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Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Stress as Predictor of Marital Satisfaction in Long Distance Married Individuals

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Abstract

The research investigated the relationship among emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals. The sample consisted of $N=131$ ($n = 66$ men, $n = 65$ women) from Pakistan as well as overseas Pakistanis through Google form, through probability purposive and snowball sampling. The Urdu version of the Emotional Intelligence scale (Schutte et al., 1998), Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983), Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) were used. Results indicated that emotional intelligence had a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction and as significant negative relationship with perceived stress. Perceived stress and marital satisfaction had a significant negative relationship. Results of hierarchical regression showed that emotional intelligence and perceived stress are significant predictors of marital satisfaction. The results showed that women perceive more stress than men and men are more emotionally strong than women.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; perceived stress; marital satisfaction; long distance; married individuals

Introduction

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.” (30:21; Al Quran), It is the process of making a union or bond between two people and it may also be known as matrimony (Arif, 2018).

The couple living in long distance relationship gives mutual willingness to each one of love, trust and is loyal in their marital relationship because once you are living in distance; fidelity is very important (Barren, 2008). In a marriage, long distance is not an easy task and this becomes one of the major reasons of stress that affects the marital satisfaction level in married individuals (Larryngton,



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2022).

All the aspects of emotional intelligence including communication and maintaining emotional expression and awareness, empathy, interpersonal skills are important for a healthy marital relationship because it allows individuals to connect with their partners on an emotional and empathetic level and it also demands that the individual understands not only their own feelings but also their partner or spouse (Bisignano, 2018). Women are seen to have higher emotional intelligence as well as interpersonal skills, flexibility and emotional management (Craig et al., 2009).

Perceived stress is basically driven from stress, when things or the circumstances gets out of control or reach to the point where we have a sense of helplessness that leads to stress (Cohen et al., 1983). There are two types of stress explained by Lazarus in 1984, the eustress and the distress, one is healthy and the other is unhealthy and when we observe we can see that every relationship in this world has to face and deal with certain stresses and hurdles in their life, they are like a test for them, some find it opportunity and put efforts to make it work and some may take it as threatening as it is exceeding from their capacity for adaptation, leading to psychological and biological changes that may put them at risk for disease (Siddiqi & Majeed, 2021). It is assumed that marital stress and dissatisfaction emerge from the combination of endurance of adverse circumstances, stress-causing events, and poor adaptation to the changing dimensions (Karney & Bradbury, 1995)

Marital satisfaction is defined by strong means of communication, between the partners where they show understanding, emotional care, respect of feelings for each other, help each other in their personal growth have emotional bonding and availability for the spouse (Frackman, 2014; Li et al., 2011; John et al., 2009).

People who are more satisfied in their marriages tend to be healthier and adopt healthier habits than people who are less satisfied it might be due to the lack of proximity and intimacy, maintaining a strong and stable marriage over a long distance is very difficult especially when the couple deals with a number of issues, like stress, loneliness, anxiety, lack of communication, unstable emotions, financial issues and partner doubts (Stalford, 2005; Handayani, 2016; Tyas et al., 2017).

Regarding marital satisfaction, men and women have different perspectives, because women believe that communication, understanding, family ties, agreement, and shared income are important factors in marital satisfaction whereas, men believe that education of the spouses, shared income, understanding, agreement, and family ties are important factors in satisfaction (Pace, 2008)

Research indicates that interpersonal mindfulness in marriage; emotional intelligence, subjective well-being, and marital adjustment were positively correlated (Erus, 2020). A study discovered a connection between gender schema and EI and the perception of communication in marriages, the husbands are more emotionally strong than the wives but wives have more good communication patterns than husbands (Piekarska, 2022).

Işık et al. (2022) studied the connections among PS, compromise styles, spousal help, and MS in married couples during COVID-19. They gathered data from 500 married couples who responded to questionnaires on demographic characteristics, perceived stress, conflict resolution styles, spousal support, and



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marital life by using purposive and cross-sectional research design. They discovered a correlation between higher MS and higher positive compromise styles and spousal help. The COVID-19 quarantine has altered marital dynamics and created unusual relationship patterns. The COVID-19 quarantine, stress, a poor compromise style, and a lack of spouse assistance all contribute to marital satisfaction.

