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Original Article

PERCEIVED SUPPORT, TRUST, AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Marital relationship quality plays a crucial role in determining an individual's psychological health, emotional stability, and overall family functioning. Perceived support and the presence of trust are considered essential factors that help build and maintain healthy and fulfilling marital relationships. The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design. A total of 300 married individuals aged between 20 to 50 years were asked to complete a questionnaire that included a demographic form, the Couple Support Behavior Questionnaire (CSBQ), the Trust Scale, and the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Scale. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, with statistical methods such as descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Pearson correlation, hierarchical multiple regression, and moderation analysis used to test the study's hypotheses. The study found that perceived support had a positive connection with trust (r = .55) and relationship quality (r = .61). Trust was also positively linked with relationship quality (r = .68). Both perceived support and trust were significant predictors of relationship quality. Men reported higher levels of support, trust, and relationship quality compared to women. These findings highlight the importance of supportive communication and trust in marital counseling. However, the study's design and sampling method limit the ability to draw causal conclusions or generalize the results.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important and lasting relationships in adult life. It provides a key source of emotional connection, psychological stability, and social support. Research shows that people in happy marriages often have better mental health. They experience lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and report higher life satisfaction and overall well-being (Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Whisman et al., 2018). Perceived support refers to the belief that help, care, encouragement, understanding, and practical assistance are available from important people when needed. Recent evidence shows that having a sense of social support can predict how satisfied a couple is with their marriage and how well they cope during difficult times (Yadollahi et al., 2025). Trust is also crucial because it gives people the feeling of safety needed for intimacy, relying on each other, and being open and vulnerable. In marriage, trust means believing that your partner is genuine, faithful, honest, dependable, emotionally available, and committed to the relationship's well-being. Recent studies show that trust is connected to how happy couples are with their marriage, how they think about their relationship, and the positive outcomes that come from it (Kausar, 2024; Makhanova et al., 2021). This topic is especially important for Pakistan and other

collectivist cultures where marriage is not only a personal choice but also a family and social institution. Instead, interpersonal factors like perceived support and trust are likely to be more significant because they determine whether a marriage feels emotionally safe, cooperative, and satisfying (Kausar, 2024; Sadeghian et al., 2025).

This study examines the link between perceived support and relationship quality in married individuals, while considering trust as a moderating factor. Therefore, this study is based on two complementary theories: the Stress-Buffering Model of Social Support, introduced by Cohen and Wills (1985), and Interdependence Theory, originally developed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and later expanded by Rusbult and Van Lange (2003). The Stress-Buffering Model outlines the psychological benefits of perceiving support from others and shows how supportive relationships can protect individuals from the negative effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Hence, this theory helps explain why individuals who feel more supported by their spouses tend to report better relationship quality (Cutrona, 1996; Feeney & Collins, 2015). While the Stress-Buffering Model explains how perceived support can be beneficial, it does not fully explain why similar supportive actions can lead to different outcomes among individuals. This gap is addressed by Interdependence Theory, which highlights that relationship outcomes depend not only on what partners do, but also on how these actions are interpreted within the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). According to this theory, trust influences how individuals see their partners' intentions, sincerity, and commitment. As a result, trust determines whether supportive actions are seen as genuine expressions of care or are viewed with suspicion.

Research by Adamczyk (2022) highlights that relationship satisfaction is linked with support and reduced conflict, suggesting that the quality of a relationship reflects meaningful interactions rather than just a simple positive attitude. Support is especially important when couples deal with health or stressful situations. Zhang et al. (2024) found that how couples cope together, how well they adjust, and how they grow after tough experiences like ongoing dialysis treatments are all connected. This shows that shared coping and adjustment are important in close relationships. Trust has been repeatedly identified as a key correlate of marital satisfaction. Kausar (2024) examined trust, romantic love, and marital satisfaction in love and arranged marriage couples and found that trust was relevant to marital satisfaction across both marital types. Makhanova et al. (2021) examined bonding-relevant cognitions and relationship satisfaction across the first three years of marriage and found that trust and related cognitions were associated with satisfaction. Trust is expected to moderate the relationship between perceived support and relationship quality because support is interpreted through the lens of trust. When trust is high, the receiver may experience support as genuine love and care. When trust is low, support may be interpreted as obligation, manipulation, or a temporary attempt to avoid conflict. This moderating logic is consistent with recent literature showing that relationship satisfaction depends on responsiveness, power, attachment, and interpretation processes (Jin et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2024).

II. METHOD

Participants

The present study employed a correlational research design. A quantitative methodology was deemed appropriate as the aim of the study was to numerically assess psychological constructs through standardized psychological assessments and statistically evaluate their interrelationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A purposive sample of 300 married individuals aged 20 to 50 years was recruited from different community and social settings. The sample size was determined using G-Power analysis. The participants had a mean age of 31.74 years (SD = 8.52), and the average duration of marriage was 39.18 months (SD = 34.27). The sample comprised 135 males (45.0%) and 165 females (55.0%).

