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Quiet Compromises: Mediating Effects of Self-Silencing and Social Approval in Mindful Relationships

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of mindfulness on marital adjustment among working married women in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of self-silencing and need for social approval. Drawing upon the frameworks of attachment theory and mindfulness-based relational models, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a purposive sample of 282 participants. Standardized instruments—MAAS, NFSA, STSS, and RDAS—were used to measure the constructs. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS v22 and Smart PLS 4. The findings reveal that mindfulness has a significant positive effect on marital adjustment. While mindfulness and need for social approval were not significantly related, need for social approval positively predicted self-silencing, which in turn negatively impacted marital adjustment. Both self-silencing and need for social approval individually and jointly mediated the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment, although the effects were partial. These results highlight the complex psychological mechanisms influencing marital satisfaction, particularly in collectivist cultural settings, and suggest the need for culturally sensitive interventions focusing on self-awareness, emotional expression, and autonomy in marital relationships.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Marital Adjustment, Self-Silencing, Need for Social Approval, Working Women, Mediation, Smart PLS, Pakistani Culture.



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Introduction

Mindfulness is defined as the process of intentionally, present-moment attention in an accepting and nonjudgmental manner (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). From ancient Buddhist disciplines and contemplative disciplines, mindfulness has progressed to be a widely accepted term in contemporary psychological science and clinical practice. It has three fundamental elements: intention (the function of attention), attention (being aware of the current moment), and attitude (an open and accepting state) (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). These elements interact with each other to promote increased sensitivity to thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations so that people can respond reflectively instead of reacting impulsively to internal or external stressors.

Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that mindfulness increases emotional control, lessens anxiety, and fosters psychological hardness (Birrer et al., 2012; Siegel, 2007). It enhances one's capacity to witness negative emotions like fear, stress, or anger without being overcome by them. This mindful detachment allows a change in the relationship of individuals with their feelings and thoughts, and space is created for better responses. In relationships, greater mindfulness has been associated with improved communication, understanding, and empathy, as well as overall relational satisfaction and emotional health (Gambrel & Keiling, 2010).

In addition, mindfulness exercises have been found to decrease self-referent attention, enhance task-referent attention, and promote more acceptance of the moment-by-moment aspects of life (Bogels et al., 2006; Martin, 1997). Through meditation, breathing, or daily presence exercises, mindfulness allows for the liberation from automatic, habitual thinking and the direct experience of life more consciously and fully. This movement from a reactive to a responsive style of engagement with the world has very deep implications for mental health, relationships, and personal development.

As mindfulness is increasingly incorporated into varied disciplines from neuroscience and psychotherapy to education and business it is increasingly seen as a transformational practice with far-reaching positive effects on individuals and communities. This article discusses the theoretical foundations of mindfulness and its psychological and affective benefits with particular emphasis on its effect on personal conduct and interpersonal relations.

Literature Review

Mechanisms and Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is more and more acknowledged to help mitigate mental problems like stress, anxiety, depression, pain, and emotional dysregulation (Smalley & Winston, 2010). Cognitive flexibility is boosted, brain functions are reorganized, and metacognitive insight is fostered through mindfulness-based interventions (Siegel, 2007; Baer, 2003; Davidson et al., 2003). The studies of Lazar et al. (2005) demonstrated modifications in brain areas involved in empathy and self-monitoring. Shapiro et al. (2006) were particularly concerned to stress that mindfulness enables one to reinterpret their thoughts more objectively and calmly.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), created by Kabat-Zinn et al. (1985), has proven to decrease pain, enhance body image, and reduce psychological symptoms like depression and anxiety. Cognitive therapies rooted in mindfulness have helped in treating and preventing depression relapse (Segal et al., 2002), while Dialectical Behavior Therapy has shown promise for emotionally vulnerable populations (Linehan et al., 1991). Despite its proven efficacy, mindfulness mechanisms are still under research, varying between meditation-oriented and mindset-oriented models (Djicic, 2014; Bowen et al., 2006).

Core Elements of Mindfulness

According to Kabat-Zinn et al. (1985), four core elements constitute mindfulness: present-moment awareness, broad concentration, attentional focus, and nonjudgmental acceptance. These dimensions are interdependent and necessary for deep mindfulness. Absence of even one element can lead to "mindlessness" or unconscious, habitual actions (Cardaciotto, 2005; Langer & Piper, 1987). Practicing all four elements supports conscious decision-making and helps differentiate emotional reactions from actual events, contributing to emotional regulation and behavioral adaptability (Bowlin & Baer, 2012).

Mindfulness in Interpersonal Relationships

Mindfulness fosters presence, empathy, and responsiveness in relationships (Siegel, 2007; Bishop et al., 2004). Through self-awareness and self-observation, individuals gain the capacity to pause and respond thoughtfully rather than reacting impulsively. This "high-road" processing enhances connection and understanding in close relationships (Wallin, 2007). Research suggests that mindfulness facilitates emotional attunement and resilience in relational settings, leading to healthier interactions and a stronger sense of self and other (Dou et al., 2018; Hanh, 2004).

