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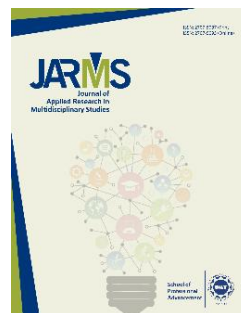
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# Married but Lonely: Attachment Styles and Loneliness across Newly Wedded and Long Wedded Pakistani Women

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## Abstract

This research examines the relationship between attachment styles (secure, avoidant, and anxious attachment styles) and loneliness among married women. The study hypothesized that attachment styles would likely predict loneliness and there would be a difference in level of loneliness due to the nature of marriage (arranged or love). Correlational research design was used to conduct the research. Non-probability sampling strategy was used to collect data from 130 married women, age ranging from 25-50 years ( $M=31$ ;  $SD=6.4$ ). Self-constructed demographic sheet, Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990) and UCLA Loneliness Version 3 (Russell, 1996) were used to collect data. Results revealed that loneliness was negatively correlated with secure and avoidant attachment styles, while positively correlated with anxious attachment style among married women. Furthermore, duration of marriage moderated the relationship between avoidant attachment style and loneliness. The findings further revealed that women's levels of loneliness were not influenced by the nature of marriage, whether it is arranged or love. Conclusively, this study has implications for mothers, therapists, and counselors.

**Keywords:** avoidant attachment style, anxious attachment style, loneliness, marriage, secure attachment style, women

## Introduction

The most significant bond between two people is marriage, which also serves as the foundation for building family ties and raising a generation (Justin & Haroon, 2019). According to a report, divorce rate has increased by 35% in recent years (Rashid, 2024). The reason might be an individual's lonely state in their marriage (Kornaszewska-Polak, 2016). An individual's attachment style affects their perspective on life and social interactions (Swapnil & Sahai, 2021). When the social relations of a person are considered inadequate by oneself, either quantitatively or in quality than required, they face distressing experience which is termed as loneliness. Loneliness is a consequence of not being able to build healthy relationships with others. It is like distress that arouses when a person feels isolated, not understood, and rejected by others or it results when there is an incongruity between individual's needs and expectations (Hawkey et al., 2005). This experience is highly subjective, for an individual can experience the feeling of loneliness even in the presence of other people and vice versa (Kornaszewska-Polak, 2016).

There are three dimensions of loneliness, namely intimate, relational, and collective loneliness. Intimate loneliness is related to intimate space, a closest space surrounding an individual. It is also termed as emotional loneliness. It happens when someone is going through bad times and no one is there to her support them (White, 2019). Besides, relational loneliness is related to social space and it is also termed as social loneliness. This dimension is related to perceived presence and absence of family connectedness and quality friendships (Dunbar, 2014). However, collective loneliness is related to public space. It refers to social identities of persons. It is related to a person's active

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network, that is group or team (White, [2019](#)). Theories of loneliness are supported by the theories of self by focusing on intimate, relational, and collective loneliness. If the concept of a person's self-expands to involve other people, that person may not develop feelings of loneliness but if a person's concept of self does not bring in other people, they are more likely to experience loneliness (Keller et al., [2022](#)).

Attachment theory, developed by Bowlby and expanded by Ainsworth, highlights the importance and strength of emotional bonding between child and caregiver (Justin & Haroon, [2019](#)) Attachment styles, which are shaped by early interactions with primary caregivers, have an impact on how people approach and manage relationships for the rest of their lives. Having a secure attachment, which is defined by a good mix of intimacy and independence, frequently results in more satisfying relationships. Conversely, relationship establishment and maintenance may be more challenging for people with insecure attachment patterns, such as avoidant or anxious (Ainsworth, [1973](#)). From this point of view, when an unstable or insecure attachment developed in childhood, the behaviour of such children is rejected by their peers. This rejection negatively affects the development of their social skills and their trust towards people closed to them, thus, increases the level of loneliness in adult relationships (Cacioppo et al., [2003](#)).

Attachment theory serves as a base for the foundation of psychological theory of loneliness. A sociologist, Robert S. Weiss, developed psychological theory of loneliness (Weiss, [1973](#)). Weiss recognized six social needs, namely guidance, attachment, reassurance of worth, nurturance, social integration, and sense of reliable alliance, that, if unmet in traumatic conditions, can lead to feelings of loneliness. Like theory of attachment, Weiss also explained that friendships can be a useful tool, but they are not as good at easing loneliness as close relationships are (Ernst & Cacioppo, [1999](#)).