Maroufizadeh (2019) examined the effects of perceived stress (PS) on marital satisfaction (MS) in husband-wife dyads as an entertainer and an accomplice. They asserted that MS may be negatively impacted by infertility, one of life's incredible stresses. A cross-sectional study of 141 infertile couples was conducted using the EMS Scale and the 4-Item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4). They discovered that everyone's PS displayed an impact from entertainment on their MS. Women's PS had a bad relationship with their partner's marital status group. Although the impact of men's PS on women's MS was not particularly significant, women whose husbands experienced higher levels of stress were inevitably going to have worse MS. Both entertainer and accomplice impact of seen weight on MS were comparative among men, and their wives. They concluded that MS in patients with infertility was influenced by their own PS, but also their companion's PS.

The marital satisfaction (MS) of long-distance marriages (LDM) and the differentiation MS among a couple going through LDM were both studied by Putra et al. (2020) he did qualitative research on LDM in different cities of the United States on different sample sizes, his exploration showed that LDM doesn't influence the MS of married couples. The spouse's marital fulfillment in LDM is found in the high and low religious oriental. While the LDM-afflicted spouse experiences marital fulfillment after having children or starting a family. The study's findings also revealed that wives completed more correspondence than husbands. Wives communicate more frequently than husbands do, and they are also more open and willing to share their feelings about or concerns about various matters that affect the family.

Raiz et al. (2021) carried out a study with the goal of examining the link between marriage adjustment and perceived stress, emotional intelligence, coping mechanisms, and dual-earning couples. They selected a sample of 300 from different cities in Pakistan by using a cross-sectional research design. The findings indicated that perceived stress and marital adjustment had a significant inverse relationship, whereas marriage-related adjustment was significantly inversely correlated with emotional intelligence and coping skills. While perceived stress and coping mechanisms do not accurately predict marital adjustment, emotional intelligence was discovered to be a significant predictor of marital adjustment. Additionally, the results showed that there was no gender difference in the study variables. Marriage adjustment is negatively impacted by perceived stress, but positively by emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms. Thus, future analysts should think about the segment factors in concentrating on perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and survival methods in marital adjustment.

The above-mentioned literature supported the study variables in different cultures including Pakistani culture but no extensive study was done with all three variables in long-distance married individuals in any culture so this study aims to explore these variables. Previous research showed that emotional



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intelligence assesses stress and affects the marital life satisfaction of married couples.

Rationale

According to previous studies long-distance marriages are particularly burdensome as they are a leading cause of emotional and physical stress between the married individual (Amrita et al., 2016). The prevalence of marital dissatisfaction in Pakistan between married individuals is getting higher day by day due to the fewer good job opportunities in Pakistan when any partner gets a good opportunity from another city, province, and also from other countries, so they prefer to avail it, this is the reason of long-distance marital dissatisfaction (Rabiye et al., 2022). The current study aimed to investigate the gender differences in emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in distance-married individuals. The goal of the current study is to assess how people feel about themselves, and their future, and how much stress has an impact on their married life. The majority of the study's attention is given to married adults in Pakistan and abroad. Like before, there isn't enough research on perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals. The results of this study may help to clarify whether marital satisfaction is affected by perceived stress and whether emotional intelligence helps people cope with perceived stress.

The goal of the current study is to ascertain how emotional intelligence and perceived stress affect marital satisfaction in married people who live apart from one another. After extensive research and prevalence of working out of cities and countries in Pakistan is increasing day by day, many men avail the good job opportunities they are getting from any other city or country, for this purpose emotional intelligence has been recognized as a significant theoretical and practical structure of married individual. The main goal of this study is to determine how perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and marital life satisfaction are related, as well as how perceived stress affects and how much married couples are happy with each other when they live apart from one another. The objective of the current study is to determine how perceived stress and emotional intelligence collectively affect marital satisfaction. The current study's objective is to ascertain whether EI traits also affect how people anticipate stressful situations and how stress affects their marital satisfaction for long-distance married individuals.

Objectives

The following are the goal of this review:

- To assess the relationship among emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.
- To assess the predictor of the role of emotional intelligence for perceived stress and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.
- To assess the gender difference in emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

