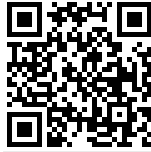


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# Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Love and Arranged Marriage Couples

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## Abstract

Marriage represents the union of two individuals shaped by cultural and societal norms. In contemporary times, the prevalence of love marriages has increased, influenced by Western culture, while arranged marriages remain deeply rooted in cultural practices specific to various regions. This study aims to explore the relationship between trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction among couples who married for love and those whose marriages were arranged. From a correlational research design, the hypothesis asserts that trust, as an independent variable, predicts romantic love and marital satisfaction in both types of marriages. The study included a sample of 261 couples (147 love-marriage and 114 arranged-marriage from Lahore, Pakistan). The data collection utilized trust scale, romantic love scale and marital satisfaction scale, all adapted into Urdu. Statistical analyses included psychometric assessments, Pearson product-moment correlation, regression analysis and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Findings revealed that romantic love was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction among husbands in both types of marriages. For wives, romantic love was seen to have a significant relationship with trust. However, regression analysis indicated that trust did not predict marital satisfaction or romantic love in either group. MANOVA results demonstrated higher levels of trust in love-marriage couples while greater romantic love and marital satisfaction was observed among wives compared to husbands in both marriage types. This research contributes to understanding the dynamics of trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in different marital frameworks, offering insights for future studies and practical applications in relationship counseling and education.

**Keywords:** arranged marriage, love marriage, marital satisfaction, relationships, romantic love, trust

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## Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important relationships that people partake in, allowing them to engage in the benefits of monogamy and fidelity as opposed to alienation and isolation, bringing them a sense of stability and strength (Jones, [2020](#); Wilcox, [2024](#)). Love marriage is focused more on the nuclear family instead of the extended family of either participants. This is enabled by focusing on companionship and monogamy, as well as freedom to choose who and when to marry (Balani, [2021](#)). Arranged marriage is defined as mate selection which is governed by the elders of both the extended families (Tahir, [2021](#)). This study analyzes trust as a person's evaluation of others, including whether someone would fulfil their required personal needs i.e., emotional, financial, safety, privacy or whether such need grow unnoticed (Jinhao & Tianqi, [2024](#)).

According to Ascension Counseling ([2024](#)), factors like emotive intelligence, mutual goals and effective communication play crucial roles in resolving conflict, enhancing relationship dynamics and fostering trust in a relationship. In addition to it, if open communication can be prioritized, partners can create a foundation of mutual understanding and trust that helps to overcome the life challenges together. Chapman ([2013](#)) asserts that every person has different feelings for their loved ones, as well as the ways through which they express those feelings. Marital satisfaction is defined as the subjective examination of the happiness and quality within a marital relationship (Delatorre & Wagner, [2020](#)). Marital satisfaction in both types of marriages has a connection with partner selection, cohabitation and period of courtship (Shachar, [1991](#)).

Martins et al. ([2023](#)) identifies that romantic love is positively associated with marital satisfaction. Raina and Maity ([2018](#)) discovered that matrimonial gratification was low for self-wedded twosomes in contrast to arranged wedded twosomes. Ranjan ([2017](#)) found more marital satisfaction in arranged married couples. Arif and Fatima ([2015](#)) explored in their study that both men and women are more satisfied in arranged marriages with parental acceptance as compared to the self-marriages. Allendorf and Ghimire ([2013](#)) explained in their study that couples come up with more interpersonal conflicts in arranged marriages. Myers et al. ([2011](#)) revealed that there were no significant satisfaction differences in marriages, regardless of whether they are arranged or not, in the East or the West.

Shoaib et al. (2016) found that there's no mean score differences in marital satisfaction among love and arranged marriages. Marital pleasure declines over time and married life quality becomes consistent and stronger with age as opposed to duration (Umberson et al., 2006). Yuji et al. (2004) found that women in love marriages feel good in their match as compared to those in arranged marriages. Yelsma and Athappilly (1988) found that there is low marital satisfaction among pairs in USA, whereas couples in arranged marriages were more satisfied.