According to behavioural approach, loneliness is a by-product of personality traits that create interpersonal problems. For instance, loneliness is interrelated with social inhibition (shyness), social anxiety, hostility, sadness, distrust, and low self-esteem (Flicker et al., [2020](#)). People with these mentioned characteristics are unable to interact or communicate with others in satisfying or gratifying ways. Lonely individuals face difficulty in formation and maintenance of meaningful and healthy relationships. They are also less likely to express their feelings, show intimacy, and share their thoughts with their peers (Achterbergh et al., [2020](#)).

Cognitive perspective claims that loneliness is the result of difference in opinion and wrong attribution. Pessimistic individuals tend to have high level of loneliness. They think more negatively about the events, people, and situations in their lives as compared to those who are optimistic with low levels of loneliness. Lonely people are not able to maintain satisfactory relationships and they blame themselves for this. Cognitive approach also considers the behavioral and attachment perspectives by considering the state where individual unable to fulfill the social needs and lack of communication skills (Keller et al., [2022](#)).

The nature of a marriage greatly impacts the loneliness and attachment types that occur between a couple. Depending on the dynamics of the relationship, societal norms, and personal preferences, different attachment styles and feelings of loneliness can develop in both love and arranged marriages (Flicker et al., [2020](#)). In an arranged marriage, people often prioritize cultural and familial ties over intense love when selecting a partner. This could lead to solid, duty-driven attachment patterns, which could support the development of a stable connection within the marriage. However, in a relationship where there isn't any intimacy or compatibility, the absence of romantic attraction or emotional ties may make loneliness worse (DiTommaso & Spinner, [1997](#)).

Love marriages, on the other hand, encourage attachment types that are concentrated on intense love and intimate emotional connection since they are founded on a shared attraction and affection. Love marriages may reduce loneliness by satisfying the emotional needs of the romantic union but barriers, such as discord or unmet expectations can exacerbate loneliness (Hsieh & Hawkey, [2018](#)).

Despite these differences, each type of marriage provides a unique support system. where love marriages primarily rely on the quality of the romantic relationship for companionship, arranged marriages typically provide networks of extended family that can reduce feelings of isolation. Ultimately, each type of marriage will have a unique experience for each person based on factors, such as communication preferences, cultural background, and personal contentment within the union (Flicker et al., [2020](#)).

Literature indicated that avoidant style of attachment and anxious style of attachment were negatively associated with the satisfaction of psychological needs. It also concluded a direct association between anxious attachment and loneliness. Avoidant attachment and loneliness were indirectly related to each other. Therefore, both anxious and avoidant styles of attachment lead to loneliness (Swapnil & Sahai, [2021](#)). Another study concluded a negative association among avoidant attachment or ambivalent attachment and loneliness. These attachment styles were also negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. People having avoidant and ambivalent styles of attachment were lonelier and less satisfied with their relationship (Borawski et al., [2022](#)).

Another research indicated that the attachment style of individuals strongly influences quality of marital relationship (Shafique et al., [2023](#)). People having secure attachment style and those who were less lonely were more satisfied with their marriages, while people having anxious attachment style showed dissatisfaction with their marriages. Loneliness also predicted duration of marriage of individuals. Previous research indicated that attachment style of individuals, their level of loneliness, and their competence in being alone strongly predict the quality of their marital relationship (Spence et al., [2020](#)). Another research indicated that people having secure style of attachment were more socially skilled and those having social competence were less lonely. Other findings revealed that secure style of attachment was negatively associated with loneliness. It means that if more secure the attachment is, the lesser the loneliness will be (Shorter et al., [2022](#)).

Halat and Hovardaoglu ([2010](#)) examined the association among the attachment styles and loneliness of the married couples in the framework of the investment model. According to the investment model, the satisfaction of relationship satisfaction, estimation of the quality of alternatives, and investment in relationship are predictors of relationship commitment and relationship stability. Results indicated that attachment styles are correlated with loneliness among married couples. Individuals having secure attachment style were less lonely than those having insecure attachment style and their relationships were more stable (Nottage et al., [2022](#)).

