Emotional Intelligence: A Predictor of Marital Quality in Pakistani Couples

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The present study examined the role of emotional intelligence in the prediction of marital quality in Pakistani scenario. A sample of 85 couples (N = 170) was collected. Their age ranged from 21 to 40 years and the duration of marriage ranged from three to 10 years. Scale of Emotional Intelligence (Batool & Khalid, 2009a), Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (Kousar & Khalid, 2003), and Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (Kousar & Khalid, 2003; McClellan, 1993) were used. The analyses of the study variables revealed significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and indicators of marital quality, i.e., marital adjustment and conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence explained 48% variance in marital adjustment and 56% variance in conflict resolution. Only interpersonal skill, empathy, optimism, and impulse control (dimensions of emotional intelligence) appeared as salient predictors of marital quality. Initial analyses ruled out the role of demographic variables (e.g., age, monthly income, family system, duration of marriage, and type of marriage) in marital quality.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, marital quality, marital adjustment, conflict resolution

Individual differences in the emotional intelligence (EI) of married individuals contribute towards quality of their relationship. Marital quality has long been a popular topic, probably due to the reason that concept is believed to be closely related to the stability of a given marriage. Korchin (1976) defines a healthy marriage as "Husband and wife both should be free of any conflict, regarding responsibility, dominance, submission, autonomy, and have affection

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and respect for each other" (p. 387). Factors constituting marital quality include cohesion, mutual trust, satisfaction, affection, and conflict resolution (Lazarus & Delingis, 1983; Margolin, 1980).

Burgess and Cottrell (1939) provide a model of marital adjustment that outlines 14 assumptions regarding marital adjustment. That is adjustment in marriage involves the extent to which spouse feel satisfied with their marriage and agreement or disagreement centering around important family matters as (1) handling of family finances, (2) recreation, (3) religion, (4) demonstration of affection, (5)friends, (6)intimate relations, (7) caring for the baby, (8) table manners, (9) matter of conversationality, (10) philosophy of life, (11) ways of dealing with in-laws, (12) wife's working, (13) sharing of household tasks, and (14) politics. A well-adjusted marriage defined by Burgess, Lock, and Thomas (1963) is:

> Union in which the attitude and acts of husband and wife are in agreement of chief issues of family such as handling family finances and dealing with in-laws, where they have come to an agreement upon interests, objectives, and values, where they have few or no more complaints about their marriage (p.294).

Conflict Resolution is another important indicator of marital quality plays crucial role in determining quality of dyadic relationship (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005). The term conflict resolution is sometimes used interchangeably with the term dispute resolution. The concept of healthy conflict resolution means the use of non-violent methods (Augsburger, 1992). No two married partners are alike, even though there are mutual interest, shared likes and dislikes, and common taste between the couples. There will be difference of opinion; this may often result in conflict or argumentation. The problem with arguing during conflict situation is that neither party gets what they want. Arguments leave couples bitter, resentful, and unsatisfied; this leads to feelings of discontent.

The secret of healthy marriage is not the absence of conflict, but the ways of resolving the conflict. Good conflict resolution skill may very well save marriages. Effective communication and emotional understanding may help married partners to resolve their conflicts successfully. Effective conflict resolution is to settle dispute and differences of belief or opinion by accommodating the second party in an assertive and cooperative manner (Thomas, 1976). Intelligent use of emotions is a skill determining how people handle themselves and their relationships (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Proper

handling of relationship needs happy adjustment and resolution of mutual conflicts in a constructive manner.

Fitness (2000, 2001, & 2006) has given vital importance to the role of EI in intimate relationships, especially to the positive association between emotional clarity and marital happiness, and deems a successful marriage as "emotionally intelligent marriage". Marriage allows partners to share some of their deepest feelings and emotions from love, hate, and anger to fear, sadness, and joy in an intimate relationship; the extent to which spouse can understand, communicate, and manage these and other powerful emotions play a crucial role in their marital happiness. The congruence between EI and characteristics required for successful marriage encourages that if there is any context in which EI might be expected to matter, it is marriage (Fitness, 2000, 2001). A large body of evidence drawn from different lines of researches following both ability and trait models suggests that EI plays vital role in healthy marital life. Self-report measures of trait EI have been used in a popular fashion to investigate the role of EI and found to be positively and significantly related to marital adjustment and satisfaction (e.g., Bricker & Rudnick, 2005; Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Croyle & Waltz, 2002; Moshe & Iris, 2008; Punyanunt-Carter, 2004; Schutte et al., 2001; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008; Vadnais & Michelle, 2005; Wachs & Cordova, 2007; Yelsma & Marrow, 2003).

