CHAPTER-2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE
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In spite of the changes in the demographics and meanings of marriage, researchers have continued to show interest in the impact of having a better or worse marriage (marital quality) on various aspects of life. Marital quality refers to the global evaluation of marriage along many dimensions (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Evaluation is done along both, positive (support) and negative (strain) dimensions (Burman & Margolin, 1992). Thus marital quality is operationally defined by high levels of self reported satisfaction and positive attitudes towards the partner and low levels of hostile and negative behavior.

Marriage and marital relationships have been a topic of interest for marital researchers since long. In a good no. of individual’s life establishing and maintaining a fulfilling intimate relationship with spouse is the most important quality seen in married couples. Healthy romantic bonds in married couples significantly play a role in general sense happiness and marital satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995). Close affiliation have been acknowledged to be importantly associated with personal well being.

Within the framework of marital research, many variables have been identified to be closely related with quality of married life. The persistent endeavors of researchers in the field have informed marital research and have given promising theoretical and empirical directions to the field.

The present research utilizes the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) as a conceptual framework (Cook & Kenny, 2005). The APIM examines interdependence within dyadic relationships. This model improves upon the currently
used research paradigms because it allows for dyadic analysis. It is intended for use in situations where the groups being studied are linked to one another, and thus, will likely provide correlated responses (Kenny et al., 2006). For the current research, marital quality has been linked with personality, conflict resolution styles, investment size and forgiveness. A dyadic perspective has been utilized to study these variables. Marital satisfaction has been adopted as an indicator of relationship quality.

2.1 Marital Satisfaction and Forgiveness

*If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.*

*Mother Teresa*

Forgiveness in close relationships is a well-researched topic. There is enough empirical evidence to show that forgiveness in close relationships leads to improved intimacy, satisfaction, commitment and relational quality and less conflict (Fincham & Beach, 2007; Tsang et al., 2006). Hyot and McCullough (2005) suggested that “because of its relationship-enhancing potential, the capacity for forgiveness may well be an important indicator of both relational and individual health” (p.110).

Intimate relationships are a source of fulfillment of our needs and at the same time they make one vulnerable to acts of transgression. The most common response to such an act is a desire to ‘give back’, seek revenge, which is “deeply ingrained in biological, psychological, and cultural levels of human nature” (McCullough & van Oyen Witvliet, 2001). When the perpetrator is an intimate partner it becomes all the more important to understand and analyze the ways both the partners handle such situations. Forgiveness is a positive measure that can be adopted by both the partners to deal with acts of transgression.
The attention to forgiveness as a study variable in close relationships has been rather recent. Perhaps one reason for this construct remaining away from research on close relationships is that earlier, forgiveness was more associated with religion and was probably not considered important for scientific study (McCullough et al., 1998). Given this recent attention to forgiveness as an interpersonal variable, research on the impact of forgiveness on relational quality is limited to a very limited number of studies.

There is ample empirical evidence to confirm the positive association between marital satisfaction and forgiveness (Entezar, et. al., 2011; Safarzadeh et. al., 2011). Mirzadeh and Fallahchai (2012) investigated the relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction on 200 persons. Results revealed that there is significant positive relationship between Forgiveness and Marital Satisfaction. Results also suggested the existence of multiple relationships between Forgiveness and Marital Satisfaction and showed that the forgiveness was the best predictor of marital satisfaction.

A meta analysis of 95 studies on forgiveness was conducted by Lerner (2006) to explore the possibilities of gender differences. 314 married couples were selected for the study. Results suggest that males were more forgiving and more committed to the marriage and on the other hand females were more successful in granting forgiveness. Further it was also seen that females were more religious and reported more symptoms of depression, anxiety and hostility. Structural Models fit data better for males than females including the latent variables of Marital Satisfaction, marital Commitment and Marital Forgiveness and Mental Health.