Previously, a research was conducted to probe the relation of different attachment styles with loneliness among couples. Its results indicated that there was a direction association between attachment style and marital satisfaction among couples. Loneliness and well-being act as a mediator between attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Securely attached couples were less lonely, while the level of loneliness was high in those individuals who had avoidant and anxious attachment style (Kornaszewska-Polak, [2016](#)). Another research was conducted to scrutinize the association between attachment styles and loneliness among university students. Its results indicated that secure attachment was negatively related with loneliness, depicting that people with secure attachment were less lonely, whereas avoidant and ambivalent styles of attachment were positively related with loneliness, indicating that people with these attachment styles were lonelier (Jalilian et al., [2023](#)).

## Rationale

The current study is crucial for understanding the complex interactions between emotional health and interpersonal relationships in the context of marriage. The institution of marriage plays a crucial role in bringing attachment dynamics formed early in life, which then influence the contentment and quality of partner relationships. Knowledge of married women's attachment styles help individuals in better understanding the emotional foundations of their relationships with their husbands. Additionally, it's commonly believed that the support and companionship found in a

marriage help to lessen the emotional experience of loneliness, which is not true. Thus, it becomes essential to investigate how attachment styles affect loneliness in the context of marriage for both theoretical and practical reasons.

By concentrating on married women exclusively, the study fills a gap in the body of existing literature. Although loneliness and attachment have been studied in great detail across a range of populations, special attention needs to be paid to the subtleties of marriage, especially among women. Married women frequently interchange between the roles of wife, mother, and professional, which gives them unique and complicated attachment experiences. The research attempts to offer focused insights into how attachment styles appear and affect loneliness within the complex dynamics of marriage by focusing on this particular group. It may be helpful to create interventions that support better attachment dynamics in marriages by identifying the particular attachment patterns linked to higher levels of loneliness in married women. These interventions could be focused counselling, teaching women communication techniques, or providing married women with attachment-style-specific support systems to meet their specific emotional needs.

### **Objectives**

1. To determine the relationship between attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) and loneliness among married women.
2. To find out the predicting role of attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) on loneliness among married women.
3. To find out the moderating role of marriage duration in relationship between attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) and loneliness among married women.
4. To determine the nature of marriage (arrange and love) differences in level of loneliness among married women.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Women with secure attachment styles should be less lonely.
2. Women exhibiting anxious and avoidant attachment experience more loneliness.
3. Duration of marriage would moderate the relationship between attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) and loneliness among married women.
4. Women in love marriages are less likely to experience loneliness than women in arrange marriages.

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

Correlational research design was used in this study to examine the relationship between attachment styles and loneliness among married women.

#### **Sample and Sampling Strategy**

Non-probability purposive sampling strategy was chosen to recruit sample of married women. The sample comprised 130 married women belonging to Lahore and Islamabad with ages ranging from 25-50 years. Only those married women were selected who had been married of more than one year. Women with both arranged and love marriages were recruited. Married women with any physical disability and psychological problems were excluded.

**Table 1**  
*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N=130)*

Variables	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			31.12	6.43
Education				
Uneducated	1	.8		
Matriculation or below	5	3.8		
Intermediate	16	12.3		
Graduation	59	45.4		
Masters or above	49	37.7		
Occupation				
Non-Working	96	73.8		
Working	34	26.2		
Monthly Family Income				
20,000 or below	6	4.6		
20,000-50,000	34	26.2		
50,000-1lac	48	36.9		
1lac or above	42	32.2		
Area of Living				
Rural	13	10		
Urban	117	90		
Family System				
Nuclear	100	76.9		
Joint	30	23.1		
Nature of Marriage				
Arranged	60	46.2		
Love	70	53.8		
Duration of Marriage (in years)			6.78	7.57
Number of Children			1.64	1.50

### Assessment Measures

Following assessment measures were used in this study.

#### *Demographics Information Sheet*

To obtain the information about the demographics of participants, a self-constructed demographic sheet was used. It consists of several items, namely age, educational level, occupation, family income, area of living, family system, nature of marriage, duration of marriage, and number of children.

#### *Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)*

The attachment style of each participant was evaluated using this scale, designed by Collins and Read (1990). The scale consists of eighteen items with Close, Depend, and Anxiety as subscales. Every subscale is further divided into six items with 5-point Likert scale, ranging 1 *being not at all characteristic of me* and 5 representing *very characteristic of me*. Items 2, 3, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, and 18 would be scored in reverse order based on the participants' responses. Following the participants' responses, below is an explanation of the attachment styles based on their scores, for high scores on the Depend and Close subscales and low scores on the Anxiety subscale indicate a secure attachment style. High scores on the Anxiety subscale and moderate scores on the Depend and Close subscales indicate an anxious attachment style. Low ratings on the Depend, Anxiety, and Close subscales

indicate an avoidant attachment style. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .69 for Close, .75 for Depend, and .72 for Anxiety were reported by Collins and Read (1990).