Mindfulness and Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness reduces emotional reactivity and fosters tolerance for emotional discomfort, supporting effective emotion regulation (Linehan et al., 2007; Arch & Craske, 2010). Studies show that mindfulness increases emotional differentiation—the ability to recognize and label diverse emotions (Paivio & Laurent, 2001; Erisman & Roemer, 2010). This capacity is essential for adaptive coping and psychological resilience (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Hill & Updegraff, 2012).

Mindfulness in Mental and Physical Health

Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program incorporates practices such as breathing exercises, body scans, and yoga to improve self-awareness (Keng et al., 2011). Evidence supports mindfulness for managing chronic pain, fibromyalgia, and mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Mindfulness has also shown benefits in workplace stress reduction and overall well-being in both clinical and non-clinical populations. The rise of mobile-based mindfulness applications reflects its growing global accessibility and appeal.

Mindfulness and Marital Satisfaction

Mindfulness enhances marital quality through emotional awareness, empathy, and open-mindedness (Burpee & Langer, 2005). Studies suggest that partners with higher mindfulness report greater marital satisfaction (Hoseyni, 2015; Zamir et al., 2017). Mindfulness allows partners to perceive each other's experiences more accurately and respond with compassion, fostering trust and stability (Smith, 2015; Pléchaty, 1987).

Marital Adjustment

Marital adjustment refers to the process of maintaining satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion in a relationship (Spanier, 1976). Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in managing conflicts and promoting mutual understanding (Buren, 2002). Socio-environmental factors and personality traits also influence marital harmony and adaptability (Bredemeier et al., 2012; Belanger, 2014).

Happiness and Marital Adjustment

Marital happiness, as a key indicator of marital quality, significantly impacts overall life satisfaction (Knox & Schacht, 2012; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Positive relational behavior, shared responsibilities, and emotional support enhance marital joy. Conversely, unresolved conflicts and role strain diminish relationship satisfaction (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Bouchard, 2014). Marital happiness tends to increase in later life stages, especially after children become independent.

Working Women and Marital Adjustment

Working women often face unique stressors balancing career and family life. Studies show that professional married women experience more role strain, anxiety, and marital conflict than non-working counterparts (Abbas et al., 2019; Parveen, 2006). Societal expectations in cultures like Pakistan can exacerbate these pressures, although individual coping strategies and emotional resilience can mediate marital satisfaction (Sahu & Singh, 2014; Liu et al., 2017).

Personality and Marital Adjustment

The relationship between personality traits and marital adjustment has been widely studied in psychological and sociological research. Luo and Klohnen (2005) found a strong correlation between personality compatibility among partners and the quality of marriage in newlyweds. The significance of personality in marital satisfaction is emphasized across multiple studies. Amato and Prevetti (2003) identified that personality differences between spouses are a key factor leading to reduced marital adjustment, whereas Barelds and Dijkstra (2011) noted that couples tend to be only somewhat similar in personality.

Five-Factor Model of Personality and Marital Outcomes

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality — Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness — is a general framework for understanding the personality dimensions that are applicable to marital functioning.

Neuroticism, or emotional instability and recurrent occurrence of unpleasant emotions, has been shown to have a consistently negative relationship with marital satisfaction. Fisher and Macknalti (2008) pointed out that excessive neuroticism in either partner could be a predictor of marital maladjustment a year into the marriage. Watson et al. (2004) also established that similarity in personality, particularly low neuroticism, plays an important role in marital satisfaction.

Extraversion, characterized by sociability and assertiveness, had inconsistent effects. It was observed to have a positive effect through social support and common activities (Mousavi, 2017) in some studies, while others reported gender-specific contrary results (Chen et al., 2007; Spirling & Persaud, 2003).

Openness, which is indicative of creativity and curiosity, and Agreeableness, with traits of trust and compassion, tend to have positive correlations with marital adjustment. Shachelford et al. (2008) and Claxton et al. (2012) identified that these personal characteristics promote empathy and mutual understanding in relationships.

Conscientiousness, which includes self-discipline and organization, has shown a strong positive correlation with marital adjustment. Amiri et al. (2011) stated that conscientious individuals are less likely to behave impulsively or aggressively, contributing to harmonious relationships.

In addition, Buss (1984) has posited that assortative mating — pairing with persons of equivalent characteristics such as extraversion — can be positively correlated with long-term relationship satisfaction. Bouchard et al. (1999) and Bono et al. (2002) again asserted that aside from neuroticism, other characteristics also affect marital adjustment.

Gender and Personality Interactions in Marital Adjustment

Empirical research indicates that the impact of personality characteristics on marital adjustment can vary by gender. Goodarzimehr (2016) revealed that a husband's emotional characteristics (e.g., neuroticism, ambivalence) were inversely associated with his wife's marital adjustment, whereas his agreeableness, openness, and honesty positively affected his wife's marital adjustment. Contrarily, Sayehmiri et al. (2020) also found that wives' personality characteristics, especially neuroticism (negative), agreeableness, openness, and empathy (positive), were significantly associated with their husbands' adjustment.

