Parents-in-Law Support as a Predictor of Marital Satisfaction in Generation Y Married Women: Moderating Role of Communication Patterns

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Abstract

The current study investigated the impact of parents-in-law support, couple's communication pattern on marital satisfaction of generation Y married women. Data was collected through purposive sampling technique from 117 married women with an age range of 25 to 45 years from different cities of Punjab, Pakistan. Kansas Marital satisfaction Scale was used to measure marital satisfaction, Communication Questionnaire Short Form for communication patterns and Perceived Social Support Scale for measuring parent-in-law support. Participants responded to questionnaires assessing perceived support from parents in law, marital satisfaction, and communication patterns. The findings of the present study suggest a positive correlation between parent-in-law support, constructive communication, and marital satisfaction. Results also found that couples' constructive communication is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. The current study has a significant theoretical implication such as Parent-in-law and young generations will benefit from this research, by knowing the communication patterns that helps in their relationship.

Keywords
Parent-in-law support, Communication patterns, Marital satisfaction

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Introduction

Generation Y is a term used to describe individuals born approximately between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, who are often referred to as Millennial. This generation is unique in that, they are the first to grow up with modern technology (Pendleton, 2021). While every generation has its own set of issues, but the challenges faced by Millennials are particularly complex due to variety of factors, including changing societal norms, economic instability and rise of technology (Danielle, 2020), and these all factors have impact on their personal, occupational and as well as on marital life. So, there are number of factors that affect their marital Satisfaction. One of the most significant factors is the role of parent-in-law (Lavner, 2016). Parents-in-law have crucial role in the lives of married couples, it can either positively or negatively affect the relationship between the partners.

The communication between the child spouse and the parent-in-law plays a vital role in bridging the connection between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction. It serves as a crucial mechanism that influences the relationship dynamics and overall happiness within the marriage (Tulgan, 2009). A strong and healthy marriage can be maintained when there are well-defined boundaries between the parent-child relationship and the marital relationship. On the other hand, problems and challenges in a marital relationship can arise when there are unclear boundaries between these two relationships. While effective communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to compromise can help to prevent conflicts and improve the relationship between parents-in-law and the couple (Lavner, 2016). In Asian cultures, conflicts with parents-in-law are a prevalent issue and considered one of the top stressors in marriage (Cao et al., 2019).

Parent-in-law support

Parental support is defined as the degree of acknowledgment or warmth that parents express toward their youngsters (Bean et al., 2006). Parents-in-law can play an important role in the lives of married couples especially in cultures where they are expected to be closely involved in the lives of their children and their spouses. Their involvement can range from providing emotional support to offering financial assistance, and from offering advice on child-rearing to interfering in the couple's lives. The nature of their involvement can have a significant impact on the couple's marital satisfaction, it can either positively or negatively affect the relationship between the partners (Cao et al., 2019). The parental support that children receive, which is a healthy part of the relationship that exists between parents and children in law, is regarded as an important component of healthy teenage growth by families.

Marital Satisfaction

According to Gottman and Silver (as cited by Tavakol et al., 2017) marital satisfaction is the extent to which spouses feel content with the overall quality of their marriage. Moreover It serves as an indicator of marriage quality, representing the genuine feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, and happiness that a husband and wife experience when considering all aspects of their marriage (Cao et al., 2019).The quality of the relationship between married partners is very crucial for the stability of the entire family, because they serve as a foundation that keeps the family united, If this satisfaction is not attained, it can result in marital dissatisfaction (Anake, 2021).

Communication Patterns

Communication patterns are the recurring ways in which individuals or couples engage in communication with each other (Cao et al., 2019). These patterns have great impact on the

quality of communication and satisfaction within a relationship. It is a key element that impact the conjugal quality (Fowers, 1998). Effective communication is vital in marriage, and the way couples communicate greatly influences their relationship satisfaction (Bradbury, 2016). Enhancing communication skills can lead to improved relationships, better handling of challenges, enhanced mental and physical well-being, and improved social interactions (Lundblad & Hansson, 2006).