### ***UCLA Loneliness (Version 3)***

Russell (1996), developed this scale. This scale has 20 items. Each of the twenty (20) assertions must be rated by respondents on a 4-point Likert scale, with 1 representing *never* and 4 representing *always*. Following the participants' responses, items no. 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, and 20 would be scored in reverse order. UCLA Loneliness (Version 3) has a test-retest correlation of .73 over a two-month period and strong internal consistency, with a coefficient alpha of .96 (Russell, 1996).

### **Procedure**

Through non-probability purposive sampling approach, the participants (married women) were selected from the general population. Prior to commencing the study, permission was obtained from the departmental ethical committee of Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Additionally, authorization was secured from the relevant authors for the use of their scales in the study. To collect demographic information, a self-constructed demographic sheet was utilized and data was collected from neighborhood of Lahore and Islamabad through in person and online modality. Prior to participating in the study, informed consent was obtained from all the participants. They were provided with a clear explanation of the research objectives and reassured that the confidentiality of their responses would be maintained. Participants were also informed that the information gathered would be solely used for research purposes. Furthermore, they were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Detailed instructions were provided to participants for completing the questionnaire. Overall, the research process adhered to ethical standards and protocols to ensure the rights and well-being of the participants. All of the collected data was subsequently entered into the SPSS for analysis. Following data entry, statistical analyses were performed to draw conclusions and interpret the results of the study.

### **Results**

The data was analyzed using SPSS 23. Reliability analysis was the first step in the data analytic approach. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was used to investigate the association between married women's attachment styles (secure, avoidant, and anxious) and loneliness and also the association between demographic characteristics and loneliness. The factors that predict loneliness were discovered through the use of multiple hierarchical regression analysis. To determine the variations in loneliness among married women based on the type of marriage (arranged and love), an independent sample t-test was employed.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of Study Variables (N=130)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	$\alpha$
Secure Attachment Style	19.48	4.22	6-29	.70
Avoidant Attachment Style	16.78	3.72	6-26	.72
Anxious Attachment Style	15.51	5.53	6-30	.73
Loneliness	44.15	8.52	22-66	.81

Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha reliability of secure attachment style is .70, avoidant attachment style = .72, anxious attachment style = .73, and for loneliness = .81. The findings indicate that Cronbach's alpha reliability of all the variables is in the acceptable range.

## Correlational Analysis

Pearson's product moment correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between demographics and study variables.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation between Demographics and Loneliness (N=130)*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	-	.15	-.19*	.17	-.21*	.21*	.93***	.78***	-.15
2 Education	.25**	-	.18*	.22*	-.18*	.06	-.06	-	.05
3 Occupation			-	-.21*	.06	-.08	.13	.10	.18
4 Place of Living				-	.02	.10	.12	-.13	-.20*
5 Monthly Family Income					-	.07	.08	.09	.20*
6 Family System						-	-.01	-.23**	-.16
7 Nature of Marriage							-	.18*	.15
8 Duration of Marriage								-	.76***
9 Number of Children									-
10 Loneliness									-

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3 shows that none of the demographic variable was predicting loneliness among married women except duration of marriage ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ) that was negatively related to loneliness. The findings indicate that the married women who have been married for longer duration and belong to the group of long wedded women have low levels of loneliness as compared to women with shorter marriage duration.

**Table 4**  
*Correlation between Attachment Styles and Loneliness (N=130)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4
1 Secure Attachment Style	19.48	4.22	.39***	-.28**	-.60***
2 Avoidant Attachment Style	16.78	3.72	-	-.50***	-.52***
3 Anxious Attachment Style	15.51	5.53		-	.41***
4 Loneliness	44.15	8.52			-

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 4 shows that secure attachment is negatively correlated with loneliness ( $r = -.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results indicate that married women with secure attachment style have low level of loneliness and avoidant attachment is negatively correlated with loneliness ( $r = -.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, it has been proved that the married women with avoidant attachment style experience low level of loneliness. Moreover, anxious attachment is positively correlated with loneliness ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, married women with anxious attachment style have high level of loneliness.

## Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis was used to find out the predictors of loneliness.

**Table 5**  
*Moderation through Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Duration of Marriage, Secure Attachment Style, and Loneliness (N=130)*

Variables	<i>B</i>	$\frac{95\% \text{ C.I.}}{LL \quad UL}$	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Step I					.04	.04**



Variables	B	95% C.I		SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
(Constant)	45.66***	43.70	47.61	.99			
Duration of Marriage	-.22**	-.42	-.03	.10	-.20**		
Step II						.36	.32***
Constant	67.63***	61.95	73.32	2.87			
Duration of Marriage	-.02	-.19	.14	.08	-.02		
Secure Attachment Style	-1.20***	-1.50	-.90	.15	-.59***		
Step III						.37	.05
(Constant)	67.45***	61.76	73.15	2.89			
Duration of Marriage	-.06	-.25	.12	.09	-.06		
Secure Attachment Style	-1.18***	-1.48	-.89	.15	-.59***		
Duration of Marriage X Secure Attachment Style	.20	-.02	.06	.20	.08		

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was used to find out the predictors of loneliness and moderating role of duration of marriage in relationship between secure attachment style and loneliness. The tolerance value was greater than .2 and VIF value was less than 10 indicating no multicollinearity. Durbin Watson value was within the range of 1-3 indicating independence of observation. Assumptions were fulfilled.

According to the above Table 5, the model is significant at  $F(1, 128) = 5.24$  ( $p < .01$ ) in step I. The standardized value of beta shows that the duration of marriage is a negative predictor of loneliness. In step II, the model is significant at  $F(2, 127) = 35.69$  ( $p < .001$ ). Here, the standardized value of beta shows that secure attachment style is a negative predictor of loneliness. In step III, the model is significant at  $F(3, 126) = 24.10$  ( $p < .001$ ). Standardized value of beta here shows that duration of marriage does not act as a moderator between secure attachment style and loneliness.

**Table 6**

*Moderation through multiple hierarchical regression analysis of Duration of Marriage, Avoidant Attachment Style, and Loneliness (N=130)*

Variables	B	95% C.I		SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Step I						.04	.04**
(Constant)	45.66***	43.70	47.62	.99			
Duration of Marriage	-.22**	-.42	-.03	.10	-.20**		
Step II						.28	.24***
Constant	63.10***	58.13	69.86	2.97			
Duration of Marriage	-.13	-.30	.04	.09	-.11		
Avoidant Attachment Style	-1.13***	-1.48	-.79	.18	-.50***		
Step III						.30	.06*
(Constant)	67.03***	60.46	73.61	3.32			
Duration of Marriage	-.96*	-1.82	-.10	.44	-.85*		
Avoidant Attachment Style	-.99***	-1.36	-.62	.19	-.44***		
Duration of Marriage X Avoidant Attachment Style	.06*	-.00	-.12	.03	.74*		

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was used to find out the predictors of loneliness and moderating role of duration of marriage in relationship between avoidant attachment style and loneliness. The tolerance value was greater than .2 and VIF value was less than 10 indicating no

multicollinearity. Durbin Watson value was within the range of 1-3 indicating independence of observation. Assumptions were fulfilled.

As per the above Table 6, In step I, the model is significant at  $F(1, 128) = 5.24$  ( $p < .05$ ). The standardized value of beta shows that the duration of marriage is a negative predictor of loneliness. In step II, the model is significant at  $F(2, 127) = 24.32$  ( $p < .001$ ). Here, the standardized value of beta shows that avoidant attachment style is a negative predictor of loneliness. In step III, the model is significant at  $F(3, 126) = 17.83$  ( $p < .001$ ). Standardized value of beta shows that duration of marriage act as a moderator between avoidant attachment style and loneliness.