Gender and Personality Interactions in Marital Adjustment

Empirical studies show that the effects of personality traits on marital adjustment may differ by gender. Goodarzimehr (2016) found that a husband's emotional traits (e.g., neuroticism, ambivalence) were negatively related to his wife's marital adjustment, while his agreeableness, openness, and honesty had a positive influence. Conversely, Sayehmiri et al. (2020) reported that wives' personality traits, particularly neuroticism (negative), agreeableness, openness, and empathy (positive), were significantly related to their husbands' adjustment.

Additional Influences on Marital Adjustment

Beyond personality traits, life satisfaction plays a crucial role. Defined as a subjective evaluation of one's overall well-being and quality of life, it encompasses satisfaction with achievements, self-concept, and relationships (Glossary of Terms, 2003). Lee (1977) noted that marrying at a young age often predicts instability, and Cranford et al. (2011) found that alcohol use, especially by wives, can severely impact marital satisfaction.

Division of responsibilities, such as housework, financial duties, and child-rearing, has also been shown to affect marital harmony. According to Ebinuwa-Okoh (2011), communication, emotional regulation, financial management, and shared responsibilities are key predictors of marital adjustment. Mickelson, Claffey, and Williams (2006) highlighted the importance of partner support in improving marital quality.

Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction

Religiosity also plays a role, as studies show that couples with higher levels of religious commitment tend to report greater marital satisfaction (Mahoney et al., 2001). However, its influence may vary depending on the type and duration of the marriage, presence of children, and other demographic factors (Bittner, 2011).

Infertility and Marital Adjustment

Infertility has been found to negatively affect marital satisfaction, especially in traditional or tribal settings, where childbearing is central to marital success. Ahmed et al. (2016) revealed that infertility in women, especially in underprivileged or less-educated populations, could lead to stigma, social rejection, or the husband's remarriage. Studies among the Garo and Toda tribes illustrate the cultural weight attached to fertility, equating motherhood with societal acceptance and marital success.

Hyer et al. (2002) emphasized the psychological impact of infertility, noting that both men and women undergo a grief-like process. Men often cope through denial or avoidance, while women experience emotional trauma, leading to marital maladjustment. These findings point to the urgent need for support systems and mental health services for infertile couples, especially in low-resource settings.

Marital Adjustment and Coping Strategies

Marital adjustment refers to the ongoing process by which partners accommodate and respond to each other's emotional, psychological, and situational needs. Coping strategies play a crucial role in this process.

Bodenmann et al. (2006) argued that effective coping mechanisms enhance the quality of marriage for both spouses. Specifically, O'Brien et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of empathetic coping strategies in sustaining relational harmony. The foundational work by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage stressful events, which can be either acute or chronic.

Two primary coping strategies are often discussed:

- Emotion-focused coping includes methods such as wishful thinking, daydreaming, or seeking emotional validation to regulate emotional responses.
- Problem-focused coping involves actively addressing the source of stress by developing solutions, setting goals, or altering behavior (Endler & Parker, 1990).

Avoidant behaviors, such as denial or escapism (e.g., excessive sleeping or leisure activities), have also been noted but are generally associated with poorer outcomes. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that coping mechanisms have the most significant psychological impact within the marital context compared to other roles like caregiving or employment.

In distressed marriages, passive coping mechanisms such as avoidance and blame are prevalent (Bowman, 1990). In contrast, happily married individuals are more likely to use active strategies like constructive reappraisal and communication (Blais et al., 1990). The functional model of marriage by Folkman and Lazarus (1988) distinguishes between proximal (situation-specific responses) and distal (enduring traits like personality or attachment style) coping influences.

Banerjee and Basu (2014) demonstrated that spouses with lower marital adjustment reported higher denial, lower extraversion and agreeableness, more neuroticism, and weaker coping abilities. They concluded that coping styles whether emotion-, problem-, or avoidance-based are aligned with attachment styles, personality traits, and relationship quality.

Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment

Attachment theory, rooted in the work of Bowlby (1969), explains how early life experiences shape one's ability to form secure or insecure bonds. These attachment patterns secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant are critical predictors of marital satisfaction.

Research suggests that individuals with secure attachments tend to have higher levels of trust, empathy, and conflict resolution skills, leading to healthier marital adjustment (Dhar & Basu, 2009; Ottu & Akpan, 2011). Insecure attachment styles, especially anxious and avoidant, are negatively associated with relationship quality and emotional availability (Riggs et al., 2007).

Gallo and Smith (2001) noted that securely attached individuals display lower levels of anxiety and avoidance and are more open to intimacy and support. La Fontaine and Lussier (2005) found

that aggression weakens the connection between insecure attachment and relational conflict. Similarly, Ben-Ari and Lave (2005) showed that secure partners exhibit more constructive conflict management.

Attachment styles influence not only marital dynamics but also partner selection. Bartholomew (1997) and Senchak & Leonard (1992) suggested that people tend to choose partners whose attachment styles complement their own, whether healthy or dysfunctional. For example, avoidant individuals may prefer emotionally distant partners to avoid intimacy-related discomfort.

