variable of marital adjustment ($B=.544$, $SE=.32$, $p>.05$). Further, 'path a' indicates a significant predictive association among secure attachment style as predictor and trust as an outcome ($B=.437$, $SE=.10$, $p <.05$). In the same manner 'path b' shows a significant predictive relation among trust and marital adjustment ($B=1.359$, $SE=.20$, $p <.05$). Moreover, the results regarding 'path c' are indicative of an insignificant predictive association among the independent variable of secure attachment and the outcome variable of marital adjustment ($B=-.050$, $SE=.31$, $p >.05$) hence signifying the full mediating effect of trust between relationship of secure attachment and marital adjustment.

Previous studies also supported the results and specified that trust has a mediating role in the relationships of secured attachment and marital satisfaction, however, secure attachment did not have significant direct effect on marital satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). In contrary, some previous literature (Brassard, Lussier, & Shaver, 2009; Brennan et al., 1998; Feeney, et al, 1994), suggested that attachment style significantly predicts marital satisfaction. The outcomes of the current study are corresponding with various research findings. Secured attachment exert an indirect effect on marital adjustment with the help of trust (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer, 1998). Trust and secure attachment style lead people to have positive views of self and others so they develop healthy relationship, also by having positive view of others they trust partner without being anxious which increases their marital adjustment. Securely attached individuals are more likely to consider and emphasize the positive side of the situation and also consider negative part to overcome the problem but do not overwhelmed by the negative aspect. They have sense of security, mutual understanding, honesty, support, independence, and close emotional bond in their relations. They always see themselves and others in constructive point of view which enhances trust (Simpson, 2007).

Individuals with secure attachment style have high level of trust, they feel themselves capable of taking responsibility and feel satisfied in their marital

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relationships which increase positive emotion and constructive feelings (Gardner, 2007), they depend on partner and put efforts in relationships and get easily close to others (Sümer & Cozzarelli 2004), they deal with interpersonal conflicts in effective way (Vinthanage, n.d). Secure attachment style has positive relations with marital satisfaction (Duncan, 2007; Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Janetius, 2019; Heene, Buysse, and Van Oost, 2005; Shaker, Heshmati, & Rahimi, 2010; Ramezani, Ahmadi, Mohammadi, & Kazemnejed, 2017), especially in married women (Meyers & Landsberger, 2002).

In summing up the findings of the study, trust is the building block of every relation, but it is crucial to have trust in marital relationship. Individuals with high trust relationship ignore the negative aspect of the situation which occurred in the relationship, they emphasize good quality of partner and are faithful to each other. Some couples believe that it is unrealistic to have trust in their relation because of their painful and bad past experiences (Asif & Saim, 2018).

Current study is significant in its clinical implications in the following ways. The findings of the current study show trust as mediating factor in the relationship of secured attachment style and marital adjustment focusing on one of the fundamental psychosocial factors which can aid the mental health professionals to understand one of the causal paths of problems in marital adjustment. Identification of such aspects can be productive in considerations of strategies for intervention for the couples with marital problems. In country like Pakistan trust and marital discord is becoming a common concern resulting in high ratios of divorce. In such instances it is highly needed to work on awareness regarding internal as well as external variables of the couples. This study findings can help to highlight the value of trust in marital adjustment. In clinical practice the marital/couple therapists can use such research findings related to trust and secured attachment to plan interventions in order to help the couples get over their marital problems. The results can be helpful for policy makers. Scarcity in awareness about untreated psychological problems, especially in married individuals affects society. Thus, Awareness programs like lectures, sessions, and workshops can be done on the basis of such study findings for different organizations and institutes. Current study can also have its implications for the young researchers to extend their interest in this area and to work on the recommendations for future revenues.

The study has some limitations. As this study includes married individuals only; in future couples, divorced, infertile, and ill individuals can be part of the sample. Urdu versions of measures are recommended to be used for better

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understanding of the constructs and precise response of the participants in culture like Pakistan. It is recommended to have larger sample in future from different cities of Pakistan. Rural areas should be given attention to have larger data.

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