

Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment among Married Individuals

Dissertation Submitted to Kerala University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Award of the Degree of Master of Science in Counselling Psychology

Submitted by

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2024-2026

Certificate



This is to certify that **Babitha B** (Reg. No. **LC24PCP06**) has successfully carried out the project entitled "**Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment among Married Individuals**" in the **Department of Counselling Psychology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram**, under the supervision and guidance of the **Dr. Jesline Maria M Mamen, Assistant Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology**, during the Fourth Semester of the M.Sc. Counselling Psychology programme in the academic year **2024–2026**. This dissertation is an original work carried out by the candidate and is hereby approved for submission to Kerala University, Thiruvananthapuram, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Counselling Psychology**.

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I, **Babitha B**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment among Married Individuals”, submitted to the Department of Counselling Psychology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Sreekariyam, Thiruvananthapuram, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Jesline Maria M. Mamen, Assistant Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Counselling Psychology of Kerala University, is a bona fide work carried out by me during the academic year 2024–2026.

I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted, either in part or in full, to any other University or Institution for the award of any degree, diploma, or other academic qualification.

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Acknowledgement

The successful completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement of many individuals. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of this study.

First and foremost, I express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Jesline Maria M. Mamen, Assistant Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram, for her invaluable guidance, constant encouragement, insightful suggestions, and unwavering support throughout every stage of this research. Her expertise, patience, and motivation greatly strengthened my confidence and enabled me to complete this study successfully.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Ammu Luckose, Head of the Department of Counselling Psychology (In Charge), Dr. Pramod S. K., Assistant Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, and Ms. Athmaja Panicker, Guest Lecturer, Department of Counselling Psychology, for their valuable suggestions, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement, which significantly contributed to the quality of this research.

I also express my sincere appreciation to all the teaching and non-teaching staff of Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram, for their support, cooperation, and encouragement throughout the course of this research.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the participants who willingly took part in this study. Their genuine interest, valuable responses, trust, and cooperation formed the foundation of this research. I am deeply grateful for the time they devoted and the confidence they placed in me, making this study possible.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my dear friend Athul, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and invaluable assistance during the data collection process played a significant role in the successful completion of this research. His constant presence and motivation provided me with strength and confidence throughout this journey.

I express my deepest gratitude to my beloved parents for their unconditional love, continuous prayers, financial support, and unwavering faith in me throughout my academic journey. Their sacrifices, encouragement, and blessings have been the greatest source of inspiration in completing this dissertation.

I also extend my sincere thanks to my dear friends for their constant motivation, appreciation, encouragement, and companionship throughout the various stages of this research. Their support has been a source of strength and positivity during this journey.

Finally, I express my gratitude to myself for remaining determined, resilient, and committed throughout this research journey. Despite the challenges encountered, I persevered with sincerity, dedication, and adherence to ethical principles. I sincerely hope that this study contributes, in some measure, to the understanding of attachment style and marital adjustment and serves as a meaningful addition to the field of Counselling Psychology.

Babitha B

Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Abstract

Chapter No.	Title	Page No.
1	Introduction	1
2	Review of Literature	28
3	Method	70
4	Result and Discussion	89
5	Summary and Conclusion	110

References

Appendices

List of Tables

Table No.	Title	Page No.
Table 1	<i>Tests of Normality for Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions (N = 149)</i>	90
Table 2	<i>Attachment Style among Married Individuals (N = 149)</i>	91
Table 3	<i>Marital Adjustment Levels among Married Individuals (N = 149)</i>	92
Table 4	<i>Comparison of Attachment Dimensions across Type of Marriage (N = 149)</i>	93
Table 5	<i>Comparison of Marital Adjustment across Type of Marriage (N = 149)</i>	95
Table 6	<i>Comparison of Attachment Dimensions across Duration of Marriage (N = 149)</i>	97
Table 7	<i>Comparison of Marital Adjustment across Duration of Marriage (N = 149)</i>	98
Table 8	<i>Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Love Marriages (n = 51)</i>	100

Table 9	<i>Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Arranged Marriages (n = 59)</i>	102
Table 10	<i>Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Semi-Arranged Marriages (n = 39)</i>	104

List of Appendices

Appendix No.	Appendices
Appendix A	Informed Consent Form
Appendix B	Socio-Demographic Details
Appendix C	Attachment Styles Questionnaire
Appendix D	Marital Adjustment Scale

Abstract

Marriage is an important interpersonal relationship that influences emotional security, psychological well-being, and overall life satisfaction. The present study examined attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals and compared these variables across love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. It also explored the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment within each group. A quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative, and correlational research design was used. The sample consisted of 149 married individuals living with their spouses, including 51 from love marriages, 59 from arranged marriages, and 39 from semi-arranged marriages, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a Demographic Data Sheet, the Attachment Styles Questionnaire, and the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test, the Kruskal Wallis H test, the Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner post hoc test, and Spearman’s rank-order correlation. The findings showed that dismissive-ambivalent attachment was the most common primary attachment style. Most attachment dimensions and marital adjustment did not differ significantly across marriage types or duration of marriage, although dismissive ambivalent attachment differed significantly between arranged and semi-arranged marriages. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between anxious-preoccupied and merging attachment dimensions and marital adjustment only in arranged marriages, while no significant relationships were found in love or semi-arranged marriages. The study highlights the need for attachment-informed counselling, couple therapy, and marital support programmes to strengthen marital relationships and promote psychological well-being among married individuals.

Keywords: attachment style, marital adjustment, love marriage, arranged marriage, semi arranged marriage, married individuals

Chapter I

Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest and most fundamental social institutions, serving as the foundation for family formation and social continuity. Across cultures and historical periods, marriage has been recognized not only as a legal contract between two individuals but also as an emotional, psychological, social, and cultural partnership. It provides a framework through which individuals share responsibilities, establish intimate relationships, nurture children, and contribute to the stability of society. The institution of marriage is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and societal norms, making it one of the most significant milestones in adult life. Although the forms and practices of marriage differ across societies, its primary purpose remains the establishment of a stable and supportive relationship that promotes the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Marriage is regarded as a sacred union that extends beyond the relationship between two individuals. It represents an emotional and legal commitment that marks an important stage in personal maturity and social development. Through marriage, individuals establish a family, which serves as the primary social institution responsible for nurturing values, providing emotional security, promoting socialization, and ensuring the continuity of society. Consequently, the quality of marital relationships has implications not only for spouses but also for children, extended family members, and society as a whole (Hashemi et al., 2024).

The family is widely acknowledged as the cornerstone of every society because it is within the family that individuals first experience love, trust, cooperation, communication, and emotional support. Healthy family relationships contribute significantly to psychological well-being, social adjustment, and personal development, whereas dysfunctional family relationships often lead to emotional distress, interpersonal conflicts, and various

psychosocial problems. Since marriage forms the basis of the family system, understanding the factors that contribute to successful marital relationships has become an important area of research in psychology, sociology, counselling, and family studies.

In contemporary society, marriage has undergone considerable transformation due to rapid social, economic, educational, and technological changes. Increased educational opportunities, urbanization, globalization, changing gender roles, financial independence, delayed marriages, and the widespread use of digital communication have influenced how individuals select their life partners and maintain marital relationships. While traditional family values continue to influence marital decisions in many societies, especially in Asian countries such as India, young adults increasingly participate in choosing their own partners through educational institutions, workplaces, social networking platforms, and matrimonial websites. These changes have resulted in diverse forms of marriage, including love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages, each characterized by different patterns of partner selection and family involvement.

Despite these societal changes, the ultimate success of marriage depends not merely on how partners are selected but on how effectively couples adapt to married life. Marriage requires continuous adjustment because two individuals with different personalities, family backgrounds, expectations, values, communication styles, and coping strategies begin living together within a shared environment. Differences in beliefs, habits, emotional needs, and interpersonal expectations inevitably create challenges that require understanding, flexibility, mutual respect, and effective communication. Therefore, successful marriages are characterized not by the absence of conflict but by the ability of couples to manage disagreements constructively and maintain emotional closeness.

Among the various psychological concepts associated with marital success, marital adjustment has received considerable attention. Marital adjustment refers to the continuous process through which spouses modify their attitudes, behaviours, expectations, and interactions to maintain a satisfying and stable marital relationship. It is not a single event but an evolving process that occurs throughout married life. Researchers describe marital adjustment as a multidimensional construct involving mutual understanding, effective communication, emotional intimacy, conflict resolution, shared responsibilities, decision-making, sexual compatibility, financial cooperation, and overall relationship satisfaction. Couples who demonstrate high levels of marital adjustment generally experience greater relationship satisfaction, better psychological health, effective parenting, and stronger family functioning. Conversely, poor marital adjustment has been associated with marital dissatisfaction, emotional distress, depression, anxiety, family conflict, separation, and divorce (Hashemi et al., 2024).

The literature suggests that marital adjustment is influenced by a wide range of factors, including individual personality characteristics, family background, communication patterns, emotional intelligence, stress management, socioeconomic conditions, cultural values, life events, and psychological variables. Among these, attachment style has emerged as one of the most significant predictors of relationship quality and marital functioning (Hashemi et al., 2024).

Attachment style

Attachment theory provides an important framework for understanding adult interpersonal relationships, particularly romantic relationships and marriage. Originally developed to explain the emotional bond between infants and their primary caregivers, attachment theory has subsequently been extended to explain how early relational

experiences shape personality development, emotional regulation, interpersonal trust, intimacy, and relationship functioning throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

The emotional experiences that children have with their caregivers become internalized as mental representations known as internal working models. These internal working models consist of beliefs about oneself, others, and interpersonal relationships. Individuals who experience consistent love, responsiveness, and emotional security during childhood generally develop positive expectations regarding themselves and others, whereas inconsistent, neglectful, or rejecting caregiving may contribute to insecure attachment patterns. These internal representations continue to influence emotional responses, interpersonal expectations, coping strategies, and relationship behaviours during adulthood (Bowlby, 1973;; Main et al., 1985).

proposed by the British psychiatrist John Bowlby, attachment theory emphasized that the need for emotional closeness with a caregiver is a fundamental human need rather than a secondary consequence of biological drives. Bowlby argued that attachment is biologically programmed because it promotes survival by ensuring proximity between infants and caregivers during times of stress or danger. He proposed that attachment develops through a sequence of developmental stages beginning in infancy and continuing through early childhood. During these stages, children gradually develop expectations regarding the availability, responsiveness, and reliability of caregivers. These expectations eventually become stable cognitive frameworks guiding future interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

Bowlby's theoretical propositions were further expanded by Mary Ainsworth, whose pioneering "Strange Situation" experiments demonstrated that infants exhibit distinct patterns

of attachment behaviour in response to separation from and reunion with their caregivers. Based on these observations, Ainsworth classified attachment into secure, anxious-ambivalent (resistant), and avoidant attachment styles. Later research introduced a fourth pattern, disorganized attachment, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of attachment differences among individuals (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Although attachment theory was initially developed to explain infant-caregiver relationships, later researchers recognized remarkable similarities between early attachment bonds and adult romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that romantic love represents an attachment process in adulthood because romantic partners serve many of the same psychological functions as caregivers during childhood, including providing emotional security, comfort, reassurance, and support during stressful situations. Since then, attachment theory has become one of the most influential perspectives for understanding adult love relationships, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and marital functioning.

Researchers have demonstrated that adult attachment is generally conceptualized along two fundamental dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Brennan et al., 1998). Individuals scoring low on both dimensions are considered securely attached and generally experience comfort with intimacy, trust, and interdependence. Individuals high in attachment anxiety often worry excessively about rejection, abandonment, and relationship instability, whereas individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to maintain emotional distance, suppress attachment needs, and avoid excessive dependence on others. The combination of these dimensions has also been used to describe four attachment categories: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful attachment styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

These attachment styles have profound implications for adult romantic relationships. Securely attached individuals generally demonstrate greater trust, emotional openness, empathy, effective communication, and constructive conflict resolution. They are more likely to experience satisfying and stable marriages because they perceive both themselves and their partners positively. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles often experience greater relationship anxiety, fear of rejection, emotional withdrawal, distrust, jealousy, ineffective communication, and difficulties in managing interpersonal conflicts. Such patterns may negatively influence relationship quality and marital satisfaction (Feeney, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Several empirical studies have reported a significant association between attachment style and marital adjustment. Secure attachment has consistently been associated with higher marital satisfaction, stronger emotional intimacy, greater relationship stability, and healthier communication patterns. In contrast, insecure attachment has been linked with lower marital satisfaction, greater interpersonal conflict, dysfunctional beliefs about partners, negative interpretations of partner behaviour, and poorer relationship functioning (Gallo & Smith, 2001).

Research further suggests that attachment influences marital relationships through cognitive and emotional processes. Individuals interpret their partners' behaviours according to their internal working models, which shape expectations regarding trust, support, intimacy, and commitment. Securely attached individuals are more likely to interpret ambiguous partner behaviours positively, whereas anxiously attached individuals often perceive greater rejection and threat. Avoidantly attached individuals may minimize emotional closeness and distance themselves during relationship conflicts. Consequently, attachment style affects communication, emotional regulation, conflict management, and overall marital adjustment (Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson et al., 1996; Gallo & Smith, 2001).

The growing body of literature therefore indicates that attachment style provides an important psychological framework for understanding why some couples successfully adapt to married life whereas others experience persistent marital difficulties. As marriage increasingly involves diverse patterns of partner selection, examining the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment becomes even more relevant. Understanding how attachment processes operate within different forms of marriage may contribute to more effective premarital counselling, marital therapy, and relationship education programmes. The following section discusses the concept of marital adjustment in greater detail and examines its relevance to the present study.

Marital Adjustment

Marriage is a dynamic relationship that requires continuous adaptation between two individuals with different personalities, values, expectations, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences. Although marriage is often associated with companionship, emotional intimacy, and mutual support, maintaining a satisfying marital relationship requires continuous effort from both spouses. Couples encounter numerous developmental transitions and life events, including career demands, financial responsibilities, parenthood, health concerns, and changing family roles, all of which require flexibility and cooperation. Consequently, the ability of spouses to successfully adjust to one another becomes one of the most important determinants of marital quality and stability.

The concept of marital adjustment has received considerable attention in psychology, family studies, counselling, and sociology because it reflects the overall quality and functioning of the marital relationship. Rather than representing a fixed state, marital adjustment is regarded as an ongoing process through which spouses accommodate individual differences, negotiate responsibilities, resolve conflicts, and maintain emotional

closeness throughout married life. Researchers have therefore emphasized that marital adjustment is not achieved once at the time of marriage but develops continuously as couples encounter new experiences and challenges.

According to Hashemi et al. (2024), marital adjustment is a multidimensional concept that explains different aspects of married life and represents a lifelong process of adaptation between spouses. It involves recognizing each other's characteristics, adjusting personal preferences, establishing mutually acceptable behavioural patterns, and developing healthy interpersonal relationships. Since marriage is constantly influenced by developmental, social, and environmental factors, marital adjustment is viewed as a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon.

Researchers have proposed numerous definitions of marital adjustment, each emphasizing slightly different aspects of marital functioning. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that marital adjustment refers to the degree to which spouses experience harmony, mutual understanding, emotional satisfaction, effective communication, cooperation, and successful conflict resolution within their relationship. It reflects the extent to which both partners perceive their marriage as rewarding and are able to work together in achieving shared goals while respecting each other's individuality.

Unlike marital satisfaction, which primarily reflects an individual's subjective evaluation of the relationship, marital adjustment encompasses broader behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal processes that enable couples to maintain relationship stability. Thus, marital adjustment includes not only feelings of happiness but also the practical ability to negotiate disagreements, adapt to changing circumstances, fulfil family responsibilities, and maintain commitment during periods of stress.

Several scholars have described marital adjustment as consisting of multiple interrelated dimensions. These commonly include emotional intimacy, communication, consensus in decision-making, affectional expression, conflict management, financial cooperation, sexual adjustment, parenting responsibilities, role performance, and overall relationship satisfaction. Healthy marital adjustment occurs when spouses communicate openly, respect each other's opinions, cooperate in solving problems, provide emotional support, and maintain mutual trust. Conversely, poor marital adjustment is characterized by frequent conflicts, ineffective communication, emotional distance, dissatisfaction, unresolved disagreements, and declining relationship quality.

Marital adjustment contributes significantly to individual psychological well-being as well as family functioning. Couples who experience healthy marital adjustment generally report greater life satisfaction, emotional security, better physical health, improved mental health, and higher relationship commitment. Positive marital relationships also promote effective parenting, children's emotional development, social competence, and overall family stability. Therefore, marital adjustment extends beyond the couple itself and influences the functioning of the entire family system (Hashemi et al., 2024).

Conversely, poor marital adjustment has serious consequences for both individuals and families. Persistent marital conflict has been associated with anxiety, depression, stress, loneliness, reduced self-esteem, psychosomatic complaints, domestic violence, marital dissatisfaction, separation, and divorce. Children raised in families experiencing chronic marital discord may also demonstrate behavioural problems, emotional difficulties, poor academic performance, and impaired interpersonal relationships. Consequently, understanding the factors that influence marital adjustment remains an important objective for psychologists, counsellors, family therapists, and researchers.

The literature indicates that marital adjustment is influenced by numerous interacting factors. Hashemi et al. (2024) classified these factors into three broad categories: personal characteristics, situational factors, and life events. Personal characteristics include personality traits, emotional maturity, communication skills, coping strategies, attachment style, emotional intelligence, mental health, beliefs, and expectations regarding marriage. Situational factors include socioeconomic status, employment, educational level, family environment, cultural norms, and social support. Life events such as parenthood, financial crises, illness, relocation, infertility, and occupational stress may also influence couples' ability to maintain healthy marital relationships.

Among these determinants, attachment style has emerged as one of the strongest psychological predictors of marital adjustment. Attachment theory proposes that individuals develop relatively stable internal working models of themselves and others based on early interactions with caregivers. These models subsequently influence interpersonal expectations, emotional regulation, trust, intimacy, communication patterns, and conflict resolution within adult romantic relationships. Consequently, attachment styles established during childhood continue to shape marital interactions throughout adulthood.

A growing body of empirical research supports the association between attachment style and marital adjustment. Hazan and Shaver (1987) extended Bowlby's attachment theory to adult romantic relationships and suggested that romantic love functions as an attachment process. They proposed that securely attached individuals experience greater trust, emotional closeness, and relationship stability than insecurely attached individuals. Subsequent investigations have consistently demonstrated that secure attachment is associated with healthier romantic relationships and greater marital satisfaction.

Studies have also shown that securely attached spouses display more adaptive communication, constructive conflict resolution, emotional responsiveness, and interpersonal trust. They are more likely to perceive their partners positively, seek support during stressful situations, and collaborate effectively in solving marital problems. These characteristics contribute to higher levels of marital adjustment and long-term relationship stability (Feeney, 1994; Senchak & Leonard, 1992).

In contrast, insecure attachment styles are frequently associated with poorer marital outcomes. Individuals with anxious attachment often fear abandonment, require excessive reassurance, and may become overly dependent on their partners. Their heightened sensitivity to rejection frequently results in jealousy, emotional distress, and negative interpretations of their partners' behaviour. These tendencies may contribute to relationship dissatisfaction and reduced marital adjustment (Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998).

Similarly, individuals with avoidant attachment generally value independence and emotional self-sufficiency. They often experience discomfort with intimacy, suppress emotional expression, and withdraw during interpersonal conflicts. Although avoidantly attached individuals may appear emotionally stable, their reluctance to express vulnerability and seek support can reduce emotional intimacy and impair relationship functioning. These behavioural patterns may negatively influence marital adjustment by limiting communication and emotional connectedness (Simpson et al., 1996).