Religiosity can serve as a buffer in relationships affected by insecure attachment. DeMaris et al. (2010) found that religious commitment mitigated the negative effects of attachment avoidance on marital satisfaction.

Cultural and Social Influences on Marital Adjustment

In collectivist cultures like Pakistan, the extended family system and societal expectations exert a strong influence on marital dynamics. Goodwin and Cramer (2000) emphasized the importance of familial support in maintaining marital harmony. In the Pakistani context, Khan & Aftab (2013) found that family support significantly mediated the relationship between depression and marital satisfaction, especially among women.

Kearns and Leonard (2004) reported that societal support is more beneficial for women in managing marital stress. Moreover, social expectations regarding gender roles, household duties, and fertility further complicate marital adjustment in these settings.

Need for Social Approval and Marital Satisfaction

Social approval—defined as the desire to be liked, accepted, and validated by others—is another influential psychological factor in marital dynamics. According to Çetin & Çelik (2021), the need for social approval can significantly affect self-esteem and interpersonal behavior.

Individuals who highly value social approval may avoid confrontation and prioritize others' opinions, potentially sacrificing authenticity in relationships (Şahan & Akbaş, 2017). Theoretical models such as:

- Dominance Theory (Barkow et al., 1975),
- Sociometer Theory (Leary et al., 1995), and
- Terror Management Theory (Solomon et al., 1991)

suggest that self-esteem and social approval are deeply connected to relationship behavior and perceived partner evaluation.

As Otnes (2017) and Hoffman (2008) noted, individuals internalize societal feedback, shaping their self-concept and influencing relational expectations. In turn, perceived disapproval can lead to internal conflict and strained marital relations.

The intersection of coping mechanisms, attachment styles, personality traits, and social approval needs creates a complex dynamic that shapes marital adjustment. Therapeutic interventions should consider:

- Strengthening adaptive coping skills (especially in conflict),
- Addressing insecure attachment roots,
- Enhancing mutual understanding and communication, and

- Navigating societal expectations and family influences.

As noted by Johnson et al. (1999), relational behavior is non-independent meaning that one partner's emotional state and coping efforts directly influence the other. Future studies should adopt dyadic research designs (e.g., Actor Partner Interdependence Models) to understand these mutual effects more accurately (Kenny, 1996).

Hypothesis

1. Mindfulness will be significantly associated with marital adjustment.
2. A significant negative relationship is expected between mindfulness and need for social approval among women.
3. Mindfulness will be negatively associated with self-silencing among women.
4. Mindfulness is expected to have a significant impact on marital adjustment.
5. A significant relationship is anticipated between mindfulness and marital adjustment when self-silencing is present among women.
6. Need for social approval is expected to mediate the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment among women.
7. Need for social approval and self-silencing are expected to function as serial mediators in the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment.

Research Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the impact of mindfulness on marital adjustment, with the mediating roles of need for social approval and self-silencing. The research was conducted in southern Punjab, Pakistan, and involved a purposive sample of 282 married working women aged between 21 and 56 years, with a mean age of 33 years. The inclusion criteria were strictly defined to ensure that only married and employed women participated; housewives and unmarried women were excluded. Data were collected electronically through an online questionnaire link that was disseminated via academic and professional networks. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 18 were excluded due to missing or incomplete responses, leaving a final sample size of 282 for analysis.

Four standardized instruments were employed to collect data. Mindfulness was assessed using the 15-item Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003), which measures present-focused awareness on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost always) to 5 (almost never). Higher scores reflect greater mindfulness and attentional control. The MAAS has been validated across multiple populations and exhibits strong psychometric properties. Marital adjustment was measured using the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) developed by Busby et al. (1995). This 14-item scale evaluates relationship dynamics across three subscales dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion using five- or six-point Likert responses. The RDAS has demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a total scale reliability of $\alpha = .90$, and a well-established cutoff score of 48 to differentiate between distressed and well-adjusted relationships.

To measure the participants' need for social approval, the study utilized the 25-item Need for Social Approval Scale developed by Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016). This scale captures three dimensions: sensitivity to others' judgments, social withdrawal, and leaving a positive impression.

Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The scale has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$) and demonstrated good concurrent and construct validity. Self-silencing behaviors were assessed using the 31-item Silencing the Self Scale (STSS) developed by Jack and Dill (1992). The scale includes four subscales—Self-Silencing, Divided Self, External Self-Perception, and Care as Self-Sacrifice—and responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale. Five items are reverse-coded. The STSS has high test-retest reliability (ranging from 0.88 to 0.94) and has shown strong construct validity in both male and female populations.

The data collection process ensured ethical considerations, as informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation. The survey was anonymous, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained. The estimated time for completing the questionnaire was approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Once data were collected, they were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS 3. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic and scale data, while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through Partial Least Squares (PLS) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships and mediating effects among the variables. The analysis included checks for reliability, validity, and overall model fitness to ensure the robustness and credibility of the findings.