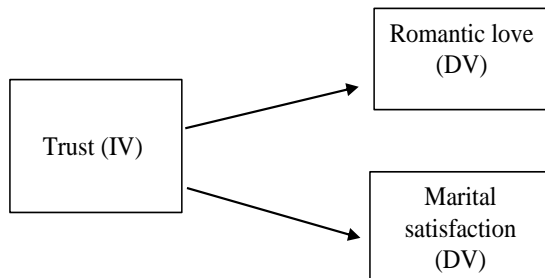
Batabyal (2011) identified three attachment styles i.e., secure, avoidant, and anxious which describe that how an individual form and maintain emotional bonds in relationship. Sternberg (1986) proposed three mechanisms in the triangular theory of love that includes passion, intimacy, and commitment that collectively define the dynamics of romantic relationships. Moreover, Li and Fung (2011) highlight the three marital satisfaction goals; personal (focuses on growth and happiness of an individual), companionship (emphasis on shared experiences and emotional connection) and instrumental goals (focused on practical support and mutual benefits in a relationship). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the emotional, and psychological dimensions of trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in marriages.

The study aimed to find out the relationship between trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love and arranged married couples. Furthermore, this research investigates the impact of gender on the level of trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction among couples.

## Conceptual Framework

### Figure 1

#### *Hypothesized Model of the Research*



## **Rationale**

The rationale of the current study was to explore how trust as an independent variable, predicts romantic love and marital satisfaction in both love and arranged marriage couples. Understanding of these variables can offer valuable insight that contribute to the role of trust and marital success in shaping romantic relations in love and arrange marriage couples.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design**

The study was carried out using correlational research design.

### **Sample**

This research study consisted of  $N = 261$  married couples. Among the participants, 147 couples were identified as having love-marriage and 114 couples as arranged-marriage. All participants were recruited from Lahore, Pakistan. The age of husbands in love marriages ranged from 21 to 50 years ( $M = 37.42$ ,  $SD = 11.22$ ), while the age of husbands in arranged marriages ranged from 20 to 65 years ( $M = 41.28$ ,  $SD = 12.08$ ). For wives in love marriages, the age range was 21 to 50 years ( $M = 33.02$ ,  $SD = 10.06$ ), while in arranged marriages, the age range was 20 to 65 years ( $M = 35.71$ ,  $SD = 10.68$ ).

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who met the criteria for love and arranged marriage contexts.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- The sample included all the stages of adulthood; young, middle and older adults in both love and arranged marriages.
- Couples were classified as either love-marriage or arranged-marriage based on self-reported process of marriage formation.
- Both members of each couple completed the survey questionnaire individually.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Couples where husbands were unemployed.
- Couples where husbands were residing out of station, city or country.
- Couples experiencing infertility.
- Couples where either spouse was experiencing mental and physical disability that could impact their ability to participate.

**Table 1***Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=261)*

Variable	Love				Arranged			
	Husband		Wife		Husband		Wife	
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>
Age	37.42(11.22)		33.02(10.6)		41.28(12.01)		36.1(10.7)	
Education								
Illiterate		3(2.0)		12(8.2)		8(7)		7(6.10)
Primary		4(2.70)		-		4(4)		5(4.4)
Middle		9(6.1)		-		10(9)		-
Matriculation		20(13.6)		5(3.4)		31(27.2)		13(11.4)
Intermediate		30(20.4)		30(20.4)		21(18.4)		22(19.3)
Graduation (BS)		50(34.0)		25(17)		24(21.1)		24(21.1)
MS/Phil.		28(119.)		54(37)		14(12.3)		32(28.1)
PhD		3(2.0)		21(14.3)		2(2)		11(9.6)
Monthly expenses	6995.17(109653.6)		-		50486.83(97731.5)		-	
Parent Status								
Alive		120(81.6)		113(77)		73(64.0)		85(74.6)
Dead		27(18.4)		34(23.1)		41(36.0)		29(25.4)
Family System								
Joint		73(49.7)		85(58)		72(63.2)		70(614)
Nuclear		74(50.3)		62(42.2)		42(36.8)		44(39)

## **Instruments**

### ***Demographic Information and Marriage Related Information***

Demographic questionnaire consisted of age, education, pay, siblings, birth order, parent status, family system and number of children. The related demographic information was separately distinguished for both love and arranged marriage couples.