Research has further demonstrated that attachment influences marital adjustment through cognitive processes. Internal working models shape how spouses perceive and interpret one another's behaviours. Securely attached individuals generally attribute positive intentions to their partners and respond more constructively to disagreements. In contrast, anxiously attached individuals often perceive ambiguous situations as threatening, whereas

avoidantly attached individuals tend to minimize emotional involvement and distance themselves from relationship conflicts. Such cognitive patterns directly influence communication, emotional regulation, problem-solving abilities, and overall marital functioning (Gallo & Smith, 2001).

Several empirical investigations support these theoretical assumptions. Gallo and Smith (2001) found that attachment security was positively associated with marital adjustment, whereas insecure attachment predicted lower relationship satisfaction and more negative responses during marital interactions. Similarly, Morrison et al. (1997) reported that securely attached individuals evaluated their partners more positively, and these positive appraisals partially explained the relationship between attachment and relationship functioning. Whisman and Allan (1996) further demonstrated that dysfunctional beliefs and cognitive attributions, together with attachment style, significantly predicted relationship adjustment.

Additional evidence has been provided by Aminpour et al. (2016), who reported that securely attached couples demonstrated significantly higher marital adjustment than couples characterized by insecure attachment patterns. Their findings also suggested that attachment style influences emotional intimacy, trust, conflict resolution, and long-term relationship stability. Likewise, Feeney (1999) observed that couples in which both partners exhibited secure attachment experienced better marital functioning than couples where one or both spouses were insecurely attached.

Collectively, these findings indicate that marital adjustment is a complex psychological process shaped by multiple individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors. Among these influences, attachment style consistently emerges as a central determinant of relationship quality because it affects how spouses perceive themselves, interpret their

partners' behaviour, regulate emotions, and respond to interpersonal challenges. Therefore, examining attachment style in relation to marital adjustment provides valuable insight into the psychological mechanisms that contribute to healthy and satisfying marriages.

In recent decades, researchers have also recognized that the process of marital adjustment may vary according to the circumstances under which marriages are formed. Different methods of partner selection involve different expectations, levels of family involvement, and patterns of relationship development, all of which may influence adjustment after marriage. Consequently, understanding marital adjustment requires consideration of the broader marital context, including whether the relationship originated as a love marriage, an arranged marriage, or a semi-arranged marriage. The following section discusses love marriage and its relevance to marital relationships and adjustment.

Types of Marriage

Marriage is a socially and culturally recognised union that can take different forms depending on societal norms, family traditions, and individual preferences. In contemporary societies, the most common types of marriage include arranged marriage, love marriage, and semi-arranged marriage, each of which differs in the extent of family involvement and partner choice.

Love Marriage

Love marriage refers to a form of marital union in which two individuals independently choose each other as life partners based primarily on mutual affection, emotional intimacy, personal compatibility, and romantic commitment before marriage. Unlike arranged marriages, where families play the principal role in partner selection, love marriages are predominantly couple-driven, with the decision to marry arising from the individuals themselves. Family approval may be sought later; however, the initial choice of

partner originates from the couple. In contemporary societies, particularly among educated young adults, love marriage has become increasingly common due to urbanization, higher educational attainment, increased interaction between men and women, economic independence, globalization, and the widespread use of social media and digital communication platforms.

The concept of romantic love occupies a central position in many cultures and is often regarded as the foundation of marital commitment. Romantic relationships provide opportunities for partners to understand each other's personalities, values, interests, expectations, and future aspirations before marriage. This period of acquaintance may facilitate emotional intimacy, trust, mutual respect, and effective communication, which are considered essential components of successful marital relationships. Consequently, many individuals believe that choosing a partner based on love increases the likelihood of marital satisfaction and long-term relationship stability.

Research has consistently highlighted the importance of love in marital relationships. Burgess et al. (1953) identified love and the expression of affection as important contributors to marital success. Similarly, Roberts (1979) reported that love was a significant characteristic among couples who had maintained successful marriages for more than five decades. Goedecke (1982) also identified a high degree of love as an important factor among couples who had sustained long-term marriages. Furthermore, Gottman (1994) described love as one of the fundamental ingredients of a healthy and enduring marital relationship. Riehl-Emde et al. (2003) found that love was ranked as the single most important factor contributing to couples' overall well-being and was the primary reason many couples remained committed to their marriages. These findings suggest that emotional closeness and affection play a vital role in promoting marital quality and relationship stability.

From the perspective of attachment theory, romantic love represents an attachment relationship in adulthood. Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that adult romantic relationships function similarly to infant-caregiver attachment relationships, with romantic partners serving as sources of emotional security, comfort, and support. Individuals with secure attachment styles generally experience greater trust, intimacy, emotional openness, and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals may experience difficulties related to trust, fear of abandonment, emotional dependence, or avoidance of intimacy, which can adversely affect the quality of romantic relationships and subsequent marital adjustment. Thus, attachment style plays an important role in determining how individuals experience love, maintain intimacy, and respond to relationship challenges.

Love marriages offer several potential advantages. Because partners voluntarily select each other, they often enter marriage with greater familiarity, emotional attachment, and shared understanding. Prior interaction allows couples to develop communication skills, negotiate differences, and establish realistic expectations regarding married life. Such familiarity may contribute positively to marital adjustment by facilitating empathy, mutual respect, and cooperative problem-solving. Moreover, individuals in love marriages often perceive greater autonomy and personal satisfaction because they exercise independent choice in selecting their life partner.

Despite these advantages, love marriages are not without challenges. Romantic relationships may sometimes be influenced by idealized perceptions, emotional intensity, or unrealistic expectations before marriage. After marriage, couples must adapt to practical responsibilities involving finances, household management, career demands, parenting, and relationships with extended family members. Differences in personality, values, cultural backgrounds, or family expectations may emerge more prominently after marriage, requiring effective communication and mutual adjustment. Therefore, the success of a love marriage

depends not merely on romantic affection but also on the couple's ability to adapt, resolve conflicts constructively, and maintain emotional commitment over time.

In countries such as India, the prevalence of love marriages has increased considerably over recent decades due to social modernization and changing cultural attitudes. Nevertheless, family support continues to play an important role even in love marriages. Many couples seek parental approval before marriage, reflecting the continuing influence of family values alongside increasing individual autonomy. This evolving pattern has contributed to the emergence of different forms of marital unions, including semi-arranged marriages, where individual choice and family involvement coexist.

For the purpose of the present study, love marriage refers to a marital union in which the individual independently chose the partner, with the decision being primarily couple-driven, while the family's role was limited to later acceptance or approval. This operational definition distinguishes love marriage from arranged and semi-arranged marriages based on the locus of initiative in partner selection.

Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage is one of the oldest and most widely practiced forms of marriage across many cultures, particularly in Asian, Middle Eastern, and African societies. In India, arranged marriage has historically been the predominant system of partner selection and continues to play an important role despite increasing acceptance of individual choice in marriage. Unlike love marriages, where the individuals independently select their partners, arranged marriages involve significant participation of family members in identifying, evaluating, and introducing potential spouses. This practice reflects the collectivistic nature of Indian society, where marriage is considered not merely a union between two individuals but an alliance between two families.

Traditionally, parents or close relatives assume the primary responsibility for selecting a suitable life partner by considering factors such as family background, educational qualifications, occupation, socioeconomic status, religion, caste, cultural compatibility, family values, and, in some cases, horoscope compatibility. Families often rely on recommendations from relatives, friends, matrimonial agencies, newspapers, or online matrimonial platforms to identify potential matches. After preliminary screening, the prospective bride and groom are introduced to each other, and if both individuals and their families agree, the marriage is formalized. Although contemporary arranged marriages generally provide greater opportunity for the prospective couple to interact and express their preferences, family involvement remains central throughout the decision-making process.

The arranged marriage system is based on the belief that the experience, maturity, and social knowledge of parents and family members contribute to selecting a compatible partner who shares similar cultural values, family traditions, and long-term life goals. Consequently, compatibility is often evaluated not only in terms of personal attraction but also through the social, cultural, economic, and familial characteristics of both partners. This broader perspective is believed to strengthen family support, facilitate adjustment after marriage, and promote long-term marital stability.

Several researchers have identified potential advantages associated with arranged marriages. Arranged marriages often receive strong emotional and practical support from both families, which may assist couples in adapting to married life. Shared cultural values, similar family expectations, and active involvement of extended family members can contribute to relationship stability and effective conflict resolution. Studies have also reported relatively lower divorce rates among arranged marriages in certain cultural contexts, suggesting that family support, social commitment, and shared responsibilities may enhance marital endurance (Allendorf, 2013). Additionally, young adults may devote greater attention

to their educational and professional development because the responsibility of partner selection is largely undertaken by their families (Jain, 2013).

Another important characteristic of arranged marriages is that the process may reduce the uncertainty and repeated rejection often associated with independent partner searching. Since families evaluate compatibility before introducing prospective spouses, individuals may experience greater emotional security during the partner selection process. Furthermore, the active involvement of parents and relatives frequently provides continued emotional, social, and financial support after marriage, thereby facilitating marital adjustment and family cohesion.

Despite these potential strengths, arranged marriages may also present certain challenges. Limited premarital acquaintance between partners can sometimes result in differences in expectations, communication styles, personality traits, and emotional needs becoming apparent only after marriage. Couples may require additional time to develop intimacy, mutual understanding, and trust. Furthermore, excessive family involvement or differing expectations between spouses and their families may occasionally contribute to marital stress. Nevertheless, many arranged marriages develop into satisfying and stable relationships as partners gradually establish emotional closeness, mutual respect, and shared commitment through continued interaction and adjustment.

From the perspective of attachment theory, the success of arranged marriages depends not only on the method of partner selection but also on the attachment characteristics that individuals bring into the relationship. Securely attached individuals generally demonstrate greater trust, emotional openness, and adaptive communication, enabling them to develop intimacy even when the marital relationship begins with limited prior acquaintance. Conversely, insecure attachment styles may hinder the development of trust, emotional

closeness, and effective conflict resolution, thereby influencing marital adjustment irrespective of how the marriage was arranged. Thus, attachment style remains an important psychological factor in understanding relationship quality within arranged marriages.

In contemporary India, arranged marriages have evolved considerably. Modern arranged marriages increasingly encourage prospective partners to interact before making a final decision, allowing greater individual participation while preserving family involvement. Consequently, the distinction between traditional arranged marriages and other forms of marriage has become less rigid, leading to the emergence of semi-arranged marriages that combine personal choice with family approval.

For the purpose of the present study, arranged marriage refers to a marital union in which the partner was selected and introduced primarily by the family, with family members playing the principal role in partner selection and the finalization of the marriage. This operational definition distinguishes arranged marriage from love marriage and semi-arranged marriage based on the family-driven locus of initiative in selecting the marital partner.

Semi-Arranged Marriage

In recent decades, changing social, cultural, and technological developments have led to the emergence of new patterns of partner selection that combine elements of both traditional arranged marriages and modern love marriages. One such pattern is the semi-arranged marriage, which has become increasingly common, particularly among educated young adults in countries such as India. This form of marriage reflects the gradual shift from exclusively family-controlled partner selection towards greater individual autonomy while continuing to preserve the cultural importance of family involvement in marital decisions.

Semi-arranged marriage represents a hybrid model in which both the individual and the family actively participate in the process of selecting a life partner. Unlike traditional

arranged marriages, where parents or relatives take the primary responsibility for identifying a suitable spouse, semi-arranged marriages begin with the individual's initiative. Prospective partners may first meet independently through educational institutions, workplaces, mutual friends, social media platforms, or online matrimonial and dating websites. Once mutual interest and compatibility are established, both partners involve their families to seek approval, evaluate compatibility, and finalize the marriage. Thus, the final marital decision becomes a collaborative process involving both the couple and their families.

The emergence of semi-arranged marriages can largely be attributed to rapid urbanization, higher educational attainment, economic independence, globalization, technological advancement, and increased opportunities for social interaction between men and women. The widespread use of digital communication, social networking sites, and matrimonial platforms has enabled individuals to interact with potential partners beyond their immediate social circles. At the same time, the enduring influence of cultural traditions and family values encourages young adults to involve their parents in the final stages of partner selection. Consequently, semi-arranged marriages represent a balance between personal choice and collective family decision-making.

This evolving form of marriage reflects the changing values of contemporary society. While younger generations increasingly value individual freedom, emotional compatibility, and personal preferences in choosing a life partner, they also recognize the importance of parental guidance, family approval, and cultural compatibility. Family involvement often provides emotional reassurance, practical support, and social acceptance, which may facilitate the couple's adjustment to married life. Thus, semi-arranged marriages attempt to integrate the strengths of both love and arranged marriage systems by combining emotional compatibility with family support.

From a psychological perspective, semi-arranged marriages provide an interesting context for understanding interpersonal relationships because they involve both premarital acquaintance and structured family involvement. Couples generally have the opportunity to know each other before marriage, allowing them to develop communication, mutual understanding, trust, and emotional intimacy. Simultaneously, family participation may contribute to relationship stability by providing guidance, shared expectations, and continued social support. However, as in any marital relationship, successful adjustment ultimately depends on the couple's ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, negotiate differences, and adapt to changing life circumstances.

Attachment theory provides a valuable framework for understanding adjustment within semi-arranged marriages. Individuals with secure attachment styles are generally more capable of establishing trust, maintaining emotional intimacy, communicating openly, and seeking support from both their partners and families. These characteristics may facilitate smoother adjustment in marriages where both individual preferences and family expectations require integration. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles may experience greater difficulty balancing personal autonomy with family involvement, potentially leading to misunderstandings, interpersonal conflicts, or reduced marital satisfaction. Therefore, attachment style remains an important psychological factor influencing the quality of relationships regardless of the method of partner selection.

Although research on semi-arranged marriages remains relatively limited compared with studies on love and arranged marriages, this form of marriage has become increasingly relevant in contemporary Indian society. As social norms continue to evolve, many marriages no longer fit neatly into the traditional categories of either arranged or love marriage. Instead, they represent a continuum in which both individual initiative and family participation contribute to the formation of marital relationships. Consequently, examining semi-arranged

marriages alongside love and arranged marriages provides a more comprehensive understanding of how different partner selection processes may influence marital adjustment.

For the purpose of the present study, semi-arranged marriage refers to a marital union in which the individual first identified the partner independently, such as through a matrimonial website, dating application, social media, educational institution, workplace, or personal network, and subsequently involved the family in approving and finalizing the marriage. Thus, the initiative for partner selection originates with the individual, while the family's role is to evaluate, approve, and facilitate the marriage. This operational definition distinguishes semi-arranged marriage from both love marriage, which is primarily couple-driven, and arranged marriage, which is primarily family-driven. Accordingly, the three forms of marriage are differentiated in the present study based on the locus of initiative in partner selection—couple-driven (love marriage), family-driven (arranged marriage), and jointly driven (semi-arranged marriage).

Need for the Study

Marriage is one of the most significant interpersonal relationships in adulthood, and its quality has profound implications for the psychological well-being of individuals, the functioning of families, and the stability of society. As social and cultural transformations continue to reshape patterns of partner selection, married couples are increasingly entering marital relationships through different pathways, including love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. These changing marital patterns are accompanied by diverse expectations, interpersonal dynamics, and adjustment processes. Consequently, understanding the psychological factors that contribute to successful marital relationships has become increasingly important in contemporary society.

Among the various determinants of marital functioning, attachment style has emerged as a significant psychological construct influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their partners, regulate emotions, communicate, resolve conflicts, and establish intimacy. Early attachment experiences shape internal working models that continue to influence adult romantic relationships and marital interactions. Similarly, marital adjustment is widely recognized as a crucial indicator of marital quality, reflecting the extent to which spouses successfully adapt to each other, maintain emotional closeness, and negotiate the challenges of married life. Although previous studies have established an association between attachment style and marital adjustment, comparatively limited research has examined these variables across different forms of marriage, particularly by comparing love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages within the same study. This represents an important gap in the literature that warrants further investigation.

The present study is especially timely because Indian society is experiencing substantial changes in marital practices. While arranged marriages continue to be culturally prominent, love marriages have become increasingly accepted, and semi-arranged marriages have emerged as a common pattern that combines individual choice with family involvement. These evolving forms of marriage differ in the process of partner selection, the extent of family participation, and the expectations spouses bring into the relationship. Such differences may influence attachment-related behaviours, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and marital adjustment. Therefore, comparing these three forms of marriage provides a more comprehensive understanding of how attachment style operates within different marital contexts.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the field of counselling psychology, which has a professional responsibility to promote psychological well-being, healthy interpersonal relationships, and adaptive attachment among married

individuals. Counselling psychologists frequently work with couples experiencing marital dissatisfaction, communication difficulties, emotional disconnection, trust issues, and relationship conflicts. Understanding how different attachment styles influence marital adjustment will enable counsellors to identify the underlying emotional and relational patterns contributing to marital difficulties and to design interventions that address these concerns more effectively.

Furthermore, the findings may assist marital counsellors, counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, family therapists, social workers, and mental health professionals in developing evidence-based counselling and therapeutic interventions tailored to the attachment needs of married couples. Knowledge of attachment patterns can facilitate the development of counselling strategies aimed at strengthening emotional security, improving communication, enhancing conflict-resolution skills, fostering empathy, and promoting healthy relationship functioning. Such interventions may ultimately improve marital satisfaction, relationship stability, and overall psychological well-being among couples.

The study also has important implications for premarital counselling. By increasing awareness of attachment styles and their influence on marital relationships, counsellors can help prospective couples develop realistic expectations regarding marriage, recognize their interpersonal strengths and vulnerabilities, improve emotional regulation, and acquire effective communication and problem-solving skills before entering married life. Such preventive interventions may reduce future marital distress and promote healthier marital adjustment.

In addition, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge concerning contemporary marital relationships in the Indian context by examining love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages within a single comparative framework.

Since semi-arranged marriages have received relatively limited empirical attention despite their increasing prevalence, the present study provides valuable insights into an emerging pattern of partner selection that reflects both individual autonomy and family participation. The findings may therefore enrich the existing literature on attachment and marital adjustment while providing culturally relevant evidence for future research.

The study is also expected to benefit educators, researchers, policymakers, and organizations involved in family welfare by providing a better understanding of the psychological factors associated with successful marital relationships. The findings may inform the development of relationship education programmes, couple enrichment initiatives, family counselling services, and community-based interventions aimed at strengthening marital relationships and promoting family well-being.

Overall, the present study is significant because it advances the understanding of the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals while considering differences in partner selection across love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages. By highlighting the role of attachment in shaping marital experiences, the study contributes meaningfully to counselling psychology and emphasizes the importance of attachment-informed counselling approaches for promoting healthy, satisfying, and resilient marital relationships. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions by supporting the development of effective counselling interventions that enhance interpersonal functioning, psychological well-being, and long-term marital adjustment among married individuals.

Statement of the Problem

Attachment style is recognized as one of the most important psychological factors influencing the quality of intimate relationships and marital adjustment. Although previous

research has demonstrated a relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment, relatively few studies have compared these variables across different forms of marriage, particularly love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages, within the Indian socio-cultural context. Furthermore, limited empirical attention has been given to understanding how different attachment dimensions are associated with marital adjustment among married individuals across varying types and durations of marriage. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive investigation into the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals.

Thus, the problem for the present study is entitled "*Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment among Married Individuals.*"

Delimitations of the Study

The present study was conducted within certain delimitations to ensure that the research remained focused and manageable. Geographically, the study was limited to Kerala, India. Therefore, the findings are interpreted within this geographical context and may not be directly generalizable to married individuals from other regions or cultural settings.

The study included married individuals aged 25 to 45 years who were living with their spouses at the time of data collection. Participants were classified into three categories based on the method of partner selection, namely love marriage, arranged marriage, and semi-arranged marriage, according to the operational definitions adopted for the present study. Individuals who were separated, divorced, widowed, or not living with their spouses were excluded from the study.