Theoretical framework

The current study is based upon Family system theory and vulnerability stress adaptation model. According to Bowen (as cite by Haefner, 2014), Family Systems Theory highlight the importance of differentiation. Differentiation of self refers to how individuals balance their emotional and intellectual functioning. In short, we can say that an individual who has strong sense of differentiation of self is able to build clear boundaries between themselves and others including their family of origin and spouse. As differentiation allows individuals to establish healthy boundaries with their parents, including parents-in-law, while maintaining a satisfying marital relationship. Higher levels of differentiation in both spouses can contribute to healthier parent-in-law relationships and increased marital satisfaction and this is called triangulation. So, Triangulation occurs when one individual in a relationship turns to a third party to manage tension or conflict. In the context of the parent-in-law relationship, triangulation can occur when one spouse involves their parents in marital conflicts or seeks support from parents rather than addressing the issues directly with their partner. Triangulation can disrupt healthy communication and problem-solving within the marital relationship, potentially impacting marital satisfaction (Erdem & Safi, 2018).

Similarly, VSA model focuses on marital quality and explains the factors that contribute to high or low marital satisfaction. According to the VSA model, marital satisfaction is influenced by three factors enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adaptive processes. Enduring vulnerability refers to stable characteristics brought into the marriage by each spouse. Stressful events (conflicts, interference) encompass developmental transitions, situations, incidents, and chronic or acute circumstances that cause distress for couples. The adaptive process involves how spouses interact and respond to one another, with communication behavior being a key focus in studies on adaptive processes (Lawrence, 2001).

Literature Review

Parent-in-Law support and Marital Satisfaction

Kim et al. (2017) found that when individuals feel supported by their parent-in-law, it tends to boost overall marital satisfaction among Korean couples. They found that wives who reported higher levels of support from their parents-in-law also reported increased levels of marital satisfaction, whereas husbands did not show a significant association between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction. In another study Kang (2017) found that positive relationships between parents-in-law and their children's spouses were associated with higher marital quality. Specifically, Kang found that when parents-in-law were supportive, respectful, and non-interfering in the couple's relationship, the couple reported increased levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of marital conflict. On the other hand, when parents-in-law were critical, intrusive, or disrespectful, the couple reported higher levels of marital conflict and lower levels of marital satisfaction. In a study by Greif and Woolley (2019), 351 women were surveyed regarding their relationship with their mother-in-law. Most women reported positive feelings about their relationship, but challenges arose when the daughter-in-law perceived

favoritism towards another child-in-law, interference in her marriage, or difficulty in discussing important matters directly with the mother-in-law. Similarly, in a study conducted in India, it was found that a higher level of support from parents-in-law was associated with a lower level of marital conflict among married couples. (Gupta & Li, 2019).

Communication Patterns as a moderator between Parent-in-law support and Marital Satisfaction

Zhang and Wei (2020) also found that a positive relationship between parent-in-law and their children's spouses was associated with higher marital satisfaction. But only when couples engaged in open and positive communication pattern. They also found that negative communication patterns weakened the bond between parent-in-law and marital satisfaction. A study was conducted by Rayes (2016) among selected couples of Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines they investigated the relation between communication of couples and marital satisfaction on 82 married couples, and the results showed a significantly positive relationship between couples' effective communication and marital satisfaction. Similarly, literature suggest that when married couples communicate positively, they find pleasure and satisfaction in their relationship (Christensen et al. 2006). On the other hand, when they communicate negatively, they experience dissatisfaction (Rehman et al. 2014). People who communicate with their romantic partners more affectionately report higher levels of marital satisfaction. They discovered that maintaining a happy and healthy romantic relationship requires affectionate communication, such as expressing love and appreciation (Gomillion et al. 2019).

