

Role of Trust in Relating Rewards and Marital Satisfaction among Married Individuals in Pakistan

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The study designed to investigate the mediating role of trust in the relationship between rewards (including intimacy, passion, love, and spousal support) and marital satisfaction in married individuals ($N = 250$) including husbands ($n = 129$) and wives ($n = 121$) from Sargodha, Faisalabad and Chiniot. Source Specific Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona, 1989) was used to assess spousal support and Perceived Relationship Quality Scale (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) were used in order to measure marital satisfaction, love, intimacy, passion, and trust among the participants. Pearson correlation demonstrated significant positive coefficients among all study variables. Results computed through SPSS and MACRO Process by Hayes (2013) supported the hypothesis by suggesting a partial mediation between the rewards and marital satisfaction. This study suggested that future researches should study couples rather than married individuals and that other third variables should also be studied within this relationship.

Keyword. Intimacy, Passion, Love, Spousal Support, Trust, Marital Satisfaction

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Role of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) has been found to be central in explaining social relationships. The main tenant of the theory is that social relationships are always based on transactions. If individuals perceive more rewards than costs in a relationship, they sustain the relationship, if not, they terminate it. In this process, the individuals go for rewards. The gratifications, pleasures, and satisfactions a person receives when participating in a relationship are included in SET as rewards (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Although rewards have been found significantly heightening the level of marital satisfaction, the mechanisms through which these rewards create such positive impacts are still unclear. Therefore, present study aims at exploring the role of resources including spousal support, intimacy, passion and love in predicting marital satisfaction among Pakistani married individuals. The study also aims to explore the role of trust in relating these rewards to marital satisfaction.

Marital Satisfaction

From a psychological point of view, there is no greater virtue found in a relationship than satisfaction one derives from that relationship; and marital relationship is no exception. Marriage provides the base for family system in any society and therefore, is perhaps the most important factor in life satisfaction. Carr, Freedman, Cornman, and Schwarz (2014), for instance concluded that marital quality is associated with an increase in own and

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spouse's life satisfaction as well as in overall well-being. Conversely, if a person is dissatisfied in marital relationship, no pleasure he/she can gain in life. Not only the person himself/herself, the whole family including children and other family members are also get disturbed causing life-long disastrous impacts on the children. It's been observed that the children whose parents are more satisfied in their marriages are more mentally healthy than those who are less satisfied in their lives (Nagaraja, Rajamm, & Reddy, 2012).

Marital satisfaction is the amount of satisfaction a person finds in his/her married relation (Rowe, 2004). Schoen, Astone, Standish, and Kim (2002) described marital satisfaction in terms of global evaluation of and reflection of happiness in marital relationship.

Because of its importance for family life, social researchers have identified numerous factors which contribute to marital satisfaction. Trustworthiness, agreeableness, cooperativeness, attractiveness, extraversion, wealth, intelligence, and humor have been identified as key determinants of marital satisfaction (Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2007). Further, marital satisfaction is the matter of costs incurred and rewards received in married relationship where more costs are associated with less satisfaction and vice versa (Atta, Adil, Shujja, & Shakir; Stone & Shackelford, 2007). This is the main tenant of SET which suggests that

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relationship satisfaction is basically the matter of equilibrium between costs incurred and benefits received in a relationship.

Role of Rewards in Marital Satisfaction

Considering the role of benefits, rewards are of great virtue in a married relationship. Rewards are the benefits which are transmitted and exchanged in a relationship. The rewards include, according to Nye (1979), those outcomes found in a relationship which are valued by the person including love, companionship (which might be transmitted through intimacy), sexual enjoyment and passion, money, status and services (including support in domestic chores and in making decisions etc). These rewards always serve for bringing attraction to a married relationship (Levinger, 1976). The present study examines the role of spousal support, love, intimacy and passion as rewards in predicting marital satisfaction among Pakistani married individuals.

Scientific literature on married life is filled with researches suggesting a predicting role of love and its types for marital satisfaction. It has been observed that love is one of the most important factors of marriage and its dissolution as lack of it is the most important reason for divorce is lack of love (Risavy, 1995). Love is a key factor contributing for marital satisfaction because love and trust are the foremost factors for solving problems and making adjustments (Ghomrani, 2005) in marital relationship. Love in a relationship affects well-being and health of

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the individuals by influencing emotions, motivations, attentions and memory and by reducing distress in the relation (Esch & Stefano, 2005). Love is such a powerful predictor of marital satisfaction that even in long-term marital relation, when passion ends, romantic love still is a good predictor of marital satisfaction. This was found by Acevedo and Aron (2009) who observed a moderately large sample of married couples and conducted a meta-analysis of studies and concluded that romantic love was a good positive correlate of marital satisfaction for both the long-term and short-term married relationship. Moshak (2010), in a study, too revealed love as an important correlate of marital satisfaction. Similarly, Asl and Bayat (2012) observed a sample of university female staff members and found that love was a strong positive predictor of marital satisfaction.

