

## Marital Adjustment, Perceived Social Support, and Marital Satisfaction in Young Married Working Women



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**Abstract:** *This study aims to investigate the relationship between marital adjustment and perceived social support with marital satisfaction in young married working women living in nuclear and joint family groups. A sample of 150 married working women between the ages of 25 and 40 was recruited from educational institutions and organizations across Lahore. Of them, 75 were from nuclear families and 75 were from joint families. Cross sectional survey was conducted to collect data by administering research questionnaire which included demographic information, Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby et al., 1995), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) and Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-16; Funk & Rogge, 2007). The findings of Pearson correlation showed that the duration of marriage showed a significant negative correlation with both perceived social support and marital satisfaction in the sample. Moreover, hierarchical regression analysis indicated that perceived social support emerged as the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction, while perceived social support and marital adjustment jointly explained a substantial proportion of total variance in marital satisfaction. Among the subscales of perceived social support, significant other support emerged as the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction, and friends support was also a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. An independent sample t-test showed no significant differences between nuclear and joint family women on any of the study variables. The study mentions the importance of enhancing spousal support and relational quality through targeted interventions and psychoeducational programs to improve marital satisfaction among married working women.*

**Keywords:** Marital Adjustment, Perceived Social Support, Marital Satisfaction, Nuclear Family, Joint Family, Young Married Working Women

### Introduction

Marriage is one of the most significant relationships in an individual's life, and the social, cultural, and psychological resources available to an individual greatly influence marital quality. In the patriarchal culture of Pakistan, young married working women are conditioned to balance both domestic and professional life. Marital relations quality is not just a private concern for individuals, but instead it is woven into the fabric of family systems, cultural expectations, and social networks (Naz et al., 2020). As the workforce is increasingly populated with women now, professional demands from women have significantly increased, while handling domestic expectations as well. This ultimately created an anomalous space for their marital experiences that is largely unexplored. This space can be explained with three important constructs. Marital adjustment is the active interpersonal interaction within which spouses create harmony in marriage on various aspects of relationships, including the areas of marriage and conflict management (Spanier, 1976; Busby et al., 1995). Perceived social support is the subjective judgement of the support received from significant others, family, and friends in terms of their emotional, instrumental (material), and informational supports, which are important for mental health and relationships (Zimet et al., 1988). Marital satisfaction is the individual's self-report of their marriage from the perspective of perceived gains and losses, with perceived gains leading to higher satisfaction, and perceived losses leading to lower satisfaction (Hawkins, 1968).

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Jha (2024) examined marital adjustment through a t-test and used a marital adjustment scale developed by Kumar and Rohtagi (2018). The results through comparison between non-working and working women on marital adjustment showed no significance. Also, women in our society are forced to create a balance between work and life. One of the challenges includes the glass ceiling phenomenon, in which discrimination plays an important role in hindering the promotion of working women. In that case, the woman struggles to work harder, and tension between work and life develops (Catalyst, 2020). It is important to find out how the perception of working and non-working women differs. (Faisal et al. 2025) conducted an open-ended and in-depth interview related to factors that affect their professional and domestic life. The research analysis also depicts that there is a misconception that women who work cannot take care of household responsibilities. The data disagree about societal stereotypes, and with proper social support, a woman can play a competent role in society.

The pressures of domestic and workplace requirements directly shape the quality of marital adjustment experienced by young married women. There is a high level of marital adjustment reported in women living in a nuclear family as compared to women living in joint families. Highlighting the link between marital adjustment and compatibility and a couple's emotional relationship, Omid (2024) showed that emotion-based couple therapy training plays a significant role in marital adjustment. In Pakistan, marital adjustment is considered an important topic in the field of social research and is related to financial adjustment. A form of mutual understanding between partners in solving financial problems tends to be directly related to better marital adjustment between them (Bajwa et al., 2025).

In Pakistani culture, marital adjustment and marital satisfaction are measured on the same scale. The lived experiences of young married women are largely shaped by cultural norms. Faisal et al. (2025) conducted a structured sampling strategy of married working and non-working women using an interpretative analysis of fourteen themes. In which intimacy of relationship, sense of completion, family strength, sense of independence, and increasing exposure have greatly affected working married women. As perceived social support is linked with other psychological benefits, which are connected with self-independence, an increase in self-empowerment, and improved quality of marital adjustment. Ahmad and Khan (2018) used demographic data and the perceived social support scale along with the marital adjustment scale questionnaire for newly married women, which showed a correlation of social support with marital adjustment.