Role of EI in effective conflict resolution, emotional support, and positive relations with friends, opposite sex, and married couples has also been supported by applying ability measures of EI (e.g., Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Brakett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Lopes et al., 2004; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). Longitudinal studies in this field are being conducted to see the long term role of EI in lives of married partners instead of looking at concurrent level of adjustment. For example Smith, Ciarrochi, and Heaven (2008) investigated the influence of EI, conflict communication pattern and relationship satisfaction on 45 cohabiting couples over 12-month period and found that self-reported EI hold stable effect on satisfaction across the 12-month period, and it was not predictive of changes in satisfaction, whereas women's reports of avoidance and withdrawing communication predicted decrease in satisfaction over the period.

Substantial disparity exists regarding the definition of EI, with respect to both terminology and operationalization (e.g., Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The field is growing rapidly, that researchers are constantly modifying their own definitions of the construct (e.g., Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Two EI models of heterogeneous nature, the ability-

based model and the mixed model exist in the literature. The ability-based model views emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the situation. The model proposes that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional processing to a wider cognition. The ability-based model claims that EI includes four types of branches: perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. This model emphasizes cognitive abilities and usually requires maximal performance. It measures direct handling of emotions and accuracy of response like IQ tests (see e.g., Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2003; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The mixed model assesses mental abilities and personality traits. Supporters of mixed model usually rely on self-report; how a person expresses his/her emotion in life. One of the well-known model, the Bar-On model of Emotional-social Intelligence (Bar-On, 2006), defines EI as being concerned with effectively understanding oneself and others, relating well to people, and adapting to and coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands. Bar-On (1997) hypothesizes that those individuals possessing higher than average EQ are in general more successful in meeting environmental demands and pressures; subsequently any deficiency in EI can signify a lack of success and the existence of emotional problems. The Bar-On model (2006) consists of cross-section of emotional and social competencies that influence behavior, and are measured by combination of self-report and multi-rater assessment. The model consists of five composite scales, i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. These dimensions give rise to 15 elements of EI including self-regard, assertiveness, self-actualization, self-awareness, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving.

In the last three year significance of EI in marital relationship has compelled researchers in non American and non European countries to investigate its role in the quality of marital relationship. For example Yazdi and Golzary (2009) found emotion related abilities (e.g., happiness, optimism, and interpersonal skill) significantly important for a happy well adjusted marriage in female teachers in Tehran. Ortese and Tor-Anyiin (2008) in Nigeria examined the effects of EI on marital adjustment of couples and found the significant effect of emotional sensitivity, emotional management, and social relationship skills on marital adjustment of couples. Pre-marital and marital counseling to develop these components of EI in couples for

long term happy marriage was recommended by the study. Lavalekar (2007) explored the core traits of EI namely; openness to criticism, self-management and empathy of married partners in Maharashtra (India) and found to be influencing the marital relationship positively. Joshi and Thingujam (2009) after research on 60 married couples in India concluded that emotionally intelligent couples tend to be well adjusted in their marital relationship and correlation between overall EI and marital adjustment remained significant after controlling for social desirability, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Following hypotheses were drawn to be tested on Pakistani sample:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional intelligence will be a salient predictor of marital quality

Hypothesis 2: Key components of emotional intelligence will predict marital quality

Hypothesis 3: Partners with higher emotional intelligence spouses would have better marital quality as compared to the (married) partners with lower emotional intelligence spouses.

The present study was mainly designed to investigate the role of trait EI in marital quality of Pakistani sample. Role of individual components of EI have not been well explored, so the second aim of the study was to look at the strength and hierarchical contribution of individual components of EI in marital quality. The study also aims to make comparison between Pakistani sample and previous results derived from Western sample.