Intimacy is the feeling of relatedness and closeness a person enjoys in a relationship with the other. Intimacy is characterized by removing the psychological boundaries and sharing the most personal thoughts and feelings with the other people (Rathus, Nevid et al., 2011). Intimacy plays a pivotal role in satisfaction with a relationship as it involves sacrificing for the other person which results in trust, care and acceptance for the other person (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). Moreover, as the definition of intimacy suggests, it involves removing boundaries which engenders feelings of closeness which ultimately causes

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satisfaction in a relationship. Therefore, it is not surprising to assume that intimacy results in marital satisfaction.

Passion is the sexual side of a marital relationship characterized by intense emotions, physiological arousal and persistent desire to have sex with the partner where the individual is aroused and feels excited for the partner (Carandang & Guda, 2015). Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, sexual intimacy has been articulated as an important commodity which yields positive outcomes such as love, respect, commitment etc (Wang, 2004). Passion is an important commodity found in marital relationship. It is high in early years of marriage and begins to decline with passage of time. On the other hand, it is a common observation that, marital satisfaction also declines with more years passed in a married relationship. A study carried out by Heiman et al. (2011), observed that among long-term committed relationships couples' physical intimacy and sexual functioning were good predictors of relationship satisfaction in various countries including Germany, Brazil, Spain, U.S., and Japan.

Similarly, perception of support from the partner is a key element in relationship satisfaction. Aycan and Eskin, (2005) define spousal support as the help, advices, understanding and like which partners provide to one another. It might be instrumental help (helping with domestic chores), and emotional support (including support given by empathic understanding of the partner,

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giving helpful and honest advices indecision making and showing genuine concern for the spouse). Spousal support might be of great value for the individuals because it concludes in many positive impacts on the individuals. For instance, it brings marital satisfaction by mitigating the effects of stress-related problems faced in a married relationship (Cutrona, 1996). Moreover, as Brock and Lawrence (2008) found in a study, when females find that their husbands are giving them appropriate support even if they are experiencing an increase in role strain in their married life they are more satisfied in their relationship. Moreover, as Xu and Burleson (2004) noted that emotional support from the spouse is the strongest correlate of satisfaction in marital life and remains same for both sexes and even for all ethnic groups. Spousal support is such an important factor in a married relationship that effects of all other supports fade in presence of this kind of support. For instance, Rostami, Ghazinour, and Richter (2013) observed an Iranian sample and found that spousal support was the strongest contributor to marital satisfaction than any other type of support.

Role of Trust in Linking Rewards to Marital Satisfaction

Trust serves as the bases for any relationship. There is no greater virtue in a relationship than trusting each other. If two individuals, in a relationship, trust each other, the relationship gives peace to both of the partners; otherwise, no positivity can be drawn from the relationship. Trust is manifested when a person

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relies on the other person or thing (Barber, 1983). Similarly, Dobing (1993) viewed trust as the composite of an intention regarding your willingness to depend on the other person, beliefs regarding trusting others and situation-specific trusting behaviors. In other words, it is the product of intentions, beliefs and behaviors showing dependency and reliance on another person.

Among Pakistani population, it has been reported that trusting the spouse results in living the life in peace for both the partners. This is so because when trusting your partner results in the feelings of independence and autonomy which gives the relationship a healthy turn. A distrustful relationship can result in a miserable life for both the distruster and the person who is being distrusted. Moreover, trust is not only related to infidelity, it includes trusting other's wisdom and his/her sincerity towards the other partner; and that the person being trusted won't harm the partner. All of these aspects of trust make a married life more happy, more favorable and ultimately more satisfied (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012).

Previous researches have found similar results suggesting a positive role of trust in marital satisfaction. For instance, Atta, Adil, Shujja, and Shakir (2013) carried out a study in order to explore the role of trust in predicting marital satisfaction among single-career and dual-career couples in Pakistan. The results concluded that trust was a significant positive predictor of marital

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satisfaction regardless of whether the couple was a single-career or a dual-career couple. Similarly, William and Mark (2008) outlined predictors of marital satisfaction adjustment and found that among others, trust was a significant predictor of marital adjustment. Similarly, Harris, Skogrand, and Hatch (2008) observed that among other contributors trust was a significant predictor of marital strength in Latino couples.