In Pakistan, patriarchal society highlights women over men to be more adaptable to the new marriage system and family. Naz et al. (2020) study depicted that social isolation and communication are two determinants of psychological adjustment and marital adjustment, respectively, related to newlywed females through testing and training methods. Less social support also leads to more social isolation, which affects the economic, cultural, and social relationships. So, if the result has a low score in the marital adjustment scale, then it will automatically link with low marital communication. Another demographic study of married young working and non-working women living in joint families, facing different restrictions from cultural and traditional roles. The reasons are high expectations for child-rearing, contributing to household chores, and taking care of the husband's family (Agarwal & Arshad, 2024). Rao (2020) used three variables: colleague, domestic help, and family for the social support system in his research to examine how married and unmarried women balance work and family. Pearson Correlation analysis was done to study and interpret the relationship between variables. The result showed a correlation between family and social support, which depicts that family also helps in terms of giving social support in balancing work and life. The social support and domestic help are said to be strongly related. The third variable, colleague support for married women, showed a value of 0.524 that supports the hypotheses. A positive perception of support from family members was reported among married and working female students. The result showed that both married and working females were satisfied with positive family support in bringing up a comfortable environment, a helping hand, and benefits in giving relaxation in life (Soleha & Nurhayati, 2025).

The social support perceived by women further mediates these outcomes, ultimately influencing their overall marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is considered the most influential yet controversial aspect, as Patel (2021) assessed it among working and non-working married women using mean and standard deviation values across three dimensions: sexual, social, and emotional, which showed that the mean values of working women were less than the mean value of non-working married women. He also assessed the significance of three dimensions through a t-test, which concluded a significant difference between the two groups, as non-working married women have higher marital satisfaction in social and sexual dimensions compared to working married women. Patrick (2002) created a predictive marital satisfaction model based on research theories, in which he used many variables, including spousal support and division of labor. The evidence showed that intimacy was mentioned as one of the main variables in envisaging the marital satisfaction level. Also, using marital satisfaction as a tool to predict mental health, mostly in Pakistani working and non-working women. Shaheen et al. (2022) used the Kansas marital satisfaction scale and the Depression Anxiety stress scale on 100 married working and non-working women in Karachi. Which depicted no such significance of marital satisfaction, while the score of working women shows higher significance on the stress variable, i.e.,  $p < .05$ . The main objectives of the research highlight that in Pakistan, marital satisfaction can be used as a tool to depict mental health through anxiety, depression, and stress scale. Marital and relationship satisfaction is high when a married working woman is satisfied with her career goals, considered as an integral part of occupational identity (Brown & Jones, 2020).

As young married women who are under the age of 35 experience extreme pressure due to the patriarchal Islamic society in Pakistan, this pushes them into an adjustment that is coerced, leaving their discomfort in the marriage, largely unspoken due to the fear of offending their families, and ultimately contributing to the high rates of Common Mental Disorders in Pashtun women. Moreover, the research indicates that no significant difference is found between Punjabis and Pashtun women in regard to depression. (Khan et al., 2025). This emphasizes the need for a systematic investigation of how marital adjustment, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction interact among young married working women in Pakistan, particularly across different family structures.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the theoretical framework of the Stress-Buffering Model, suggested by Cohen and Wills (1985), which provides a potent model of conceptualizing the protective role of perceived social support in mitigating the harmful psychological impacts of cumulative role stress. According to the model, social support is not just a source of comfort, but rather it interposes a stressor and its detrimental effects, and is a psychological buffer that diminishes the threat appraisal of the individual and improves their coping ability. In the case of young married working women who have to manage the two realms of professionalism and domestic pressures in the collectivist cultural context of Pakistan, the perceived social support of family, friends, and other significant people turns out to be not only an indulgence but also a psychological need. When this support is perceived well enough, when a woman has a sense that she is actually listened to, assisted, and appreciated by her social support system, the role conflict stress builds up before it has a chance to entirely drain out the satisfaction and adjustment of her marriage. But when the perceived social support is less or nonexistent, the resulting isolation is severe. The woman starts to internalize the feeling of helplessness, the silent yet fatal realization that she has to bear her burdens on her own, that people simply do not realize how much burden she carries on her own, and that the very relationships that are supposed to support her have turned out to be the extra burden. This lack of buffering is what will turn manageable role strain into chronic marital distress, so perceived social support is the most important protective variable in the current research.