Results

This study sought to examine whether Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing functioned as mediators in the relationship between Mindfulness and Marital Adjustment. The constructs of Mindfulness, need for Social Approval, and Self-Silencing were assessed as key variables influencing marital adjustment. SPSS version 22 was employed to perform descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and reliability analysis. To investigate the mediating effects, SmartPLS 4 was utilized, offering a robust approach for path modeling and indirect effect testing.

Table 1: *Alpha reliability of the Scale.*

Scales	R	M	A
Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)	1-5	3.47	.860
The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)	2-6	4.16	.850
The Silencing the Self Scale	1-5	3.35	.843
Need for Social Approval Scale	1-5	3.73	.943

Table 2: Family System Wise Demographic Characteristics (N=282)

Characteristics	Nuclear (n=134) f (47.5%)	Joint (n=148) f (52.5%)	Total(N=282) f (100%)
Mean Age (years)	34.4±7.10	31.7±6.89	33.05±6.9
Mean Duration of Marriage	10.32±6.50	7.61±6.67	8.96±6.50
Education			
Matric	7(2.4)	7(2.4)	14 (4.8)
Intermediate	58 (20.5)	36 (12.7)	94 (33.2)
Bachelors	9 (3.1)	7 (2.4)	16 (5.5)
Masters	55 (19.5)	85 (30.1)	140 (49.6)
M.Phil.	5 (1.7)	13 (4.6)	18 (6.3)
No of Children			
No Child	17(6)	42(15)	59(21)
One	33 (11.7)	45(16)	78 (30)
Two	39 (14)	24 (8)	63 (22)
Three	33 (11.7)	28 (10)	61 (22)
Four	9 (3)	2 (1)	11 (4)
Five	3 (1)	0 (0)	3(1)

Table 2 presents the gender-wise demographic characteristics of the study participants (n = 282). The mean age of the respondents was 33.05 years (SD = 6.9). On average, the participants had been married for approximately 9 years. In terms of educational attainment, nearly 49.0% of the respondents held a Master's degree. Regarding family structure, a majority of the participants (78.0%) reported having one child, whereas only 3.0% indicated having five children.

Table 3: Correlates of Variables(N=282)

	NFSA	SS	M	MA
1. Need for social Approval	—	.381**	-.070	.161**
2. Self-Silencing		—	-.154**	-.178**
3. Mindfulness			—	.419**
4. Marital Adjustment				—

**Correlation-value is sig. at 0.01-level (two-tailed)

Table 2 summarizes the correlation results among the study variables. A significant positive correlation was observed between Self-Silencing and Need for Social Approval (NFSA), with $R = .381$, $p < .01$, indicating that higher levels of approval-seeking behavior are associated with greater tendencies to self-silence. However, the relationship between Need for Social Approval and

Mindfulness was non-significant ($R = -.070$, $p > .05$), suggesting no meaningful association between the two.

A significant positive correlation was found between Need for Social Approval and Marital Adjustment ($R = .161$, $p < .01$), implying that individuals seeking social approval may report slightly better marital harmony in this cultural context. In contrast, Self-Silencing exhibited a significant negative association with Mindfulness ($R = -.154$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher mindfulness is linked to reduced self-silencing behaviors. Additionally, Self-Silencing demonstrated a significant negative correlation with Marital Adjustment ($R = -.178$, $p < .01$), reflecting its detrimental impact on relationship quality.

Finally, a strong positive correlation was found between Mindfulness and Marital Adjustment ($R = .419$, $p < .01$), supporting the notion that mindful awareness contributes positively to relationship satisfaction and adjustment.

Table 4: *Impact of mindfulness on marital adjustment among working married women (N=282).*

model	Independent-variable	Co-efficient		T-stat	P-value	
		unstandardized-coefficient	standardized-coefficient			
		B	Standard deviation			
1-		1.886	.209	9.017	<.001	
	Mindfulness(constant)	.380	.049	.42	7.714	<.001
	R ²	.17				<.001

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis assessing the impact of Mindfulness on Marital Adjustment among working married women. The model reported an R² value of 0.17, indicating that Mindfulness accounts for 17% of the variance in Marital Adjustment. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 280) = 59.51$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, Mindfulness was found to be a significant positive predictor of Marital Adjustment ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with better marital adjustment in this population.

Table 5: *Direct Effects of Mindfulness on Marital Adjustment in the Absence of Mediators (Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing)*

type	pathway	B	standard deviation	T	p	R-square
Direct-(without mediator)	Mindfulness → Marital Adjustment	.043	.048	0.951	0.368	0.006

Note: N=282, $P < 0.01^{***}$, $P < 0.05^{**}$

The results presented in the above table illustrate the influence of Mindfulness on Marital Adjustment among working married women. The model yielded an R² value of 0.006, indicating

that Mindfulness explains only 0.6% of the variance in Marital Adjustment. Although the overall model was statistically significant ($p < .001$), the specific path coefficient for Mindfulness was not significant ($\beta = .043$, $p > .005$). These findings suggest that Mindfulness, in isolation, does not serve as a significant predictor of Marital Adjustment within this population.