On the other hand, it is not contrary to expectations that the rewards in married relationship serve as bases for trust. Love and its manifestations in form of intimacy and passion all enhance the level of trust among partners as its manifestation in words (expression of love and intimacy), deeds and gestures (i.e., expression of passion) and providing the partner with emotional and instrumental support communicates to the partner that person is committed to his/her partner which serves as to strengthen the relationship by increasing affection and mutual dependence which ultimately leads to trust among partners. Gonzaga, Keltner, Londahl, and Smith (2001) observed that the individuals who experience love at a higher level and display it to their partners are more likely to experience such kinds of outcomes as increased level of trust in their partners.

Turning towards the relationship of spousal support and trust, it is not contrary to assume that the partners who provide more support are more likely to be trusted by their partners. In

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order to take a closer look at their relationship, it is better to consult the definitions of both the constructs. Both the constructs share some parts of definitions. By spousal support we mean the help and assistance a partner provides to his/her spouse by giving him helpful advices, empathic understanding in form of emotional support and support in domestic chores (Aycan & Eskin, 2005); whereas, trust is the reliance of one person onto the other person/persons/objects. There are high chances that the spouse who is always supporting his/her partner emotionally, providing help in chores of physical nature (for instance help in domestic chores) and giving empathic listening and understanding to the partner, will tend to be relied upon to a greater extent than the partner who is less supporting.

Trust is important for any relationship. When there is trust, even negative aspects of relationship begin to fade out. Gondal, Makhdoom and Atta (2018) observed that relationship of Machiavellianism (a negative personality trait marked by deceitful interpersonal style for the sake of personal interest) with marital satisfaction fades away when the level of trust is high among married individuals. Therefore, trust is always supposed to be an increasing agent for marital satisfaction. For instance, Atta, Adil, Shujja, and Shakir (2013) observed that trust always enhances the level of satisfaction among couples whether the couple is single career or both career.

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Therefore, the present study assumes that rewards (including spousal support, love, intimacy and passion) result in increased level of trust on the partner which ultimately brings marital satisfaction among the individuals. In other words, rewards bring marital satisfaction through increasing the level of trust among married individuals. Following major hypothesis was formulated in order to explore the relationship:

H1: Level of trust would mediate the relationship of rewards (including intimacy, passion, love and spousal support) and marital satisfaction among married individuals.

Method

Sample

The sample of the present study comprised of 250 married individuals including 129 males and 121 female participants from urban and rural areas of three cities of Pakistan including Sargodha, Faisalabad and Chiniot. The age of the sample ranged from 21 years to 50 years of age with ($M = 36.53$ and $SD = 8.56$). The individuals with less than one year of marriage or more than 30 years of marriage, and having no children were not included in the sample.

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Instruments

In order to measure the constructs following instruments will be used for the present study.

Source Specific Social Provisions Scale. Source Specific Social Provisions Scale (SPS-SS; Cutrona, 1989) was used in order to measure spousal support. The SPS-SS is a six item scale anchored at a six-point rating scale where 0 indicates “not at all” and 5 indicates “a great deal”. The scale consists of two sub-scales including amount of support and satisfaction with support. The internal consistency, as reported by Cutrona (1989), is .78 which is quite satisfactory. The high scores on the scale are indicative of high level of social support and vice versa.

Perceived Relationship Quality Components. In order to measure intimacy, passion, love, satisfaction and trust, Perceived Relationship Quality Scale (PRQC) was used. The scale was developed by Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas, (2000) and is a reliable measure of relationship quality. For instance, Roth (2012) reported the internal consistency of the scale which was .919 for husbands and .923 for wives. The scale consists of 18 items and six subscales named as satisfaction, trust, commitment, passion, intimacy and love. The commitment sub-scale was not used in the study. The items on the scale were anchored on a 7-point rating scale where 1 = not at all and 7 = extremely. High scores on the scale were indicative of high level of the construct being measured.

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Procedure

Married individuals were incorporated in current study from three major cities of Pakistan including Faisalabad, Sargodha and Chiniot. The sample was approached through purposive convenient sampling from rural and urban areas of these cities. The portfolio including informed consent, a demographic data sheet and the related questionnaires discussed before, was handed over to the participants by personally contacting to them. After taking consent the participants were asked to fill the questionnaires along with providing their demographic information. Detailed verbal as well as written instructions regarding responding to the questionnaires were provided to them. After they had completed their responses on the instrument, the portfolio was received from them with thanks and was entertained through SPSS and PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) by using various statistical techniques.