Method

Sample

Sample was recruited from the offices of 'union councils' and 'Nikkah Registrars' of four cities of Punjab (i.e., Lahore, Multan, Gujranwala, and Khanewal). Couples with three to 10 years duration of marriage were included in the sample. Addresses and contact numbers of 120 couples were gathered and when contacted few of them declined to participate in the study. Rest of the couples responded well and showed keen interest in the study. Childless couples were ruled out and excluded from the study. The final sample consisted of 85 married couples ($N = 170$).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Variables (N = 170)

Variables		f	Percentage
Gender	Male	85	50.0%
	Female	85	50.0%
Age (in Years)	21 – 30	79	46.5%
	31- 40	91	53.5%
Education	Under graduates	18	10.6%
	Graduates	58	34.12%
	Post graduates	94	55.29%
Income (in thousands)[a]	6 – 15	29	18.7%
	16 – 25	26	16.8%
	26 –35	22	14.2%
	36 – 45	26	16.8%
	46 – 55	10	6.5%
	56 – 65	17	11.0%
	66 – 75	14	9.0%
	76 and above	11	7.1%
Residence	Urban	110	64.7%
	Rural	60	35.29%
Nature of marriage	Love marriage	29	17.1%
	Arrange marriage	141	82.9%
Duration of marriage	3 – 5 years	90	52.9%
	6- 10 years	80	47.1%
Family system	Nuclear	73	42.9%
	Joint	97	57.1%
No of children	1-2	122	71.0%
	3-4	42	24.7%
	5-6	06	3.5%

[a] 15 values were missing from the income demographics.

In Table 1 distribution of the demographic characteristics shows that the age of the sample ranged between 21 years to 40 years

(M = 31.67, SD = 4.63), having qualification from under graduation to post graduation, representing all socioeconomic status, rural and urban background, nuclear and joint family system, and number of children.

Instruments

The Scale of Emotional Intelligence.   Developed by Batool and Khalid (2009a), SEI is a self-report measure, based on the social and EI model of Bar-On (1997, 2000, & 2006). Respondents use 4-point Likert type response options ranging from 1 (*never true of me*), to 4 (*always true of me*). The scale consists of 10 factors: interpersonal skill, self-regard, assertiveness, empathy emotional self-awareness, impulse control, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, and optimism. The scale is in Urdu language and contains 56 items.

Psychometric properties were fulfilled during developmental and validation process. Convergent validity of the scale was determined by finding correlation between SEI and Urdu version of Bar-On (EQ-i; 1997, 2000, & 2006) by Akram and Ghous (2004) and it showed moderate correlation (r =. 69, p < .01).

Convergent validity was supplemented with peers rating on self-constructed rating scale defining trait EI on a sample of 60 students. Significant positive correlation (r = .63, p < .01) was found between peers' rating and self-reported EI on SEI. Construct validity of the scale was further established by correlating scores of SEI with Beck Depression Inventory (Beck & Steer, 1993) and significant results were found (r = -.49, p < .01). The Cronbach's alpha α = .95 demonstrates that SEI is a reliable instrument. The norms of SEI on normative sample (N = 1547) yielded a mean of 164 (SD = 28.31). Subjects scoring one standard deviation above the mean are rated as above average (high scorer) and one standard deviation below the mean are rated as below average (low scorer).

Marital Adjustment Questionnaire.   Kousar and Khalid (2003) developed Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ) in Urdu language. The rationale of this questionnaire was taken from the revised Marriage Study Schedule of Burgess and Cottrell (1939). The questionnaire covers areas like: handling of family finances, recreation, demonstration of affection, friends, intimate relations, caring for the baby, matter of conversationality, ways of dealing with in-laws, and sharing of household tasks; assuming that these are fundamental factors for the marital adjustment of both male and

female married partners in Pakistani culture. The questionnaire consists of 48 statements. Each statement has three forced choices where 1 represents (*never*), 2 represents (*to some extent*) and 3 represent (*to great extent*). Higher score represents better marital adjustment and lower score represents poor marital adjustment. Minimum score = 48 and maximum score = 144.