Measures

[I] Cutrona (1984) developed the Couple Support Behavior Questionnaire (CSBQ) to assess how frequently loving partners exchange supportive behaviors. It is used to evaluate how well-being and relationship satisfaction are impacted by perceived partner support (Cutrona, 1984). The 19-item short form employs a 5-point Likert scale, with 0 denoting "not at all" and 4 denoting "nearly every day." Emotional support, informational support, and instrumental/tangible support which includes actions like empathy, encouragement, counsel, and useful assistance

are its three primary subscales (Cutrona, 1984). The CSBQ exhibits good validity, including conceptual and convergent validity with related relationship measures, and adequate reliability (α > 0.70). It is frequently employed in studies to assess supportive partner behaviors in romantic partnerships (Cutrona, 1984; Cutrona et al., 2003). **[II]** The Trust Scale was created by Rempel et al. in 1985 to evaluate trust between individuals in romantic and marital relationships (Rempel et al., 1985). It includes 18 items that measure aspects like predictability, dependability, and faith in one's partner. People answer questions based on how much they trust and feel confident about their spouse. A higher score on the scale shows a higher level of trust in the marriage (Rempel et al., 1985). This scale has shown strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores usually above 0.85. It also has strong construct validity and is commonly used in research related to relationships and marriage (Rempel et al., 1985; Simpson, 2007). **[III]** A psychological tool for evaluating the general quality of Romantic Relationships is the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Scale, created by Fletcher et al. (2000). It is frequently used in relationship studies to comprehend how people view various positive and negative features of their romantic relationships (Fletcher et al., 2000). A 7-point Likert scale is typically used to rate the scale's 18 items. Satisfaction, commitment, closeness, trust, passion, and love were six main aspects of relationship quality that are measured. Each subscale has three items (Fletcher et al., 2000). With high reliability (α = 0.80–0.95) and good validity (construct, convergent, and predictive validity), the PRQC Scale exhibits significant psychometric qualities (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Procedure

Before data collection began, the study was approved by the relevant department and authorities. Following consent, participants received a demographic information sheet along with standardized questionnaires measuring perceived support, trust, and relationship quality. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 15 to 20 minutes. After collecting the data, the questionnaires were examined for any missing or incomplete responses. The collected responses were coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis. This study strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines and principles set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA) for research involving human participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Before taking part, all participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, nature, and goals. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were maintained throughout the research process. No personal identifying information such as names or addresses was recorded on the questionnaires. All data collected dignity, privacy, and right to make autonomous decisions at every stage of the research. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages were kept secure and were used exclusively for academic and research purposes. The researcher respected participants', means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics and variables of the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationship between perceived support, trust, and relationship quality among married individuals. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive role of perceived support and trust on relationship quality. Additionally, moderation analysis was performed to determine whether trust influenced the relationship between perceived support and relationship quality. This analysis helped determine whether the relationship between perceived support and relationship quality changed at different levels of trust. The significance level for all statistical analyses was set at $p < .05$.

III.RESULTS

Table I: Descriptive statistics of Demographic variables of Sample Characteristics (N=300)

Characteristics	*n* (%)	*M*(*SD*)
Age		31.74 (8.52)
Gender		
Male	135(45.0)	
Female	165 (55.0)	
Family System		
Nuclear	148 (49.3)	
Joint	152 (50.7)	
Duration of Marriage (in months)		39.18 (34.27)
Less than 2 years	92 (30.7)	
2–5 years	104 (34.7)	
6–10 years	68 (22.7)	
More than 10 years	36 (12.0)	
Type of Marriage		
Arrange	212 (70.7)	
Love	88 (29.3)	
Education Level		
Intermediate	20 (6.7)	
Bachelors	116 (38.7)	
Masters	155 (51.6)	
PhD	9 (3.0)	
Employment status		
Unemployed	126 (42.0)	
Part-time employed	48 (16.0)	
Full-time employed	126 (42.0)	

Note. n = frequency; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 300). The participants had a mean age of 31.74 years (SD = 8.52), and the average duration of marriage was 39.18 months (SD = 34.27). The sample comprised 135 males (45.0%) and 165 females (55.0%)**.** Regarding family structure**,** 152 participants (50.7%) belonged to a joint family system, whereas 148 participants (49.3%) lived in a nuclear family system. The majority of participants (70.7%) reported having an arranged marriage, while 29.3% had a love marriage**.** In terms of educational attainment, over half of the participants (51.6%**)** held a Master's degree, followed by those with a Bachelor's degree (38.7%)**.** A smaller proportion had completed Intermediate education (6.7%), whereas 3.0% possessed a PhD. Regarding employment status, 42.0% of the participants were unemployed**,** 42.0% were employed full-time, and 16.0% were employed part-time.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics and psychometric properties for study measures (N = 300)

Measures	*M*	*SD*	Range	*Cronbach's α*
Perceived Support	48.16	17.41	19-95	.91
Trust	82.74	15.82	18-126	.86
Relationship Quality	99.43	18.96	18-126	.93

Note. M= Mean; SD= Standard deviation; α= Cronbach's reliability alpha.