In a study conducted by Fincham et al., (2007) results showed that wife’s positive benevolence predicted husband’s later reports of conflict resolution by controlling initial levels of conflict resolution.
Elizabeth et. al., (2013) studied the effect of perceived forgiveness and the language of apology has on Marital Satisfaction. Data were collected from 17 different states of America by 141 married couples answered a questionnaire on paper and internet. Sample expressed about their behavior after a disagreement, their overall Marital Satisfaction and their language of apology style. Findings revealed the greater the forgiving behavior greater would be the marital satisfaction among partners and also the love language of “responsibility” which had a positive linear correlation with forgiving behavior.

A longitudinal study was conducted by McNulty (2008), regarding tension in marriage. 72 newlywed couples participated in the study. Results indicate that newlyweds with low levels of negative behavior have higher levels of forgiveness in their marriage. However, overall finding of newlywed study suggested that forgiveness has no relationship with Marital Development and Satisfaction. Hence, it was concluded that more research is needed to determine when and how forgiveness helps improve marriage.

Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen (2006) investigated the relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction which was related to marital stability. It’s a comparative study between first married and remarried couples which include 787 married couples from Flanders, Belgium. Findings indicate no differentiation among both kind of couples. But first married couples found significant difference in 2 subscales of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory and also found significant difference in Marital Satisfaction of both the first married and remarried couples. Additionally, there was positive relationship among adjustment in life and forgiveness and there was high Marital Satisfaction among remarried than first married couples. Findings
were contrary to the original hypothesis as it showed that remarried couples compare their second and first marriage is more susceptible to the marital problems than remarried couples. Hence, it was concluded the results were consistent to the previous studies that Marital Satisfaction is positively correlated to Forgiveness.

Most of the review points to the fact that forgiveness has beneficial consequences for quality of intimate relationships. Though the pathways are not yet clear.

### 2.2 Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Resolution

As nowadays couples are experiencing conflicts in their marital life which gives rise to methodical researches on marital life in psychology. The investigation of interaction in a situation of conflict enjoys a significant status in research pertaining to marital satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that distress results from couples’ aversive and ineffective response to conflict (Koerner & Jacobson, 1994) that is amenable to change.

Lawerence (1994) studied the impact of conflict resolution styles on Relationship Satisfaction among Gay, Lesbians, Heterosexual parents and Heterosexual non-parent couples. 75 gay, 51 Lesbians, 108 married non-parent and 99 married parent couples participated and data was assessed through Conflict Resolution Style Inventory. The results revealed that withdrawal style was significantly associated with low relationship satisfaction and the positive problem solving style was significantly associated with high relationship satisfaction.

Pamela et. al., (1995)examined the mediating effect of men’s ineffective conflict resolution strategies and marital distress on the intergenerational transmission of wife battering. 1836 men participated in the Second National Family Violence
Survey. Results revealed that men were more likely to use ineffective Conflict Resolution Strategies who witnessed inter-parental violence which increased men’s likelihood of encountering marital distress and engaging in wife battering.

Howell (1999) undertook a study to investigate the relationship between coping strategies and Marital Satisfaction of dual careers couples with children. Data were collected from urban couples and assessed through dyadic adjustment and way of coping questionnaires. Results showed that there was significant relationship between coping strategies and Marital Satisfaction of dual career couples with children.

The aim of the Jennifer et. al., (2000) study was to investigate the relation of depressive symptom and marital satisfaction to conflict resolution strategies. The subjects were 40 married couples and data were analyzed through hierarchical regression analysis wherein avoidance and attacking scores were regressed on husbands and wives depression and marital Satisfaction score. Results demonstrated depressive symptoms and Marital Satisfaction were strong predictors of conflict resolution strategy.

Greffy and Bryne (2000) studied the relationship between conflict management/resolution styles and Marital Satisfaction. 57 married couples were taken who were married for at least 10 years. Findings showed that couples experienced high marital satisfaction when they used the collaborative style. Similarly couples who used competitive conflict management style experienced low marital satisfaction.