The convergent validity of the MAQ was determined by finding correlation between the dimensions of Bowen's (1990) Marital Coping Inventory (MCI; Server, 1994) on 40 married persons. Marital adjustment correlated significantly with dimensions of MCI i.e., conflict ($r = -.57$, $p < .01$), introspective self-blame ($r = -.55$, $p < .01$), positive approach ($r = .62$, $p < .01$), self-interest ($r = -.42$, $p < .01$), and avoidance ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Earlier studies support the positive relationship between marital copings in quality of marital adjustment (Haring, Hewitt, & Flett, 2003; Lussier, Sabourin, & Turgeon, 1997; Wunderer, & Schneewind, 2006).

Conflict Resolution Questionnaire.   Urdu-version of the McClellan Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CRQ; 1993) by Kousar and Khalid (2003) was used in the study. The questionnaire comprises 10 sub-groups of conflict resolution strategies: view conflict as natural and positive, to create positive atmosphere while addressing conflict, identify root cause of conflict, identify needs essential to mutual relationship, to share power, work on mutually beneficial solution, accept alternatives with open mind, look up for permanent solution, avoid win-lose solution, and to involve third party facilitator if needed; the preference for the strategy is measured by the maximum scores on the sub-group of four items corresponding to that strategy.

The total score is achieved by adding up all the scores on 40 items determines the degree of overall conflict resolution. Each item has five options, where 1 represents (*almost never*), 2 represents (*occasionally*), 3 represents (*half of the time*), 4 represents (*usually*), and 5 represents (*almost always*). The minimum range of the total score is 40 and the maximum range is 200. The higher the score on any question, the more likely a person is to be effective in arriving at resolution that meets both people's needs and that builds up the relationship and lower score indicates ineffectiveness to build up long term relationship and resolution that meet everyone's need.

To establish the convergent validity, correlation between Conflict Resolution Questionnaire and Marital Coping Inventory (Bowen, 1990) was measured and results showed significant correlations, i.e., Conflict ($r = -.05$, $p < .01$), introspective self-blame ($r = -.45$,

$p < .01$), positive approach ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), self-interest ($r = -.34$, $p < .05$), and avoidance ($r = .31$, $p < .01$).

Procedure

Contact numbers and addresses of the sample selected from the offices of union councils and *Nikkah* (marriage) Registrars were gathered. Sample was approached personally and requested to participate in the study. After getting written consent, the three study questionnaires were distributed. The participants were briefed about how to fill up the questionnaires. Couples were treated as individuals, each partner was instructed to rate him/her self on the measures without collaborating with the spouse. Most of the respondents returned the questionnaires on the same day, some took couple of days, and few of them posted back the questionnaires in duly addressed envelopes.

Results

In order to achieve the goals of the present study, a series of analyses was run. Initially construct validity and reliability of the measures of present study were established. Then frequencies and percentages of demographic variables were calculated. *t*-test, ANOVA and Pearson's correlations were calculated in order to rule out the role of demographic variables in study variables.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Internal Consistency of the Study Instruments (N = 170)

Scales	No. of items	*M*	*SD*	α
Scale of Emotional Intelligence	56	162	21	.92
Marital Adjustment Questionnaire	48	123	15	.93
Conflict Resolution Questionnaire	40	134	18	.90

As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alphas of all three measures are $\alpha \geq .90$, which supports the internal reliability of the scales.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values of Demographic Variables on Marital Adjustment and Conflict Resolution (N = 170)

	n	M	SD	t(169)	Cohen's d	95% CI LL	UL
Marital adjustment							
Gender							
Male	85	124.48	14.13	1.11	.12	-1.99	7.10
Female	85	121.93	15.84				
Nature of Marriage							
Love marriage	29	118.58	17.43	-1.83	-.25	11.57	.44
Arrange marriage	141	124.15	14.36				
Family System							
Nuclear	73	120.72	18.35	-.48	-.20	-8.91	.21
Joint	97	125.07	11.68				
Conflict resolution							
Gender							
Male	85	133.30	19.57	-.68	-.07	-7.48	3.65
Female	85	135.22	17.10				
Nature of marriage							
Love marriage	29	131.83	20.83	-.78	-.11	- 10.33	4.66
Arrange marriage	14	134.77	17.84				
Family system							
Nuclear	73	131.51	21.40	1.71	-.18	- 10.41	.75
Joint	97	136.34	15.46				

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

*p > .05

The results in Table 3 indicate that nonsignificant difference in marital adjustment and conflict resolution of married partners is found due to difference in gender, nature of marriage, and family system. However Cohen's *d* indicates that nature of marriage and family system has larger effect on marital adjustment as compared to conflict resolution.