**Figure 1**

*Simple Slope Analysis showing the moderating effects of Duration of Marriage in relationship between Avoidant Attachment Style and Loneliness*

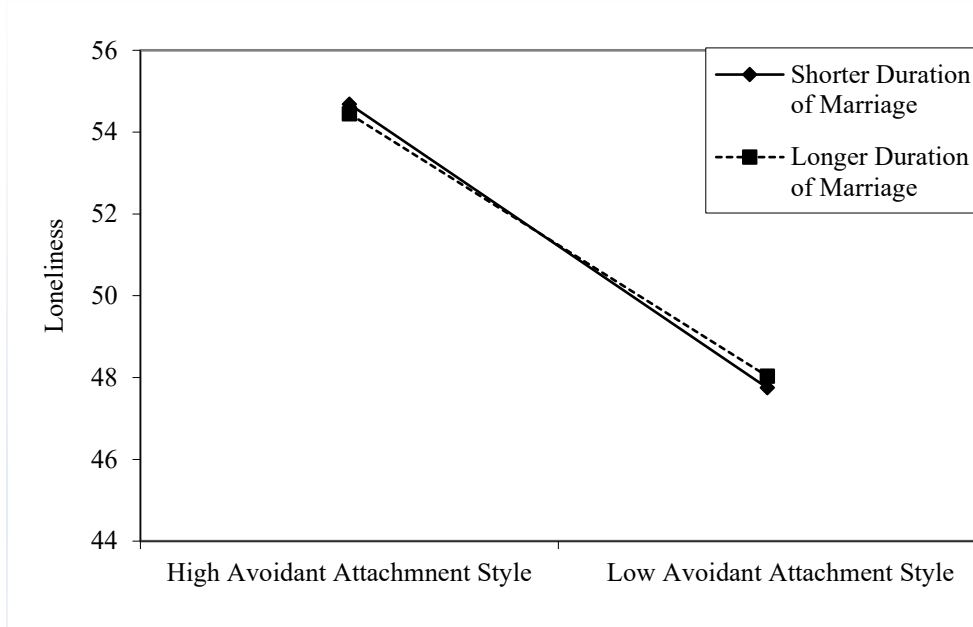


Figure 1 shows the buffering effect of duration of marriage on relationship between avoidant attachment style and loneliness. The illustration indicates that women with longer duration of marriage experience low level of loneliness even if they have avoidant attachment style.

**Table 7**

*Moderation through multiple hierarchical regression analysis of Duration of Marriage, Anxious Attachment Style, and Loneliness (N=130)*

Variables	B	95% C.I		SE	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Step I						.04	.04*
(Constant)	45.66***	43.70	47.62	.99			
Duration of Marriage	-.22*	-.42	-.03	.10	-.20*		
Step II						.19	.15***
(Constant)	36.08***	31.74	40.42	2.19			

Variables	B	95% C.I		SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Duration of Marriage	-.17	-.35	.01	.09	-.15		
Anxious Attachment Style	.60***	.35	.84	.12	.39***		
Step III						.20	.05
(Constant)	37.27***	32.71	41.83	2.30			
Duration of Marriage	-.26*	-.47	-.05	.11	-.23*		
Anxious Attachment Style	.55***	.30	.80	.13	.36***		
Duration of Marriage X							
Anxious Attachment style	-.03	-.07	.01	.02	-.15		

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was used to find out the predictors of loneliness and moderating role of duration of marriage in relationship between anxious attachment style and loneliness. The tolerance value was greater than .2 and VIF value was less than 10 indicating no multicollinearity. Durbin Watson value was within range of 1-3 indicating independence of observation. Assumptions were fulfilled. In step I, the model was significant at  $F(1, 128) = 5.24$ , ( $p < .05$ ). The standardized value of beta showed that the duration of marriage was negative predictor of loneliness. In step II, the model was significant at  $F(2, 127) = 14.62$ , ( $p < .001$ ). Results indicated that anxious attachment style was a positive predictor of loneliness. In step III, the model was significant at  $F(3, 126) = 10.72$ , ( $p < .001$ ). The duration of marriage did not act as a moderator between anxious attachment style and loneliness.

### Independent Sample t-Test

Independent sample t-test was used to determine the differences in level of loneliness due to the nature of marriage, that is arranged and love marriages.

**Table 8**

*Independent Samples t-test to compare loneliness in Arranged and Love Marriages (N=130)*

Variable	Arranged Marriage (N= 60)		Love Marriage (N= 70)		t (128)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Loneliness	43.22	8.74	44.94	8.32	-1.15	.25	.20

An independent sample t-test analysis was run to investigate the differences of nature of marriage (arranged and love) in the level of loneliness. Assumptions were fulfilled. Table 6 shows that there is a non-significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) in loneliness. However, the above results indicate that women with love marriages have same level of loneliness as women with arranged marriages.