The study was further delimited to examining only two major psychological variables: attachment style and marital adjustment. Attachment style was assessed in terms of the attachment dimensions measured by the selected standardized instrument, while marital

adjustment was assessed using a standardized measure of marital adjustment. Other variables that may influence marital relationships, such as personality traits, communication patterns, emotional intelligence, socioeconomic status, family functioning, mental health, parenting practices, and cultural or religious influences, were beyond the scope of the present investigation.

The research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, comparative-correlational research design. Since data were collected at a single point in time, the study examined the existing relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment without investigating changes over time or establishing causal relationships.

Furthermore, the study relied exclusively on standardized self-report instruments for data collection. Consequently, the findings are based on participants' self-reported responses and may be influenced by factors such as social desirability, response bias, and individual differences in self-perception.

These delimitations were necessary to maintain clarity in the scope of the study and to ensure that the research objectives were addressed within a defined and feasible framework. While these boundaries may limit the generalizability of the findings, they also provide a focused basis for examining the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals in the selected context.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Review of literature is an essential component of the research process that provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing body of knowledge related to the research problem. It involves the systematic identification, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of published scholarly works to establish the theoretical and empirical foundations of a study. A well-conducted review of literature enables the researcher to understand the current state of knowledge, identify consistencies and inconsistencies in previous findings, recognize gaps in existing research, refine the research problem, and justify the need for the present investigation. It also assists in selecting appropriate theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, variables, and measurement tools while providing a basis for interpreting the findings of the study.

In the field of psychology, reviewing previous literature is particularly important because psychological constructs such as attachment style and marital adjustment have been investigated from multiple theoretical perspectives and across diverse cultural contexts. Understanding these perspectives allows the researcher to critically examine how attachment influences interpersonal relationships, emotional functioning, and marital experiences throughout adulthood. Furthermore, a systematic review of empirical evidence helps identify factors associated with healthy marital relationships and highlights areas requiring further scientific investigation.

The present study examines attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals, with particular emphasis on differences across love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. Considering the increasing diversity in patterns of partner selection and the growing importance of marital well-being in contemporary society,

it is essential to examine both the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence related to these constructs. The review of literature therefore provides the conceptual background necessary to understand the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment and to identify the research gap that forms the basis of the present investigation.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has been drawn primarily from peer-reviewed journal articles published during the past 10–15 years, supplemented by seminal theoretical works that have significantly contributed to the development of attachment theory, marital adjustment research, and relationship psychology. This combination ensures that the review reflects both the historical development of the concepts and the most recent empirical evidence relevant to the present study.

For the purpose of systematic presentation, this chapter is organised into four major sections. The first section presents the theoretical review, which discusses the major theoretical perspectives on attachment style, marital adjustment, and the role of interpersonal commitment and psychological well-being among married individuals. The second section provides an empirical review of previous research, including studies on attachment style, marital adjustment, different types of marriage, marital duration, and the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment. The third section identifies the research gap emerging from the reviewed literature, highlighting the need for the present investigation. Finally, the fourth section discusses the theoretical and practical relevance of the present study, particularly its contribution to counselling psychology, marital counselling, family intervention, and future research.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical review provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the variables investigated in the present study. It examines the major theories and conceptual

models that explain the development of attachment style, the process of marital adjustment, and the psychological mechanisms underlying interpersonal commitment and well-being among married individuals. Reviewing these theoretical perspectives facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment and provides the framework for interpreting the findings of the present study.

Theoretical Perspectives on Attachment Style

Attachment theory is one of the most influential psychological theories explaining the formation, development, and maintenance of close interpersonal relationships throughout the lifespan. Originally developed to explain the emotional bond between infants and their primary caregivers, attachment theory has subsequently become one of the dominant frameworks for understanding adult romantic relationships, marital functioning, emotional regulation, and interpersonal behaviour. The theory proposes that early interactions with caregivers shape enduring patterns of expectations, beliefs, and behaviours that influence how individuals perceive themselves and others in intimate relationships.

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory

The foundation of attachment theory was established by John Bowlby, whose work fundamentally changed the understanding of human relationships. Drawing upon evolutionary biology, ethology, psychoanalysis, and developmental psychology, Bowlby proposed that attachment is an innate behavioural system that evolved because it enhances an infant's chances of survival. Rather than viewing attachment as merely a consequence of feeding or the satisfaction of biological needs, Bowlby argued that infants possess an inherent tendency to seek proximity to caregivers during times of distress, uncertainty, or danger (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

According to Bowlby, repeated interactions with caregivers lead children to develop mental representations known as internal working models. These cognitive frameworks contain beliefs about one's own worthiness of love and care, the availability and trustworthiness of others, and expectations regarding interpersonal relationships. When caregivers consistently respond with warmth, sensitivity, and emotional availability, children develop positive internal working models characterized by trust, security, and confidence. Conversely, inconsistent, rejecting, or neglectful caregiving may contribute to insecure internal working models characterized by anxiety, mistrust, emotional avoidance, or fear of abandonment.

Bowlby further proposed that internal working models are relatively stable across development and continue to influence emotional regulation, interpersonal expectations, relationship behaviours, and coping strategies throughout adulthood. Consequently, attachment experiences established during early childhood continue to shape romantic relationships, marital interactions, parenting behaviour, and overall psychological well-being.

Mary Ainsworth's Contribution

Bowlby's theoretical propositions were empirically expanded by Mary Ainsworth, whose landmark "Strange Situation" procedure provided observational evidence for individual differences in infant attachment. Through systematic observation of infants' reactions during brief separations from and reunions with their caregivers, Ainsworth identified three primary attachment styles: secure attachment, anxious-ambivalent (resistant) attachment, and avoidant attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Securely attached infants demonstrated confidence in exploring their environment while using the caregiver as a secure base, showed moderate distress during separation, and were easily comforted upon reunion. Avoidant infants displayed emotional detachment,

minimized proximity-seeking behaviours, and appeared relatively unaffected by separation. In contrast, anxious-ambivalent infants exhibited intense distress during separation and difficulty being comforted despite actively seeking proximity after reunion. Later research by Mary Main introduced a fourth category, disorganized attachment, characterized by inconsistent, contradictory, or disoriented behaviours toward caregivers.

These attachment classifications became the foundation for understanding individual differences in interpersonal relationships across the lifespan and stimulated extensive research on attachment in adolescence and adulthood.

Adult Attachment Theory

The extension of attachment theory to adult romantic relationships was pioneered by Hazan and Shaver (1987). They proposed that romantic love represents an attachment process because romantic partners fulfil many of the same psychological functions that caregivers serve during childhood, including providing emotional security, comfort, support, and protection during stressful situations.

According to Hazan and Shaver, adults differ in the way they establish intimacy, trust others, express affection, and cope with relationship stress because they carry forward the attachment patterns developed during childhood. Securely attached individuals generally experience greater emotional intimacy, trust, relationship satisfaction, and stability. Conversely, insecure attachment styles are associated with fear of rejection, emotional dependence, interpersonal distrust, avoidance of intimacy, and ineffective conflict resolution.

The extension of attachment theory into adulthood significantly broadened its application beyond developmental psychology and established attachment as a central construct in relationship psychology, counselling psychology, family therapy, and marital research.

Bartholomew's Four-Category Model

Building upon previous conceptualizations, Kim Bartholomew and Leonard Horowitz (1991) proposed a four-category model of adult attachment based on positive and negative models of the self and others. According to this model, attachment styles are classified as:

- Secure attachment, characterized by positive views of both self and others.
- Preoccupied attachment, characterized by a negative self-image but positive perceptions of others.
- Dismissing attachment, characterized by positive self-evaluation but negative perceptions of others.
- Fearful attachment, characterized by negative views of both self and others.

This model provided a more comprehensive understanding of adult attachment by recognizing that attachment-related behaviours result from combinations of self-esteem and interpersonal trust rather than from a single dimension of security versus insecurity.

Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's Two-Dimensional Model

Later developments in attachment research were advanced by Kelly Brennan, Catherine Clark, and Phillip Shaver (1998), who demonstrated that adult attachment is best understood along two continuous dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance.

Attachment anxiety reflects fears of rejection, abandonment, and excessive dependence on interpersonal approval, whereas attachment avoidance reflects discomfort with emotional closeness, excessive self-reliance, and reluctance to depend upon others.

These dimensions have become the dominant framework in contemporary attachment research because they capture the complexity of interpersonal functioning more effectively than categorical classifications.

Attachment Style and Marriage

Attachment theory provides an important explanation for differences in marital functioning. Internal working models influence how spouses communicate, interpret one another's behaviours, regulate emotions, seek support, and resolve interpersonal conflicts. Secure attachment promotes trust, empathy, emotional openness, constructive communication, and adaptive conflict resolution, thereby facilitating healthy marital adjustment. In contrast, insecure attachment often contributes to emotional withdrawal, interpersonal anxiety, negative relationship expectations, ineffective communication, and persistent marital conflict.

Attachment theory further proposes that spouses influence one another's attachment experiences over time. Consistent emotional responsiveness, empathy, and supportive interactions may strengthen attachment security within marriage, whereas repeated experiences of rejection, criticism, emotional neglect, or unresolved conflict may reinforce attachment insecurity. Consequently, attachment style should not be viewed solely as an individual characteristic but also as an interpersonal process that evolves through ongoing relational experiences.

Within counselling psychology, attachment theory provides an important conceptual framework for understanding marital distress and relationship functioning. Attachment-informed counselling enables professionals to identify maladaptive interpersonal patterns, improve emotional regulation, strengthen communication, and promote secure relational bonds between partners. Consequently, attachment theory remains one of the most influential theoretical perspectives for understanding adult romantic relationships and provides the primary theoretical foundation for the present study examining attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals.

Theoretical Perspectives on Marital Adjustment

Marital adjustment is a multidimensional psychological construct that explains how spouses adapt to one another while maintaining a satisfying, stable, and healthy marital relationship. Unlike marital satisfaction, which primarily reflects an individual's subjective evaluation of the marriage, marital adjustment encompasses the continuous process of accommodating differences, negotiating responsibilities, resolving conflicts, and fostering emotional intimacy. Over the years, several theoretical perspectives have attempted to explain the factors that contribute to successful marital adjustment. These theories emphasize the importance of communication, interpersonal interactions, emotional attachment, cognitive processes, behavioural exchanges, and family dynamics in shaping the quality of marital relationships. The present study draws upon these theoretical perspectives to understand how attachment style influences marital adjustment among married individuals.

Spanier's Theory of Marital Adjustment

One of the most influential conceptualizations of marital adjustment was proposed by Graham B. Spanier (1976), who defined marital adjustment as a dynamic process through which spouses continuously adapt to changing circumstances and interpersonal demands within marriage. According to Spanier, marital adjustment is not a fixed state but an ongoing process that develops throughout married life as couples encounter developmental transitions, personal challenges, and environmental stressors.

Spanier identified four major dimensions of marital adjustment:

1. Dyadic Consensus – the degree of agreement between spouses regarding important issues such as finances, religious beliefs, child-rearing practices, household responsibilities, recreational activities, and future goals.

2. Dyadic Satisfaction – the extent to which spouses experience happiness, commitment, relationship stability, and satisfaction while minimizing conflict and considering separation or divorce.
3. Dyadic Cohesion – the degree to which couples participate in shared activities, spend quality time together, cooperate in decision-making, and maintain emotional connectedness.
4. Affectional Expression – the manner in which spouses express love, affection, emotional warmth, and sexual intimacy within the relationship.

According to Spanier, healthy marital adjustment is reflected in high levels of consensus, satisfaction, cohesion, and affectional expression. His conceptualization remains one of the most widely accepted frameworks in marital research and forms the basis of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), one of the most extensively used instruments for assessing marital quality.

Family Systems Theory

Another important perspective explaining marital adjustment is Family Systems Theory, developed primarily by Murray Bowen. This theory views the family as an integrated emotional system in which the behaviour of each family member influences and is influenced by every other member. According to Bowen, marriage cannot be understood by examining spouses independently because each partner functions within an interconnected family system.

Family Systems Theory proposes that successful marital adjustment depends upon the ability of spouses to balance emotional closeness with personal autonomy. Bowen introduced the concept of differentiation of self, referring to an individual's capacity to maintain emotional independence while remaining emotionally connected to significant others.

Individuals with higher differentiation generally demonstrate greater emotional regulation, effective communication, adaptive problem-solving, and healthier marital relationships. Conversely, poor differentiation may result in emotional reactivity, excessive dependence, conflict avoidance, and chronic interpersonal tension, thereby reducing marital adjustment.

This theory further emphasizes that marital difficulties often arise not solely from the behaviour of one spouse but from dysfunctional interaction patterns within the family system. Consequently, counselling interventions frequently focus on modifying family interaction patterns rather than assigning responsibility to individual partners.

Social Exchange Theory

George Homans and Peter Blau proposed Social Exchange Theory (1958), which suggests that interpersonal relationships are maintained when individuals perceive that the rewards of the relationship exceed its associated costs. Within marriage, rewards may include emotional intimacy, companionship, affection, trust, financial security, social support, and shared achievements, whereas costs may involve conflict, stress, sacrifices, financial burdens, and emotional distress.

According to this perspective, marital adjustment depends largely on spouses' perceptions of fairness and reciprocity. Couples who believe that both partners contribute equally to the relationship and receive comparable benefits generally experience greater relationship satisfaction and stability. Conversely, perceptions of inequity, imbalance, or unmet expectations may contribute to dissatisfaction, resentment, and reduced marital adjustment.

Although Social Exchange Theory effectively explains decision-making and relationship maintenance, critics argue that marital relationships cannot be understood solely

in terms of rewards and costs because love, commitment, attachment, and emotional investment frequently transcend rational cost-benefit calculations.

Behavioural Theory of Marriage

Behavioural theorists explain marital adjustment primarily through patterns of interpersonal interaction and reinforcement. According to behavioural principles, marital satisfaction increases when spouses consistently reinforce desirable behaviours such as appreciation, affection, cooperation, empathy, and effective communication. Positive interactions strengthen relationship quality, whereas criticism, hostility, withdrawal, and punishment weaken marital functioning (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979).

Behavioural approaches emphasize that many marital conflicts arise because couples unintentionally reinforce negative interaction patterns. For example, repeated criticism may lead to emotional withdrawal, while avoidance of conflict may temporarily reduce tension but ultimately prevent effective problem-solving. Consequently, behavioural marital therapy focuses on improving communication skills, increasing positive interactions, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and replacing maladaptive behaviours with constructive alternatives.

Behavioural theory has significantly influenced modern marital counselling because many evidence-based interventions are based upon principles of communication training, behavioural rehearsal, reinforcement, and conflict management.

Attachment Theory and Marital Adjustment

Among all theoretical perspectives, attachment theory provides one of the most comprehensive explanations of marital adjustment because it integrates emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal processes. Attachment theory proposes that early caregiving experiences shape internal working models, which subsequently influence trust, emotional regulation,

intimacy, communication, dependency, and conflict resolution within adult romantic relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Secure attachment promotes healthy interpersonal functioning by enabling spouses to communicate openly, regulate emotions effectively, seek support during stressful situations, and resolve disagreements constructively. Securely attached individuals generally perceive both themselves and their partners positively, facilitating empathy, cooperation, and emotional closeness. Consequently, secure attachment has consistently been associated with greater marital adjustment, relationship satisfaction, and psychological well-being.

Conversely, insecure attachment styles often interfere with marital adjustment. Individuals with anxious attachment frequently fear abandonment, seek excessive reassurance, and become emotionally distressed during relationship conflicts. Those with avoidant attachment tend to suppress emotional expression, maintain interpersonal distance, and avoid excessive intimacy. Fearful attachment combines both anxiety and avoidance, often resulting in unstable interpersonal relationships. These attachment-related patterns influence communication, trust, emotional intimacy, and conflict resolution, thereby affecting overall marital adjustment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Contemporary researchers increasingly recognize that no single theory fully explains marital adjustment. Instead, marital relationships are influenced by a complex interaction of attachment experiences, communication patterns, behavioural exchanges, cognitive interpretations, emotional regulation, family dynamics, and sociocultural influences. An integrative perspective acknowledges that successful marriages develop through continuous interaction among these multiple psychological and environmental factors.

The present study adopts this integrative perspective while considering attachment theory as its primary conceptual framework. Attachment style is expected to influence marital

adjustment by shaping interpersonal trust, emotional intimacy, communication, conflict resolution, and relationship commitment. Understanding these theoretical relationships provides the conceptual basis for examining differences in marital adjustment among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages.

Theoretical Perspectives on Marital Relationships, Interpersonal Commitment, and Psychological Well-being

Marriage is a unique interpersonal relationship characterized by emotional intimacy, mutual commitment, shared responsibilities, and long-term companionship. Beyond being a legal or social institution, marriage represents a psychological partnership in which spouses continuously influence each other's emotions, behaviours, attitudes, and overall well-being. Consequently, several psychological theories have attempted to explain how interpersonal commitment and psychological well-being contribute to the quality and stability of marital relationships. These theoretical perspectives emphasize that successful marriages are sustained not merely by love or attraction but through enduring commitment, effective interpersonal functioning, emotional security, and mutual adaptation.

Interpersonal Commitment Theory

Interpersonal commitment is regarded as one of the strongest predictors of stable and satisfying marital relationships. Commitment refers to an individual's psychological attachment to the marital relationship and the willingness to maintain it despite challenges and life transitions. It reflects the intention to preserve the relationship over time by investing emotional, psychological, and practical resources in the marriage.

One of the most influential explanations of commitment is Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment (1980, 1983). According to this model, commitment is determined by three major factors:

- Relationship satisfaction, or the degree to which individuals experience positive outcomes within the relationship.
- Quality of alternatives, referring to the perceived attractiveness of alternative relationships or lifestyles outside the marriage.
- Investment size, which includes emotional attachment, shared experiences, children, financial resources, time, and other investments that increase the value of maintaining the relationship.

Rusbult proposed that spouses who experience high relationship satisfaction, perceive few attractive alternatives, and have made substantial investments in the marriage are more likely to demonstrate strong commitment and remain dedicated to their relationship. Strong interpersonal commitment encourages spouses to forgive one another, cooperate during difficult situations, communicate constructively, and work collaboratively to resolve conflicts. Consequently, commitment contributes significantly to long-term marital adjustment and relationship stability.

Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love

Another influential framework explaining interpersonal relationships is the Triangular Theory of Love proposed by Robert J. Sternberg (1986). Sternberg suggested that love consists of three interrelated components:

- Intimacy, referring to emotional closeness, trust, warmth, and connectedness.
- Passion, referring to physical attraction, romantic feelings, and sexual desire.

- Commitment, referring to the conscious decision to maintain the relationship over time.

According to Sternberg, different combinations of these three components produce different forms of love. The ideal marital relationship, referred to as consummate love, includes high levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment. This form of love is believed to contribute to greater marital satisfaction, emotional security, and relationship stability.

The theory further suggests that although passion may naturally fluctuate over the course of marriage, intimacy and commitment become increasingly important in maintaining long-term marital relationships. Therefore, interpersonal commitment serves as a crucial factor supporting successful marital adjustment throughout different stages of married life.

Ryff's Model of Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is another important concept influencing marital relationships. Carol D. Ryff (1989) proposed a multidimensional model of psychological well-being consisting of six major components:

1. Self-acceptance
2. Positive relations with others
3. Personal growth
4. Purpose in life
5. Environmental mastery
6. Autonomy

According to Ryff, psychological well-being extends beyond the absence of psychological distress and involves the realization of an individual's full psychological

potential. Individuals with higher psychological well-being generally demonstrate greater emotional stability, resilience, empathy, effective coping strategies, and healthier interpersonal relationships.