Table 4

Correlations among Conflict Resolution, Marital Adjustment, and Demographic Variables (N = 170)

Variables	Marital adjustment	Conflict resolution
Age	-.07	-.12
Personal income	-.02	-.08
Spouse income	-.14	-.02
Number of children	-.20*	-.12
Years married	-.09	-.04

*$p < .01$

Inter-correlations between demographic variables (viz., age, personal income, spouses' income, no of children, and years married) and study variables (conflict resolution and marital adjustment) were computed and nonsignificant correlation appeared except for significant negative correlation ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$) between number of children and marital adjustment, depicting that high number of children leads to low marital adjustment (see Table 4).

Additionally one-way ANOVA for levels of education and income categories in relation to marital adjustment, and conflict resolution was carried out. The results indicated nonsignificant difference in marital adjustment and conflict resolution of partners results due to difference of education and socioeconomic status.

To compare the self-perceived marital quality of partners with low and high EI spouses *t*-statistic was applied (see Table 5). To test hypotheses regarding EI in the prediction of marital quality linear regression was run, and to establish the relative significance of components of EI in the prediction of marital quality Step-wise regression analysis was run (see Table 6). To study EI as a predictor of marital quality, Simple regression analysis was run individually for both outcome variables i.e., marital adjustment and conflict resolution (see Tables 7 and 8).

Results in Table 5 indicate that married partners, whose spouses have higher EI show better marital quality as compared to married partners whose spouses have lower EI. Cohen's d indicates that high and low EI level of spouse have larger effect on both indicators of marital quality (i.e., marital adjustment and conflict resolution) of a partner. In figure below, sample of the study shows highest mean score on interpersonal skill, second highest score on assertiveness,

third highest score on self-regard, and lowest score on impulse control and stress tolerance (see Figure 1).

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviations, and t-values of High and Low EI Spouses on Marital Adjustment and Conflict Resolution (N = 47)

	EI							
	Low (n = 21)		High (n = 26)			*Cohen's*	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD	t(46)	d	LL	UL
MA	111.28	20.58	129.09	10.60	-3.83**	-1.08	-38.54	- 22.27
CR	122.43	20.10	142.96	15.73	-3.93**	-1.13	-52.17	-34.04

Note. Read MA as marital adjustment and CR as conflict resolution. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.
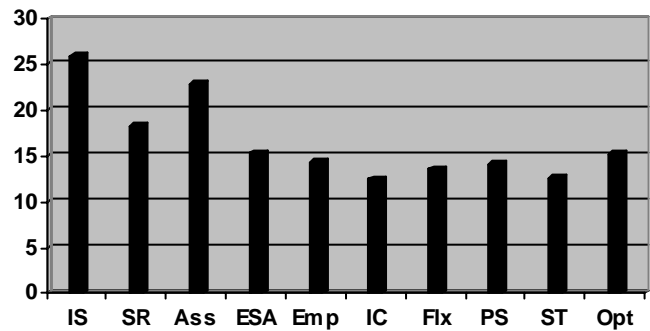
**$p < .00$

Figure 1. Bar Chart showing Comparative Mean of Components of Emotional Intelligence. IS = interpersonal skill , SR = self-regard, Ass =assertiveness, ESA = emotional self-awareness, Emp = empathy, IC = Impulse control, Flx = flexibility, PS = problem solving , ST = stress tolerance, and Opt = optimism.

In Table 6, it can be seen that both values indicate that our model over all significantly predicts quality of marital relationship, 48% of variance in marital adjustment and 56% variance in conflict resolution is accounted for by trait EI. EI predicts marital relationship positively, so we may conclude that partners high on EI tend to have better quality of marital relationship.