Klaus et. al., (2002) investigated the relationship between couples’ stable personality variables associated with interpersonal competencies and marital satisfaction with conflict resolution style as the mediating factor. Data were collected
from 83 newlywed couples at 6 points over 5 years at 1 year intervals. It was found that personality variables were strongly correlated with conflict resolution style which strongly influenced the marital satisfaction.

2.3 Investment Size and Marital Satisfaction

Review of related literature also points to the association between marital satisfaction and commitment (e.g. Rusbult & Bunk, 1993). Various researchers (Rusbult et al., 1991; 1998) found that greater commitment is more likely to foster more constructive, accommodative responses towards one’s partner.

An experimental study was conducted by Rusbult (1980), for validating the Investment Model. The main independent variables were different levels of investments (small, medium and large), quality of alternatives and different levels of costs (high and low). The sample comprise for this experiment was 82 men and 89 women. Results showed that rather than cost variables, there were significant effects of investments and quality of alternatives on commitment. Further results found that there was higher marital satisfaction only when the cost level was low.

Rusbult’s (1983) conducted a longitudinal study which continues for 7 months which examines the relationship between investments, cost, reward and quality of alternative with commitment and marital satisfaction in romantic relationships. Data was collected from college students who are in romantic relationships. Results demonstrated that with the increase in rewards, relationship satisfaction also increases and but there was no significant changes in relationship satisfaction found when costs changes; similarly it also does not show any effect on commitment. Further results
conclude that when there was increase in investment size and satisfaction and decrease in alternative qualities, commitment increases.

A project done by Mc Dowel (2004) to investigate the African American men’s level of commitment by measuring SES, length of relationships, age and relationship status in relation with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size. The present study finds out the factors which are influential to have an impact on the strength of commitment of AA male in intimate relationships. By using Investment Model of Commitment which state that there is positive relation between individual’s commitment to a partner’s satisfaction and investment level whereas negative relation with quality of alternatives. Results revealed that the only variable which is significantly describes the commitment is satisfaction level. Another set of regression was accomplished to investigate the difference between married and cohabiting men.

2.4 Personality Factors and Marital Satisfaction

Researchers (Gottman & Notarius, 2002) have studied the difference between successful happy and unsuccessful unhappy marriages which is based on the personality theory. Over time the field has come to a general acceptance of a useful conceptualization known as Big Five Factor Model of Personality, a model that grew out of studies in natural language. Initially, 1,500 trait adjectives were identified in the English language, which were then combined into broader, more basic dimensions until analyses arrived at a replicable five factor structure (McCrae, 1991). The dimensions of Big Five Factor Model of Personality include Neuroticism(also called emotional instability, negative affectivity, or nervousness), Extraversion(sociability and energy), Openness to Experience (originality and intellectual curiosity),
agreeableness (sympathy and cooperation), and Conscientiousness (a sense of competence and control).

There is abundant literature on marital satisfaction which investigates the relationship between personality traits and marital quality. Studies on Big Five factor of Personality found that there is association between personality and marital satisfaction and Neuroticism was found to be the most important predictor of Relationship Satisfaction. On the basis of the noticeable documentation about the negative correlation of Neuroticism with Relationship Satisfaction found in longitudinal studies which showed that negative attitudes in early marital relationships probably predicts the future course of marital relationship. Kelly and Conley (1987) report of a 40-year longitudinal study of married couples found that neuroticism was the strongest predictor of marital dissatisfaction, as well as likelihood of divorce. A study conducted by Gattis, et. al., (2004) found that unsatisfied married couples showed significant higher levels of neuroticism than satisfied couples.

There are various traits along with Neuroticism which predict relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Extraversion has been positively correlated with marital satisfaction (Lester et al., 1989). But few researchers (Gattis et al., 2004) found no relation among extraversion and marital satisfaction.