H1: There would be a significant relationship between emotional intelligence,



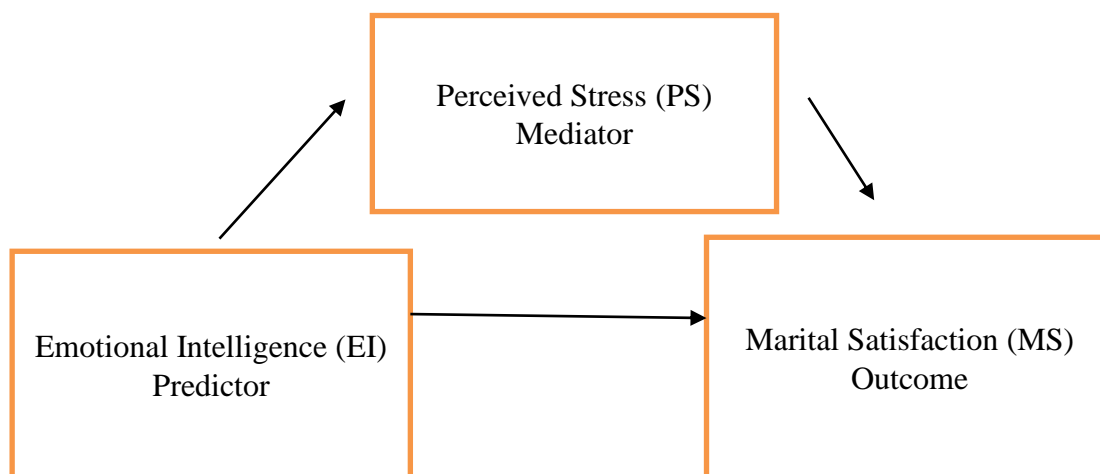
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perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.

H2: Perceived stress is likely to play a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.

H3: There is likely to be a gender difference among emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.

It is illustrate in figure 1,



Hypothesized model

Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work of the Present Study

Method

In current study cross-sectional correlation research design was used. The sample size was based on the G-Power Analysis technique for which the effect size was taken at $p=0.3$ on a medium level, the power was 95% so the sample size was 115 participants. The direction from extant literature was also taken for implementing the sample selection criteria where about $N= 130$ (men = 66; women= 65) participants were recruited from various cities, provinces, and countries, and they were further scrutinized through inclusion as well as exclusion criteria.

To gather the sample, the purposive sampling technique was used and data was collected through an online Google form.

Inclusion Criteria

- Couple must be living apart for at least more than 2 months.
- Age range 20-40 Years

Exclusion Criteria

- Separated or divorced individuals
- Individuals who have been taking any kind of psychological treatment for the last 3 months were excluded.

Formal permission was taken for all the Tests used in this research. The tests were translated through formal procedures by using MAPI guidelines.

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT Schutte et al.,



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1990)

The translated version of this scale was used in this research. SSEIT by Salovey and Mayer (1990) used to assess general Emotional Intelligence (EI), using four sub-scales: emotion perception, utilizing emotions, caring for one's own feelings, and managing the feelings of others. The SSEIT includes a 33-item self-report using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale for responses. Each sub-test score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant. The internal consistency of this tool is .90. Total scale scores are calculated by reverse coding items 5, 28, and 33, and then summing all items. Scores can range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher EI. The reliability of the scale in the current study is $\alpha=.92$.

Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983)

This scale was used after translating it for the current study. In PSS items are specifically made to gauge how much a person feels their life is unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloading. The PSS includes a 14-item self-report using a 0 (never) to 4 (very often) scale for responses. Total scale scores are calculated by reverse coding items 4, 5, 7, and 8 and then summing all items. Scores can range from 0 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater stress. The reliability of the scale in the current study is $\alpha=.71$.

Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988)

The translated version of the test was used in the present study. The RAS is used to measure marital satisfaction among couples. It is a 7-item scale intended to gauge overall relationship satisfaction. Each question is answered by respondents from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Total scale scores are calculated by reverse coding items 4 and 7 and then summing all items. Total score ranges from 3 to 21, high scores mean higher relationship satisfaction. The reliability of the scale in the current study is $\alpha=.90$.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical standards were kept in mind and followed while designing and conducting research.

- Consent to use scales were taken from the relevant authors
- Ethical approval from the department and university was taken for conducting the research.
- The secrecy of data and obscurity of the members was kept up with, and results were dispersed while following appropriate proper decorum.
- Participants were given the option to withdraw at any time during research.

Result

The goal of the research was to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals. The current data was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences-21 (SPSS-21). At first, the data was screened out for any exclusion mistakes, reverse coding, and assessing missing values. After this, the descriptive statistics were applied to all the study measures. Demographic characteristics of the sample were also reported. Later reliability analysis was conducted to check



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the reliability of measures. To scrutinize the bonding of the study variable Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied. Moreover, regression analysis was used to identify the predictions.