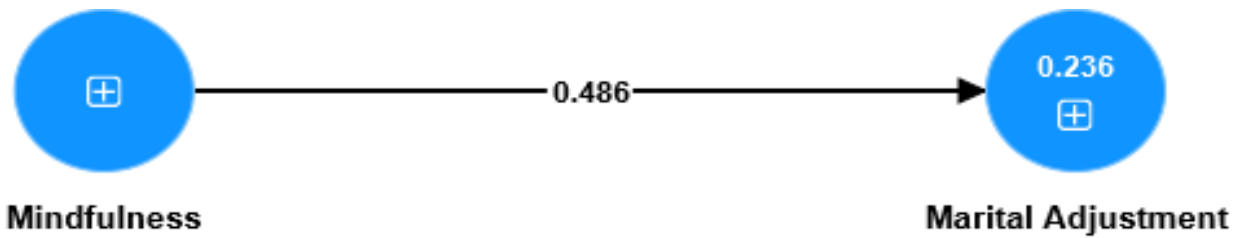


Table 6: *Indirect Effects through Mediators: Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing*

Type	Pathway	β	standard deviation	t	p	R-square
Indirect- (with mediators)	Mindfulness→NFA→Marital Adjustment	0.444	0.047	3.04	0.002**	-.144
	Mindfulness →NFA →SS	0.688	0.015	1.40	0.159	-.022
	Mindfulness → SS → Marital Adjustment	0.013	0.024	0.53	0.596	-0.20
	Mindfulness →NFA→SS→Marital Adjustment	-.209	0.64	1.62	0.01	0.104

Note: N=282, $p < 0.01^{**}$, NFA=Need for Social Approval, SS=Self- Silencing.

Table 6 presents the mediation analysis results for Need for Social Approval (NFA) and Self-Silencing in the relationship between Mindfulness and Marital Adjustment. The findings show a significant indirect effect of Mindfulness on Marital Adjustment through Need for Social Approval ($\beta = 0.444$, $p < .001$), indicating a meaningful mediating relationship. However, the reported R^2 value of $-.144$ appears to be a typographical error, as R^2 cannot be negative; this should be verified.

In contrast, the indirect effect of Mindfulness on Self-Silencing through Need for Social Approval was found to be non-significant ($\beta = 0.068$, $p > .05$), suggesting no meaningful mediation in this pathway. Similarly, the indirect effect of Mindfulness on Marital Adjustment via Self-Silencing was also non-significant ($\beta = 0.013$, $p > .05$). Finally, the serial mediation effect—through both Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing—on the relationship between Mindfulness and Marital Adjustment was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.209$, $p > .05$), indicating that the combined mediation path did not contribute meaningfully to the overall model.

Analysis of Mediation

The bootstrapping technique, a non-parametric resampling method, was employed in this study to evaluate the statistical significance of path coefficients and to analyze the indirect effects among variables. As noted by Hair et al. (2017), bootstrapping is particularly well-suited for quantitative research and mediation analysis. To assess the mediating roles of Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing, this study followed the mediation framework proposed by Zhao et al. (2010), which is widely applied in SmartPLS 4. Furthermore, the Variance Accounted for (VAF) criterion was

used to determine the strength of mediation. According to Hair et al. (2011), mediation is classified based on the VAF value as follows: above 80% indicates full mediation, between 20% and 80% suggests partial mediation, and below 20% reflects no mediation.