There are less researches on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, but some researchers (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Botwin et al., 1997; Gattis et al, 2004) found that these factors of personality are positively related and advantageous to marital satisfaction. According to Shiota and Levenson (2007), these factors are always considered as desirable qualities which result in more satisfying relationship and also help in pairing with each other. However, Watson, Hubbard, and
Weise (2000) reported inconsistencies regarding gender differences and couple types (dating vs. married). Although the big five personality factors have potential relation with the marital quality, but the variation and dissimilarity found regarding significance may be due to various methods and small sample sizes.

Longitudinal studies showed extensive review on marital satisfaction or stability of married couples over time, the research of Karney and Bradbury (1995) in this field found noticeable diversity of various personality factors (56 traits in all). Since the Karney and Bradbury (1995) article, the body of research examining the impact of personality on relationship satisfaction has continued to expand.

After researching many studies Najarpourian et. al., (2012) found basic personality factors (E,N and C) as best predictors of marital satisfaction but there is need of research on their combined effects. Many researchers (Nikiju et.al., 2011; Shahnazari et al., 2013) aimed to examine the association between five factors of personality and marital satisfaction. Results suggested that there is positive correlation between marital satisfaction with conscientiousness and agreeableness and marital satisfaction had negative correlation with neuroticism. Further simple regression analysis indicated that the best predictor of marital satisfaction is neuroticism which is negatively related and conscientiousness which is positively related and these predictors need further research in the field of marital satisfaction. Similar findings were reported by Mirffallahi et al., (2012) in female teachers.

The Kaufman (2011) investigated the partner’s pairing with similar Personality partners and tested the relationship between personality components and marital satisfaction. This study was conducted on 10,000 national samples of married couples to find whether couples with similar/ dissimilar personalities have more/ less
marital satisfaction and whether individuals pair mostly with peoples who have similar or different personality. Kauffman divided couples into four different measures: according to which both couples are scoring high, scoring low, scoring moderate and one scoring high or low on each five personality traits. Result showed that marital satisfaction and similar personality or dissimilar personality characteristics has no relationship between them and about 66% want different personality to pair with the people rather their own personality components. Further it was shown that marital satisfaction was judged by personality similarity/ dissimilarity as it can be seen that couples who score high on each personality traits have significant relationship with marital satisfaction rather than who scored less on each personality trait.

A behavioral- genetic study conducted by Spotts et. al., (2005) investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and personality components (anxiety, guilt, aggression, irritability and suspiciousness). 752 Swedish female twins and their spouses completed the questionnaires. Results showed that wives personality affects their own marital satisfaction as well as husband’s marital satisfaction. Further results revealed that neuroticism was negatively whereas positive expressivity, conscientiousness and agreeableness were significantly associated with marital satisfaction.

A longitudinal study conducted by Lazarides et. al., (2010) investigates the relationship between couples’ stability and communication behavior by moderating the role of personality of 135 couples. Results showed that there is relationship between women’s couple stability and problem solving and withdrawal which is moderated by the men’s neuroticism and agreeableness.
After researching many studies Shiota et al., (2006) found that higher marital satisfaction is predicted by the similarity in demographics, values, activities and attitudes. The current study investigated the relationship between similarity between personality factors and initial levels and 12 years pathways of marital satisfaction. Data were collected from 156 long term married couples aging between 40-60 at the beginning of the study which predicts higher negative slopes in marital satisfaction pathways through greater personality similarity. Results suggested that marital dissatisfaction is predicted higher in middle age couples rather than older couples when they have partner similarity on extraversion and conscientiousness.