The current study comprised equal male and female partners, almost all the partners are educated, within the age range of 25 to 40, the majority of male partners live in different cities and province of Pakistan, and few lives in other countries as well, just for the employment. Mostly female partners are also employed because their husbands live far from them. Many couples live far away from their partners just for the sake of employment and few away because of study. The partners are living in long-distance relationships from the range of 1 month to 10 months.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the overall consistency of the scale in the current study. As shown in table 1,

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Reliability Coefficient, and Range of Scale (N= 131)

Variables	k	M	SD	α	Range	
					Potential	Actual
EIS	33	124.28	16.23	.92	33-165	56-157
PSS	14	26.46	6.33	.71	8-47	0-70
RAS	7	26.31	6.84	.90	9-35	0-35

Note: k= Number of items in the scale; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; α= Cronbach Alpha; EIS= Emotional Intelligence Scale; PSS= Perceived Stress Scale; RAS= Relationship Assessment Scale.

Above table showed that all scales had high internal consistency on the current study sample.

Pearson Product Moment Co-Relation Analysis

In order to assess the relationship among emotional intelligence, perceived stress and marital satisfaction in long distance married individual, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted. As shown in table 2,

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Co-relation among Demographic Variables, Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Stress and Marital Satisfaction in Long Distance Married Individual (N= 131)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Emotional Intelligence	1	-.34**	.38**
2. Perceived Stress		1	-.54**
3. Marital Satisfaction			1

Note.*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 2 shows that emotional intelligence has a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction and a significant negative correlation with perceived stress. This means that participants who have high EI also have more marital satisfaction and less perceived stress. However, perceived stress has a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction. It means that the participants who have more perceived stress then they have less marital satisfaction.



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Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression was done to assess the predictors of marital satisfaction. As shown in table 3,

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression to Assess Prediction of Marital Satisfaction in Long Distance Married Individuals (N=131)

Variables	β	B	SE	95%CI	
				LL	UL
Model 1					
EI	.19***	.38	.03	.09	.23
R ²	.15				
ΔR^2	.14**				
F	22.87**				
Model 2					
EI	.19***	.22	.03	.03	.15
PS	-.30***	-.47	.08	-.67	-.34
R ²	.34				
ΔR^2	.19**				
F	33.78**				

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, CI= Confidence Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit; SE= Standard Error; EI= Emotional Intelligence; MS= Marital Satisfaction

Table 3 demonstrates hierarchical regression indicating Model 1 explained 14% variance and Emotional Intelligence is significantly contributed to the marital satisfaction as an outcome ($\beta = .38, p = .01$); $F = 22.87, p < .01$. Model 2 explained 19% variance and Perceived Stress is significant predictor in marital satisfaction as an outcome ($\beta = -.30, p = .01$); $F = 33.78, p < .01$. It is also illustrated in figure 2

Emerging Model of Regression

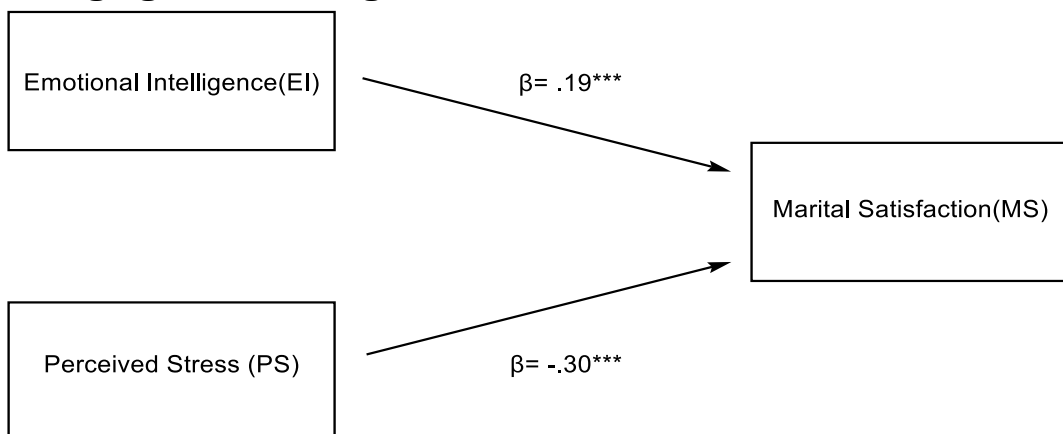


Figure 2: Shows that emotional intelligence and perceived stress are significant predictors of marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals.

Independent Sample T-test

T-test analysis was done to find out the difference between gender and demographics study variables.