### **Rationale**

Previous studies conducted in Pakistan have identified factors such as perceived social support and marital adjustment as significant factors influencing women's psychological well-being and marital satisfaction. Most

studies, however, have looked at social support as a broad construct and have given little attention to the interaction between perceived social support, marital satisfaction, and marital circumstances among young working married women. In addition, the research has been limited to comparing working with non-working women, rather than recognizing the specific issues confronted by young working women who must learn to cope with the demands of career and married life at the same time. These dynamics have become significant in the Pakistani collectivist culture, where the role of women is changing with the growing participation of women in the workforce. The present study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between perceived social support, marital satisfaction and marital adjustment among young married working women and look at the moderating role of family structure (nuclear versus joint family systems).

The results are anticipated to add to the existing research body and offer support for the creation of culturally relevant interventions, counseling, and support services that improve marital and psychological functioning. Furthermore, with the increasing focus on women's employment and family welfare in the policy agenda in Pakistan, the study can provide some lessons that can help design policies and policies at the workplace supporting the working women to manage household responsibilities and their professions simultaneously.

### **Objectives**

The present study has the following specific objectives:

- To find out the intercorrelations among marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and the perceived social support in young married working women.
- To find out the predictive role of perceived social support of marital adjustment and marital satisfaction in young married working women.
- To compare marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and perceived social support among young married working women in nuclear and joint family systems.

### **Hypotheses**

Following the analysis of the available literature, the following hypotheses are suggested:

- Perceived social support will be significantly and positively correlated with marital adjustment and marital satisfaction among young married working women living in nuclear and joint family systems.
- Perceived social support will significantly predict marital adjustment and marital satisfaction in young married working women.
- The young married working women in nuclear families will report significantly higher marital adjustment and marital satisfaction than their counterparts in the joint family systems.

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

The current research design has utilized a cross-sectional study design with a quantitative approach. It also aimed to compare the differences in marital adjustment, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction between young married working women living in nuclear and joint family systems in Lahore, Pakistan. A cross-sectional design was chosen due to its ability to collect data about a number of participants at one time, and thus it is especially applicable when studying group differences and interrelationships among psychological variables without the need to follow up (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The design is aligned with the previous studies of indigenous literature, which analyze family structure and marital outcomes in Pakistan (Abbas et al., 2019; Qadir et al., 2013) and fits the purpose of comparative and predictive aims of the current study.

### Sample

The current research had a total sample of 150 working married women, 75 of whom were recruited in a nuclear family and 75 in a joint family environment. The age range of participants was 25 to 40 years ( $M = 32.11$ ,  $SD = 4.38$ ), representing the early to middle stages of the marital trajectory when role negotiation, identity formation, and career establishment co-occur, a stage of development that was found to be especially important to understand marital adjustment among working women in Pakistan (Qadir et al., 2005; Faisal et al., 2025).

To be eligible to participate in the study, the participants must fulfill the following inclusion criteria. The participants should be presently working in a full-time professional or freelance role at the moment of data gathering. The participants should have at least two years of marriage experience. The participants should have lived in their respective family structure, either nuclear or joint, for at least one year. The homogeneity and relevance of the sample are maintained by the following exclusion criteria. Women aged under 25 and above 40 have been ruled out to ensure the sample is age-appropriate. Working women who have a history of divorce or separation are not allowed, as mentioned above. Working women who have not lived in their current family structure for more than a year are excluded.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of the sample (N = 150)*