Reliability analysis indicated that all scales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients well above the recommended threshold of .70.

Table III: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Means and Standard Deviations of Perceived Support, Trust and Relationship Quality among Married Individuals

Variables	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Perceived Support	300	48.16	17.41	—	.55**	.61**
2. Trust	300	82.74	15.82		—	.68**
3. Relationship Quality	300	99.43	18.96			—

*p<.05, ** p<.01

Perceived support was also positively and significantly correlated with relationship quality (r = .61, p < .01), indicating that greater perceived support was associated with better perceived relationship quality. Furthermore, trust demonstrated a strong positive and significant correlation with relationship quality (r = .68, p < .01).

Table IV: Multiple Regression analysis predicting Trust among Married Individuals (N= 300)

Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95%CI
(Constant)	63.25	3.84	16.47	< .001	[55.69, 70.81]
Perceived support	0.39	0.05	7.80	< .001	[0.29, 0.49]
Trust	0.54	0.06	9.00	< .001	[0.42, 0.66]

Note. B = Unstandardized Co efficient; R^2= .53, F(2,297)=167.28, CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit

The overall regression model was statistically significant, F(2, 297) = 167.28, p < .001, indicating that the predictors significantly contributed to the prediction of relationship quality. The results therefore indicate that both perceived support and trust were significant positive predictors of relationship quality among married individuals.

Table V: Moderator Analysis: Perceived Support and Trust Predicting Relationship Quality

			95 CI		
Fixed effects	*Estimate*	*SE*	*LL*	*UL*	*p*
Intercept	99.43	0.71	98.03	100.83	< .001
Perceived support	0.37	0.05	0.27	0.47	< .001
Trust	0.59	0.06	0.47	0.71	< .001
Perceived support × Trust	−0.10	0.04	−0.18	−0.02	.014

Note. N = *300. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. Variables were mean-centered prior to analysis*

The interaction between perceived support and trust was statistically significant (Estimate = −0.10, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.18, −0.02], p = .014). This significant interaction indicates that trust significantly moderated the association between perceived support and relationship quality.

Table VI: Independent Samples t-tests comparing Perceived Support, Trust and Relationship Quality by Gender (N=300)

	Male (n=135)	Female (n=165)			
Variables	M (SD)	M (SD)	*t(298)*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Perceived support	2.67 (0.81)	2.43 (0.88)	2.45	.015	0.43
Trust	4.73 (0.82)	4.41(0.89)	3.22	.001	0.51
Relationship quality	5.71 (.97)	5.39 (1.03)	2.78	.006	0.55

Note. TS= Trust Scale; CSBQ= Couple Support Behavior Questionnaire; PRQC= Perceived Relationship Quality Component Scale; CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit. Cohen's d represents the standardized effect size

The findings indicated that males reported significantly higher perceived support (M = 2.67, SD = 0.81) than females (M = 2.43, SD = 0.88), t(298) = 2.45, p = .015, with a small effect size (d = 0.28). Similarly, males reported significantly higher trust (M = 4.73, SD = 0.82) than females (M = 4.41, SD = 0.89), t(298) = 3.22, p = .001, with a

small-to-moderate effect size (d = 0.37). A significant gender difference was also observed for relationship quality, with males (M = 5.71, SD = 0.97) reporting higher relationship quality than females (M = 5.39, SD = 1.03), t(298) = 2.78, p = .006. The effect size was small (d = 0.32).

Table VII: Independent Samples t-tests comparing Perceived Support, Trust and Relationship Quality by Family system (N=300)

	Nuclear (n=148)	Joint (n=152)			
Variables	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*t (298)*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Perceived support	2.46 (0.89)	2.55 (0.86)	-.90	.370	-0.10
Trust	4.48 (0.91)	4.59 (0.84)	-1.09	.278	-0.13
Relationship quality	5.37 (1.06)	5.70 (0.95)	-2.88	.004	-0.33

Note. TS= Trust Scale; CSBQ= Couple Support Behavior Questionnaire; PRQC= Perceived Relationship Quality Component Scale; CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit. Cohen's d represents the standardized effect size.