### **Trust in Close Relationship Scale (Rempel et al., [1985](#))**

Trust in close relationship scale contained 17 items with point rating scale as 1= “*Strongly disagree*” to 7= “*Strongly agree*” 7-point Likert scale. The trust scale was used in Urdu language translated by Jahangier and Batool ([2020](#)). The reliability of trust was good ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) in both husbands and wives in love marriage couples. The reliability of trust was also good ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) in both husbands and wives of arranged married couples.

### **Romantic Love Scale**

Romantic love scale contained 49 items with 2-point Likert rating scale where 1= “*No*” and 2= “*Yes*”, was specifically designed and employed as culturally relevant measure (Zafar & Amjad, [2015](#)). For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> question was “Do you take care of your partner?”, the 2<sup>nd</sup> item was “Do you feel attraction in your partner” etc. The reliability of romantic love was good ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) in both husbands and wives of love marriage couples. The reliability of romantic love was also good ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) in both husbands and wives of arranged married couples.

### **Marital Satisfaction Scale (Locke & Wallace, [1959](#))**

Marital Satisfaction Scale contained 29 items with 4-point Likert rating scale where 1= “*Always disagree*” to 4= “*Always agree*”. For example, the item 1<sup>st</sup> was “family system” and 2<sup>nd</sup> was “opinion about praise” etc. The reliability of marital satisfaction in husbands was low (0.30-0.50) whereas it was good ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) in wives of love marriage couples, whereas the reliability of marital satisfaction in both husbands and wives was low (0.30-0.50) in arranged married couples.

## **Results**

Firstly, one needs to understand the psychometric properties of the scale used in the research. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between trust, romantic love and marital

satisfaction in love and arranged marriage couples. Multivariate Analysis for Variance was used to check the differences among the spouses (based on gender) and types of marriages (love and arranged) in the selected participants.

Psychometric properties of trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love marriage couples are shown in Table 2 and psychometric properties of trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in arranged marriage couples are shown in Table 3.

**Table 2**

*Psychometric Properties of Trust, Romantic love and Marital Satisfaction in Love Marriage Couples (N=294)*

Variables	Husband				Wife			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	$\alpha$
Trust	84.68	21.6	17-119	.90	84.07	21.9	17-119	.90
Romantic Love	86.60	5.37	49-98	.80	88.42	4.58	49-98	.74
Marital Satisfaction	71.93	5.01	29-116	.31	79.64	7.91	29-116	.79

The reliability of study scales was found to be between good (0.9-0.8) to poor (less than 0.5).

**Table 3**

*Psychometric Properties of Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Arranged Marriage Couples (N=228)*

Variables	Husband				Wife			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	$\alpha$
Trust	81.97	22.5	17-119	.91	84.68	21.6	117-119	.90
Romantic Love	87.35	4.33	49-98	.71	86.60	5.37	49-98	.80
Marital Satisfaction	70.97	5.33	29-116	.36	71.93	5.01	29-116	.31

It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a relationship in trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in couples, regardless of the different marriage types. Pearson product-moment was used to check this relationship. According to the analysis, in love marriage couples, romantic love shows a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction ( $r=.41^{**}$ ) in husbands, while it shows a significant positive correlation with trust ( $r=.38^{**}$ ) in wives. Similarly, in arranged marriage couples, romantic



love shows significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction ( $r=.33^{**}$ ) in husbands and significant positive correlation with trust ( $r=.26^{**}$ ) in wives.