Table 4: Independent Sample t-Test Showing Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Stress, and Marital Satisfaction in Long Distance Married Individuals

Variables	Men (n=66)		Women(n=65)		t	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
EI	124.63	19.48	123.92	12.22	.25	.80	-.49	6.33
PS	25.02	6.19	27.92	6.19	-2.67***	.009	-5.03	-.75
MS	26.84	6.73	25.76	6.96	.90	.36	-1.28	3.44

Note:*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; EI= Emotional Intelligence; PS= Perceived Stress; MS= Marital Satisfaction; CI= Confidence Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit

Table 4 shows that a significant difference in perceived stress is found between men and women which signifies that women have more perceived stress than men (131) = -2.67, p< .001[-5.0, -.75].

Discussion

The current study investigated the relationship among emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals. Previous study results indicated higher emotional intelligence leads to more marital satisfaction and less perceived stress (Brat, 2014). In Pakistan, many studies have been conducted on emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in married individuals but there is no work on long-distance married individuals. Lavalekar et al (2010) studied to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. They collected data from N=316 couples by using the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) and Exploring Emotional Abilities (EEA) tool to analyze the data. Their results suggested that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. Few studies have been conducted in Pakistan on the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress in long-distance married individuals. This study aimed to find the relationship between emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction in married couples who live away from each other. The results of this study helped in better understanding how the emotional intelligence of married couples is affected.

The results of this study helped in better understanding to find out how the emotional intelligence of married couples affected their marital life satisfaction. The importance of the relationship between emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and marital satisfaction was highlighted in the current study.

In the current study, there are N=131 married individuals comprised of equal men and women partners, almost all the participants are educated, mostly within the age range of 25 to 40, the majority of male participants live in different cities and province of Pakistan and few lives in other countries as well, just for the employment. Most female participants are also employed because their husbands live far from them. Many couples live far away from their partners just for the sake of employment and a few away because of study purposes. The partners are living in long-distance relationships from the range of 1 month to 10 months. These findings are also supported by previous studies that majority of the male partners go to other cities and countries for employment (Quwat, 2016)

In the present study, there is a negative significant correlation between



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emotional intelligence and perceived stress in long-distance married individuals. The finding of the current study was supported by a previous study, Pau et al (2003) conducted a study to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress by collecting data from $N=220$ individuals. They found an inverse relation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress. Their results indicated that those individual who has high emotional intelligence, show less perceived stress, and those individuals who have low emotional intelligence, they have high perceived stress.

Another finding of the current study showed that there is a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in long-distance married individuals. This result was supported by a previous study in which they collected data from $N=100$ married couples, which showed that a married individual who has high emotional intelligence has more marital satisfaction as compared to that married individual who has low emotional intelligence so they have low marital satisfaction (Shaimet, 2010).

The present study also indicated that emotional intelligence and perceived stress were significant predictors of marital satisfaction, the outcome of the study was supported by the research in which the data was collected from different cities of Pakistan $N=500$ of married individuals, and the result shows that emotional intelligence and perceived stress are important thing in married life of everyone for the marital satisfaction because highly emotional intelligent couples handling their daily stressors in more better way as compared to those couples who are less emotionally intelligent (Shamz, 2010).

The current study also revealed that men have more emotional intelligence and less perceived stress as compared to women, and women have less emotional intelligence and more perceived stress as compared to men. Evidence of this study can be supported by research, $N=150$ married couples were selected in Malta to find out the stress level result shows that women perceived more stress than men (Naido, 2008).

Limitations and Suggestions

- The current study was based on quantitative analysis, so it suggested that future research may employ a qualitative analysis of the sample to gain a deeper understanding of the components of emotional intelligence, and perceived stress that influence marital satisfaction.
- An online form was sent to many participants but because of their busy schedule of work, the participants took more time to fill out the form so it suggested that the next data should be collected in physically and online both ways.

Implication of the Study

- The study will help therapists and counselors plan training and intervention programs for increasing the quality of marital relationships in couples who are living away from each other due to their jobs.
- This study results guide the therapists to devise and offer pre-marital counseling services to couples who are going to face long-distance marital relationships after their marriage. So both partners will live a happy married life.

Conclusion



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The current research was conducted to better understand how emotional intelligence and perceived stress affect the satisfaction of married life. The research found a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress, but the results show a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. On the other hand, in long-distance married people, perceived stress is negatively related to marital satisfaction. Further results revealed that gender differences are negatively significant for perceived stress while being positively significant for emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. According to the current findings, men are more satisfied with their married lives than women, and women score higher on perceived stress than men.

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