Current Study

Past studies have focused on factors effecting marital satisfaction but to the best of our knowledge no study has focused on parent-in-law support and moderating role of

communication patterns between these variables so, the current study attempts to determine impact of parent-in-law support on marital satisfaction of generation Y with moderating role of communication patterns**.** Based upon the literature it was hypothesized that, (1) Perceived support from parent-in-law would be positively related to marital satisfaction in married women of generation Y. (2) Non constructive communication patterns will be negatively related to parent-in-law support and MS and constructive communication patterns will be positively related in married women of generation Y. (3) Parent-in-law support and communication pattern can significantly predict the marital satisfaction. (4) Communication pattern (constructive, self-demand, & partner-demand) will moderate the relationship between parent-in-law and marital quality in married women of generation Y.

Method

Sample and procedure

This study used the purposive sampling technique. 230 married women were approached from different cities of Punjab for data collection and after data cleaning the final sample was comprised of 117 married women with an age range of 25 to 45 years old. This sample size has been determined by applying G power calculator. Only those married women were included who had minimum two years of marriage experience, and belong to generation Y and whose parent-in-law reside within the same household. Moreover, to have a more control on the study those married females who do not have children and who were separated from their spouse or divorced were excluded from the study.

Instruments

There were three research instruments which were used in this study.

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Marital satisfaction of both couples were assessed by using Kansas marital satisfaction scale, how satisfied couples are in their marriage. It consists of three items that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1= extremely dissatisfied and 7= extremely satisfied), with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction and low scores indicating low satisfaction. The scale has been found to be reliable, with a high internal consistency.

Communication Pattern Questionnaire. Communication patterns were assessed by using a shorter version of the Communication Patterns Questionnaire called CPQ-SF. It's a widely used tool to measure couple communication behavior. The scale asks spouses to identify their typical communication patterns during issue discussions. The CPQ-SF consists of 11 items, assessing constructive and non-constructive communication patterns.

Perceived social support Scale. Parent-in-law support were measured by perceived social support scale (PSS- Fa) developed by Procidano and Heller in 1983. It has 20 items that consisted of declarative statements to which the individual answered "Yes", "No", and "Don't Know". For each item, the response indicative of perceived social support was scored from 0 to 2, where 0 indicating no perceived social support, to 40, indicating maximum perceived social support, as provided by parent-in-law.

Results

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the results section consisted a number of statistical analyses.

Psychometric Properties of Scales used for Study Variables

Internal Consistency of the study measures was computed by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for reliability. To identify the relationship patterns of research variables, correlations among scales were calculated. The psychometric properties used in the study are presented in the table below.

Table 1

Psychometric properties for study variables (n=117)

Scale	k	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
MS	3	12.76	2.89	3-15	.87
MILS	20	58.8	6.29	46-80	.82
FILS	20	32.56	7.34	19-55	.87
CC	5	24.34	6.47	5-32	.71
SDPW	3	11.67	5.59	3-24	.62

PDSW	3	11.54	5.33	3-24	.51

Note, MS= Marital satisfaction, MILS = mother-in-Law support, FILS= Father-in-Law support, CC = constructive communication, SDPW= Self demand partner withdraw, PDSW = Partner demand self- withdraw

Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha of marital satisfaction, mother-in-law support, Constructive communication, self-demandpartner withdraw and partner demand self-withdraw

Relationship between the Study Variables

Table 2

Pearson product correlation between study variables (N=117)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. MILS	-	.609**	.294**	.388**	-.178	-.110
2. FILS			.261*	.308**	-.209*	-.274**
3. MS				.546**	-.090	-.163
4. CC					-.280**	-.336**
5. SDPW						.685**
6. PDSW						-

**p<.01, *p<.05

Note, MS= Marital satisfaction, MILS = mother-in-Law support, FILS= Father-in-Law support, CC = constructive communication, SDPW= Self demand partner withdraw, PDSW = Partner demand self-withdraw