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Results

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities and correlation matrix for all the variables used in the study (N = 250)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Intimacy	14.87	2.80	.76	-	.63*	.66*	.60*	.57*	.73*
2. Passion	13.51	3.27	.75		-	.56*	.50*	.56*	.68*
3. Love	15.58	2.84	.80			-	.61*	.56*	.68*
4. SS	27.50	5.24	.74				-	.54*	.62*
5. Trust	15.18	2.32	.70					-	.60*
6. MS	15.48	3.11	.82						-

Note. SS = spousal support; MS = marital satisfaction. * $p < .001$.

Table 1 reveals that all the scales possess good internal consistencies ranging from .70 (for Trust) to .82 (for Marital Satisfaction). Moreover, as the table enunciates, all the scales are highly correlated with each other in positive direction.

Table 2

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Direct and Indirect Effect of Major Study Variables on Marital Satisfaction (N=250)

Model	Outcome	Variables	Direct effects			Variables	Indirect effect		
			β	LL	UL		β	LL	UL
1	Marital satisfaction	Intimacy	.64***	.53	.75	Intimacy	.17 ^{a1}	.10	.26
		Trust	.37***	.23	.50				
	Trust	Intimacy	.47***	.39	.57				
2	Marital Satisfaction	Passion	.47***	.37	.57	Passion	.17 ^{a2}	.11	.26
		Trust	.44***	.30	.57				
	Trust	Passion	.39***	.32	.47				
		Love	.55***	.43	.66	Love	.20 ^{a3}	.43	.66
	Trust	Trust	.43***	.29	.57				
		Love	.46***	.37	.54				
Trust	Spousal Support	.25***	.18	.31	Spousal Support	.12 ^{a4}	.07	.17	
	Trust	.50***	.36	.65					
	Spousal Support	.24***	.19	.29					

Note. ^{a1}Sobel's $Z = 4.85, p < .001$; ^{a2}Sobel's $Z = 5.30; p < .001$ ^{a3}Sobel's $Z = 5.27, p < .001$; ^{a4}Sobel's $Z = 5.68, p < .001$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 summarizes mediation results in order to test the proposed conceptual model, The Model 4 in Process Macro (Hayes, 2013), of the study. Results indicate that trust partially mediates the relationship between rewards (including intimacy, passion, love and spousal support) and marital satisfaction. It is obvious from the table that intimacy ($\beta = .64, p < .001$), passion ($\beta =$

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.47, $p < .001$), love ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$) and spousal support ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors of marital satisfaction. Turning towards the indirect effects the Table concludes the values of Sobel's Z which are significant for intimacy (Sobel's $Z = 4.85$, $p < .001$), passion (Sobel's $Z = 5.30$, $p < .001$), love (Sobel's $Z = 5.27$, $p < .001$) and spousal support (Sobel's $Z = 5.68$, $p < .001$) suggesting that indirect effects of all of these variables are significant in contributing to marital satisfaction. Further, a closer look at values of 95% Confidence Interval, all of the values enunciate that this interval does not contain zero hence increasing the certainty of this relationship.