Within marriage, psychological well-being enables spouses to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, solve problems collaboratively, and provide mutual emotional support. Conversely, poor psychological well-being may contribute to stress, anxiety, depression, emotional withdrawal, interpersonal conflict, and reduced marital adjustment. Thus, maintaining psychological well-being is essential for healthy and satisfying marital relationships.

Attachment Theory and Psychological Well-being

Attachment theory also provides an important explanation for psychological well-being among married individuals. According to Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980), secure attachment promotes emotional security by providing individuals with confidence in the availability and responsiveness of significant others. Securely attached individuals generally exhibit greater self-esteem, optimism, emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal competence.

Research has consistently demonstrated that secure attachment is positively associated with psychological well-being, whereas insecure attachment is associated with anxiety, depression, loneliness, emotional dysregulation, and relationship distress. Since psychological well-being directly influences interpersonal functioning, securely attached spouses are generally better able to establish satisfying marital relationships characterized by trust, intimacy, cooperation, and effective communication.

Furthermore, secure marital relationships themselves contribute to psychological well-being by providing emotional support, companionship, validation, and a sense of

belonging. Thus, attachment security and psychological well-being share a reciprocal relationship, with each reinforcing the other throughout married life.

Family Systems Perspective on Married Individuals

From the perspective of Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978), married individuals function as members of an interconnected family system rather than as isolated persons. Changes in one spouse inevitably influence the emotions, behaviours, and functioning of the other spouse and the family as a whole.

Bowen emphasized the importance of differentiation of self, referring to an individual's ability to balance emotional intimacy with personal autonomy (1978). Married individuals who possess higher levels of differentiation are better able to regulate emotions, tolerate interpersonal stress, communicate effectively, and maintain satisfying relationships. Conversely, low differentiation often results in emotional dependency, excessive reactivity, conflict avoidance, or chronic marital dissatisfaction.

This perspective highlights that marital adjustment depends not only on individual characteristics but also on patterns of interaction between spouses and within the broader family environment.

Ecological Systems Theory

The Ecological Systems Theory proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides a broader understanding of married individuals by emphasizing that marital relationships are influenced by multiple environmental systems. According to Bronfenbrenner, individual behaviour is shaped through interactions occurring within family, workplace, community, cultural traditions, and wider societal structures.

Marriage is therefore influenced by numerous contextual factors, including socioeconomic conditions, employment, education, cultural beliefs, religious practices, family expectations, social support, and public policies. These ecological influences affect interpersonal commitment, psychological well-being, communication patterns, and marital adjustment. Consequently, understanding married individuals requires consideration of both individual psychological characteristics and broader sociocultural contexts.

Within theoretical perspective, marriage is viewed as a developmental relationship that requires continuous emotional growth, mutual understanding, adaptive communication, and collaborative problem-solving (Brown & Lent, 2019). Counselling psychologists emphasize that healthy marriages are characterized by secure attachment, emotional responsiveness, interpersonal commitment, empathy, and effective conflict management. Difficulties in any of these areas may contribute to marital distress, relationship dissatisfaction, and reduced psychological well-being. (Gurman et al., 2015)

Attachment-informed counselling has become increasingly important because it enables professionals to understand the underlying emotional processes that influence marital interactions (Wallin, 2007). By identifying attachment-related patterns of communication, emotional regulation, and interpersonal behaviour, counsellors can assist couples in developing greater emotional security, improving relationship satisfaction, strengthening commitment, and enhancing overall psychological well-being.

Empirical Review

Empirical review involves the systematic examination and critical analysis of previous research studies related to the variables under investigation. It enables the researcher to understand the current state of knowledge, identify consistent and contradictory findings, evaluate research methodologies, and recognize gaps in the existing literature. The present

empirical review focuses on studies related to attachment style, marital adjustment, different types of marriage, marital duration, and the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment. Particular emphasis is placed on recent peer-reviewed research, while seminal studies are included where necessary to provide historical context.

Studies on Attachment Style among Married Individual

Attachment style has been extensively investigated as one of the most important determinants of adult interpersonal relationships. Building upon Bowlby's attachment theory and subsequent developments in adult attachment research, numerous empirical studies have demonstrated that attachment patterns significantly influence emotional regulation, relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and marital functioning.

A longitudinal study by Alana Siegel, Yafit Levin, and Zahava Solomon (2019) examined the contribution of each partner's attachment style to marital adjustment among 156 married couples. Using latent profile analysis, the researchers found that couples in which both partners demonstrated secure attachment reported the highest levels of marital adjustment. In contrast, couples in which one or both partners exhibited high attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance reported significantly lower marital adjustment. The findings highlighted that attachment patterns of both spouses jointly influence relationship quality rather than individual attachment characteristics alone.

A recent systematic review and meta-analysis by Nasrin Ghiasi and colleagues (2024) synthesized findings from studies examining attachment styles and marital infidelity. The review concluded that attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, dismissive attachment, and fearful attachment were significantly associated with marital infidelity and poorer relationship functioning. Individuals with insecure attachment experienced greater relationship instability and interpersonal difficulties, whereas secure attachment functioned as

a protective factor for relationship stability. These findings further support attachment theory by demonstrating that attachment insecurity negatively affects marital relationships through reduced trust, emotional intimacy, and commitment.

recently, a multilevel study investigating attachment styles, maladaptive cognitive schemas, and relationship satisfaction found that securely attached individuals reported significantly fewer maladaptive schemas and greater relationship satisfaction than individuals with avoidant or ambivalent attachment styles. The study further demonstrated that early cognitive schemas partially mediated the relationship between attachment style and relationship quality, suggesting that attachment influences adult relationships through both emotional and cognitive pathways.

The review identified attachment security, relationship satisfaction, emotional regulation, communication, conflict resolution, and psychological well-being as the dominant themes in contemporary attachment research. It also highlighted an increasing emphasis on culturally diverse populations and couple-based interventions, while noting the need for more research in non-Western contexts.

Collectively, these studies consistently indicate that attachment style remains one of the strongest psychological predictors of adult relationship functioning. Secure attachment facilitates emotional intimacy, trust, communication, and adaptive conflict resolution, whereas insecure attachment is associated with relationship dissatisfaction, interpersonal distress, and poorer marital outcomes. Although considerable empirical evidence supports the association between attachment style and relationship quality, comparatively fewer studies have examined these relationships across different forms of marriage within the Indian socio-cultural context.

Studies on Marital Adjustment among Married Individuals

Marital adjustment has been widely recognized as one of the most important indicators of marital quality and relationship stability. Researchers have examined marital adjustment in relation to various psychological, interpersonal, and socio-demographic variables, including communication, emotional intimacy, personality, attachment style, stress, social support, and coping strategies. The following review summarizes recent empirical studies that have contributed to the understanding of marital adjustment and its determinants.

Alana Siegel et al. (2019) investigated the contribution of each partner's attachment style to marital adjustment among 156 married couples. Using latent profile analysis, the researchers found that couples in which both spouses demonstrated secure attachment reported significantly higher levels of marital adjustment than couples characterized by attachment anxiety or avoidance. The study further revealed that the attachment styles of both partners jointly influenced marital adjustment, highlighting the importance of examining couples rather than individuals alone. These findings support the view that secure attachment promotes healthy marital functioning through greater trust, emotional intimacy, and constructive communication.

A systematic review by Landolt et al. (2023) examined the relationship between dyadic coping and mental health among couples. After reviewing numerous empirical studies, the authors concluded that positive dyadic coping was consistently associated with better marital adjustment, greater relationship satisfaction, reduced psychological distress, and improved emotional well-being. Couples who managed stress collaboratively demonstrated healthier communication, stronger emotional bonds, and greater resilience in facing marital challenges. The review emphasized that effective coping processes strengthen marital adjustment by enhancing mutual support and interpersonal understanding.

A systematic review of marital adjustment in remarriage published by Santos et al. (2024) identified several factors associated with successful marital adjustment among remarried couples. The review found that effective communication, mutual trust, emotional intimacy, social support, and adaptive coping strategies were consistently associated with higher marital adjustment, whereas unresolved conflict, financial stress, and poor communication reduced relationship quality. The authors emphasized that marital adjustment is influenced by a combination of individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors rather than a single determinant.

Research consistently indicates that emotional intimacy is another important predictor of marital adjustment. Recent evidence suggests that empathy and emotional intimacy function as protective factors against marital strain. Couples who demonstrate higher empathy and emotional responsiveness are more likely to maintain satisfying relationships despite experiencing stress, financial pressures, caregiving responsibilities, or other life challenges. Emotional intimacy facilitates mutual understanding, strengthens interpersonal trust, and promotes adaptive conflict resolution, thereby enhancing marital adjustment.

Collectively, these empirical studies demonstrate that marital adjustment is a complex and dynamic process influenced by multiple psychological and interpersonal factors. Secure attachment, effective communication, emotional intimacy, collaborative coping, interpersonal commitment, empathy, and counselling interventions consistently contribute to healthier marital relationships. Conversely, attachment insecurity, ineffective communication, unresolved conflicts, and inadequate coping strategies reduce marital adjustment and increase relationship distress. Although considerable evidence exists regarding the determinants of marital adjustment, comparatively fewer studies have examined marital adjustment across love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages within the Indian socio-cultural context. This highlights the need for further research comparing different forms of

marriage while simultaneously examining the influence of attachment style on marital adjustment.

Studies on Marriage Types and Marital Outcomes

The process of partner selection has undergone considerable transformation over the past few decades. While arranged marriages continue to be the dominant form of marriage in many collectivistic societies, increasing educational opportunities, urbanization, globalization, and technological advancements have contributed to the growing prevalence of love marriages and semi-arranged marriages. Researchers have therefore attempted to examine whether different methods of partner selection influence marital quality, relationship satisfaction, communication, commitment, and psychological well-being. The following studies provide empirical evidence regarding marital outcomes across different types of marriage.

Allendorf and Ghimire (2013) examined marital quality among married couples in Nepal using data from the Chitwan Valley Family Study. The researchers compared love marriages and arranged marriages across several dimensions, including communication, affection, conflict, and overall marital satisfaction. The findings indicated that individuals in love marriages initially reported higher levels of affection, communication, and marital satisfaction than those in arranged marriages. However, these differences gradually diminished as the duration of marriage increased. The study concluded that although the process of partner selection may influence the early years of marriage, long-term marital quality depends largely on couples' ability to adapt, communicate, and maintain emotional intimacy rather than on the type of marriage itself.

Banerjee et al. (2014) investigated marital satisfaction among Indian couples in love and arranged marriages. Using standardized measures of marital satisfaction, the researchers

found that couples in love marriages reported slightly higher emotional intimacy during the initial years of marriage because they had greater familiarity with one another before marriage. Nevertheless, arranged marriage couples demonstrated comparable levels of marital satisfaction over time as emotional attachment and mutual understanding developed through shared marital experiences. The study emphasized that successful marital relationships depend more on communication, trust, and mutual adjustment than on the method of partner selection.

Madathil and Benshoff (2018) explored marital relationships within the changing socio-cultural context of India. Their findings suggested that modernization has gradually transformed traditional patterns of marriage by increasing individual participation in partner selection while preserving family involvement. The researchers observed that contemporary marriages frequently combine elements of both love and arranged marriages, giving rise to hybrid forms such as semi-arranged marriages. They concluded that the quality of marital relationships is influenced by the balance between personal compatibility and family support rather than by the category of marriage alone.

A cross-cultural investigation conducted by Myers et al. (2015) examined marital expectations and relationship quality among couples from collectivistic and individualistic cultures. The study reported that spouses from collectivistic societies placed greater emphasis on family support, shared values, and long-term commitment, whereas couples from individualistic cultures emphasized personal compatibility, emotional intimacy, and individual choice. Despite these cultural differences, communication, trust, commitment, and mutual respect emerged as universal predictors of successful marital relationships.

Pimentel (2019) examined changing marital practices among young adults in South Asia and reported that increased educational attainment, employment opportunities, and

digital communication have expanded opportunities for independent partner selection. The study highlighted that many young adults preferred involving their families after independently identifying prospective partners, resulting in the growing prevalence of semi-arranged marriages. The researcher argued that this hybrid form of marriage successfully integrates personal autonomy with cultural traditions, making it increasingly common among urban populations.

Gupta and Singh (2021) reported that family acceptance and emotional support significantly contributed to marital adjustment regardless of whether marriages were arranged or based on individual choice. Couples receiving positive support from both families demonstrated better communication, reduced marital conflict, and greater relationship satisfaction than couples experiencing family opposition or limited social support.

Overall, previous studies suggest that the method of partner selection alone does not determine marital success. While love marriages may initially demonstrate greater emotional intimacy due to premarital familiarity and arranged marriages may benefit from stronger family support, long-term marital adjustment appears to depend primarily on attachment security, communication, interpersonal commitment, conflict resolution, mutual respect, and emotional responsiveness. Furthermore, the growing prevalence of semi-arranged marriages reflects changing social values in which individual autonomy and family participation coexist.

Despite increasing scholarly interest in different forms of marriage, comparatively few empirical studies have simultaneously compared love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages while examining their association with attachment style and marital adjustment. This limitation is particularly evident within the Indian socio-cultural context, where semi-arranged marriages are becoming increasingly common. Therefore, further

research is required to understand how different methods of partner selection influence attachment processes and marital adjustment among married individuals.

Studies on Marital Relationships Across the Duration of Marriage

Marital relationships evolve continuously over time as couples encounter various developmental, social, and psychological transitions. The duration of marriage is considered an important factor influencing marital adjustment because spouses gradually develop shared experiences, communication patterns, emotional intimacy, and coping strategies. At different stages of married life, couples face unique challenges such as establishing family roles, parenthood, financial responsibilities, career demands, child-rearing, caring for aging parents, and adapting to changing life circumstances. Consequently, researchers have examined whether marital quality, relationship satisfaction, attachment processes, and psychological well-being differ according to the duration of marriage.

Lavner, Karney, and Bradbury (2016) conducted a longitudinal study examining changes in marital satisfaction among newly married couples during the early years of marriage. The researchers found that although many couples experienced a gradual decline in marital satisfaction over time, couples who demonstrated effective communication, emotional support, and adaptive conflict-resolution skills maintained significantly healthier marital relationships. The findings emphasized that relationship quality depends more on interpersonal processes than simply on the length of marriage.

Similarly, Williamson et al. (2018) investigated predictors of marital stability among married couples across different stages of marriage. Their findings indicated that couples who maintained positive communication patterns, mutual respect, and emotional responsiveness experienced consistently higher marital adjustment regardless of the number of years they had been married. In contrast, couples characterized by persistent criticism, emotional

withdrawal, and ineffective conflict management reported lower relationship satisfaction over time.

A longitudinal investigation by Joel et al. (2020) examined relationship quality across the transition from early marriage to established married life. The study found that relationship satisfaction generally fluctuated across different stages of marriage due to changing family responsibilities and life stressors. However, couples who demonstrated greater interpersonal commitment, emotional intimacy, and collaborative coping adapted more successfully to these transitions than couples with poorer relationship skills. The researchers concluded that marital adjustment is a dynamic developmental process rather than a fixed characteristic.

Research has also demonstrated that attachment security plays an important role in maintaining marital quality across different stages of marriage. Siegel, Levin, and Solomon (2019) reported that securely attached couples consistently demonstrated higher marital adjustment irrespective of marriage duration. Secure attachment promoted trust, emotional intimacy, constructive communication, and adaptive conflict resolution, enabling couples to cope effectively with developmental transitions occurring throughout married life.

A recent review by Landolt et al. (2023) highlighted that couples who engaged in positive dyadic coping maintained healthier marital relationships during stressful life events such as parenthood, financial challenges, occupational stress, and health-related difficulties. The review emphasized that collaborative coping strategies strengthened marital adjustment regardless of the duration of marriage by promoting emotional support and mutual understanding.

Studies conducted in the Indian context have similarly reported that marital adjustment changes across different phases of married life. During the early years of

marriage, couples primarily adjust to differences in personality, family background, expectations, and household responsibilities. As marriage progresses, additional responsibilities related to parenting, financial management, career development, and extended family relationships emerge. Successful adaptation to these developmental tasks contributes to greater emotional maturity, stronger interpersonal commitment, and improved marital adjustment. Conversely, unresolved conflicts during earlier stages may accumulate over time and negatively affect relationship quality.

Several researchers have also suggested that emotional intimacy generally increases with marital duration as spouses accumulate shared experiences and develop deeper interpersonal understanding. Nevertheless, prolonged marital duration alone does not guarantee relationship satisfaction. Couples who fail to communicate effectively or resolve conflicts constructively may experience declining marital quality despite many years of marriage. Thus, marital duration influences relationship experiences, but the quality of interpersonal interactions remains the strongest predictor of successful marital adjustment.

Overall, previous studies indicate that marital life is characterized by continuous developmental changes rather than a static pattern of adjustment. Although the challenges faced by couples vary across different stages of marriage, healthy communication, secure attachment, emotional intimacy, interpersonal commitment, and effective coping consistently contribute to positive marital outcomes. These findings suggest that differences in marital adjustment may be associated not only with attachment style but also with the duration of marriage. Therefore, examining marital adjustment across different marital durations provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of marital relationships and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of married life.

Studies on the Relationship Between Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment

The relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment has been extensively investigated over the past two decades. Researchers have consistently demonstrated that adult attachment patterns influence emotional intimacy, communication, conflict resolution, relationship satisfaction, and overall marital functioning. Most studies report that secure attachment facilitates healthy marital relationships, whereas insecure attachment—particularly anxious and avoidant attachment—is associated with poorer marital adjustment.

Gallo and Smith (2001) examined the relationship between attachment style and marital functioning among married couples. The study assessed anxious and avoidant attachment, marital support, conflict, and attributional styles. The findings indicated that attachment style significantly predicted marital adjustment, with anxious attachment emerging as a stronger predictor of marital difficulties than avoidant attachment. Negative attributions regarding a spouse's behaviour partially mediated the relationship between attachment insecurity and marital adjustment. The researchers concluded that cognitive interpretations of partner behaviour play an important role in explaining how attachment influences marital relationships.

Feeney (2002) investigated attachment processes within long-term marital relationships and reported that securely attached spouses demonstrated greater emotional responsiveness, trust, and supportive behaviours than insecurely attached individuals. Secure attachment was positively associated with relationship satisfaction, constructive communication, and emotional intimacy, whereas insecure attachment predicted relationship distress and interpersonal withdrawal. The study emphasized that attachment security facilitates adaptive responses to everyday marital challenges.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) examined the influence of attachment security on interpersonal functioning and emotional regulation within adult relationships. Their findings demonstrated that securely attached individuals exhibited greater empathy, emotional regulation, and willingness to provide support to their spouses. In contrast, attachment anxiety was associated with excessive reassurance-seeking, whereas attachment avoidance predicted emotional distancing and discomfort with intimacy. These interpersonal patterns significantly influenced marital adjustment and relationship quality.

Collins and Feeney (2004) investigated the relationship between attachment security and supportive interactions among romantic partners. The researchers found that secure attachment facilitated effective support-seeking and caregiving behaviours during stressful situations. Couples characterized by secure attachment demonstrated healthier communication, greater relationship satisfaction, and better conflict resolution than insecurely attached couples. The study concluded that emotional support serves as an important mechanism linking attachment security with marital adjustment.

Davila et.al (2005) explored whether attachment insecurity predicted changes in marital satisfaction during the early years of marriage. The longitudinal findings revealed that spouses with anxious or avoidant attachment experienced greater declines in marital satisfaction over time compared with securely attached individuals. Couples characterized by secure attachment maintained greater emotional closeness and demonstrated more adaptive responses to marital stressors.

Simpson et.al (2007) investigated attachment processes during stressful interpersonal situations. The researchers reported that securely attached spouses were more likely to seek and provide emotional support during periods of stress, thereby maintaining higher marital adjustment. Avoidantly attached individuals tended to suppress emotional expression, while

anxiously attached individuals displayed heightened emotional distress and dependency. These patterns negatively influenced communication and relationship stability.