### Discussion

An individual's attachment styles, which are influenced by their early experiences with carers, have a major impact on how they form emotional connections and interact with others throughout their lives (Justin & Haroon, 2019). Positive and satisfying relationships are frequently the result of secure attachment, which is typified by a balanced mix of intimacy and independence. Conversely, insecure attachment styles, such as avoidant or anxious ones, might make it more difficult to build and maintain relationships (Borawski et al., 2022). Attachment styles and loneliness are strongly related, as loneliness is a ubiquitous emotional experience (Jalilian et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationship between attachment styles and loneliness among married women.

Results of the study indicated that secure attachment style was negatively correlated and negatively predicted loneliness among married women. It indicated that the married women who had secure attachment were less lonely. In adult relationships, secure attachment, which has its roots in a supportive early caregiving environment, promotes emotional safety, trust, and effective communication. In the context of marriage, this stable base enables women to face difficulties with more assurance, believing their partners will be there to provide emotional support and are able to effectively communicate their needs and emotions within the relationship. People who are securely attached typically approach relationships with a healthy balance of independence and intimacy. For married women, this means that they can communicate their needs, seek comfort, and share their vulnerabilities without worrying about being rejected or abandoned. By encouraging good communication and conflict resolution, the secure attachment style strengthens the emotional bond between spouses. Moreover, their ability to maintain a healthy balance between autonomy and closeness allows them to cultivate fulfilling social networks and support systems outside of the marriage, further reducing the risks of loneliness. Overall, the presence of a secure attachment style enables married women to experience greater satisfaction, intimacy, and emotional fulfillment within their relationships, leading to lower levels of loneliness. This finding aligns with previous studies which also showed that secure attachment style and loneliness are positively correlated (Nottage et al., [2022](#); Shorter et al., [2022](#)).

Furthermore, the current findings revealed that avoidant attachment style was negatively correlated with and negatively predicted loneliness among married women. This confirmed that the women with avoidant attachment style were less lonely. Among married women, avoidantly attached women might have a strong sense of independence that helps them get through times when they are alone without feeling lonely. These women are less likely to depend entirely on their spouses for emotional fulfillment and are frequently at ease with self-governance. A sense of contentment in solitude may be influenced by the capacity to uphold personal boundaries and pursue individual interests without an overwhelming need for continuous emotional reassurance. Avoidantly attached women may find a special balance that permits companionship within marriage while still maintaining their need for independence, even though their approaches to emotional intimacy may differ. This ultimately results in a reduced susceptibility to loneliness when compared to individuals with other attachment styles. This finding is contradictory with previous study which showed that people with avoidant attachment style had high level of loneliness (Borawski et al., [2022](#); Spence et al., [2020](#)).

Findings also revealed that anxious attachment style was positively correlated with and positively predicted loneliness among married women. Therefore, women with anxious attachment style had high level of loneliness. Anxious attachment style, characterized by the fear of abandonment, excessive need for reassurance, and heightened sensitivity to perceived threats to the relationship, can significantly influence how individuals interpret and respond to marital dynamics, ultimately impacting their experiences of loneliness within the marriage. Women with an anxious attachment style often increase deep-seated fears of rejection and abandonment, leading them to seek constant validation and closeness from their partners. However, their persistent need for reassurance and intense emotional dependence may unintentionally strain the marital bond, contributing to the feelings of loneliness. One key mechanism through which anxious attachment style may exacerbate loneliness in married women is through maladaptive coping strategies and communication patterns. Women with an anxious attachment style may engage in behaviors, such as excessive clinginess, emotional overreactions, and heightened jealousy, which can create tension and distance within the marriage. These behaviors may elicit negative responses from their partners, leading to conflicts and further exacerbating feelings of isolation and rejection. Moreover, anxious individuals may struggle effectively expressing their needs and boundaries, fearing that asserting themselves could jeopardize the relationship. Consequently, their unmet emotional needs and inability to effectively communicate

may contribute to a sense of disconnection and loneliness within the marriage. Hence, this finding aligns with previous study (Borawski et al., [2022](#); Kiralp & Serin, [2017](#)).