It was hypothesized that trust is likely to predict romantic love and marital satisfaction in love and arranged marriage couples. Simple linear regression was used to test it. The analysis shows that trust does not predict romantic love ( $\beta=.02, p>.05$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $\beta=-.08, p>.05$ ) in either husbands or wives ( $\beta=.13, p>.05$ ) ( $\beta=.13, p>.05$ ) in love marriages. In the husbands in arranged marriages, trust does not predict romantic love ( $\beta=.03, p>.05$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $\beta=.15, p>.05$ ) neither does it predict romantic love ( $\beta=.06, p>.05$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $\beta=.14, p>.05$ ) in wives.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to check the differences among the groups from the perspective of gender (husband, wife) and type of marriage (love and arranged). Descriptive analysis on trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love and arranged marriages shows that the level of trust is high in love marriage husbands ( $M=84.69, SD=21.62$ ) and love marriage wives ( $M=84.13, SD=21.96$ ). Wives in arranged marriages show high level of romantic love ( $M=88.65, SD=3.24$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $M=78.78, SD=7.93$ ) as compared to husbands in arranged marriages which shows lower level of romantic love ( $M=87.35, SD=4.34$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $M=70.97, SD=5.33$ ).

The relationship in trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love marriage couples is shown in table 4, and the relationship in trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in arranged couples is shown in table 5.

**Table 4**

*Inter Correlation in Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Love Marriage Couples (N=294)*

Variables	1	2	3
1.Trust	-	.02	-.75
2.Romantic Love	.38**	-	.41**
3.Marital Satisfaction	.13	.13	-

*Note.* Correlation analysis for love marriage husband ( $n=147$ ) are presented above the diagonal, and correlation for love marriage wife ( $n=147$ ) are presented below the diagonal.

\* $p<.05$ . \*\* $p<.01$ .

It was found that romantic love positively correlates with marital satisfaction in husbands and trust in wives of love marriage couples, however no significant relationship was found between trust and marital satisfaction love marriage husbands.

**Table 5**

*Inter Correlation in Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Arranged Marriage Couples (N=228)*

Variables	1	2	3
1.Trust	-	.15	.03
2.Romantic Love	.26**	-	.33**
3.Marital Satisfaction	.08	.14	-

**Note.** Correlation analysis for arranged marriage husband ( $n=114$ ) are presented above the diagonal, and arranged marriage wife ( $n=114$ ) are presented below the diagonal.

\* $p<.05$ . \*\* $p<.01$ .

According to the analysis, romantic love shows significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction in husbands in arranged marriage. Romantic love showed positive significant correlation with trust in wife of arranged marriage couples. For husbands, trust did not show significant correlation with romantic love and marital satisfaction in arranged marriage couples. Marital satisfaction also didn't show significant correlation with trust and marital satisfaction in arranged marriage husbands.

Descriptive analysis on trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love and arranged marriages is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Analysis on Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Love and Arranged Marriage Couples (N=522)*

Variables	Type of Marriage	Couple	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Trust	Love	Husband	84.69	21.62
		Wife	84.13	21.96
	Arrange	Husband	81.97	22.55
		Wife	79.71	23.09
Romantic Love	Love	Husband	86.61	5.38
		Wife	88.44	4.58
	Arrange	Husband	87.35	4.34

Variables	Type of Marriage	Couple	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Marital satisfaction	Love	Wife	88.65	3.24
		Husband	71.93	5.01
	Arrange	Wife	79.71	7.88
		Husband	70.97	5.33
		Wife	78.78	7.93

The above analysis shows that level of trust is high in love marriage couples. Wives in arranged marriages and love marriages show high level of romantic love and marital satisfaction as compared to husbands in both love and arranged marriages.

**Table 7**

*Test of Between Subject Effects on Trust, Romantic Love and Marital Satisfaction in Love and Arranged Marriage Couples (n=522)*

Variables		<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>
Couples	Trust	255.48	255.48	.47	
	Romantic Love	315.52	315.52	.01	.23
	Marital Satisfaction	7810.79	7810.79	.01	59.56
Type of marriage	Trust	1633.01	1633.01	.07	
	Romantic Love	29.12	29.12	.23	1.22
	Marital Satisfaction	113.84	113.84	.11	.78
Couples*Type of Marriage	Trust	93.36	93.36	.66	
	Romantic Love	9.31	9.31	.50	.23
	Marital Satisfaction	.04	.04	.98	.56

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in romantic love ( $p = .01$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $p = .01$ ) between love and arranged marriage couples, with love marriage couples reporting higher levels for both variables. However, no significant difference is observed in trust ( $p = .47$ ) between the two groups. When analyzing the impact of the type of marriage, no significant effects are found for trust ( $p = .07$ ), romantic love ( $p = .23$ ), or marital satisfaction ( $p = .11$ ). Additionally, the interaction between couples and the type of marriage does not significantly affect trust ( $p = .66$ ), romantic love ( $p = .50$ ), or marital satisfaction ( $p = .98$ ). These

findings highlight that while love marriages tend to foster more romantic love and satisfaction, trust and the interaction effects remain unaffected.