Table 6

Emotional Intelligence Predicting Marital Adjustment and Conflict Resolution (N = 170)

Models	*B*	*SEB*	β
Marital adjustment			
1. Constant	44.054	6.342	-
Emotional intelligence	.488	.039	.697*
Conflict resolution			
1. Constant	30.65	7.182	-
Emotional intelligence	.64	.044	.747*

Note. R² = .48 (t = 12.58; F = 158.45) for marital adjustment and R² = .56 (t = 14.55, p < .00;F = 211.73, p <. 00) for conflict resolution.

*p <. 00

All 10 components of EI were put into stepwise regression analysis, and three components (viz., assertiveness, empathy, interpersonal skill) appeared as significant predictors of marital relationship (see Table 7).

Table 7

Step-wise Regression for Components of Emotional Intelligence Predicting Marital Adjustment (N = 170)

Models	*B*	*SEB*	β
1. Constant	52.57	3.19	-
Assertiveness	3.10	.14	.87*
2. Constant	49.16	2.91	-
Assertiveness	2.38	.17	.67*
Empathy	1.39	.21	.30*
3.Constant	42.64	3.24	-
Assertiveness	2.04	.18	.57*
Empathy	1.45	.20	.32*
Interpersonal skill	.510	.13	.16*

Note. R² = .76 in step1, R² = .80 in step 2 and R² = .82 in step 3 (t-statistic = 22.16, 7.24, and 4.19).

*p < .00

All *t*-values are significant, so we may conclude that the predictor variables contribute significantly to the values of outcome variable. 75% of variance in marital adjustment is accounted for by

assertiveness, when empathy combines with assertiveness the value of R^2 increases by 5% and 80% of the variance is accounted for in marital adjustment by both assertiveness, and empathy. In the third step interpersonal relationship further enhances the value of R^2 by 2%, we may conclude that 82% marital adjustment is accounted for by 3 components of EI (i.e., assertiveness, empathy, interpersonal skill; Fs = 510.37, 340.44, 252.08, ps <.00) for the three components support the model (see Table 7).

Table 8

Step-wise Regression Analyses for Components of Emotional Intelligence Predicting Conflict Resolution (N =170)

Models	B	SEB	β
1. Constant	62.15	6.42	-
Interpersonal skill	2.78	.22	.66*
2. Constant	42.60	6.82	
Interpersonal skill	1.81	.28	.43*
Optimism	2.94	.52	.38*
3.Constant	34.36	6.65	-
Interpersonal skill	1.60	.27	.38*
Optimism	2.44	.50	.32*
Empathy	1.49	.31	.26*
4.Constant	33.25	6.57	-
Interpersonal skill	1.50	.27	.36*
Optimism	2.16	.50	.28
Empathy	1.30	.32	.23*
Impulse control	.83	.33	.14*

Note. R^2= .44 for model 1, R^2 = .53 for model 2 and R^2 = .59 for model 3 and R^2 = .60 for model 4 (*t*-values = 11.39, 5.68, 4.76, and 2.52).

*p < .00

All components of EI were put into stepwise regression analysis, and four components (viz., interpersonal skill, optimism, empathy, impulse control) appeared as significant predictors of conflict resolution (see Table 8). All *t*-values are significant, so we may conclude that the predictor variables contribute significantly to the values of outcome variable (i.e. conflict resolution). Maximum

variance is accounted for by interpersonal skill i.e. 44% for conflict resolution among married partners, in step 2 additional 9% variance is accounted for by optimism, in step 3, empathy adds 6% more variance and in step 4, impulse control adds 2% variance. Four components significantly account for 60% of variance in conflict resolution among married partners (Fs = 129.70, 93.09, 77.70, 61.68, ps<.00).

Discussion

The present study sought to assess the role of EI in marital adjustment and conflict resolution. Significant relationship did not appear between demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, type of marriage, family system, year married, monthly income) and study variables (viz., marital adjustment and conflict resolution) in initial analyses. These results are in line with the findings of researches carried out on western sample (e.g., Smith, Heaven et al., 2008; Tucker & Horowitz, 1981; Wachs & Cordova, 2007). It suggests that demographic variables did not substantively change the results of further analyses. Only one demographic variable (viz., number of children) showed significant negative relationship with marital adjustment. This inverse relationship might be due to reasons: like large number of children causes; financial burden on parents, constrained quality time for spouses to share love, and affection with each other and congested home environment, this all may lead to problems in child rearing, marital disputes and dissatisfaction with the marital life.