Butzer and Campbell (2008) examined the relationship between adult attachment and marital satisfaction among married couples. Their findings indicated that secure attachment significantly predicted greater marital satisfaction, commitment, and emotional intimacy. Attachment anxiety and avoidance were negatively associated with relationship quality and constructive conflict resolution. The study further suggested that emotional closeness mediated the relationship between attachment security and marital adjustment.

Mercer and Li (2009) explored attachment style and psychological well-being among married adults. The results demonstrated that securely attached individuals reported lower psychological distress, greater life satisfaction, and healthier marital relationships. The researchers concluded that psychological well-being partially explained the positive association between attachment security and marital adjustment.

Bernier and Matte-Gagné (2011) investigated the relationship between adult attachment, marital functioning, and caregiving among families. The study reported that secure attachment was associated with healthier interpersonal functioning and more adaptive caregiving behaviours. Although the researchers found stronger associations between attachment and parenting than with subjective marital satisfaction, the findings supported the importance of attachment security in promoting positive family relationships and healthy interpersonal functioning.

Karantzas et al. (2012) examined attachment orientations and relationship functioning among married and cohabiting couples. The findings indicated that securely attached individuals demonstrated greater emotional responsiveness, empathy, and constructive communication during interpersonal interactions. In contrast, attachment anxiety and

attachment avoidance were associated with poorer conflict resolution, increased relationship distress, and reduced marital adjustment. The researchers concluded that attachment influences marital quality primarily through emotional regulation and interpersonal responsiveness.

Li and Chan (2014) explored the association between attachment style and marital satisfaction among Chinese married couples. The researchers reported that secure attachment was positively associated with trust, relationship commitment, and emotional intimacy. Conversely, anxious and avoidant attachment predicted poorer communication, lower marital satisfaction, and greater interpersonal conflict. The study demonstrated that attachment theory is applicable across different cultural settings and not limited to Western populations.

Overall et al. (2015) further examined how attachment orientations influence relationship maintenance behaviours. Their research indicated that securely attached spouses were more likely to engage in supportive communication, forgiveness, and collaborative problem-solving. Attachment insecurity, particularly attachment anxiety, increased negative interaction patterns and emotional instability within marriage. The findings reinforced the importance of attachment security in sustaining healthy marital relationships.

Feeney and Monin (2016) investigated emotional support within close relationships and found that secure attachment significantly enhanced the ability to provide and receive effective support during stressful situations. Couples characterized by secure attachment reported greater relationship quality and marital adjustment because they perceived their partners as emotionally available and responsive. The study highlighted supportive communication as a mechanism linking attachment security with positive marital outcomes.

Consoli et al. (2018) examined the influence of primary attachment style and couple attachment on marital adjustment. Their findings revealed that couples in which both spouses

demonstrated secure attachment reported significantly better marital adjustment than couples characterized by insecure attachment. The study concluded that attachment security established within the marital relationship could partially compensate for earlier attachment experiences and contribute to healthier marital functioning.

Siegel et al. (2018) conducted a latent profile analysis involving 156 married couples to investigate how the attachment styles of both partners influence marital adjustment. The study demonstrated that couples in which both spouses exhibited secure attachment achieved the highest levels of marital adjustment, whereas couples characterized by high attachment anxiety or avoidance reported the lowest levels of adjustment. Importantly, the researchers emphasized that marital adjustment should be understood as a dyadic process in which the attachment orientations of both partners jointly influence relationship quality.

Çelebi (2018) reviewed empirical evidence regarding adult attachment styles and marital relationships. The review concluded that attachment security consistently predicts greater marital satisfaction, trust, intimacy, and relationship stability, while insecure attachment contributes to emotional distancing, conflict, and relationship dissatisfaction. The author further emphasized that attachment-informed counselling can improve communication, strengthen emotional bonds, and enhance marital adjustment among couples.

Siegel, Levin, and Solomon (2019) examined the role of each partner's attachment style in predicting marital adjustment among 156 married couples using latent profile analysis. The study reported that couples in which both spouses exhibited secure attachment achieved the highest levels of marital adjustment. In contrast, couples in which one or both partners demonstrated high attachment anxiety or avoidance reported significantly lower adjustment. The authors emphasized that marital adjustment is influenced by the combined attachment orientations of both spouses rather than by the attachment style of one partner

alone. These findings highlight the importance of viewing marital adjustment as a dyadic process.

McLeod, Berry, Hodgson, and Wearden (2020) conducted a systematic review examining attachment and social support in romantic relationships. After reviewing a large body of empirical research, the authors concluded that secure attachment was consistently associated with higher levels of perceived partner support, emotional responsiveness, relationship satisfaction, and healthier interpersonal functioning. Individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment styles reported poorer support-seeking and support-providing behaviours, which adversely affected relationship quality. The review identified social support as one of the principal mechanisms through which attachment influences marital adjustment.

Ghiasi, Rasool, Haseli, and Feli (2024) conducted a systematic review examining the relationship between attachment styles and marital infidelity. Although the primary outcome was infidelity, the review demonstrated that attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, fearful attachment, and dismissive attachment were consistently associated with poorer relationship functioning, lower trust, weaker commitment, and greater interpersonal instability. Secure attachment, by contrast, functioned as a protective factor for relationship quality and stability. The authors concluded that attachment insecurity represents a significant risk factor for maladaptive marital outcomes.

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of attachment-informed interventions within counselling psychology. Evidence suggests that counselling approaches focusing on attachment security, emotional responsiveness, communication skills, and conflict management improve marital functioning by strengthening emotional bonds between spouses. These interventions help couples recognize maladaptive interpersonal patterns,

develop healthier emotional regulation strategies, and enhance mutual understanding, thereby contributing to better marital adjustment.

The empirical literature reviewed consistently demonstrates that attachment style is one of the strongest psychological predictors of marital adjustment. Across different countries, cultures, and research designs, securely attached individuals consistently report greater marital satisfaction, emotional intimacy, communication, trust, commitment, and relationship stability. Conversely, anxious and avoidant attachment styles are associated with emotional dysregulation, communication problems, interpersonal conflict, reduced relationship satisfaction, and poorer marital adjustment.

Another important observation emerging from recent literature is the shift from studying attachment as an individual characteristic to conceptualizing it as a dyadic interpersonal process. Contemporary researchers increasingly recognize that the attachment orientations of both spouses interact to influence relationship functioning, suggesting that marital adjustment depends on the emotional dynamics shared by the couple rather than the characteristics of only one partner.

Despite the considerable volume of international research, important gaps remain. Most studies have been conducted in Western populations, with comparatively limited evidence from India. Furthermore, relatively few investigations have simultaneously compared love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages while examining the association between attachment style and marital adjustment. Semi-arranged marriages, in particular, remain underrepresented in empirical research despite their increasing prevalence in contemporary Indian society. These limitations provide a strong justification for the present study, which seeks to examine attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals across different forms of marriage within the Indian socio-cultural context.

Research Gap

The review of theoretical and empirical literature demonstrates that attachment style and marital adjustment have received considerable attention in the fields of counselling psychology, relationship psychology, and family studies. Previous research has consistently established that secure attachment is associated with healthier marital relationships, whereas insecure attachment styles are linked to poorer communication, emotional distress, interpersonal conflict, and reduced marital adjustment. Similarly, numerous studies have identified communication, emotional intimacy, interpersonal commitment, social support, and conflict resolution as important determinants of successful marital adjustment. These findings have significantly advanced the understanding of adult attachment and marital functioning.

Despite this growing body of literature, several important research gaps remain. Although a substantial number of studies have examined the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment, the majority of these investigations have been conducted in Western countries. Comparatively limited research has examined these constructs within the Indian socio-cultural context, where marital relationships are influenced by unique cultural values, family structures, and social expectations. Consequently, the applicability of findings derived from Western populations to Indian married individuals remains uncertain.

Previous studies have predominantly compared love marriages and arranged marriages, while semi-arranged marriages have received relatively little empirical attention. In contemporary Indian society, semi-arranged marriages have become increasingly common because they combine individual partner selection with family approval and participation. However, despite their growing prevalence, empirical research examining attachment style and marital adjustment among individuals in semi-arranged marriages remains scarce. This represents a significant gap in the existing literature.

Many previous investigations have focused primarily on marital satisfaction rather than marital adjustment. Although these constructs are related, marital adjustment is a broader concept that encompasses communication, consensus, emotional intimacy, affectional expression, conflict resolution, and the spouses' ability to adapt to changing life circumstances. Therefore, there is a need for studies that specifically examine marital adjustment as a multidimensional construct in relation to attachment style.

Most existing studies have examined attachment style and marital adjustment independently or have focused on one or two attachment dimensions. Comparatively fewer studies have simultaneously assessed attachment style and marital adjustment across different types of marriage using standardized psychological instruments. Examining these variables together may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological processes underlying successful marital relationships.

Although some researchers have explored the influence of demographic variables on marital relationships, limited empirical evidence is available regarding the role of duration of marriage in the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment. Marital relationships evolve over time as couples encounter developmental transitions, family responsibilities, occupational demands, and changing interpersonal experiences. Therefore, investigating marital adjustment across different marital durations may provide valuable insights into how attachment influences relationship functioning throughout married life.

Furthermore, relatively few studies have adopted a comparative approach by examining attachment style and marital adjustment simultaneously among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. Such comparative investigations are particularly important in India, where diverse patterns of partner selection

coexist and may influence relationship expectations, interpersonal dynamics, and adjustment processes differently.

Another limitation of the existing literature is that relatively few studies have explored the implications of attachment style for counselling psychology. Although attachment theory is widely applied in couple therapy and marital counselling, more empirical evidence is required to guide attachment-informed counselling interventions within the Indian cultural context. Understanding how attachment patterns influence marital adjustment can assist counselling psychologists in developing culturally appropriate interventions that strengthen communication, emotional intimacy, conflict resolution, and relationship stability among married individuals.

The review of literature therefore indicates the need for a comprehensive investigation that examines attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals, compares these variables across love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages, and considers the influence of marital duration within the Indian socio-cultural context. The present study seeks to address these gaps by employing standardized psychological measures to examine the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge while providing valuable implications for counselling psychology, marital counselling, family intervention, and future research.

Relevance of the Present Study

The present study is relevant both theoretically and practically as it contributes to the understanding of attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals within the contemporary Indian socio-cultural context. Although substantial research has examined attachment and marital relationships independently, comparatively limited studies have

investigated their relationship across different forms of marriage, particularly love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. By addressing this gap, the present study seeks to make meaningful contributions to counselling psychology, relationship research, and family studies.

The present study contributes to the theoretical understanding of adult attachment by extending the application of Attachment Theory to marital relationships among married individuals. While attachment theory has traditionally emphasized the influence of early caregiver-child relationships on later interpersonal functioning, the present study examines how attachment styles continue to shape emotional intimacy, communication, interpersonal trust, and marital adjustment during adulthood. The findings will therefore provide additional empirical support for the theoretical proposition that attachment patterns remain influential throughout the lifespan.

The study also contributes to the conceptual understanding of marital adjustment by examining it as a multidimensional construct rather than merely as marital satisfaction. By focusing on dimensions such as interpersonal consensus, affectional expression, cohesion, communication, and relationship stability, the study provides a broader understanding of marital functioning and adaptation among married individuals.

Furthermore, the present investigation integrates the concepts of attachment style and marital adjustment within a single conceptual framework. This integrated approach enhances the theoretical understanding of how attachment-related emotional and cognitive processes influence marital relationships and provides further evidence regarding the psychological mechanisms underlying successful marital adjustment.

Another important theoretical contribution lies in the inclusion of three different forms of marriage—love marriage, arranged marriage, and semi-arranged marriage. Most

previous studies have focused primarily on comparisons between love and arranged marriages, while semi-arranged marriages have received comparatively little empirical attention. By incorporating this emerging form of marriage into the research framework, the present study expands the theoretical understanding of partner selection processes and their relationship with attachment and marital adjustment.

The study further contributes to the existing literature by examining the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment across different durations of marriage. Since marital relationships evolve over time, investigating whether attachment continues to influence marital adjustment across different stages of married life provides additional theoretical insight into the dynamic nature of adult relationships.

The findings of the present study have important practical implications for counselling psychology, marital counselling, family therapy, and mental health practice. Counselling psychologists have a professional responsibility to promote psychological well-being, healthy interpersonal relationships, and secure attachment among married individuals. Understanding the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment enables counsellors to identify the underlying emotional and interpersonal processes contributing to marital difficulties and to develop more effective counselling interventions.

The findings may assist marital counsellors, counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, family therapists, psychiatric social workers, and other mental health professionals in assessing attachment-related difficulties among married couples. Knowledge of attachment patterns may help professionals understand problems related to emotional intimacy, trust, dependency, communication, conflict resolution, and relationship satisfaction. Such understanding enables the development of individualized counselling strategies that strengthen emotional security and improve marital functioning.

The present study also has significant implications for premarital counselling. By identifying the influence of attachment style on marital adjustment, counsellors can help prospective couples develop greater awareness of their interpersonal strengths and vulnerabilities before marriage. Premarital counselling programmes may incorporate attachment-focused interventions that improve communication, emotional regulation, empathy, conflict management, and realistic marital expectations, thereby promoting healthier and more stable marital relationships.

The findings may further contribute to the design of couple enrichment programmes, relationship education workshops, and community-based family interventions. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, family welfare centres, and counselling institutions may utilize the findings to develop preventive programmes that strengthen marital relationships, reduce marital conflict, and enhance family well-being.

The study is particularly relevant within the Indian socio-cultural context, where multiple forms of marriage coexist. By comparing attachment style and marital adjustment among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages, the study provides culturally relevant evidence regarding the psychological processes associated with different methods of partner selection. Such information may assist counsellors and family therapists in providing culturally sensitive interventions that acknowledge the influence of both individual choice and family involvement in marital relationships.

The findings may also benefit researchers and academicians by providing empirical evidence that can guide future investigations on attachment, marital adjustment, relationship satisfaction, family functioning, and psychological well-being. The study may encourage further research examining additional variables such as personality traits, emotional

intelligence, communication patterns, parenting styles, family support, and mental health in relation to attachment and marital functioning.

In addition, the study has implications for policy and family welfare services. Organizations involved in family counselling and relationship education may utilize the findings to develop evidence-based programmes aimed at strengthening marital stability, promoting healthy family relationships, and enhancing the psychological well-being of married individuals.

Overall, the present study is significant because it contributes to both theory and practice by expanding the understanding of attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals. The findings are expected to enrich the existing body of knowledge in counselling psychology, provide culturally relevant evidence from the Indian context, and support the development of attachment-informed counselling interventions that promote healthy interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, and successful marital adjustment. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the enhancement of marital quality and family well-being by providing valuable insights into the psychological factors that foster stable, satisfying, and resilient marital relationships.

Chapter III

Method

The methodology chapter presents the research approach adopted in the present study. It outlines the aim, objectives, variables, operational definitions, hypotheses, and research design adopted for the investigation. Furthermore, the chapter describes the target population, sample, sampling technique, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the instruments used for data collection. The chapter also explains the procedure followed for data collection, ethical considerations observed during the study, and the statistical techniques employed for analysing the data. A systematic and scientifically appropriate methodology ensures that the findings of the study are valid, reliable, and capable of addressing the research objectives.

Aim of the Study

The present study aims to examine attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals and to compare attachment style and marital adjustment among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. The study also aims to examine the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To assess the attachment dimensions (anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, secure, merging, and dismissive-ambivalent) among married individuals.
2. To assess the level of marital adjustment among married individuals.
3. To compare attachment dimensions among married individuals across different types of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged).

4. To compare marital adjustment among married individuals across different types of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged).
5. To compare attachment dimensions among married individuals across different durations of marriage.
6. To compare marital adjustment among married individuals across different durations of marriage.
7. To examine the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in love marriages.
8. To examine the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in arranged marriages.
9. To examine the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in semi-arranged marriages.

Variables of the Study

The study variables in the present study are attachment style and marital adjustment.

The grouping variables are type of marriage and duration of marriage.

Since the present investigation adopts a descriptive-comparative research design, no variable is experimentally manipulated. Therefore, the study does not include traditional independent and dependent variables. Instead, type of marriage and duration of marriage function as attribute (grouping) variables, while attachment style and marital adjustment are the principal variables measured in the study.

Type of marriage classifies participants into three groups:

- Love Marriage

- Arranged Marriage
- Semi-arranged Marriage

Duration of marriage classifies participants into three groups:

- Early duration of marriage: less than 5 years
- Mid-term duration of marriage: 6 to 15 years
- Long-term duration of marriage: more than 15 years

Attachment style and marital adjustment are compared across these groups. Additionally, the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment is examined within each marriage group as well as among the total sample.

Operational Definitions of Variables

Attachment Style

In the present study, Attachment style refers to The characteristic pattern of an individual's expectations, needs, and behaviour within close romantic relationships. Attachment style is operationally defined as the scores obtained by participants on the Killian (2018), which classifies attachment into five dimensions: Secure Attachment, Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment, Fearful-Avoidant Attachment, Merging Attachment, and Dismissive-Ambivalent Attachment.

Marital adjustment

In the present study, Marital adjustment refers to The accommodation of spouses to each other at a given time. Marital adjustment is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Locke and Wallace (1959).

Married Individuals

Married individuals refer to individuals currently in a recognised marital union, living together with a living spouse, classified by *who selected the partner* and *the family's role*.

Participants included in the present study belong to one of the operationally defined categories of marriage: love marriage, arranged marriage, or semi-arranged marriage.

Love marriage: The individual independently chose the partner, the decision being primarily couple-driven, with the family's role limited to later acceptance.

Arranged marriage: The partner was selected and introduced by the family, who played the primary role in the choice.

Semi-arranged marriage: The individual first identified the partner independently (e.g., via a matrimonial/dating site or social media) and then involved the family in approving and finalising the match. The distinguishing axis is the locus of initiative — couple-driven, family-driven, or jointly driven — and these are operational classifications defined for the present study.

Duration of Marriage

Duration of marriage refers to the number of completed years since the marriage at the time of data collection. In the present study, duration of marriage is operationally classified into three categories:

- Early duration of marriage: less than 6 years
- Mid-term duration of marriage: 6 to 15 years
- Long-term duration of marriage: more than 15 years

Hypotheses of the Study

The following alternative hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H1: There is a significant difference in attachment dimensions among married individuals across different types of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged).

H2: There is a significant difference in marital adjustment among married individuals across different types of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged).

H3: There is a significant difference in attachment dimensions among married individuals across different durations of marriage.

H4: There is a significant difference in marital adjustment among married individuals across different durations of marriage.

H5: There is a significant relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in love marriages.

H6: There is a significant relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in arranged marriages.

H7: There is a significant relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals in semi-arranged marriages.

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional, comparative -correlational design (The comparative component examines between-groups differences in attachment dimensions and marital adjustment across marriage type, age group, and duration of marriage. The correlational component examines the association between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment).

Participants

Population

The target population for the present study comprised married individuals who were currently living with their spouse at the time of data collection. Participants belonged to one of the three operationally defined categories of marriage, namely love marriage, arranged marriage, or semi-arranged marriage. Individuals from different educational, occupational, and socio-economic backgrounds were included to obtain a diverse representation of married individuals.

Sample

The sample for the present study consisted of 149 married individuals selected from 6 districts of Kerala

The participants were classified into three groups based on the type of marriage: love marriage (n=51), arranged marriage (n=59 & semi arranged marriage (n=39)

The selected sample included both male and female married individuals representing different age groups, educational qualifications, occupations, family systems, and durations of marriage. All participants were married and were living with their spouse at the time of participation.

The present study employed Convenience Sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, to recruit participants.