2.5 APIM and Marital Satisfaction

Interaction and communication between people is a big part of daily life. Thus, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that many phenomena studied by social and behavioral scientists are interpersonal by definition. There’s no avoiding it: people are influenced by other people and they influence other people in return. The most important interactions in daily life are close dyadic relationships (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), conceptualized as dynamic systems in which participants mutually influence each other at behavioral, cognitive and affective levels (Huston, 2000; Rusbult, 1983). In light of this, family and relationship researchers started to study both partners of a couple instead of the individual partners (e.g., Kane et al., 2007). Over the years, the general consensus seemed to grow that when investigating behavior, thoughts or feelings of people, it’s only natural to include both members of such an interaction or relationship in the study.

What is the difference between the behavior of a dyad in a close relationship and the two independent persons? The answer is, that it includes mutual influence
and interdependence according to fundamental relationship science. For example, According to Kelly (1983), “a causal connection between two interacting parties, in the sense that one person's behavior is causally implicated in subsequent changes in the other person” (p.24). On the basis of the above mentioned definition, interdependence theorist explains that dyad members affect each other’s behavior for their outcomes (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). Studies in the area of relationship satisfaction have frequently investigated the consequences of interdependence on relationship related behaviors. How one mate perceives the other has been shown to determine the outcomes in intimate associations (Acitelli et al., 1993; Sillar, 1985).

According to Sergin, Hanzal and Domschke (2009), conflict handling styles significantly lead to marital success. To explore the role of perceptions of marital conflict styles, self- and partner-reports of conflict styles and marital satisfaction questionnaires were filled by 194 married dyads who were married for less than five years. Results indicated that spouses were both accurate and biased in their perceptions of each other’s’ conflict styles. Results of APIM analysis demonstrated several actor effects for conflict resolution styles and partner effects for the withdrawal and conflict engagement styles and marital satisfaction.

David and Stafford (2013) pointed out the role of individual relationship with god, forgiveness, spirituality, religion and couple’s joint religious communication with marital satisfaction by employing a relational model. Using an actor-partner approach results suggested that one’s individual relationship with God is indirectly related to marital quality and couple’s joint religious communication among spouses were directly related to marital quality. Forgiveness of self and partner was the significant predictor of marital quality.
Overbeek et al., (2012), studied that relationship among depressive symptoms and relationship longevity is mediated by adolescents’ conflict resolution styles. Data was comprised of 80 couples aged 18-19 years old and analyzed using APIM. Results indicated that conflict resolution strategies have no effect as mediator and also suggest that dyad members showed that greater the depressive symptoms more they use negative resolution styles rather than positive problem solving strategies.

Orth (2013), found that the personality of a relationship partner predicts both individual’s own satisfaction as well as partner’s satisfaction with relationship. He used APIM to test whether actor and partner effects of personality are biased when we use same self-report method and consequently we are not controlling shared method variance for assessing the personality and relationship satisfaction. Self and Partner report data were collected from 186 spouses on the big five personality traits from both the partners. Attesting the importance of control shared variance in dyadic data analysis results shows that actor effects were larger than partner effects based on self-reports, smaller than partner effects based on partner reports, or of about the same size as partner effects based on both self and partner reports.

A research on personality and relationship satisfaction by Dyrenforth et al., (2010) investigates three different types of personality effects: actor effects, partner effects, and similarity effects and showed that actor’s personality is influenced by his/her marital satisfaction and partner effects influenced by partner’s Marital Satisfaction. The study examined the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of relationship and life satisfaction. Self and partner reports data were collected from both the partners of UK (N=6,554), Australia (N=5,278) and United Kingdom (N=11,418), married couples. By using APIM three types of personality effects were
found: actor effects, Partner effects and similarity effects, according to which it has clear evidence of actor and partner effects of personality for both marital and life satisfaction. There is no consistent evidence that the dyadic variable of similarity matters more than the actor and partner effects of personality.

Parsons and Starks (2013) examined the sexual health of gay male couples by APIM using a multi-level modelling approach. Data were surveyed from large events of New York City and Los Angeles from 172 matched gay male couples. Results demonstrated that both sexual compulsivity and attachment is relevant to the sexual health of the gay partner men and also explains that APIM has the ability to identify both within person and between person associations.