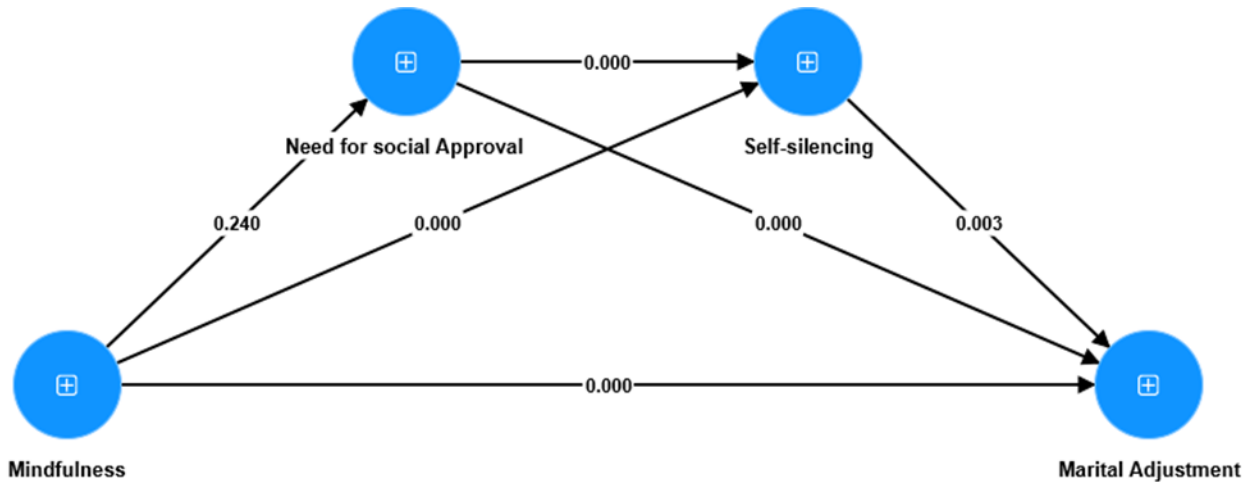


Fig: Mediation Model

Table 8: Summary of Mediation Analysis

Paths	Beta	SD	Indirect Effect	Total Effects	VAF	t-values	p-value	Decision
Mindfulness → Marital Adjustment	.043	.048				0.951	0.000	
Mindfulness → NFA → Marital Adjustment	0.444	0.047	-.144	.152	0.94 94%	3.04	0.000	Full mediation
Mindfulness → NFA → SS	0.688	0.015	-.022	.104	2.11	1.40	0.000	No mediation
Mindfulness → SS → Marital Adjustment	0.013	0.024	-0.20	-0.60	0.33 33%	0.581	0.003	Partial mediation
Mindfulness → NFA → SS → Marital Adjustment	-.209	0.64	0.104	.688	0.35 35%	1.62	0.003	Partial mediation

Table 9: Mediation of Need for social approval and Self-silencing between Mindfulness and Marital adjustment among working married women

Variables	B	S. E	T	P
Constant	3.9907	.2261	17.6473	.0000
Mindfulness	-.0626	.0532	-1.1761	.2406
R ²	0.0701			
Outcome variable = Need for Social Approval				
Constant	2.5616	0.2591	9.8845	.0000
Mindfulness	-.0979	0.0421	-2.3257	.0208
Need for Social Approval	.3191	0.0471	6.7717	.0000
R ²	0.4019			
Outcome variable = Self-silencing				
Constant	1.7797	.3376	5.2719	.0000
Mindfulness	.3666	.0476	7.6949	.0000
Need for Social Approval	.2774	.0570	4.8662	.0000
Self-silencing	-.2609	.0671	-3.8866	.0001
R ²	0.5022			
Outcome variable = Marital adjustment				

Table 9 presents the results regarding the mediating roles of Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing in the relationship between Mindfulness and Marital Adjustment among working married women. The table indicates that Mindfulness does not have a statistically significant effect on Need for Social Approval and Self-Silencing ($p > .001$). In Model 2, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.4019$) suggests that approximately 40% of the variance in Self-Silencing is explained by Need for Social Approval, and this relationship is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Additionally, need for Social Approval has a significant positive effect on Self-Silencing ($B = .3191$, $p < .001$).

In Model 3, the R^2 value of 0.5022 indicates that about 50% of the variance in Marital Adjustment is explained collectively by Mindfulness, Need for Social Approval, and Self-Silencing. The results further reveal that Mindfulness has a significant positive impact on Marital Adjustment ($B = .3666$, $p < .001$), Need for Social Approval also shows a significant positive effect ($B = .2774$, $p < .001$), while Self-Silencing demonstrates a significant negative impact ($B = -.2609$, $p < .001$) on Marital Adjustment.

Summary of the findings

The findings of the present study revealed that need for social approval, self-silencing, and marital adjustment are significantly interrelated. However, the association between mindfulness and need for social approval was found to be non-significant. Despite this, mindfulness emerged as a significant predictor of marital adjustment. Furthermore, the mediating role of need for social approval in the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment was confirmed, whereas its mediation between mindfulness and self-silencing was not supported. In contrast, self-silencing significantly mediated the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment. Additionally,

the combined mediation of need for social approval and self-silencing in the link between mindfulness and marital adjustment was found to be significant.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of mindfulness in predicting marital adjustment of working women. Further, it examined the connection between mindfulness and self-silencing, and tested if need for social approval and self-silencing mediated the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment. Three constructs were utilized as major concepts to account for differences in marital adjustment. Data were gathered by cross-sectional survey design from a purposive sample of 282 married working women, excluding unmarried and housewives. Standardized measures such as the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Need for Social Approval Scale (NFSA), Silencing the Self Scale (STSS), and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) were utilized, all of which had satisfactory psychometric properties. Data analysis employed correlation, reliability, and regression with SPSS version 22, whereas testing mediation effects was done using SmartPLS 4.

The first hypothesis proposed a significant association between mindfulness and marital adjustment among working women. The findings supported this hypothesis, indicating a strong positive relationship between the two variables. These results are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate mindfulness is positively linked with emotional intelligence, subjective well-being, self-awareness, and the quality of marital relationships (Erus & Deniz, 2020; Wachs & Cordova, 2007). Mindful individuals are better equipped to perceive their partner's emotions and perspectives, leading to healthier and more satisfying marital relationships (Burpee & Langer, 2005). Furthermore, Jones et al. (2011) found that attachment style mediated the relationship between mindfulness and marital happiness, supporting the notion that mindfulness fosters non-judgmental understanding of oneself and one's partner, which promotes marital harmony.