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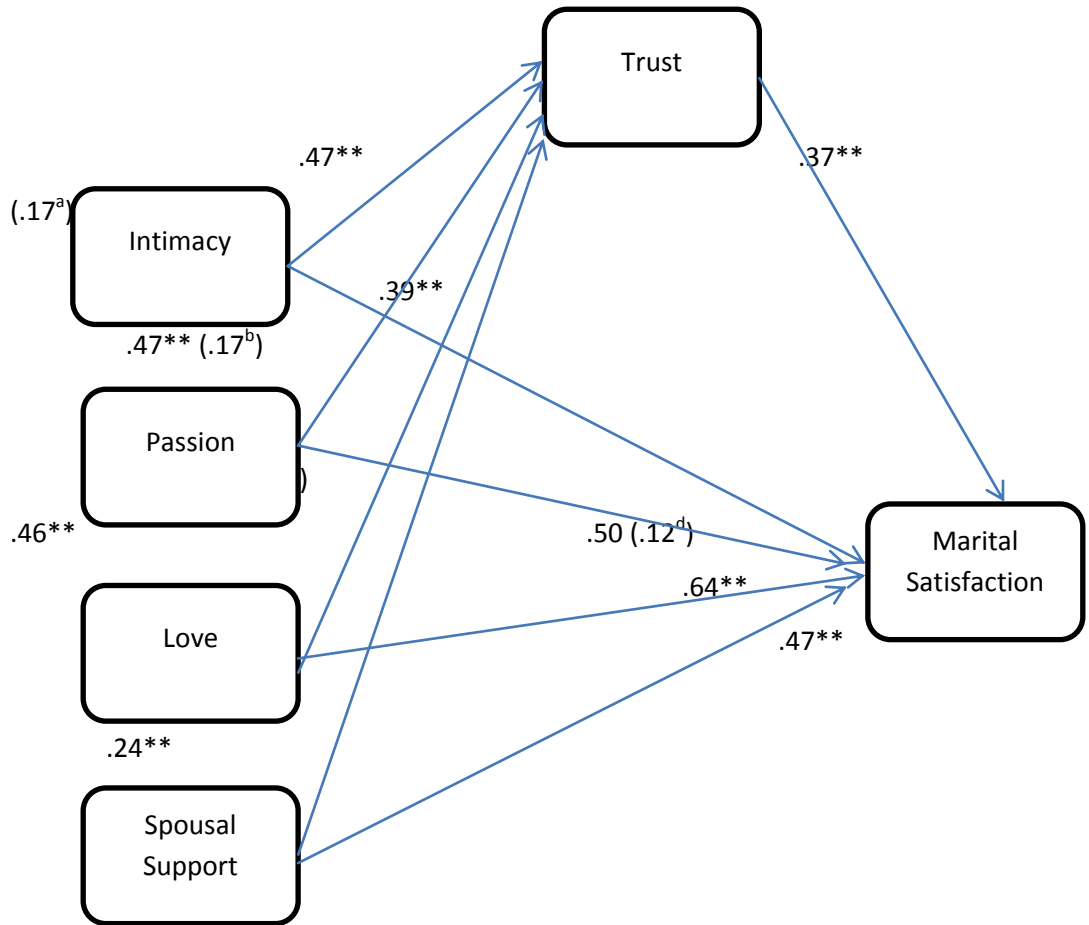


Figure 1. The outcome model for all the mediational effects in the study. The value in parentheses is the indirect effect of intimacy, passion, love and spousal support whereas the value outside the parenthesis is the value of trust predicting marital satisfaction with intimacy, passion, love and spousal support respectively

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Discussion

The major aim of the study was to investigate the mediating role of trust for the relationship of rewards and marital satisfaction. It was hypothesized that trust would mediate between the relationship of rewards including intimacy, passion, love and spousal support with marital satisfaction. The results are in line with the assumptions of the study as trust was found to be a partial mediator for the relationship of rewards found in a relationship and marital satisfaction among Pakistani married individuals.

The study concluded that all of the rewards including intimacy, passion, love and spousal support and level of trust positively and strongly predicted marital satisfaction. The results are not contrary to expectations. As the common sense might assume, when a person involves in love, intimacy and passion, he/she is more satisfied in the relationship than vice versa. Let's have a finer grained look at the rewards. First of all there comes love. Love has been found to be the most important and the most constant cause of marital satisfaction. For example, Estrada (2009) observed five couples and observed that among other factors, love was the factor which was common to all five couples which was stated as a contributory factor to marital satisfaction in particular and a long-term happy married life. Similarly, Grossbard and Mukhopadhyay (2012) concluded that relationship happiness disappears as soon as spousal love diminishes among the partners.

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Similarly, Acevedo and Aron (2009) and Asl and Bayat (2012) also reported love as a key contributor to marital satisfaction.

Next among marital rewards, there is intimacy; which is the feeling of closeness and relatedness towards a relationship partner. Therefore, it is not strange that intimacy yields relationship satisfaction. The results of the present study also supported this notion as intimacy was found to be a strong positive predictor of marital satisfaction. Intimacy is defined as the feeling of closeness and communication of emotional and romantic feelings based on understanding of the feelings of the partner (Bagarozzi, 2001). Previous researches have concluded the same. For instance, Greeff, Hildegarde, and Malherbe, (2001) and Kim, (2013) concluded intimacy as a positive predictor of marital satisfaction.