As anticipated, EI appeared as a significant positive correlate of marital adjustment. Findings suggest that married partners with high EI tend to have better marital adjustment. Regression analysis highlighted that a substantial amount of variance i.e. 48% was accounted for by EI in marital adjustment. These results coincide with earlier studies done on western samples (e.g., Cordova, Gee & Warren, 2005; Croyle & Waltz, 2002; Joshi & Thingujam, 2009; Moshe & Iris, 2008; Schutte et al., 2001; Smith, Ciarrochi, et al., 2008; Smith, Heaven et al., 2008; Vadnais & Michelle, 2005; Wachs & Cordova, 2007). Fitness (2006) supports the role of emotions and EI in marriage due to congruence between types of capacities EI contains and the abilities required for well-adjusted, happy, and successful marriages. In societies like Pakistan most of the marriages are arranged by parents on the basis of caste, creed, and social status. When two unknown persons get married without knowing each other, the role of EI becomes more worthwhile because matching of social

and religious status does not mean that two partners are mentally compatible and are able to accommodate each other, so the couple has to work on building affection later in post marital life. There is social pressure on the partners to live together. Marriage in these circumstances demands interpersonal skill, assertiveness, patience, regard, stress tolerance, optimistic outlook, and impulse control from marital partners. If couples have significant level of EI, they may better accommodate their spouses and in-laws as well.

Conflict resolution is another indicator of marital quality. EI in the present study predicted 56% of the variance in conflict resolution of married partners. The role of EI in constructive conflict resolution has been supported in past studies (e.g., Jamieson & Thomas, 1974; Jones & Melcher, 1982; Jordan & Troth, 2002; Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga & Cox, 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) in an organizational context. The role of EI in effective conflict resolution in a marital context has also been supported (e.g., Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy, & Thomas, 2000; Cooper & Swaf, 1997; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Wachs & Cordova, 2007). Results suggest that high EI may enable married partners to view conflict as natural outgrowth, separate person from problems, and listens to view point of their spouses while handling conflicts this all leads to healthy married life.

Five out of ten components of EI, i.e., assertiveness, interpersonal skill, empathy, optimism, and impulse control appeared as salient contributing factors in marital quality. These results partially coincide with researches conducted on Western sample. For example a recent review of researches conducted in Europe and America reports that emotional expressiveness and communication are the major contributing factors in the marital quality; while empathy, self-awareness and impulse control come after that (Batool & Khalid, 2009b). One explanation for this disparity is that a married person in Pakistan not only has to handle his/her spouse, but the in-laws as well, that's why interpersonal skill and assertiveness appeared as major indicators of marital quality in the present study. Assertiveness accounted for 75% of variance in marital adjustment (R^2 = .76, F = 510.368, p < .000). Role of assertiveness in marital adjustment is supported by earlier researches (e.g., Cordova, Gee, &Warren, 2005; Yelsma & Marrow, 2003). We may assume that difficulties in emotional assertiveness impair couples' marital satisfaction. Assertive person places his/her demands in constructive manner and expresses emotion in a suitable way, and it contribute to his/her adjustment with the spouse.

Interpersonal skill appeared as leading predictor of conflict resolution in married partners. These findings suggest that a person

with high interpersonal skill can better maintain their marital relations and resolve conflicts in a healthier fashion by taking other party into confidence. No support from available researches conducted in Europe and America could be found in this reference, but recent researches done in collectivistic cultures like Iran by Yazdi and Glozary (2008) and in Nigeria by Ortese and Tor-Anyiin (2009) have supported the role of interpersonal skill in well adjusted happy marriages.