Hardy (2012), by using Karney and Crown’s (2007) Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation model which is adapted from military as a guide, investigate the relationship between attachment style, constructive communication and relationship confidence. Data were collected from 71 newlywed couples from military. The study predicted an enduring vulnerability i.e. romantic attachment style, would be associated with marital confidence indirectly as a marital resource and couples’ communication directly as an adaptive process. Data were analyzed through APIM to see actor and partner effects. Results suggested that while working with military couples in the early years of marriage, it is important to assess attachment style and relationship confidence as it also shows that wives’ avoidant attachment and husband’s anxious attachment was directly associated with his/ her constructive communication after controlling financial worry and husband’s rank. Partner effects were there between relationship confidence and constructive communication, when we reckon anxious attachment.
Stafford, et al. (2014), examined the relationships among sanctity of marriage (un) forgiveness, sacrifice and both positive and negative marital satisfaction as it is based on the Mahoney & colleagues theoretical assumptions about the potential role of sanctity as it is a central feature of religion/spirituality. Data were analyzed through APIM using a multilevel path modelling which examined the perspectives of 342 dyad members. Result showed that sanctity emerged as a strong predictor of marital quality even after considering forgiveness and sacrifice and it is positively related to marital satisfaction and negatively to marital dissatisfaction.

Rodriguez, et al., (2013) examined that one’s relationship satisfaction and commitment was effected by one’s perception about their romantic partner’s problematic drinking and also examined that whether it varies as a function of their partner’s drinking. Data were analyzed for 78 married dyads by using APIM which revealed that partner moderated actor interaction, such that the association between the actor’s perceptions about their partner’s drinking as problematic and actor’s relationship was significantly moderated by the partner self-reported drinking. Results suggest that partners higher level drinking did not have effect on the perception of drinking as problematic and but on the other side when partners drank at lower levels, perceive drinking as problematic which was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment. Results also showed about alcohol consumption that there is three way interactions with gender emerged, which indicates that males have stronger effect.

Levesque, et al., (2014) explored the relationship between dyadic coping, dyadic empathy and relationship satisfaction which was described through a theoretical model. Investigating the indirect and direct relationship between the above
variables among 187 dyads. Results suggested that higher level of dyadic empathy, higher would be the dyadic coping strategies in both males and females. Similarly, superior dyadic coping strategies was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Mediating effects of dyadic coping strategies was seen on dyadic empathy and relationship satisfaction in male members, In conclusion, males dyadic perspective notably improves dyadic coping strategies in female partners, whereas, dyadic empathy of females notably improved dyadic coping strategy of their male partner.

Dennison et.al., (2014) conducted study among newlyweds married couples and examined the influence of family-origin characteristics among husbands’ and wives’ marital satisfaction and also use conflict resolution styles as mediator. Data were analyzed through APIM via Structural equation models. Results suggest that wives’ lower marital satisfaction was associated with family-origin characteristics and also found mixed evidence which indicate that relationship was partially mediated by Conflict Resolution Style.

Rahim et al., (2000) conducted a study to examine the effect of husband and wives Conflict Management Styles on wife and husband’s perception of marital satisfaction and marital instability. 125 married couples were taken as sample and data was analyzed through Actor Partner Interdependence Model via SEM. Results demonstrated that obliging and compromising styles were positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Furthermore, dominating and avoiding styles were negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, to clearly understand the effects of personality it is important to analyze husbands and wives separately, and to use data from both spouses rather than just one (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Some studies fail to do this, while those that do
use data from both spouses face the further challenge of dealing with the non-independent nature of dyadic data because of the correlation between spouses’ scores, which can bias findings (Kenny, 1996). Researchers are beginning to use innovative techniques to deal with the problem of non-independence with structural equation modeling (Miller et al., 2003; Robins, Caspri, & Moffitt, 2000).