Table 2 indicates Mother-in-Law support is significantly positively moderately correlated with Father-in-Law support (r=.60, p<.01), significantly positively weakly correlated with marital Satisfaction (r=-.29, p<.01), constructive communication (r=-.38, p>.05) and there does not significant correlation between mother-in-law support and self-demand/ partner withdraw (r= -.17, p>.05), partner demand /self-withdraw (r=-.11, p>.01). Father-in-Law support is significantly positively weakly correlated with marital satisfaction (r= .26, p<.01), significantly positively weakly correlated with constructive communication (r=.30, p<.01) and there is significantly weakly relationship between self-demand partner withdraw (r= -.20, p>.05) and partner demand self-withdraw (r= -.27, p>.05). Marital satisfaction is significantly positively moderately correlated with constructive communication (r=.54, p<.01), and no significant

relationship with self-demand partner withdraw (*r*=-.09, *p*>.01) and partner demand self-withdraw (r=-.16, p>.01). Constructive communication is significantly negatively weakly correlated with self-demand partner with draw (*r*=-.28, *p*<.01) and significantly negatively weakly correlated with partner demand self with draw (r=-.37, p<.01). Findings also shows that Self demand partner withdraw is significantly positively moderately correlated with partner demand self-withdraw (r=.68, p<.01).

Predictive relationship between Study variables

The current research has identified possible variables that may predict marital satisfaction in generation Y. Multiple linear regression is used in the present study to examine the predictive significance of those variables.

Table 3

Regression analysis predicting Marital satisfaction from Parent-in-Law support and communication pattern (N=117)

	Estimate	*SE*	95% Cl		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	9.19	3.7	1.73	16.7	
MILS	-.022	.056	-.134	.090	.69
FILS	-.072	.044	-.159	.016	.106
CC	.273	.048	.177	.368	.000
SDPW	.048	.074	-.098	.195	.52
PDSW	.020	.073	-.164	.125	.79

Note, MILS =mother-in-Law support, FILS= Father-in-Law support, CC = constructive communication, SDPW= Self demand partner withdraw, PDSW = Partner demand self-withdraw

Table indicates that constructive communication is significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction (β=.57, p<.05). 42% variance in marital satisfaction isaccounted for by constructive communication (R^2=.42)

Role of Communication Pattern as a Moderator

In present study, communication pattern was taken as moderator that could possibly moderate the association between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction of generation Y. Moderation was computed using model 1 through PROCESS MACRO by Hayes. The following are the findings of present study that investigated the moderating effect of communication pattern on the relationship between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction of generation Y.

Table 6

Moderating role of Self demand partner withdrawn communication pattern on Relationship between Mother-in-law support and marital satisfaction (N=117)

Predictors	Marital satisfaction	*95% Cl*
	B values	*UL, LL*
constant	18.7***	[27.5, 9.8]
Mother-in-Law support	-.08	[.048, -.21]
Self-demand partner withdraws	-1.03***	[-.35, -.172]
MIL support × self-demand Partner withdraw	.015***	[.026, .004]
R^2	.15***	
F	6.73**	
ΔR^2	.065*	
ΔF	8.5*	

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

Table 6 shows moderating results of the Self demand partner withdraw for the relationship between Mother-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction. Analysis shows that self-demand partner withdraw is significantly moderates the relationship between Mother-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction.