Variable	Categories	n (%)	M (SD)
Age (years)			32.15 (4.30)
Duration of marriage (years)	Less than 5 years	94(62.7)	5.82 (4.23)
	More than 5 years	56(37.3)	
Education level	Intermediate	5 (3.3)	
	Bachelor's degree	53 (35.3)	
	Master's degree	46 (30.7)	
	MPhil/PhD	46 (30.7)	
Occupation	Teacher/Lecturer	45 (30)	
	Healthcare professional	19 (12.7)	
	Government/Civil servant	22 (14.7)	
	Private sector employee	25 (16.7)	
	Self-employed	34 (22.7)	
Monthly household income (PKR)	Below 30,000	8 (5.3)	
	30,000-60,000	10 (6.7)	
	60,000-100,000	48 (32)	
	100,000-150,000	16 (10.7)	
	Above 150,000	67 (44.7)	
Family system	Nuclear family	71 (47.3)	
	Joint family	79 (52.7)	
Type of marriage	Arranged marriage	100 (66.7)	
	Love marriage	50 (33.3)	
Number of children	0	34 (22.7)	
	1	37 (24.7)	
	2	48 (32)	
	3	19 (12.7)	
	5	12 (8)	
Duration in the current family structure	1-2 years	31 (20.7)	
	3-5 years	57 (38)	
	Above 5 years	48 (32)	

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of the participants ( $N=150$ ). Out of 150 participants, 79(52.7) were in joint family structures, and 71 (47.3) were in nuclear family structures. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 35 years, with an average age of 32.11 years ( $SD=4.38$ ) and an average marriage duration of 5.85 years ( $SD=4.31$ ). In terms of education level, the highest percentage was those with a Bachelor's Degree ( $n=53,35.3\%$ ). The most frequent occupational group included school teachers and college lecturers ( $n=45,30.0\%$ ).

### Instruments

The present study utilized a structured demographic questionnaire and three standardized and validated psychometric tools to measure the key variables of interest.

All the participants were provided with a structured demographic questionnaire that was used to collect the necessary background information. Variables that were captured in the demographic questionnaire consist of age, level of education, occupation, and nature of employment, monthly household income, duration of marriage, number of children, family system type, residence, and nature of marriage.

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby et al., 1995), a 14-item self-report instrument, was used to measure marital adjustment. The RDAS of marital adjustment consists of three sub-scales: dyadic consensus, which evaluates the degree of agreement between partners on the key issues in the relationship; dyadic satisfaction, which measures the partners' subjective sense of fulfilment within the relationship; and dyadic cohesion, which was used to measure the degree to which the participants perform activities together and their emotional intimacy towards each other. The items were rated using Likert-type response scales that had different anchor points based on the subscale. The RDAS had demonstrated strong psychometric properties with Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .90 (Busby et al., 1995).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988), a 12-item self-report instrument, was used to measure perceived social support. The MSPSS measured the subjective perception of the availability of social support of the individual by three different people, i.e., family, friends, and significant others. The scale consisted of 12 questions, rated using the seven-point Likert scale, 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). The MSPSS had proven to have good psychometric qualities in many cross-cultural studies, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient being in the range of more than .85 (Zimet et al., 1988).

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16; Funk & Rogge, 2007), a 16-item instrument, was used to measure relationship satisfaction between partners. This instrument was developed on item response theory. The CSI-16 documents the cognitive analysis as well as the affective content in the marital relationship in a variety of response formats, such as Likert-type agreement scales, frequency scales, and semantic differential items, and this was the multidimensionality of relationship satisfaction. The CSI-16 was proven to possess better psychometric qualities than previous measures of satisfaction, and Cronbach's alpha was above .94, and convergent and discriminant validity was highly evidenced in a variety of samples (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

### Procedure

The following study was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). Throughout this research process, multiple ethical safeguards were implemented to ensure the protection of participant welfare, dignity, and rights. The involvement in the current study was voluntary. None of the participants was put under any sort of pressure, incentives, or coercions to participate or keep participating. All the participants were asked for their consent. The process of informed consent guaranteed that all the participants were also given comprehensive details of the research before participating, enabling them to review the study and seek clarification. No personal data, such as names, contact information, or institutional affiliation of any one of the participants, was gathered at any time during the study. No information is given to any third party outside the research. All in-

person data collection was conducted by a female researcher. Participants were not required to disclose any personal information beyond what was necessary for the data. There was no physical, psychological, or social danger to the subjects in the present study. Respondents who felt uneasy while filling out the survey were free to quit at any time.