Convenience sampling was considered appropriate because participants were selected based on their accessibility, availability, and willingness to participate in the study. Married individuals who satisfied the inclusion criteria were approached through the researcher's personal contacts, community networks, educational institutions, workplaces, residential

communities, and online platforms. Individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate and provided written informed consent were included in the study.

The use of convenience sampling facilitated efficient data collection from participants representing different types of marriage within the available time and resources. Although the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population of married individuals, the selected sampling technique was considered suitable for achieving the objectives of the present descriptive-comparative study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were adopted for selecting participants for the present study:

1. Individuals who were married at the time of data collection.
2. Individuals who were currently living with their spouse.
3. Individuals whose marriage could be clearly classified as love marriage, arranged marriage, or semi-arranged marriage according to the operational definitions adopted in the present study.
4. Individuals who were 18 years of age or above.
5. Individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and provided written informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

The following exclusion criteria were adopted for the present study:

1. Married individuals who were not living with their spouse, irrespective of the reason for separation.

2. Individuals whose spouse was deceased at the time of data collection.
3. Married individuals with a self-reported diagnosis of a psychiatric disorder or neurological disorder, as these conditions could influence responses to the study variables.
4. Individuals who were unable to comprehend or respond appropriately to the research instruments in the language of administration.
5. Individuals who did not provide written informed consent or who chose to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process.
6. Individuals whose type of marriage could not be clearly categorized into love marriage, arranged marriage, or semi-arranged marriage based on the operational definitions adopted for the present study.

Instruments

The present study employed standardized psychological instruments to assess attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals. In addition, an investigator-constructed demographic information sheet was used to obtain personal and marital characteristics of the participants. The instruments selected for the study were appropriate for measuring the variables under investigation and have been widely used in psychological and relationship research.

The following instruments were used for data collection:

1. Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ)
2. Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)
3. Demographic Information Sheet

Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ)

Attachment style was assessed using the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) developed by Kyle D. Killian (2018). The questionnaire was adapted from the attachment models proposed by Collins (1996) and Griffin and Bartholomew (1994). The ASQ was designed to assess adult attachment patterns in close romantic relationships and is suitable for use among adults irrespective of their current relationship status.

The instrument measures relatively stable patterns of emotional bonding, trust, dependency, intimacy, and interpersonal behaviour within romantic relationships. It enables the identification of an individual's predominant attachment orientation by measuring five attachment dimensions. The questionnaire is appropriate for research investigating interpersonal relationships, marital functioning, relationship satisfaction, counselling psychology, and family studies.

Reliability and Validity. The Attachment Styles Questionnaire is based on well established adult attachment models proposed by Collins (1996) and Griffin and Bartholomew (1994). The internal consistency of the various ASQ dimensions is reported as acceptable, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.70 to 0.85 across subscales. Additionally, the instrument demonstrate good test-retest reliability, indicating stable measurement over time.

Number of Items, Subscales, and Response Format. The Attachment Styles Questionnaire consists of 20 self-report items.

The instrument measures five attachment dimensions, with four items representing each attachment style:

- Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment

- Fearful-Avoidant Attachment
- Secure Attachment
- Merging Attachment
- Dismissive-Ambivalent Attachment

Participants respond to each statement using a 5-point Likert response scale ranging from:

- 0 = Not at all characteristic of me
- 1 = A little characteristic of me
- 2 = Moderately characteristic of me
- 3 = Quite a bit characteristic of me
- 4 = Very characteristic of me

Participants are instructed to consider their romantic relationships in general while responding to each statement. If they have not previously experienced a romantic relationship, they are instructed to respond based on how they believe they would generally feel in such relationships.

Administration. The questionnaire may be administered individually or in groups. Before administration, participants are informed about the purpose of the study and are instructed to respond honestly to every statement. There are no right or wrong answers.

The average administration time is approximately 10–15 minutes. Participants are requested to complete all items independently without discussing their responses with others. Uniform instructions are provided to all participants to ensure consistency in administration.

Scoring. Scoring is carried out by summing the responses corresponding to each attachment dimension.

The five subscales are scored as follows:

- Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment: Items 1, 6, 11, and 16
- Fearful-Avoidant Attachment: Items 2, 7, 12, and 17
- Secure Attachment: Items 3, 8, 13, and 18
- Merging Attachment: Items 4, 9, 14, and 19
- Dismissive-Ambivalent Attachment: Items 5, 10, 15, and 20

Each subscale score ranges from 0 to 16. According to the scoring guidelines, scores of 11 or above on a subscale are considered significant. Individuals may obtain significant scores on more than one attachment dimension; however, the highest subscale score is generally interpreted as representing the individual's predominant attachment style.

Higher scores on the Secure Attachment subscale indicate greater emotional security, trust, and comfort with intimacy. Higher scores on the remaining four subscales indicate greater tendencies toward anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, merging, or dismissive-ambivalent attachment characteristics respectively.

Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

Marital adjustment was assessed using the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) developed by Locke and Wallace (1959). The MAT is one of the earliest and most widely used standardized instruments for assessing the quality of adjustment between married partners. It was specifically designed to distinguish well-adjusted marriages from distressed marriages by assessing agreement and satisfaction across important areas of marital life.

The instrument measures the overall level of marital adjustment by assessing agreement between spouses regarding issues such as financial management, recreation, friends,

philosophy of life, sexual relations, conventionality, affection, conflict resolution, and general happiness within the marriage. It provides a global index of marital adjustment and has been extensively used in marital and family research, counselling psychology, clinical psychology, and couple therapy.

The Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was selected for the present study because it is a standardized, psychometrically established measure of marital adjustment and is appropriate for use among married adults. The instrument has been widely employed in both research and clinical settings to evaluate the quality of marital relationships.

Reliability and Validity. The Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties since its development. Locke and Wallace (1959) reported a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.90, indicating a high level of internal consistency. With the Cronbach alpha, the $r = .73$. Content validity was established through the careful selection of items representing important domains of marital functioning, including agreement, affection, communication, conflict, and overall relationship satisfaction. Criterion-related validity has also been supported by studies showing that MAT scores accurately differentiate between clinically distressed and non-distressed married couples. Because of its strong psychometric characteristics, the instrument has remained one of the most widely used measures of marital adjustment for more than six decades.

Number of Items. The Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test consists of 15 items. The items assess multiple aspects of marital adjustment rather than separate subscales.

Administration. The Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test can be administered individually or in small groups. Before administration, participants are informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses will remain confidential and will be used only for research purposes. Participants are instructed to read each item carefully and

select the response that best describes their present marital relationship. There are no right or wrong answers, and respondents are encouraged to answer honestly based on their own experiences. The administration of the instrument generally requires approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Uniform instructions are provided to all participants to ensure consistency in administration.

Scoring. The Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test employs a weighted scoring system developed by the authors. Each response option is assigned a predetermined numerical weight. Individual item scores are summed to obtain a total marital adjustment score.

The possible total score ranges from 2 to 158.

Interpretation of scores is based on the original guidelines:

- 100 or above: Indicates satisfactory or good marital adjustment.
- Below 100: Indicates marital maladjustment or marital distress.

Higher total scores reflect greater marital harmony, consensus, emotional closeness, and relationship satisfaction, whereas lower scores indicate greater disagreement, conflict, dissatisfaction, and poorer marital adjustment. The instrument provides a single overall measure of marital adjustment rather than separate subscale scores.

Demographic Information Sheet

A Demographic Information Sheet was prepared by the investigator to collect relevant personal and marital information about the participants before the administration of the standardized psychological instruments. The information obtained through this schedule was used solely for research purposes and to describe the characteristics of the sample.

Participants were instructed not to write their names and were instead assigned a code number to maintain anonymity.

The demographic information sheet collected the following details:

Age, gender, district of residence, highest educational qualification, present occupational status, working status of the couple (single income/dual income), type of family system (nuclear/joint), type of marriage (love marriage, arranged marriage, or semi-arranged marriage), duration of the current marriage, age at the time of marriage, number of children (if any) and whether the spouse was currently living

The classification of the type of marriage was based on the operational definitions adopted in the present study. Participants selected one of the three categories after carefully reading the descriptions provided in the demographic information sheet. Love marriage referred to marriages initiated primarily by the couple; arranged marriage referred to marriages initiated mainly by family members; and semi-arranged marriage referred to marriages in which the partner was initially identified by the individual and subsequently approved by the family.

Information regarding the duration of marriage was collected both categorically and continuously by asking participants to indicate the duration category as well as the exact number of years and months of marriage. The demographic schedule also recorded whether participants had children and confirmed that the spouse was alive and currently living with the participant, ensuring compliance with the inclusion criteria.

The demographic information sheet served two important purposes. First, it provided a detailed description of the characteristics of the study sample. Second, it enabled the investigator to classify participants into the three marriage groups and to summarize important demographic variables during data analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The present study was conducted following the approval of the research proposal by the concerned academic authorities. Prior to the commencement of data collection, ethical principles governing psychological research involving human participants were carefully considered and followed throughout the study.

Initially, the investigator identified married individuals who satisfied the inclusion criteria of the study through personal contacts, community networks, workplaces, educational institutions, residential communities, and online platforms. Participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique, based on their accessibility, availability, and willingness to participate.

Each prospective participant was approached individually and provided with a brief explanation regarding the purpose and objectives of the study. The investigator explained that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that participants had the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty or adverse consequences. Participants were also assured that the information collected would be used solely for academic and research purposes and that strict confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained throughout the research process.

After explaining the nature of the study, written informed consent was obtained from each participant before administering the research instruments. Only those participants who voluntarily agreed to participate and fulfilled the inclusion criteria were included in the study.

Data were collected using both offline (paper-and-pencil) and online (Google Forms) modes of administration to ensure greater accessibility and convenience for participants. Participants who were personally accessible completed printed questionnaires, whereas those who were geographically distant or preferred online participation completed the same

questionnaires through a Google Forms link. The content, sequence of questions, instructions, and response options were identical in both modes of administration to maintain uniformity in data collection.

The administration of the instruments began with the Demographic Information Sheet, which collected relevant personal and marital information required for the study. Participants were then administered the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) followed by the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT). Standardized instructions were provided uniformly to all participants before the administration of each instrument. Participants were requested to read each statement carefully and respond honestly according to their own experiences without discussing their responses with others.

The average time required to complete all the instruments ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. The investigator remained available throughout the administration process to clarify procedural doubts whenever necessary. However, no assistance was provided regarding the interpretation of individual questionnaire items to avoid influencing participants' responses.

For participants completing the questionnaires offline, the completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion and checked for completeness. In the case of online data collection, Google Forms was designed to minimize missing responses by requiring responses to essential items before submission. Responses were reviewed periodically to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Data collection was carried out over a period of approximately two months. Upon completion of the questionnaires, participants were thanked for their valuable cooperation and were debriefed regarding the broader purpose and expected significance of the study. Participants were also informed that the findings would be reported only in aggregate form

and that no personally identifiable information would be disclosed in any report or publication.

The completed questionnaires from both offline and online modes were coded systematically, entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis, and stored securely to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected from the participants were coded, entered, and analysed using JAMOV statistical software (Version 2.7; based on JAMOV 2.3.28). Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data in accordance with the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Initially, descriptive statistical techniques were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and the study variables. The following descriptive statistics were computed: Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation.

Prior to conducting inferential analyses, the assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The Shapiro–Wilk test was performed for all attachment dimensions and marital adjustment scores.

The test was statistically significant for all study variables, indicating that the data departed significantly from a normal distribution. Since the assumption of normality was violated, non-parametric statistical procedures were considered appropriate for subsequent analyses.

As the data were not normally distributed, the Kruskal–Wallis H test, a non-parametric alternative to one-way analysis of variance, was employed to compare the study variables across groups.

The Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to compare:

- Attachment dimensions across Type of Marriage (Love Marriage, Arranged Marriage, and Semi-arranged Marriage).
- Marital Adjustment across Type of Marriage.
- Attachment dimensions across Duration of Marriage.
- Marital Adjustment across Duration of Marriage.

Whenever the Kruskal–Wallis H test yielded a statistically significant result, Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner (DSCF) pairwise comparisons were performed as a post hoc procedure to identify the specific groups that differed significantly from one another.

These analyses addressed the research objectives 3, 4, 5 & 6 and corresponding hypotheses H1, H2, H3, & H4

To examine the relationship between attachment style and marital adjustment, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho) was employed. Spearman's correlation was selected because the variables did not satisfy the assumption of normality.

Correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between marital adjustment and attachment dimensions among: Individuals in Love Marriages, Individuals in Arranged Marriages & Individuals in Semi-arranged Marriages.

These analyses addressed the research objectives 7, 8 & 9 and corresponding hypotheses H5, H6 & H7.

The selected statistical procedures were considered appropriate for the present study because they enabled the comparison of attachment dimensions and marital adjustment across different marriage types and durations, while also examining the relationship between

attachment style and marital adjustment within each marriage group under conditions of non-normal data distribution.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to address the objectives and test the hypotheses of the present study. The findings are organized according to each objective and are presented using appropriate tables, followed by their interpretation and discussion in relation to existing theoretical and empirical literature. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the data, while the Shapiro–Wilk test was employed to assess normality. As the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric statistical techniques, including the Kruskal–Wallis H test and Spearman's rank-order correlation, were used for data analysis. The results are discussed in the context of previous research and relevant theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals.

Tests of Normality

Prior to inferential analysis, the distribution of marital adjustment and the five attachment dimensions was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The test was significant for all six variables ($p < .05$), indicating departures from univariate normality. As the Shapiro–Wilk test is highly sensitive at larger sample sizes, distributional shape was further appraised through skewness and kurtosis, which remained within accepted limits. On this basis, non-parametric procedures were adopted: the Kruskal–Wallis H test for between-group comparisons and Spearman's rank-order correlation for associations.

Table 1*Tests of Normality for Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions (N = 149)*

Variable/Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>
Marital adjustment	149	108	28.6	-0.216	-0.952	0.96	< .001
Anxious-preoccupied attachment	149	4.38	3.85	0.725	-0.176	0.91	< .001
Fearful-avoidant attachment	149	5.65	3.33	0.160	-0.396	0.97	.002
Secure attachment	149	7.21	3.97	0.344	-0.541	0.97	.002
Merging attachment	149	5.55	2.99	0.0248	-0.824	0.97	.001
Dismissive-ambivalent attachment	149	8.73	4.20	-0.107	-0.734	0.97	.003

Note. W = Shapiro–Wilk statistic. Significant values ($p < .05$) indicate departure from normality.

Table 1 presents the results of the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality for marital adjustment and the five attachment dimensions among the 149 married individuals included in the study. The findings indicate that all study variables significantly deviated from a normal distribution, as the Shapiro–Wilk test was significant ($p < .05$) for each variable.

Marital adjustment yielded a Shapiro–Wilk value of $W = 0.96$, $p < .001$, indicating that the distribution of marital adjustment scores significantly differed from normality. Similarly, all attachment dimensions demonstrated significant departures from normality: anxious-preoccupied attachment ($W = 0.91$, $p < .001$), fearful-avoidant attachment ($W = 0.97$, $p = .002$), secure attachment ($W = 0.97$, $p = .002$), merging attachment ($W = 0.97$, $p = .001$), and dismissive-ambivalent attachment ($W = 0.97$, $p = .003$).

The skewness values ranged from -0.216 to 0.725 , indicating only slight negative or positive asymmetry across the variables, while kurtosis values ranged from -0.952 to -0.176 , suggesting relatively flatter (platykurtic) distributions than the normal curve. Although these skewness and kurtosis values were within generally acceptable limits for descriptive purposes, the significant Shapiro–Wilk statistics indicate that the assumption of normality was not satisfied.

Based on these findings, the assumption of normality required for parametric statistical analyses was violated. Therefore, non-parametric statistical tests were considered appropriate for the analysis of the study objectives. Accordingly, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to compare marital adjustment and attachment dimensions across groups, and Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed to examine the relationships between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment.

Table 2

Attachment Style among Married Individuals (N = 149)

Attachment style	<i>f</i>	%
Secure	42	28.2
Anxious-preoccupied	22	14.8
Fearful-avoidant	18	12.1
Merging	10	6.7
Dismissive-ambivalent	57	38.3
Total	149	100.0

Note. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the primary attachment styles among the 149 married individuals who participated in the study. The findings indicate that dismissive-ambivalent attachment was the most prevalent attachment style, reported by 57 participants (38.3%). This was followed by secure attachment, which was observed among 42 participants (28.2%).

The anxious-preoccupied attachment style was identified in 22 participants (14.8%), while fearful-avoidant attachment was reported by 18 participants (12.1%). The merging attachment style was the least common, with 10 participants (6.7%).

Overall, the results suggest that dismissive-ambivalent attachment was the dominant attachment style among the married individuals in the present study, whereas merging attachment was the least frequently observed. Although more than one-fourth of the participants exhibited a secure attachment style, a larger proportion demonstrated insecure attachment patterns (dismissive-ambivalent, anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, and merging). These findings indicate considerable variability in attachment orientations among married individuals and provide a foundation for examining how different attachment dimensions are associated with marital adjustment in the subsequent analyses.

Table 3

Marital Adjustment Levels among Married Individuals (N = 149)

Marital adjustment level	<i>f</i>	%
Marital Adjustment	84	56.4
Marital Maladjustment	65	43.6
Total	149	100.0

Note. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of marital adjustment levels among the 149 married individuals who participated in the study. Based on the cutoff score of 100, participants scoring 100 or above were classified as having marital adjustment, while those scoring below 100 were classified as having marital maladjustment.

The findings revealed that 84 participants (56.4%) were classified as having marital adjustment, whereas 65 participants (43.6%) were classified as having marital maladjustment. Thus, more than half of the participants demonstrated satisfactory levels of adjustment in their marital relationships, while a considerable proportion experienced marital

Table 4*Comparison of Attachment Dimensions across Type of Marriage (N = 149)*

Attachment dimension	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	ε^2
Anxious-preoccupied	1.15	2	.562	.008
Fearful-avoidant	1.40	2	.496	.009
Secure	1.53	2	.466	.010
Merging	0.92	2	.632	.006
Dismissive-ambivalent	6.59	2	.037	.045

Note. Groups: love (*n* = 51), arranged (*n* = 59), semi-arranged (*n* = 39). *H* = Kruskal–Wallis test statistic. A Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner pairwise comparison for dismissive-ambivalent attachment showed a significant difference between arranged and semi-arranged marriages (*W* = -3.59, *p* = .030).

A Kruskal–Wallis test compared the five attachment dimensions across the three marriage types. A statistically significant difference emerged for dismissive-ambivalent attachment, $H(2) = 6.59$, $p = .037$, $\varepsilon^2 = .045$, and the post-hoc comparison indicated that individuals in arranged marriages scored higher than those in semi-arranged marriages ($p = .030$). The remaining four dimensions did not differ significantly across marriage types ($p > .05$).

The findings suggest that the type of marriage is generally not associated with differences in most attachment dimensions. Attachment styles are considered relatively stable internal working models that develop early in life through interactions with primary caregivers and tend to remain consistent into adulthood, including within marital relationships. Therefore, regardless of whether individuals entered into love, arranged, or semi-arranged marriages, their attachment orientations were largely similar. The significant difference observed only in dismissive-ambivalent attachment may reflect differences in

interpersonal expectations, emotional distance, or autonomy within certain marital contexts. However, given the small effect size, this finding should be interpreted cautiously.