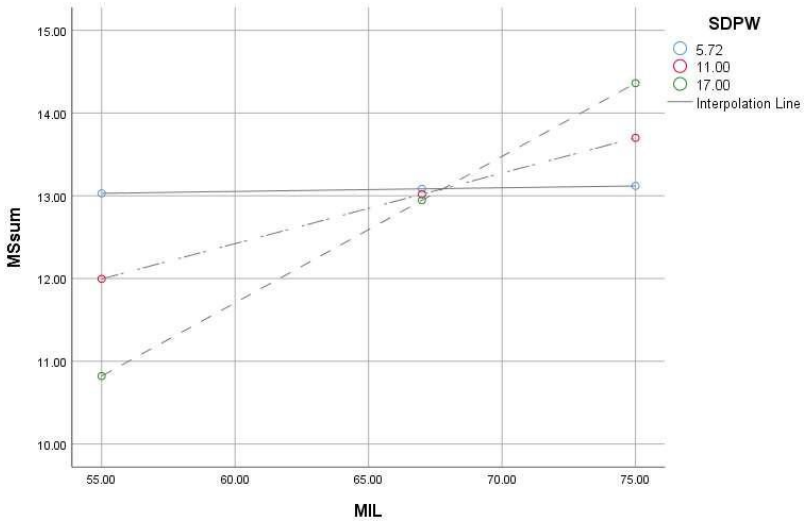


Figure 2 Moderator predicting the role of Self demand partner withdraw communication pattern on Relationship between Mother-in-law support and maritalsatisfaction

Figure shows that shows that self-demand partner withdraw is significantly moderated the relationship between Mother-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction. The graph shows the positive relationship between mother-in-law support and marital satisfaction. At all the levels of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern(low, moderate, and high), the relationship between mother-in-law support and marital satisfaction remained positive however the strength of this relationship gets stronger as the level of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern increases.

.Table 9

Moderating role of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern on Relationship between Father-in-law support and marital satisfaction (N=117)

	Marital satisfaction	*95% Cl*
Predictors	*B values*	*L, LL*
constant	6.8	[13.4, 12.18]
Father-in-Law support	.16	[-.05, -.22]
Self-demand partner withdraws	.25	[.074, -.157]
FIL support × Self demand partner withdraw	-.007**	[-.005, -.02]
R^2	0.08**	
F	2.69*	
ΔR^2	.01	
ΔF	1.11	

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

Table 9 shows moderating results of the Self-demand partner withdraw for the relationship between Father-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction. Analysis showsthat self-demand partner withdraw significantly moderates the relationship between Father-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction.

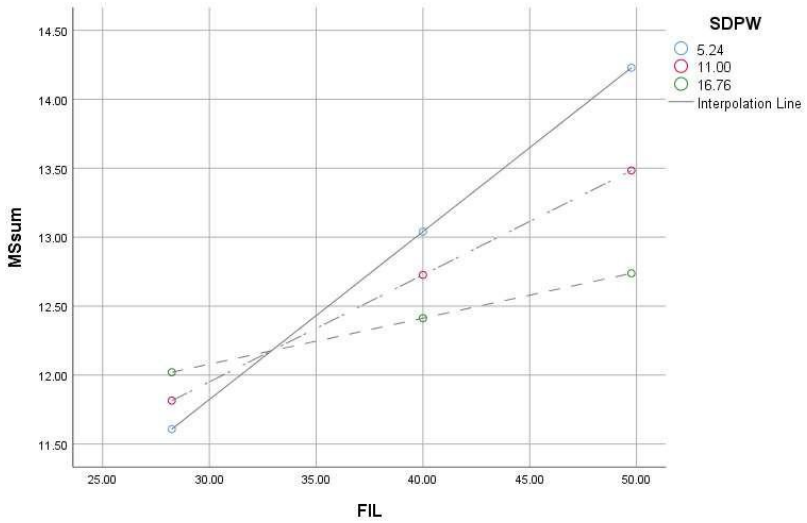


Figure 5 Moderator predicting the role of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern on Relationship between Father-in-law support and marital satisfaction

Figure shows that self-demand partner with draw shows that self-demand partner withdraw moderates the relationship between Father-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction. The graph shows the positive relationship between father-in-law support and marital satisfaction. At all the levels of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern (low, moderate, and high), the relationship between father-in-law support and marital satisfaction remained positive however the strength of this relationship gets stronger as the level of self-demand partner withdraw communication pattern decreases.

Discussion

Firstly, it was hypothesized that the perceived support from parent-in-law would be positively related to marital satisfaction. Results shows positive correlation between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction based on the study findings, Literature supports our study findings, and perceived support from parents-in-law was positively associated with marital satisfaction among Korean couples. They found that wives who

reported higher levels of perceived support from their parents-in-law also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction (Kim et al. (2017).