Turning towards the role of sexual side of the relationship, passion was also found to be a strong positive predictor of marital satisfaction. Having sex is an important biological need of the human being and marriage is the only legal way which allows two individuals to meet this biological need, particularly in a society like ours where marital sex is the only source of acceptable sexual pleasure. Therefore, if the person enjoys sex in the relationship, he/she is more likely to experience satisfaction from the relationship. Therefore, the results of the present study are justified. Previous researches have also found the same results as for instance Heiman et al. (2011) observed that physical intimacy

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or passion were found to be significant contributors to married relationship.

Along with other predictors, the study concluded spousal support as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. The results are in line with the assumptions of the study and previous researches. The results suggest that when a partner perceives that his/her partner is supporting him/her in all domains of life including giving emotional support, helping in house chores and guiding the spouse by providing help in decision making, the partner will experience more satisfaction in the relationship. Further, according to SET (Blau, 1964), the relationship where rewards are perceived as higher than costs, are more likely to be valued and thus sustained. Support from the partner is an important type of reward which brings worth to a relationship (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Therefore, it is not strange to observe that spousal support is a positive predictor of marital satisfaction. Previous researches have also reported such relationship for instance Rostami, et al. (2013), Aycan and Eskin (2005) and Xu and Burleson (2004) concluded that spousal support and its various components prove to be significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction.

The study concluded that all of these rewards bring trust in a relationship. The results are logical in a sense that when a person loves his/her partner and expresses through intimacy and passion,

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it is more likely that he/she will express feelings of trust towards partner. Trust involves relying on the partner. When one partner loves the other, have sexual passionate relationship with the partner, and is ready to disclose his/her internal life by diminishing any boundaries between them, it is more likely that the person will trust the partner. Moreover, these resources bring commitment to the relationship which itself is an indication of trust among partners. Further it has been observed that when a partner loses trust in the other partner, the result is a decrease in feeling of love for the partners. For instance, Sailor (2013) found that among the indicators of falling out of love, losing trust is an important indicator.

It was observed in the study that trust is a significant contributor to marital satisfaction. The reason is quite simple. When an individual trusts the other, he/she gives room to partner to live a more autonomous and free life. Moreover, the level of trust always results in more commitment to the relationship and when commitment is increased, the person is more likely to ignore the trivial disturbing matters in the relationship which ultimately results in an increased level of marital satisfaction. The relationship becomes clearer in the context of SET; which suggests that the base for social exchange systems is trust. When trust evolves, commitment increases which ultimately brings betterment to a marital relationship. In contrast, the couples who lack trust, ultimately suffer from a disturbed marital relationship marked by

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less commitment in the relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Previous studies also support this notion. For instance Fatima and Ajmal (2012) found that for a happy married life trust is a necessary element among Pakistani population. Similarly, Atta, Adil, Shujja, and Shakir (2013) found that among a Pakistani single and dual career couples level of trust was a significant contributor to marital satisfaction.

Therefore, it is not contrary to expectations that love, intimacy, passion and spousal support (i.e., the marital rewards) increase the level of trust among married partners and this increased level of trust results in heightened level of marital satisfaction among the married individuals. The results reveal that trust partially mediated between the relationship of love, intimacy, passion and spousal support with marital satisfaction. It means that rewards result in increased level of trust among married partners, which in turn increases the level of marital satisfaction. However, as the study articulates, level of trust partially mediates which suggests that intimacy, passion, love and spousal support themselves cause an increased level of marital satisfaction as well as they increase marital satisfaction through increasing the level of trust among participants.

Limitations and Suggestions

The study is not void of certain limitations. The foremost limitation is that the variables under consideration might have

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given a more true picture of results if the data had been collected from couples rather than married individuals as the picture of rewards perceived and their relationship to outcomes variables can be portrayed with more clarity if the responses of both the sender and the receiver partners are compared. Therefore, further researchers should focus partners rather than individuals. Moreover, the sample of the present study was small to study a mediated effect further researchers should focus on a larger sample in order to engender more generalizability in the results.

Practical Implications

The study has important implication for both the theorists and the man-in-street. At theoretical level, it adds trust as important mediator in SET. Whereas, at practical level, the study enunciates spousal support and love and its forms increase marital satisfaction among married individuals. It further adds to this notion that if these rewards are not working, another important resource can be consulted which is trust. If the partners trust each other, their relationship satisfaction can be increased. The study proposes important variables for family counselors who are dealing with the clients of disturbed marital relationships in a sense that, if they focus on increasing the level of spousal support, love, intimacy, passion and above all, trust, they can increase the marital satisfaction among them, which ultimately can dissolve relationship problems.

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