The present findings are broadly consistent with previous research suggesting that attachment style has a stronger influence on marital functioning than the type of marriage itself. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) proposed that adult attachment patterns are relatively stable personality characteristics that shape relationship behaviours across different relational contexts rather than being determined by the manner in which the marriage was formed. Similarly, Feeney (1999) reported that attachment security is associated with relationship quality regardless of demographic or relationship characteristics. In contrast, some studies conducted in collectivistic cultures have suggested that spouses in arranged and love marriages may differ in intimacy, communication, and emotional expression, which could indirectly influence attachment-related behaviours over time (Gupta & Singh, 1982). The significant difference in dismissive-ambivalent attachment observed in the present study may therefore reflect cultural or relational dynamics specific to certain marriage types, while the absence of differences in the remaining attachment dimensions suggests that attachment is largely independent of how the marriage was initiated.

Although one attachment dimension (dismissive-ambivalent) showed a statistically significant difference, Hypothesis 1 is not supported, because the hypothesis predicted a significant difference in attachment dimensions across marriage types as a whole. Since four of the five attachment dimensions did not differ significantly, the overall evidence does not support the hypothesis that attachment dimensions vary according to the type of marriage. The findings instead indicate that attachment patterns are largely comparable among individuals in love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages, with only a limited difference observed in dismissive-ambivalent attachment.

Table 5*Comparison of Marital Adjustment across Type of Marriage (N = 149)*

Variable	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	ε^2
Marital adjustment	2.23	2	.328	.015

Note. Groups: love (n = 51), arranged (n = 59), semi-arranged (n = 39). H = Kruskal–Wallis test statistic. Marital adjustment did not differ significantly across the three marriage types, $H(2) = 2.23$, $p = .328$, $\varepsilon^2 = .015$.

The findings suggest that married individuals experience comparable levels of marital adjustment regardless of whether their marriage was based on love, arranged, or semi-arranged unions. Marital adjustment is influenced by a wide range of factors, including communication, mutual trust, emotional intimacy, commitment, conflict resolution, and social support. As couples spend more time together after marriage, these interpersonal and relational factors may become more important determinants of marital adjustment than the manner in which the marriage was initiated. Therefore, the quality of the marital relationship appears to depend more on how couples adapt to one another over time than on the type of marriage itself.

The present findings are consistent with several previous studies that have reported no significant differences in marital adjustment or marital quality between love and arranged marriages. For instance, Gupta and Singh (1982), in their longitudinal study of Indian couples, found that the quality of marital relationships in arranged marriages gradually increased over time and eventually became comparable to that of love marriages. Similarly, Myers and Madathil (2005) reported that spouses in arranged and love marriages did not differ significantly in overall marital satisfaction, suggesting that both forms of marriage can provide equally satisfying and stable relationships when supported by mutual commitment and effective communication.

However, the findings are inconsistent with studies that have reported significant differences in marital adjustment based on the type of marriage. For example, Yelsma and Athappilly (1988) found that couples in love marriages reported higher marital satisfaction and greater emotional intimacy than those in arranged marriages. Likewise, some contemporary studies have suggested that love marriages may be associated with better communication, greater autonomy in partner selection, and higher initial relationship satisfaction, whereas arranged marriages may involve greater family support and stability, leading to differences in marital outcomes across cultural settings.

The variation between the present findings and those of previous studies may be attributed to differences in cultural context, sample characteristics, duration of marriage, socioeconomic background, and changing societal attitudes toward marriage. In contemporary Indian society, distinctions between love and arranged marriages have become less pronounced, particularly with the increasing prevalence of semi-arranged marriages, where both individual choice and family involvement coexist. Consequently, couples across different marriage types may develop similar levels of understanding, commitment, and adjustment over time.

Since the difference in marital adjustment across marriage types was not statistically significant ($p > .05$), Hypothesis 2 is not supported. The findings indicate that the type of marriage—whether love, arranged, or semi-arranged—does not significantly influence the level of marital adjustment among the married individuals included in the present study.

Table 6*Comparison of Attachment Dimensions across Duration of Marriage (N = 149)*

Attachment dimension	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	ε^2
Anxious-preoccupied	2.34	2	.311	.016
Fearful-avoidant	2.38	2	.304	.016
Secure	0.90	2	.636	.006
Merging	1.96	2	.376	.013
Dismissive-ambivalent	0.02	2	.988	< .001

Note. Duration groups: less than 5 years (early), 6–15 years (mid-term), more than 15 years (long-term). *H* = Kruskal–Wallis test statistic. None of the five attachment dimensions differed significantly across the three durations of marriage (all $p > .30$).

These findings suggest that attachment dimensions remain relatively stable regardless of the length of the marital relationship. According to attachment theory, internal working models of attachment are formed during early interactions with caregivers and tend to remain relatively enduring throughout adulthood, although they may be modified to some extent through significant relationship experiences. The absence of significant differences across the duration groups indicates that attachment orientations are more likely to reflect stable personality characteristics than the number of years individuals have been married. This finding implies that couples who have been married for only a few years and those who have been married for several decades exhibit similar attachment patterns.

The present findings are consistent with the work of Bowlby (1988), who proposed that attachment representations are relatively stable across the lifespan. Similarly, Fraley (2002) concluded that adult attachment demonstrates considerable stability over time despite changes in life circumstances and relationship experiences. Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) also emphasized that attachment orientations tend to remain consistent across adulthood and

influence relationship functioning regardless of relationship duration. These theoretical and empirical findings support the present result that the duration of marriage does not substantially alter attachment dimensions.

However, the present findings differ from some previous studies that have suggested that attachment patterns may become more secure over time as spouses develop greater trust, intimacy, and emotional support through shared marital experiences. For example, Davila et al. (1999) have argued that positive relationship experiences can gradually modify attachment-related behaviours, particularly by reducing attachment anxiety and avoidance. Such differences across studies may be explained by variations in sample characteristics, cultural background, relationship quality, and life events that influence marital experiences over time.

Since none of the attachment dimensions differed significantly across the three duration-of-marriage groups ($p > .05$), Hypothesis 3 is not supported. The findings indicate that the duration of marriage does not significantly influence anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, secure, merging, or dismissive-ambivalent attachment among the married individuals included in the present study.

Table 7

Comparison of Marital Adjustment across Duration of Marriage (N = 149)

Variable	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	ϵ^2
Marital adjustment	0.37	2	.830	.003

Note. Duration groups: less than 5 years (early), 6–15 years (mid-term), more than 15 years (long-term). *H* = Kruskal–Wallis test statistic. Marital adjustment did not differ significantly across durations of marriage, $H(2) = 0.37$, $p = .830$, $\epsilon^2 = .003$.

The findings indicate that married individuals experienced similar levels of marital adjustment regardless of whether they were in the early, mid-term, or long-term stages of marriage. This suggests that the number of years spent in marriage alone may not be a determining factor in marital adjustment. Instead, successful marital adjustment is likely to be influenced by ongoing interpersonal processes such as effective communication, emotional intimacy, mutual trust, commitment, adaptability, conflict resolution, and social support. Couples who develop healthy relationship skills may maintain satisfactory marital adjustment throughout different stages of married life, irrespective of the duration of their marriage.

The present findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that marital adjustment depends more on relationship quality than on the length of the marriage. For instance, Spanier (1976) conceptualized marital adjustment as a dynamic process influenced by consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and emotional expression rather than by the duration of marriage alone. Similarly, Karney and Bradbury (1995) reported that marital quality is shaped by enduring personal characteristics, stressful life events, and adaptive processes, with years of marriage having only an indirect influence. These findings support the present study, suggesting that marital adjustment remains relatively stable when couples continue to adapt effectively to changing life circumstances.

However, the present findings differ from some previous studies that have reported variations in marital adjustment across different stages of marriage. For example, Glenn (1990) found that marital satisfaction tends to decline during the middle years of marriage due to increased family and occupational responsibilities and may improve in later years as these pressures lessen. Similarly, VanLaningham et al. (2001) observed that marital quality may fluctuate over the marital life course depending on developmental transitions and family demands. The discrepancy between these findings and the present study may be attributed to

differences in cultural context, sample characteristics, socioeconomic conditions, and the distribution of participants across duration groups.

Since no statistically significant difference in marital adjustment was found across the three duration-of-marriage groups ($p > .05$), Hypothesis 4 is not supported. The findings indicate that the duration of marriage does not significantly influence marital adjustment among the married individuals included in the present study, suggesting that couples are capable of maintaining comparable levels of adjustment throughout different phases of married life.

Table 8

Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Love Marriages ($n = 51$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marital adjustment	—					
2. Anxious-preoccupied	-.086	—				
3. Fearful-avoidant	.107	.227	—			
4. Secure	-.118	.059	.212	—		
5. Merging	-.171	.260	.579***	.481***	—	
6. Dismissive ambivalent	.068	.003	.356*	.457***	.315*	—

Note. rs = Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. Marital adjustment did not correlate significantly with any attachment dimension.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Among individuals in love marriages, none of the five attachment dimensions was significantly correlated with marital adjustment (all $p > .20$).

The absence of a significant relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment suggests that marital adjustment in love marriages may be influenced more by factors such as communication, mutual understanding, emotional support, conflict resolution,

and commitment than by attachment orientation alone. It is possible that couples in love marriages have already established emotional bonds before marriage, reducing the direct influence of attachment characteristics on their marital adjustment. Other contextual factors, including personality, family support, and shared life experiences, may also contribute to maintaining relationship quality.

The present findings are inconsistent with several previous studies that have reported a significant association between adult attachment and marital adjustment. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) concluded that individuals with secure attachment generally experience higher relationship satisfaction and better marital functioning, whereas insecure attachment is associated with poorer relationship outcomes. Similarly, Feeney (1999) found that secure attachment promotes trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction, while anxious and avoidant attachment styles are associated with greater marital difficulties. Likewise, Collins and Read (1990) reported that adult attachment styles significantly influence the quality and stability of close relationships.

However, the present findings are consistent with studies suggesting that attachment may not independently predict marital adjustment when other relational variables are considered. For example, Karney and Bradbury (1995) argued that marital quality is influenced by a combination of enduring vulnerabilities, stressful life events, and adaptive processes, rather than by any single psychological factor. This perspective supports the present findings, indicating that attachment dimensions alone may not explain differences in marital adjustment among individuals in love marriages.

Since none of the attachment dimensions showed a statistically significant relationship with marital adjustment ($p > .05$), Hypothesis 5 is not supported. The findings indicate that attachment dimensions are not significantly associated with marital adjustment

among married individuals in love marriages, although significant positive relationships were observed among several attachment dimensions themselves.

Table 9

Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Arranged Marriages

($n = 59$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marital adjustment	—					
2. Anxious-preoccupied	.299*	—				
3. Fearful-avoidant	-.047	-.036	—			
4. Secure	.120	.100	.195	—		
5. Merging	.262*	.453***	.347**	.281*	—	
6. Dismissive-ambivalent	-.210	-.185	.278*	.120	.131	—

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. Correlations of marital adjustment with attachment dimensions are uncorrected for multiple comparisons and should be interpreted with caution.

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

Among individuals in arranged marriages, marital adjustment was significantly and positively correlated with anxious-preoccupied attachment, $r_s = .30$, $p = .022$, and with merging attachment, $r_s = .26$, $p = .045$. The remaining three dimensions were not significantly associated with marital adjustment.

The significant positive relationship between anxious-preoccupied attachment and marital adjustment may indicate that individuals with this attachment orientation invest considerable emotional effort in maintaining their marital relationship. In arranged marriages, where spouses often develop emotional closeness gradually after marriage, individuals with greater concern for maintaining intimacy and seeking reassurance may actively work to

strengthen the relationship, thereby contributing to better marital adjustment. Similarly, the positive association between merging attachment and marital adjustment suggests that individuals who value emotional closeness, interdependence, and shared decision-making may experience greater adjustment in arranged marriages, where family involvement and mutual commitment are often emphasized.

The present findings are partially consistent with previous research demonstrating that attachment influences marital functioning. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) suggested that attachment orientations shape emotional regulation and relationship quality throughout adulthood. Likewise, Feeney (1999) reported that attachment characteristics influence intimacy, communication, and relationship satisfaction. However, unlike many previous studies, the present study did not find a significant relationship between secure attachment and marital adjustment. This contrasts with findings reported by Collins and Read (1990), who observed that secure attachment is generally associated with healthier and more satisfying romantic relationships. The discrepancy may reflect cultural characteristics of arranged marriages in the present sample, where adjustment may be influenced more strongly by commitment, family support, shared responsibilities, and gradual relationship development than by attachment security alone.

Although significant positive relationships were found between marital adjustment and anxious-preoccupied and merging attachment, the remaining three attachment dimensions showed no significant association with marital adjustment. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is not supported. While the findings indicate that certain attachment dimensions are related to marital adjustment among individuals in arranged marriages, the overall hypothesis predicting a significant relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment was not fully confirmed, as the expected relationships were not observed across all attachment dimensions.

Table 10

Correlations among Marital Adjustment and Attachment Dimensions in Semi-Arranged Marriages (n = 39)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marital adjustment	—					
2. Anxious-preoccupied	-.062	—				
3. Fearful-avoidant	.259	.319*	—			
4. Secure	-.238	-.143	-.279	—		
5. Merging	-.036	.272	-.082	.187	—	
6. Dismissive-ambivalent	-.034	-.117	.067	.367*	.379*	—

Note. rs = Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. Marital adjustment did not correlate significantly with any attachment dimension; the smaller subgroup size limits statistical power.

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

Among individuals in semi-arranged marriages, none of the five attachment dimensions was significantly correlated with marital adjustment (all $p > .10$).

The absence of significant relationships between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment suggests that marital adjustment in semi-arranged marriages may be influenced by factors beyond attachment orientation. Semi-arranged marriages combine elements of both partner choice and family involvement, allowing couples to develop familiarity before marriage while also benefiting from family support. Consequently, interpersonal factors such as communication, mutual respect, commitment, conflict management, and shared life experiences may play a more substantial role in determining marital adjustment than attachment characteristics alone. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size ($n = 39$) may

have reduced the statistical power to detect modest associations between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment.

The present findings differ from several previous studies that have reported significant associations between adult attachment and marital adjustment. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) concluded that secure attachment is generally associated with higher relationship satisfaction and better marital functioning, whereas insecure attachment styles are linked to poorer relationship outcomes. Similarly, Feeney (1999) reported that attachment security contributes to trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction in marriage. In contrast, the present study found no significant relationship between any attachment dimension and marital adjustment among individuals in semi-arranged marriages. This discrepancy may be explained by cultural characteristics of semi-arranged marriages, the influence of family support, or the limited statistical power resulting from the relatively small subgroup size.

The present findings are, however, consistent with the perspective of Karney and Bradbury (1995), who argued that marital adjustment is determined by multiple interacting factors, including adaptive processes, external stressors, and enduring personal characteristics, rather than by attachment orientation alone. This suggests that attachment may represent only one of several factors influencing marital adjustment, particularly in relationship contexts where both personal choice and family involvement contribute to marital stability.

Since none of the attachment dimensions showed a statistically significant relationship with marital adjustment ($p > .05$), Hypothesis 7 is not supported. However, because the semi-arranged marriage group consisted of a relatively small number of participants, these findings should be interpreted with caution. The absence of statistically

significant relationships should be considered inconclusive rather than definitive evidence of no association, and future studies with larger samples are recommended to further examine the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment in semi-arranged marriages.

Discussion

The present study examined the attachment dimensions and marital adjustment of married individuals and explored whether these variables differed according to the type of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged) and duration of marriage. The study also investigated the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment within each marriage type. Since the data did not satisfy the assumption of normality, non-parametric statistical analyses were employed, including the Kruskal–Wallis H test and Spearman's rank-order correlation.

The descriptive findings revealed that dismissive-ambivalent attachment was the most common primary attachment style among the participants, followed by secure attachment, while merging attachment was the least frequently reported. This indicates that although a substantial proportion of married individuals demonstrated secure attachment characteristics, insecure attachment patterns were more prevalent in the present sample. Adult attachment theory proposed by Bowlby (1988) and further developed by Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) suggests that attachment orientations formed during early life continue to influence interpersonal relationships in adulthood. The predominance of insecure attachment styles in the present study may reflect the influence of early relational experiences as well as sociocultural and interpersonal factors operating within marital relationships.

The findings showed that attachment dimensions did not differ significantly across marriage types, except for dismissive-ambivalent attachment, which was significantly higher

among individuals in arranged marriages than in semi-arranged marriages. However, the effect size was small, suggesting that the practical significance of this difference was limited. Overall, the findings indicate that attachment orientations remain largely similar regardless of whether individuals entered into love, arranged, or semi-arranged marriages. This is consistent with the view that attachment is a relatively stable psychological characteristic that is not primarily determined by the manner in which a marriage is formed (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016). Although one attachment dimension differed significantly, the overall hypothesis regarding differences in attachment dimensions across marriage types was not supported.

Similarly, marital adjustment did not differ significantly across love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages. This finding suggests that the success of a marriage depends less on how the marriage began and more on the quality of the ongoing relationship. Factors such as communication, trust, commitment, emotional intimacy, and effective conflict resolution may play a greater role in promoting marital adjustment than the type of marriage itself. This finding is consistent with the work of Gupta and Singh (1982), who reported that arranged marriages gradually achieve levels of marital quality comparable to love marriages, and with Myers and Madathil (2005), who found no significant difference in marital satisfaction between arranged and love marriages. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The study also found that neither attachment dimensions nor marital adjustment differed significantly across different durations of marriage. Participants who had been married for less than five years, six to fifteen years, and more than fifteen years demonstrated similar attachment patterns and comparable levels of marital adjustment. These findings support attachment theory, which proposes that attachment orientations remain relatively stable across adulthood (Fraley, 2002; Bowlby, 1988). Likewise, the absence of significant differences in marital adjustment suggests that relationship quality is influenced more by

couples' adaptive processes than by the number of years spent in marriage, consistent with the vulnerability–stress–adaptation model proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995).

Accordingly, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not supported.

Regarding the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment, the findings varied across marriage types. Among individuals in love marriages, none of the attachment dimensions showed a significant relationship with marital adjustment. This suggests that factors other than attachment orientation, such as communication, emotional support, shared experiences, and relationship commitment, may play a greater role in determining marital adjustment within love marriages. Similarly, among individuals in semi-arranged marriages, no significant relationships were observed between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment. However, because this subgroup consisted of only 39 participants, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, as the smaller sample size may have reduced the statistical power to detect significant associations.

In contrast, among individuals in arranged marriages, anxious-preoccupied attachment and merging attachment were positively associated with marital adjustment. These findings suggest that individuals who seek emotional closeness, reassurance, and interpersonal connectedness may experience better marital adjustment in arranged marriages. One possible explanation is that arranged marriages often involve gradual development of intimacy after marriage, making emotional investment and mutual dependence important contributors to relationship adjustment. However, no significant relationships were found between marital adjustment and secure, fearful-avoidant, or dismissive-ambivalent attachment. Since only two of the five attachment dimensions showed significant associations, the overall hypothesis regarding attachment and marital adjustment in arranged marriages was not supported.

Overall, the findings indicate that attachment dimensions alone do not consistently predict marital adjustment across different marriage types. While attachment remains an important psychological construct in understanding close relationships, the present study suggests that marital adjustment is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by numerous interpersonal, social, cultural, and contextual factors. Communication quality, emotional intimacy, commitment, conflict management, family support, socioeconomic circumstances, and shared life experiences may collectively contribute to successful marital adjustment beyond attachment orientation alone. This interpretation is consistent with the vulnerability–stress–adaptation model of Karney and Bradbury (1995), which proposes that marital quality results from the interaction of enduring personal characteristics, adaptive processes, and external stressors.

Taken together, the findings contribute to the growing body of literature on attachment and marital relationships by demonstrating that the type of marriage and duration of marriage have limited influence on attachment dimensions and marital adjustment. Except for a small difference in dismissive-ambivalent attachment across marriage types and the positive associations of anxious-preoccupied and merging attachment with marital adjustment among arranged marriages, most comparisons and correlations were not statistically significant. These findings highlight the complexity of marital adjustment and suggest that healthy marital relationships are sustained primarily through ongoing relational processes rather than by the form of marriage or the duration of the marital relationship. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of interventions aimed at strengthening communication, emotional understanding, conflict resolution, and mutual support among married couples, regardless of how or when their marriage was established.