Secondly It was hypothesized that non constructive communication patterns will be negatively related to parent in law support and marital satisfaction and constructive communication patterns will be positively related, Results shows that there is a significant relationship of mother in law support with constructive communication and no significant relationship with non-constructive communication, while there is significant relationship between Father in law support and constructive communication and with Non constructive communication patterns. According to literature, there is a significantly positive relationship between couples' effective communication and marital satisfaction. A positive relationship between parent-in-law and their children's spouses was associated with higher marital satisfaction. But only when couples engaged in open and positive communication pattern. They also found that negative communication patterns weakened the relationship between parent-in-law and marital satisfaction (Rayes, 2016).

Thirdly It was hypothesized that Parent-in-law support and communication patterns can significantly predict the marital satisfaction. Results shows that Father and mother-in-law support is not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, while Constructive communication pattern is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction and non-constructive communication pattern is not a significant predictor. According to literature parent-in-law support can predict marital satisfaction, when parents-in-law were supportive, respectful, and non-interfering in the couple's relationship, the couple reported higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of marital conflict. On the other hand, when parents-in-law were critical, intrusive, or disrespectful, the couple reported lower

levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of marital conflict (Kang, 2017). And the literature does not support result findings this suggest that effective and positive communication within a marriage plays a more important role in marital satisfaction as compared to parent-in-law support.

Fourthly It was hypothesized that Communication pattern will moderate the relationship between parent in law and marital quality in married couples of generation Y. Results shows that constructive communication is not significantly moderated the relationship between mother in law support and marital Satisfaction, while non constructive communication patterns (Partner demand self-withdraw and self-demand partner withdraw) significantly moderated the relationship between mother in law support and marital satisfaction. Results also shows that constructive communication and non-constructive communication patterns (Partner demand self-withdraw and self- demand partner withdraw) do not significantly moderated the relationship between Father-in-Law support and marital Satisfaction. According to literature the crucial mechanism that moderates the relationship between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction is communication between the child's spouse and the parents-in-law (Tulsan, 2009) also found that a positive relationship between parent-in-law and their children's spouses was associated with higher marital satisfaction. But only when couples engaged in open and positive communication pattern. They also found that negative communication patterns weakened the relationship between parent-in-law and marital satisfaction (Zhang & Wei 2020).

Lastly it was hypothesized that there will be significant relationship between study variables. Results show non-significant relationship that couples living in nuclear

and joint family system experience same parent-in-law support. This suggests that the level of parent-in-law support experienced by couples is similar regardless of the family system they live in. There could be several reasons for non-significant relationship between parent-in-law support and type of family system due to cultural norms, individual dynamics within the family or other contextual factors may have influenced the similarity in parent-in-law support experienced by couples in both family systems.

Limitations and suggestions

Since the current research was only conducted on Generation Y and it cannot be generalized on other group, so it is recommended that future researchers conduct research on Different Generations. Secondly It is recommended that future researchers carry out longitudinal research in order to discover additional intervention strategies and procedures and the sample was geographically limited because it was only collected from cities of Punjab, mostly due to time constraints, so the results cannot be applied to Pakistan's entire population as a whole. Therefore, future studies should collect sample from different geographical regions to ensure that the findings can be applied to the entire population of Pakistan similarly Future studies should take the moderating effect of various demographic factors into account (education, Family system and age) as well as Sample was collected from females only so for future studies it is recommended that sample should be collected from men as well.

Conclusion

The current study aims to investigate the relationship between parent-in-law support and marital satisfaction of generation Y, with the focus on the role of communication patterns (constructive, self-demand, partner demand). The findings of the present study are , there

is positive correlation between parent in law support and marital satisfaction, while there is significant relationship between Father in law support and constructive communication results also shows that Father and mother in law support is not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, while Constructive communication is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, as well as non- constructive communication is significantly moderates the relationship between mother in Law support and marital Satisfaction.

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