### Results

The current study was conducted to examine the relationship among marital adjustment, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction in young married working women. Prior to hypothesis testing, the reliability of the three scales was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics were applied to examine the group means and standard deviations of the study variables. Pearson correlations were used to examine the interrelationships among the study variables. Two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine the predictive role of perceived social support on marital adjustment among young married working women. The first hierarchical regression was conducted to assess the contributions of perceived social support, including significant others, family, and friends, as predictors of marital satisfaction, after controlling for age and duration of marriage. The second hierarchical regression examined the combined predictive role of total perceived social support and Marial adjustment on marital satisfaction, after controlling for age and duration of marriage. Moreover, for the comparison between the two groups, nuclear and joint family working women, independent samples t-tests were conducted on marital adjustment, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction. Results of significance were set at  $p < .05$  for all analyses, and Cohen's d was also computed to reflect the magnitude of effect sizes where applicable.

**Table 2**  
*Reliability Analysis of Study Measures*

Variables	M	SD	Range	$\alpha$
Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)	45.83	10.53	17-67	.834
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	63.47	13.44	28-84	.947
Significant Other Support	21.13	5.18	8-28	.909
Family Support	21.27	4.80	10-28	.903
Friends Support	21.07	4.70	9-28	.860
Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16)	55.83	17.24	10-82	.964

The table indicates that the reliability analysis of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale is good ( $\alpha = .834$ ). Moreover, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is very high ( $\alpha = .947$ ). Moreover, the Couples Satisfaction Index shows excellent reliability ( $\alpha = .964$ ). Subscales of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support also show excellent internal consistency, significant other support ( $\alpha = .909$ ), family support ( $\alpha = .903$ ), and friends support ( $\alpha = .860$ ).

**Table 3**  
*Pearson Correlation Matrix for Duration of Marriage, Marital Adjustment, Perceived Social Support, and Marital Satisfaction*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Duration of Marriage	5.82	4.23	-			
2. Marital adjustment	45.83	10.53	-.134	-		
3. Perceived Social Support	63.47	13.44	-.274**	.512**	-	
4. Marital Satisfaction	55.83	17.24	-.232**	.820**	.565**	-

\*\* $p < .01$

Results indicate that duration of marriage has statistically significant negative low correlation with perceived social support,  $r(149) = -.274, p < .01$ , and a statistically significant negative low correlation with marital satisfaction,  $r(149) = -.232, p < .01$ . However, duration of marriage has no significant correlation with marital adjustment,  $r(149) = -.134, p = .101$ . Furthermore, marital adjustment demonstrated a statistically significant moderate positive correlation with perceived social support,  $r(149) = .512, p < .01$ , and a statistically significant strong positive correlation with marital satisfaction,  $r(149) = .820, p < .01$ . Moreover, perceived social support demonstrated a statistically significant moderate positive correlation with marital satisfaction,  $r(149) = .565, p < .01$ .

**Table 4**

*Predictors of Marital Satisfaction in Young Married Working Women*

Marital Satisfaction	B	95% confidence		SE B	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
<b>Model 1</b>						.023	.023
Constant	75.430	54.55	96.31	10.565			
Age	-.610	-1.253	.034	.326	-.152		
<b>Model 2</b>						.054	.031**
Constant	61.076	36.72	85.43	12.324			
Age	.010	-.837	.856	.428	.002		
Duration of Marriage	-.953*	-1.814	-.092	.435	-.234*		
<b>Model 3</b>					.	.391	.337
Constant	27.571	6.615	48.275	10.603			
Age	-.464	-1.154	.226	.349	-.116		
Duration of Marriage	.044	-.683	.771	.368	.011		
Significant Other Support	2.031**	1.584	2.478	.226	.610**		
<b>Model 4</b>						.405	.014
Constant	25.009	4.043	45.975	10.603			
Age	-.527	-1.125	.160	.348	-.132		
Duration of Marriage	.075	-.647	.797	.365	.018		
Significant Other Support	1.610**	.978	2.243	.320	.484**		
Family Support	-.044	1.296	1.296	.339	.174		
<b>Model 5</b>						.435	.030**
Constant	26.536	6.012	47.059	10.383			
Age	-.383	-1.063	.297	.344	-.096		
Duration of Marriage	-.177	-.905	.551	.368	-.043		
Significant Other Support	1.910**	1.257	2.564	.331	.574**		
Family Support	1.294**	.486	2.102	.409	.360**		
Friends Support	-1.199**	-2.050	-.348	.430	-.327**		

Note: N=150; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

In model 1, Age did not significantly predict wellbeing,  $\beta = -.152, p = .063, F(1, 148) = 3.2502, p = .063$ .  $R^2 = .023$  indicated that age did not explain any variance in marital satisfaction.