## Discussion

Marriage is a significant relationship worldwide (Lucas et al., [2008](#)). Love is considered one of the primary emotions that create a lasting bond between individuals (Gottman, [2017](#)). Additionally, social support is a predictor of marital satisfaction, with both being positively linked (Nawaz et al., [2014](#)). This study aimed to examine the relationships among trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction in love and arranged marriages.

The reliability of trust and romantic love was good for both husbands and wives in love and arranged marriages, consistent with previous findings (Epstein & Guttman, [1984](#); Estrada & Rebeca, [2009](#); Rotter, [1980](#)). However, the reliability of marital satisfaction was lower in arranged marriages but high for wives in love marriages, aligning with other studies (Allendorf & Ghimire, [2013](#); Chapman, [2013](#); Greef, [2000](#); Li & Fung, [2011](#)). Correlation analysis of 147 pairs of love marriages showed a significant correlation between romantic love and marital satisfaction in husbands of both love and arranged marriages. Romantic love also showed a significant positive correlation with trust in wives of both marriage types, while trust did not significantly correlate with romantic love and marital satisfaction in husbands (Raina & Maity, [2018](#)). It was hypothesized that trust would predict romantic love and marital satisfaction in both marriage types. However, linear regression analysis revealed that trust did not predict these variables in love marriages. Similarly, trust did not predict romantic love and marital satisfaction in arranged marriages, opposing Popova ([2018](#)) findings that romantic love and marital satisfaction directly influence each other. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) indicated that trust levels were higher in love marriages. Wives in arranged marriages reported higher levels of romantic love and marital satisfaction as compared to wives in love marriages, contradicting Dush et al. ([2008](#)) assertion that marital satisfaction decreases over time. Interaction plots showed that wives in love marriages had higher marital satisfaction than husbands, a trend also observed in arranged marriages. Overall, wives had higher marital satisfaction in both marriage types, while husbands reported lower satisfaction. In Pakistani culture, it is observed that couples in arranged marriages often do not understand each other well initially. This is similar for love marriages (Fatima & Ajmal, [2012](#)). Myers et al. ([2011](#)) found no

significant satisfaction differences between East and West, arranged or self-marriages, although they noted mean score differences in marital satisfaction among love and arranged couples (Buss & Shackelford, [1997](#)).

### **Conclusion**

The research concluded that women showed higher level of marital satisfaction whether it was love marriage or arranged marriage, as compared to men. It also highlighted the gender variation in the perception of the marital satisfaction. Moreover, research depicted that trust did not have a significant impact on romantic love or marital satisfaction in either love or arranged marriage. It emphasized that other factors such as interpersonal communication or cultural norms and expectations played a vital role in shaping these outcomes.

### **Limitations**

- Some couples were hesitant to provide personal information, such as age, income, sexuality, divorce and their relationship with their spouse.
- Cultural factors also influenced openness in responding. Issues included the availability of couples simultaneously.
- The study utilized self-reported information, which may be subject to social desirability bias.

### **Suggestions**

- More indigenous tools need to be developed for culturally relevant data because culture and religion influences behavior.
- The study sample was drawn from a limited geographical area. Future studies should collect data from different cities to increase its generalizability.
- Qualitative methods should be used such as focus groups and interviews, to derive an appropriate understanding of cultural quirkiness.

### **Implications**

This research can bring the awareness to couples regarding trust, romantic love and marital satisfaction, and the importance thereof in a happy, married life. In love or arranged marriages, trust is the root cause for keeping the marital satisfaction as well as the cause of one's partner's good mental health. This research will help overcome the fears attached to

marriage due to negative perception along with identifying the risk and protective factors by providing a gateway to counselors and researchers in devising interventions.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

### **Data Availability**

The data associated with this study will be provided by corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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