The outcome of research findings revealed that duration of marriage moderated the relationship between avoidant attachment style and loneliness. This showed that women with longer duration of marriage had low level of loneliness even if they had avoidant attachment style. Couples that spend more time together tend to become closer, more intimate, and have deeper knowledge of one another, all of which can act as barriers against loneliness. Over the course of a marriage, memories, experiences, and support from one another can enhance the marriage quality and improve sentiments of connection and belonging. Additionally, as a couple faces difficulties, they grow stronger in their ability to handle conflict, show affection, and attend to each other's emotional needs. Moreover, they may establish efficient communication patterns and coping mechanisms that promote increased emotional closeness and resilience against loneliness. Also, the duration of a marriage enables partners to create and maintain support networks and social networks outside of their union. Couples frequently become part of each other's social circles over time, developing friendships and ties to the community in common. These outside relationships lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation within the marriage by offering extra sources of emotional support, companionship, and validation. This is also consistent with the previous study (Halat & Hovardaoglu, [2010](#)).

Similarly, the result (Table 8) indicated that women with love marriage had same level of loneliness as women with arranged marriage. It indicated that women's levels of loneliness are not substantially impacted by the type of marriage they enter, whether it is arranged or love. Although arranged marriages are usually connected with social pressures and family participation and love marriages are commonly thought to result from love and free will. However, the underlying causes of loneliness may be more universal. Firstly, loneliness can originate from a variety of nonmarital contexts, including personal psychological issues, social support systems, and cultural standards. Navigating these wider influences may provide similar issues for women in both kinds of partnerships. Moreover, the nature of marital bond, regardless of how it developed, might not automatically protect people against loneliness. Factors like communication styles, emotional closeness, and shared values are vital in creating a sense of connection and reducing feelings of loneliness. Furthermore, whether a marriage is arranged or founded on love, gender norms and cultural expectations inside marriages might affect women's feelings of loneliness. These expectations may show up differently in arranged marriages and romantic relationships, but if they get in the way of real emotional fulfillment and connection, they can ultimately lead to comparable feelings of loneliness. This finding is consistent with the previous research (Hsieh & Hawkey, [2018](#)).

## Conclusion

The present study find the relationship between attachment style and loneliness among married women. The findings showed that there was a positive association between anxious attachment types and loneliness, while there was a negative correlation between secure attachment style and loneliness and between avoidant attachment style and loneliness. Furthermore, there was a negative association between the duration of a marriage and loneliness across a variety of demographic groups. It's interesting to note that women in love marriages reported feeling like those in arranged marriages. The current research results were consistent with previous studies. Overall, this study offers insightful information about the dynamics of loneliness and attachment in the context of marriage for women, emphasizing how crucial it is to comprehend such elements in order to promote happiness in relationships and overall well-being of married people.

## Limitations and Suggestions

Recognizing the impact of cultural context on attachment types and loneliness within love and arranged marriages is crucial when examining such dynamics. Therefore, it is crucial to create indigenious assessment tools that are suited to the marriage patterns, way of life, and mindsets of

Pakistani married women. Furthermore, the study's exclusive focus on married women restricts the scope of knowledge because attachment processes in marriage involve both the partners. In order to obtain a more complete understanding of the relationship between attachment patterns and loneliness, future research should strive to include couples as participants. Although quantitative evaluations offer significant insights, qualitative research is essential for exploring the fundamental reasons for attachment patterns and isolation. Qualitative methods can provide a more profound comprehension of the social, cultural, and familial elements influencing attachment styles and feelings of isolation in both love and arranged marriages. Therefore, researchers should create a more comprehensive understanding of attachment dynamics and loneliness in the context of Pakistani marriages by combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This will enable more culturally sensitive interventions and support systems for the individuals involved in these relationships.

### Policy Implications

The current study adds to literature in context of Pakistan and holds practical implications for various interventions aimed at improving relationships and mental well-being. Counselling and therapeutic approaches stand to benefit significantly from an understanding of the intricate relationship between loneliness and attachment styles. The finding that secure attachment acts as a protective factor against loneliness among married women underscores the importance of nurturing emotional stability and fostering productive communication within marital relationships. Moreover, the study underscores the necessity of considering attachment styles when designing relationship education programs, highlighting the potential to enhance marital satisfaction, and reduce loneliness through targeted interventions. Beyond therapeutic settings, this research offers valuable insights for parents, therapists, and counsellors, enabling them to identify which attachment styles contribute positively to individuals' relationships. With this knowledge, parents and therapists can better support their children and clients in developing healthier attachment styles, ultimately fostering more fulfilling, and connected relationships. By integrating these findings into practical interventions and support strategies, policy makers can contribute to the promotion of emotional well-being and relational harmony in diverse contexts.

### Conflict of Interest

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

### Data Availability Statement

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

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