In Model 2, duration of marriage significantly predicted marital satisfaction,  $\beta = -.234, p < .05, F(2, 147) = 4.189, p = .017$ .  $R^2 = .031$  indicated that the duration of marriage explained 3.1% variance in marital satisfaction.

In Model 3, significant other support significantly predicted marital satisfaction,  $\beta = .610, p < .01, F(3, 146) = 31.185, p < .0001$ .  $R^2 = .337$  indicated that significant other support explained 33.7% variance in marital satisfaction.

In Model 4, family support did not significantly predict marital satisfaction,  $\beta = .067$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $F(4, 145) = 24.627$ ,  $p < .001$ .  $R^2 = .014$  indicated that family support explained a significant 1.4% variance in marital satisfaction.

In Model 5, friends' support significantly predicted marital satisfaction,  $\beta = -.327$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $F(5, 144) = 22.172$ ,  $p < .001$ .  $R^2 = .030$  indicated that friends' support explained 3.0% additional variance in marital satisfaction.

Altogether, significant other support, family support, and friends support added 41.5% of the variance in marital satisfaction.

**Table 5**

*Comparison of Marital Adjustment, Perceived Social Support, and Marital Satisfaction between Nuclear and Joint Family Women*

Variable	Nuclear Family (n= 71)		Joint Family (n= 79)		t	df	p	d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Marital Adjustment	46.32	9.46	45.39	11.45	.545	146.98	.586	.09
Perceived Social Support	63.04	13.24	63.86	13.69	-.372	147.19	.710	.06
Marital Satisfaction	57.17	14.79	54.63	19.19	.911	144.74	.364	.15
Duration of Marriage	5.39	4.73	6.31	3.72	-1.179	148	.240	.19

The results of the independent sample t-test indicate that there is no significant difference between nuclear family women ( $M = 46.32$ ,  $SD = 9.46$ ) and joint family women ( $M = 45.39$ ,  $SD = 11.45$ ) on marital adjustment,  $t(146.48) = .545$ ,  $p = .586$ . Cohen's  $d = .09$ . Similarly, there is no significant difference between nuclear family women ( $M = 63.04$ ,  $SD = 13.24$ ) and joint family women ( $M = 63.86$ ,  $SD = 13.69$ ) on perceived social support,  $t(147.19) = -.372$ ,  $p = .710$ , Cohen's  $d = .06$ . Furthermore, there is no significant difference between nuclear family women ( $M = 57.17$ ,  $SD = 14.79$ ) and joint family women ( $M = 54.63$ ,  $SD = 19.19$ ) did not differ significantly,  $t(144.74) = .911$ ,  $p = .364$ . Cohen's  $d = .15$ . Moreover, there is no significant difference between nuclear family women ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 4.73$ ) and joint family women ( $M = 6.21$ ,  $SD = 3.72$ ) on duration of marriage,  $t(148) = -1.179$ ,  $p = .240$ . Cohen's  $d = .19$ .

**Discussion**

The first hypothesis was supported, showing that perceived social support had a significant moderate positive correlation with marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. Marital adjustment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction, which confirms that marital harmony is an important factor in marital satisfaction. The results are consistent with the findings of Ahmad and Khan (2018) and Naz et al. (2020), who revealed direct support of social resources to relational harmony in Pakistani women's perspective. This can be explained by Role Theory (Goode, 1960), which holds that as long as the demands of the profession, family, and home vie for the individual's needs, social support will return the capacity to invest in marriage. Social support from family and colleagues and those from domestic networks has positive effects on work-life balance, psychological well-being, and marital quality (Rao, 2020; Soleha & Nurhayati, 2025; Ahmad & Khan, 2018). The Stress-Buffering Model (Cohen & Wills, 1985) also provides an explanation for how role conflict compromises marital quality by blocking its impact. As predicted by Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), the longer the marriage, the less social support participants felt and the less successful they felt the marriage was, indicating that the relationship was not failing, but rather becoming depleted. Marital tenure was similar for both groups, so it was not a confound.