Empathy as a predictor of marital adjustment is supported by (Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985; Goleman, 1995; Lavalekar, 2007; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Rowan, Compton, & Rust, 1995; Yazdi & Glozary, 2008). Role of empathy in conflict resolution is supported by (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Canary & Cupach, 1988). Findings suggest that empathy and perspective taking has significant influence on healthy marital relationship. If a married person has empathic understanding, it might be easier for him/her to entertain the possibility that his/her spouse can have completely different thoughts and that they may be equally valid. Significant level of empathy helps couples after marriage and they take care of each other's problems, sentiments and emotions.

Role of optimism in healthy marital life in the present study is consistent with western and non-western studies (e.g., Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007; Thuen & Rise, 2006; Yazdi & Glozary, 2008). When the couple engages in conflict conversation optimist see the positive aspect and handle the matter more constructively. It might be assumed that optimists see the brighter aspects of circumstances and don't lose hope even in the face of adversities, that's why they are well adjusted and happy in their marital relationships.

Present study demonstrates that conflict resolution demands impulse control from spouses. Significant negative correlation between anger outburst and global marital quality and positive correlation between control of anger and marital quality is supported by Wachs and Cordova (2007). Bar-On et al. (2007) found hostility and anger as damaging to marital relationship. Positive role of impulse control in constructive conflict resolution is also supported by Jordan and Troth (2002). It might be assumed that if a person controls his/her anger, he/she would think rationally and would not create opportunity to aggravate the negative situation in marital relationship, and will keep oneself and the other party cool.

Results in the present study indicates that EI level of one's spouse is as important as one's own EI level in determining self-perceived quality of marital relationship. Spouses of high EI partners appeared as perceiving better marital quality as compared to spouses of low EI

partners. The results are in line with conclusions drawn by researchers (e.g., Bracket et al., 2005; Schutte et al., 2001). When one's spouse has higher EI, he/she tends to understand and manage not only his/her on emotions and problems, but understand and manage the emotions of his/her spouse too; and might be able to keep the relationship on right track due to social skill, empathy, and assertiveness.

Comparative mean of the ten components of EI in the present sample show interpersonal skill, self-regard, and assertiveness as the higher components while impulse control and stress tolerance appeared as the lowest components in the sample. Skill for interpersonal relationship entails much importance in collectivistic cultures like Pakistan. Interpersonal skill is internalized during socialization process in Pakistan. Children learn this skill from parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts. Families in Pakistan are well knitted, members are closer to each other and not only share their own emotions, but also understand the emotions of others. Mutual love and care is highly encouraged by parents. When a person enters into marital relationship, this skill helps him/her to adjust in family of procreation, resolve mutual conflict in a constructive manner, and bring cohesiveness in the family. One valid reason for higher mean level of assertiveness and self-regard might be the education level of participants in the study; as education enhances assertiveness and promote self-regard by producing self-confidence in a person. In fact high percentage (89%) of sample in the present study comprised of graduates and post graduates. It is very clear that once a person learns, he becomes aware of one's own self and one's own rights, and it is difficult to manipulate an educated person (Mueen, Khurshid, & Hassan, 2006). Lowest mean levels of impulse control and stress tolerance is worrisome. There are certain factors that might cause low impulse control in Pakistani sample like; social injustice, economic problems, terrorism, and political instability.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of the study should be interpreted with caution as it contains certain limitations. The study has limited genralizibility in the sense that sample was collected from one province only, so more representative sample from all over the country should be selected in future studies. Secondly, measures used in the study were self-report, thus factors of common method variance cannot be ignored. More authentic results can be taken in future by developing and applying performance based ability measure of EI in Pakistani cultural context.

It would have been better if incremental validity of the EI measures in the study with personality and IQ was examined, but it could not be possible due to certain restraints, so this limitation should be kept in mind while replicating the study in future, however (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Gannon & Ranzijn, 2005; Lopes et al., 2003) supported the predictive power of EI even when these variables (i.e., personality and IQ) are controlled.

Conclusion

However despite of all the limitations, the present study suggests the adaptive value of the use of emotions and the fact that people differ in their capacity for EI and degree of difference in EI may lead to difference in self-perceived marital quality (marital adjustment and effective conflict resolution). Five components of EI (viz. assertiveness, interpersonal skill, optimism, empathy, and impulse control) appeared as salient predictors of quality of marital relationship in the study. It might be assumed that married partners having lowered marital quality need help in these five dimensions of EI.

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