The analysis indicated that there were no significant differences between participants from nuclear and joint family systems with respect to perceived support, t(298) = −0.90, p = .370, or trust, t(298) = −1.09, p = .278. However, a statistically significant difference was observed for relationship quality, t(298) = −2.88, p = .004. Participants from joint family systems (M = 5.70, SD = 0.95) reported significantly higher relationship quality than those from nuclear family systems (M = 5.37, SD = 1.06).

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study explored the connections between perceived support, trust, and relationship quality among married individuals. The current study supports this view by showing that individuals who feel more supported by their spouses and have higher levels of trust report better relationship quality. These findings match earlier research that shows perceived support is key to maintaining successful marriages. The current study also found that trust remains an important factor in relationship quality, indicating that support and trust work together to make marriages healthier. This is in line with Jia et al. (2025) and Jin et al. (2024), who found that trust improves relationship satisfaction by encouraging openness, emotional security, and a sense of commitment. The results also support the Stress-Buffering Model of Social Support (Cohen & Wills, 1985), which argues that strong relationships help people handle stress by offering emotional support and effective ways to cope. Likewise, Interdependence Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) explains that when partners support each other, it builds trust, commitment, and satisfaction because they feel more rewarded in the relationship. The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant positive relationship between perceived support, trust, and relationship quality among married individuals. The results back this idea, showing that when people perceive more support from their spouse, they tend to have more trust and a more satisfying relationship. Adamczyk (2022) found that feeling supported by a partner leads to greater satisfaction and emotional closeness in a relationship. The connection between trust and relationship quality also aligns with the work of Jia et al. (2025) and Jin et al. (2024), who found that trust helps couples feel secure, communicate openly, and commit to each other long-term.

The second hypothesis stated that perceived support would significantly predict relationship quality among married people The results support this, showing that feeling supported is a key factor in having a better relationship. Harel et al. (2024) also found that supportive communication leads to better relationship satisfaction through improved emotional understanding and conflict resolution. The findings support the Stress-Buffering Model (Cohen & Wills, 1985), which suggests that social support helps people handle stress by improving their mental health and ability to cope. The third hypothesis stated that trust would moderate the relationship between perceived support and relationship quality among married people. These findings can be explained through the Stress-Buffering Model of Social Support (Cohen & Wills, 1985), which suggests that social support is most helpful when individuals believe it is reliable and available during difficult times. Similarly, Interdependence Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) suggests that trust encourages reciprocal investment and mutual commitment, allowing supportive exchanges to build intimacy and satisfaction. The fourth hypothesis stated that there would be

significant differences in perceived support, trust, and relationship quality across demographic variables, particularly gender and family system. The findings partially supported this hypothesis. There were significant gender differences in perceived support, trust, and relationship quality, while family system differences were only significant for relationship quality. This finding is similar to Thargay and Giri (2024), who suggested that family structure influences marital satisfaction through differences in privacy, autonomy, and family involvement, rather than through changes in trust or support.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several important practical implications for psychologists, marriage counselors, family therapists, educators, and policymakers. Counseling interventions should focus on improving supportive communication between spouses. Couples should be encouraged to develop skills like empathic listening, emotional validation, constructive feedback, and effective conflict resolution. Trust can be strengthened by promoting honesty, consistency, transparency, reliability, forgiveness, and mutual respect in marital relationships. Identifying deficiencies in these areas can help therapists design targeted interventions that improve relationship functioning. Equipping couples with these interpersonal skills before marriage may help prevent future marital difficulties and improve long-term relationship satisfaction. Educational workshops promoting healthy communication, emotional support, and trust-building may contribute to stronger family relationships and improved psychological well-being within communities.

Limitations and Future Directions

First, the cross-sectional research design prevents drawing causal conclusions about the relationships among perceived support, trust, and relationship quality. Second, the study relied entirely on self-report measures, making the findings vulnerable to social desirability bias, recall bias, and common method variance. Third, the use of non-probability sampling restricts the representativeness of the sample and limits generalization to the broader population of married individuals in Pakistan. Future research should use longitudinal and experimental designs to investigate the causal relationships among perceived support, trust, and relationship quality. Researchers should recruit larger and more representative samples from different provinces, socioeconomic groups, and cultural backgrounds to improve external validity. Future studies should also examine additional mediating and moderating variables, including communication patterns, forgiveness, attachment security, emotional intelligence, resilience, conflict resolution strategies, and psychological well-being.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that perceived support and trust are key factors that determine relationship quality among married individuals. The findings showed that both perceived support and trust are positively linked to relationship quality, perceived support significantly predicts relationship quality, and trust significantly moderates the relationship between perceived support and relationship quality. The study adds to the existing body of knowledge by expanding on earlier research about marital relationships in Pakistan. It shows that trust does not only directly affects the quality of a relationship but also enhances how perceived support influences how well a marriage functions. The results highlight that healthy marriages are based on ongoing emotional support, mutual trust, and positive interactions between partners.

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