The second hypothesis was supported, showing that perceived social support predicted marital satisfaction and marital adjustment. Emotional intimacy, effective communication, financial understanding, and perceived social support are all characteristics of higher marital adjustment. Significant other support

was the main predictor among the three pillars of perceived social support, which means that feelings known, valued, and understood by one's spouse are more important than receiving assistance. This is consistent with the findings by Patrick (2002), Shaheen et al. (2022), and Social Exchange Theory, where the spouse is seen as the main source of relationship gains. Friends' support emerged as another important negative predictor, indicating that the extent to which they rely on friends may be a proxy for a lack of marital support, rather than a supplement, consistent with the findings of Faisal et al. (2025), who found intimacy in marriage to be the strongest determinant of marital experience. However, the role of family support was evident only in the final regression model, which included other subscales, where family support was found to be one of the components of support network, as suggested by the Stress-Buffering Model (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and Soleha and Nurhayati (2025) that family support is not an independent predictor of marital satisfaction but plays a significant role when entered with other subscales in the Pakistani context.

The third hypothesis was not supported, showing that there were no significant differences between nuclear and joint family women, with negligible effect sizes, in the following areas: marital adjustment, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction. This result is consistent with Role Theory (Goode, 1960): role demands are equally penetrating in both family structures, the difference being only in the form. According to Bibi et al. (2025), the shared Islamic and cultural norms have a uniform impact on marital role relations regardless of family type, and it was shown by Bajwa et al. (2025) that knowledge of the other person in marriage was a better predictor of marital adjustment than household composition. Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) continues the explanation of the equivalence: Joint family women receive instrumental aid but lose autonomy; nuclear family women receive autonomy but have increased individual responsibility; countervailing pressures that produce comparable relational outcomes. Omidi's finding of greater adjustment in nuclear families, in contrast, may have been related to the context of his study, which was an intervention, and further supported the notion that the quality of the dyadic relationship, not family structure, is the most important factor in marital outcomes. Women's marital experiences are also highly influenced by the family structure, cultural expectations, and societal stereotypes, particularly in patriarchal societies (Naz et al., 2020; Agarwal & Arshad, 2024; Faisal et al., 2025). In general, marital adjustment and marital satisfaction are multifaceted concepts that are intricately tied to women's mental health, social support, career roles, and relationships (Shaheen et al., 2022; Brown & Jones, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above findings, it can be concluded that the perceived social support, marital adjustment, and marital satisfaction are strongly related in Pakistani young married working women, whereby support maintains adjustment and adjustment maintains satisfaction. Significant other support was found to have the most impact on marital satisfaction. Friends' support was a response to unmet marital needs, whereas family support was a conditional response in a larger support network. The decreased support and satisfaction with marital duration indicate the accumulated cost of dual-role strain on relational well-being over time. Lastly, nuclear and joint family systems showed no significant difference in marital satisfaction and adjustment, supporting that it is the perceived social support that ultimately determines how adjusted and satisfied a young married working woman feels.

## **Limitations and Suggestions**

The data collected in this study are of a cross-sectional type, which does not allow for making causal inferences. The study was conducted with urban working women of Lahore and was limited in size. Self-report measures have the disadvantage of being subject to social desirability bias because, in Western culture, women are encouraged to underreport marital dissatisfaction. Neither were psychological factors (emotional regulation, self-esteem, personality) taken into consideration. Longitudinal designs would better reflect changes in marital relationships over time. More sampling in rural areas and other cities would provide better

generalizability. Additional psychological mediators and qualitative approaches are needed in future research to gain a more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of married working women.

### **Implications**

The current study can be applied in counselling settings. It should focus on developing emotional responsiveness between the couple, as spousal support is the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Assessing the quality of spousal support as an important indicator of relational well-being should be considered in the practice of the therapist with married working women. Psychoeducation-related activities that would target the attunement between partners in terms of emotions would be especially useful for young women with dual working and family roles. Structurally, a need to be addressed is to make the role burden of married working women in Pakistan proportionate. There is a need to increase awareness of the community and family of the invisible emotional needs of women. Importantly, because family structure was not predictive of marital outcomes, interventions should target the quality of relational experiences, not the type of family; it is relational quality and not family type that has a bearing on marital outcomes.

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