The second hypothesis suggested a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and the need for social approval. However, the results indicated a non-significant correlation between these variables. This finding may be attributed to the cultural context of Pakistan, where women are socialized in a collectivistic environment that emphasizes conformity, compromise, and gaining social approval, particularly from husbands and in-laws. Although international studies (Arpaci et al., 2019; Flink et al., 2018; Shorey et al., 2015) found significant negative associations between mindfulness and approval-seeking behaviors linked with early maladaptive schemas, this pattern was not observed in the present study. These studies suggest that lower mindfulness is associated with greater dependence on maladaptive schemas, including approval seeking. However, in a collectivist society like Pakistan, approval-seeking behavior may be culturally reinforced, hence reducing the visibility of such a relationship.

The third hypothesis predicted a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and self-silencing. The findings confirmed this hypothesis. Mindful individuals tend to engage in open, empathetic, and non-judgmental communication, reducing the need to suppress their own thoughts and feelings. In contrast, self-silencing behaviors have been linked with depression and strained relationships (Whiffen et al., 2007). This study contributes uniquely by focusing on working married women from South Punjab, Pakistan—a demographic that has not been extensively studied in this context—thereby filling a gap in existing literature.

The fourth hypothesis proposed a direct and significant impact of mindfulness on marital adjustment. This was validated by the results, suggesting that mindfulness positively contributes

to overall well-being and marital functioning. Prior research supports this, indicating that mindfulness improves both mental health and relationship quality (Virley, 2016). Suppressive emotional regulation strategies are detrimental to marital satisfaction, while mindfulness enhances emotional expression and fosters marital harmony (Babapour, 2020).

The fifth hypothesis examined whether self-silencing mediates the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment. The findings revealed a partial mediation effect. Whereas mindfulness facilitates marital adjustment, its effects can be thwarted when individuals participate in self-silencing, which can result in emotional repression and relational discontent. Past research (Woods, 2012; Harper & Welsh, 2007; Lacković-Grgin et al., 2009) has highlighted the fact that women who self-silence more often have reduced emotional disclosure and more conflict in their marriages. These results imply that while self-silencing may begin as a temporary coping mechanism, it has a detrimental impact on the quality of long-term relationships.

The sixth hypothesis suggested that need for social approval mediates between mindfulness and adjustment in marriage. The results supported the hypothesis, which indicated full mediation. Women in collectivist societies tend to be subject to social pressure to fit into traditional roles and to seek approval from their families and, most importantly, their husbands. This external-validation tendency results in suppression of one's own wants and expression of emotions, thus impacting marital satisfaction (Hafsa et al., 2021; Whiffen et al., 2007). Blatt and Zuroff (1992) have been cited as stating that high dependency on external approval is less likely to result in expressions of dissatisfaction or anger, with the fear of losing emotional support. In the Pakistani context, hierarchical relationships and familial expectations also add strength to this behavior (Qadir et al., 2005). To our knowledge, this research is the first to explore the mediating effect of need for social approval in the mindfulness–marital adjustment relationship, hence making an important contribution to the literature.

The seventh and final hypothesis suggested that both need for social approval and self-silencing jointly mediate the relationship between mindfulness and marital adjustment. The findings supported this hypothesis, revealing a significant but partial mediation effect. Although social approval fully mediated the mindfulness–marital adjustment link in the previous hypothesis, it did not mediate the mindfulness–self-silencing relationship. Nonetheless, the combined mediating role of social approval and self-silencing between mindfulness and marital adjustment was statistically significant. Both constructs influence emotional expression and interpersonal intimacy, often undermining marital harmony. Yet, in the cultural setting of Pakistan, these behaviors may be perceived as necessary strategies to maintain family cohesion and spousal relationships. Marital adjustment in such contexts is shaped not only by emotional compatibility but also by relational dynamics with extended family members (Kousar & Khalid, 2003). When women develop greater mindfulness, they may gradually reduce the need for social approval and self-silencing, which can positively influence their marital satisfaction. While earlier research explored these constructs individually, the current study is pioneering in examining all four variables—mindfulness, self-silencing, need for social approval, and marital adjustment—together. Thus, the findings close a significant gap in the literature and open new avenues for culturally informed psychological research.

Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion:

This pioneering study explored the relationship between mindfulness, need for social approval (NFSA), self-silencing, and marital adjustment among married working women in South Punjab, Pakistan. Despite its strengths, the study has limitations, including reliance on self-report

questionnaires prone to bias, a homogeneous sample lacking gender and ethnic diversity, and a cross-sectional design that limits causal inferences. The purposive sampling method may also introduce self-selection bias. Future research should employ longitudinal and multi-informant designs with more diverse and representative samples. Nonetheless, the study offers valuable insights by demonstrating that mindfulness significantly predicts marital adjustment and that self-silencing and NFSA partially mediate this relationship. These findings underscore the need to introduce mindfulness-based coping strategies for improving marital quality in collectivist, patriarchal societies like Pakistan.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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