Chapter V

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the present study, the major findings, implications, limitations, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion. The study primarily aimed to examine the attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals. In addition to assessing attachment dimensions and the level of marital adjustment, the study compared these variables across different types and durations of marriage and examined the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment within love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages. To achieve these objectives, a quantitative, cross-sectional, comparative-correlational research design was adopted using the survey method. Data were collected through both online and offline modes from 149 married individuals using standardized instruments. The collected data were analysed using appropriate descriptive and non-parametric statistical techniques to address the objectives and test the hypotheses of the study.

Summary

The present study mainly aimed to examine the attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals. Apart from the main objective of assessing attachment dimensions and marital adjustment, the study also focused on comparing these variables across different types of marriage (love, arranged, and semi-arranged) and durations of marriage, as well as examining the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment within each marriage type.

The present study adopted a quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative, and correlational research design to examine attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals. The study was conducted among 149 married individuals living with

their spouses, comprising 51 individuals in love marriages, 59 individuals in arranged marriages, and 39 individuals in semi-arranged marriages. Participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Data were collected using an investigator-developed Demographic Data Sheet, the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) developed by Killian (2018), and the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) developed by Locke and Wallace (1959). Data collection was carried out through both paper-and-pencil questionnaires and Google Forms, depending on participants' accessibility and convenience. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

The collected data were analysed using JAMOV statistical software (Version 2.7). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were computed to describe the demographic characteristics and study variables. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the data, and the results indicated that the variables were not normally distributed. Consequently, non-parametric statistical tests were employed. The Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to compare attachment dimensions and marital adjustment across different types and durations of marriage. Whenever significant group differences were observed, Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner (DSCF) post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment separately among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

The study included married individuals who were living with their spouse at the time of data collection, whose marriage type (love, arranged, or semi-arranged) was confirmed

according to the operational definitions of the study, and who were willing to provide informed consent for participation. Individuals who were not living with their spouse, those with a self-reported diagnosis of psychiatric or neurological disorders, and those who were unable to comprehend or respond to the study instruments in the language of administration were excluded from the study.

The present study examined attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals belonging to love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. The findings revealed that Dismissive-Ambivalent attachment was the most prevalent primary attachment style among the participants, followed by Secure, Anxious-Preoccupied, Fearful-Avoidant, and Merging attachment styles. The results also indicated that the majority of the participants were classified as having marital adjustment, while a smaller proportion exhibited marital maladjustment.

The study found no statistically significant differences in attachment dimensions among individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. Likewise, marital adjustment did not differ significantly across the three types of marriage. Furthermore, neither attachment dimensions nor marital adjustment showed significant differences across different durations of marriage, suggesting that the length of marriage was not associated with variations in attachment style or marital adjustment among the participants.

These findings indicate that attachment style is associated with marital adjustment, although the pattern of association differs across attachment dimensions and marriage groups.

Overall, the findings suggest that the type of marriage (love, arranged, or semi-arranged) and the duration of marriage do not significantly influence attachment style or marital adjustment. Instead, attachment style appears to be a more important psychological

factor associated with marital adjustment. The study highlights the significance of understanding attachment patterns in promoting healthy marital relationships and provides valuable implications for counselling psychology, marital counselling, and family therapy by emphasizing the importance of attachment-informed interventions to enhance marital adjustment and psychological well-being among married individuals.

Findings of the Study

- The most prevalent primary attachment style among the married individuals was dismissive-ambivalent attachment (38.3%), followed by secure attachment (28.2%), anxious-preoccupied attachment (14.8%), fearful-avoidant attachment (12.1%), and merging attachment (6.7%).
- The participants exhibited varying levels of marital adjustment, indicating differences in the quality of marital relationships among the married individuals.
- There was no significant difference in anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, secure, and merging attachment across love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages. However, dismissive-ambivalent attachment differed significantly, with individuals in arranged marriages reporting higher scores than those in semi-arranged marriages. Overall, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.
- Marital adjustment did not differ significantly across love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.
- None of the five attachment dimensions showed a significant difference across different durations of marriage (less than 5 years, 6–15 years, and more than 15 years). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
- Marital adjustment did not differ significantly across different durations of marriage. Hence, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

- No significant relationship was found between marital adjustment and any of the five attachment dimensions among individuals in love marriages. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.
- Marital adjustment showed a significant positive relationship with anxious-preoccupied attachment and merging attachment. However, no significant relationships were found with secure, fearful-avoidant, or dismissive-ambivalent attachment. Overall, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.
- No significant relationship was observed between marital adjustment and any of the five attachment dimensions among individuals in semi-arranged marriages. However, the relatively smaller sample size of this subgroup suggests that these findings should be interpreted cautiously. Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Conclusion

The present study examined attachment style and marital adjustment among married individuals in love marriages, arranged marriages, and semi-arranged marriages. The findings showed that there were no significant differences in attachment dimensions or marital adjustment across the three types of marriage or across different durations of marriage, suggesting that partner selection method and length of marriage alone do not determine marital adjustment. The correlation analyses indicated that attachment dimensions were related to marital adjustment within each marriage group, though the pattern of association varied. Overall, the study concludes that attachment style is an important psychological factor in marital adjustment, while the type and duration of marriage are not significant determinants in the present sample. These findings highlight the need for attachment-informed counselling and interventions to promote healthier marital relationships.

The findings of the present study suggest that the quality of marital adjustment is influenced more by individuals' attachment characteristics than by the method of partner

selection. Whether the marriage was love, arranged, or semi-arranged, attachment style emerged as an important psychological factor associated with marital functioning. The study contributes to the existing literature in counselling psychology by enhancing the understanding of attachment processes in marriage and provides useful implications for marital counselling, couple therapy, family intervention, and future research.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

The present study has several theoretical implications for understanding attachment and marital adjustment. The findings provide support for Bowlby's Attachment Theory by indicating that attachment dimensions remain relatively stable regardless of the type or duration of marriage. The results are also consistent with the view of Mikulincer and Shaver (2016), who proposed that adult attachment orientations are relatively enduring characteristics that are not easily altered by marital circumstances. Furthermore, the findings suggest that marital adjustment is a multidimensional construct influenced by various interpersonal and contextual factors rather than attachment dimensions alone. This supports the Vulnerability–Stress–Adaptation Model proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995), which explains marital adjustment as the outcome of interactions among enduring personal characteristics, adaptive processes, and life stressors. The study also extends the application of attachment theory to love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages within the Indian cultural context, contributing to the understanding that the type and duration of marriage alone are not sufficient predictors of marital adjustment. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of integrating attachment theory with other psychological and relational theories to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of marital adjustment among married individuals.

Practical Implications

The present study makes several important empirical contributions to the existing literature on attachment dimensions and marital adjustment among married individuals, particularly within the Indian context. The findings add empirical evidence to the limited body of research in this area by demonstrating that most attachment dimensions did not differ significantly across different types or durations of marriage, thereby providing support for the relative stability of adult attachment patterns. The study further revealed that marital adjustment did not vary significantly across love, arranged, and semi-arranged marriages, suggesting that the quality of marital relationships depends more on interpersonal processes than on the form of marriage itself. Likewise, the absence of significant differences in marital adjustment across different durations of marriage indicates that the number of years spent in marriage alone does not determine marital quality. Notably, anxious-preoccupied attachment and merging attachment showed significant positive relationships with marital adjustment only among individuals in arranged marriages, highlighting the contextual nature of attachment processes. In contrast, the lack of significant relationships between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment in love and semi-arranged marriages suggests that other psychological, relational, and contextual factors may play a more prominent role in determining marital adjustment. The findings provide an empirical basis for developing premarital counselling, marital counselling, and family intervention programmes that emphasize communication, emotional intimacy, conflict resolution, and relationship skills rather than focusing on marriage type alone. Furthermore, the study offers baseline data for future researchers interested in examining attachment and marital adjustment across different populations and cultural contexts. It also underscores the need for future research employing larger samples, longitudinal designs, dyadic data from both spouses, and additional

psychosocial variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of marital adjustment. Overall, the study contributes to the growing evidence base that can guide counselling psychologists, family therapists, social workers, and other mental health professionals in designing evidence-based interventions to promote healthy and satisfying marital relationships.

Limitations of the Study

1. **Cross-sectional Research Design:** The study employed a cross-sectional design; therefore, causal relationships between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment cannot be established. The findings represent participants' responses at a single point in time.
2. **Limited Sample Size:** The study was conducted with 149 married individuals, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In particular, the semi-arranged marriage group ($n = 39$) was comparatively smaller, which may have reduced the statistical power to detect significant relationships.
3. **Sampling Technique:** The participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling, which may have introduced sampling bias and limited the representativeness of the sample.
4. **Geographical Limitation:** The participants were drawn from selected regions, and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to all married individuals across different states, cultures, or countries.
5. **Self-report Measures:** The study relied on self-report questionnaires to assess attachment dimensions and marital adjustment. Such measures are susceptible to social desirability bias, response bias, and participants' willingness to provide honest responses.

6. Online and Offline Data Collection: Data were collected through both online and offline modes. Differences in participants' understanding of the questionnaire or response environment may have influenced the accuracy of the responses.
7. Limited Variables: The study focused only on attachment dimensions and marital adjustment. Other variables such as communication patterns, emotional intimacy, personality traits, conflict resolution styles, family support, mental health, socioeconomic status, and parenting responsibilities were not included, although they may significantly influence marital adjustment.
8. Unequal Distribution of Marriage Types: The three marriage groups (love, arranged, and semi-arranged) were not equal in size, which may have influenced group comparisons.
9. Non-normal Distribution of Data: Since the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric statistical tests were used. Although appropriate for the data, these tests generally have lower statistical power than parametric tests.
10. Lack of Longitudinal Assessment: Attachment dimensions and marital adjustment may change over time due to life events and relationship experiences. The present study did not examine such changes because participants were assessed only once.
11. Individual-Level Assessment: The study collected data from individual married participants rather than both spouses. Therefore, the findings reflect only one partner's perception of attachment and marital adjustment and do not capture the dyadic nature of marital relationships.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, the following suggestions are proposed for future research:

1. Conduct studies with larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of the findings across different regions, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
2. Use probability sampling techniques to obtain a more representative sample of married individuals and reduce sampling bias.
3. Employ longitudinal research designs to examine how attachment dimensions and marital adjustment change over time and to better understand causal relationships between these variables.
4. Include both spouses (dyadic data) in future studies to obtain a comprehensive understanding of marital adjustment and the influence of each partner's attachment dimensions on the relationship.
5. Examine additional psychological and relational variables, such as communication patterns, emotional intimacy, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, personality traits, resilience, stress, and perceived social support, to gain a broader understanding of factors influencing marital adjustment.
6. Investigate the mediating and moderating roles of variables such as communication, trust, relationship satisfaction, family support, and coping strategies in the relationship between attachment dimensions and marital adjustment.
7. Conduct comparative studies among different cultural, religious, and socioeconomic groups to explore how cultural and contextual factors influence attachment and marital adjustment.
8. Include a larger sample of individuals in semi-arranged marriages, as this group was comparatively smaller in the present study, to increase statistical power and provide more reliable findings.

9. Adopt mixed-method or qualitative research approaches to explore married individuals' lived experiences, perceptions, and relationship dynamics in greater depth, thereby complementing quantitative findings.
10. Evaluate the effectiveness of counselling and intervention programmes, such as premarital counselling, marital enrichment programmes, attachment-based interventions, and communication skills training, in improving marital adjustment among different types of married couples.
11. Examine attachment dimensions and marital adjustment across different stages of the family life cycle, including newly married couples, couples with young children, empty-nest couples, and older adults, to understand developmental variations in marital relationships.
12. Replicate the present study in different geographical settings and populations, including rural and urban communities and different occupational groups, to determine the consistency and applicability of the findings across diverse contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

About the Study

This study is conducted as part of the academic requirements for the M.Sc. Counselling Psychology programme at Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram. It explores attachment styles and examines the level of marital adjustment among married couples across three types of marriages — love marriage, semi-arranged marriage, and arranged marriage. Your participation will contribute to a deeper academic understanding of marital relationships in the Indian context.

Your Participation

You are invited to complete the questionnaire booklet enclosed with this form. Kindly read each item carefully and respond honestly. This study involves completing a demographic information sheet, an attachment style questionnaire, and a marital adjustment scale. There are no right or wrong answers — your genuine personal experience matters most.

Please note the following:

- **Voluntary Participation** — Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part in this study.
- **Right to Withdraw** — You may withdraw at any point during the study without any consequence or explanation required.
- **Confidentiality** — All responses will be used exclusively for academic research purposes and will not be disclosed to any third party.

- Anonymity — Your identity will remain completely anonymous throughout the study. No identifying information will be linked to your responses.
- No Risk — Participation involves no physical, psychological, or social risk. If any item causes discomfort, you may skip it.

Instructions to Participants

Please complete all three sections of the questionnaire booklet in the following order:

- Section I: Demographic Information Sheet
- Section II: Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Section III: Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

Respond to all items as honestly as possible. Please do not leave any item unanswered. Once completed, ensure all pages are returned to the researcher.

Declaration of Consent

I have read and understood the information provided above regarding this research study. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any consequences. I confirm that I am a currently married adult and meet the eligibility criteria for this study. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name/ Initials:

Date:

Appendix B

Socio demographic details

Topic: Attachment Style and Marital Adjustment among Married Couples

INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS

This questionnaire is part of a research study being conducted as a requirement for the Master of Science (MSc) in Counselling Psychology. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. All information provided will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Please do not write your name on any part of this questionnaire. Tick (✓) the most appropriate response for each item, or fill in the blank where required. Please answer all items honestly and completely. There are no right or wrong answers.

Name / Initials : _____

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Age	☐ 20 – 25 yrs ☐ 26 – 30 yrs ☐ 31 – 35 yrs ☐ 36 – 40 yrs ☐ 41 – 45 yrs ☐ 46 – 50 yrs ☐ 51 yrs and above Exact Age: _____ years
2. Gender	☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender / Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to disclose
3. District of Residence	_____
6. Highest Educational Qualification	☐ Below 10th Standard ☐ SSLC / 10th Standard ☐ Higher Secondary (+2) ☐ Diploma (Technical/Vocational) ☐ Undergraduate Degree ☐ Postgraduate Degree ☐ Professional Degree (Medical/Law/Engineering, etc.) ☐ Doctorate (PhD)

7. Present Occupational Status	☐ Employed ☐ Self-Employed / Own Business ☐ Homemaker ☐ Student ☐ Unemployed (Seeking Work) ☐ Other:
SECTION B: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY INFORMATION	
9. Working Status of Couple	☐ Single Income (Only one partner is employed) ☐ Dual Income (Both partners are employed)
10. Type of Family System	☐ Nuclear Family (Living only with spouse and/or children) ☐ Joint / Extended Family (Living with parents-in-law or other relatives)
11. Type of Marriage (Please read the descriptions carefully before selecting)	☐ Arranged Marriage: My partner was identified and introduced by my family (through family networks, matchmaker, or matrimonial agency). I had little or no prior acquaintance with my partner. The marriage decision was primarily family-driven. ☐ Semi-Arranged Marriage: I found my partner independently (through matrimonial website, social media, or personal interaction), but subsequently informed my family and obtained their approval before marriage. The decision was jointly made by the couple and the family. ☐ Love Marriage: I chose my partner entirely through my own personal interaction and independent judgment. The decision to marry was exclusively made by the two of us, without family involvement in the selection process.
12. Duration of Current Marriage	☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1 – 5 years ☐ 6 – 10 years ☐ 11 – 15 years ☐ 16 – 20 years ☐ 21 – 25 years ☐ Above 25 years Specify exact duration: _____ Years _____ Months
13. Your Age at the Time of Marriage	☐ Below 18 years ☐ 18 – 21 years ☐ 22 – 25 years ☐ 26 – 30 years ☐ 31 – 35 years ☐ 36 years and above
14. Do you have children?	☐ No ☐ Yes If Yes, number of children: _____ Ages of children (optional): _____
15. Is Your Partner Currently Living?	☐ Yes, my partner is alive ☐ No, my partner is deceased <i>Note: If you selected No, please do not complete the remaining questionnaires. Thank you for your participation.</i>

Appendix C

Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) Kyle D Killian, 2018

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read each of the following 20 statements and rate the extent to which it describes your feelings about romantic relationships. Please think about all your relationships (past and present) and respond in terms of how you generally feel in these relationships. If you have never been involved in a romantic relationship, answer in terms of how you think you would feel.

Please circle the number to the right of each statement using the scale below:

0	1	2	3	4	
Not At All Characteristic of Me	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Very Characteristic of Me	← Not characteristic of me → Very characteristic of me

No.	Statement	0	1	2	3	4
	<i>Please circle the number that best describes how you generally feel in romantic relationships.</i>	Not At All Characteristic of Me	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Very Characteristic of Me
1.	I often worry that a partner will not want to stay with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

No.	Statement	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I find it relatively easy to get close to people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	It is very important to me to feel independent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	I often worry that partners do not really love me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	Partners often want to be closer or more intimate than I feel comfortable being.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	I am comfortable depending on others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	I often want to get closer to others than they want to get to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I prefer not to depend on others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I worry that partners don't value me as much as I value them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I am uncomfortable when others want to be too emotionally close to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	I am comfortable developing close relationships with others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

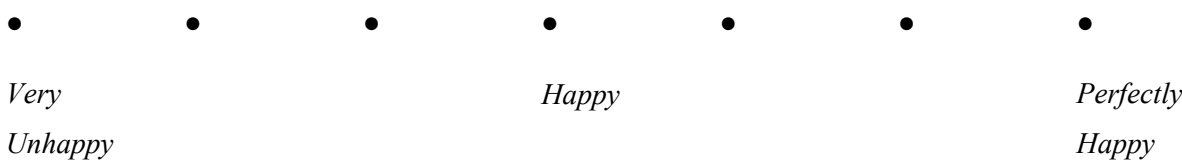
No.	Statement	0	1	2	3	4
14.	I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	It is very important to me to feel self-sufficient.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	I worry about others not accepting me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	I often worry about someone getting too close to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	I know that people will be there when I need them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	Sometimes people do not want to get close to me because I want so much to be close to them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	I do not want to feel like I need anyone or anything.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D

Marital Adjustment Scale – Locke Wallace, 1959

Part 1 — Overall Happiness

Circle the dot on the scale line which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present marriage. The middle point, 'happy', represents the degree of happiness which most people get from marriage, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in marriage, and on the other, to those few who experience extreme joy or felicity in marriage.



Part 2 — Areas of Agreement

State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your mate on the following items. Please check (○) each column.

Topic Area	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
Handling family finances						
Management of family income, spending decisions, saving habits, budgeting, and financial responsibilities	○	○	○	○	○	○

Topic Area	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
Matters of recreation <i>Hobbies, entertainment, outings, and ways of spending free time together or individually</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrations of affection <i>Expressing love, care, and emotional warmth, including verbal and non-verbal expressions</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○

Friends <i>Choice of friends, social interactions, and time spent with friends or social groups</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Sex relations <i>Sexual relationship, intimacy, expectations, and satisfaction in sexual life within marriage</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○
Conventionality <i>Social values, moral standards, traditions, and appropriate behaviour expected in family and society</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○
Philosophy of life <i>Similarity in beliefs, attitudes, values, goals, and outlook towards life</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ways of dealing with in-laws <i>Interactions, attitudes, and behavior toward each other's parents and relatives</i>	○	○	○	○	○	○

Part 3 — Additional Questions

Circle one answer for each of the following questions.

1. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:

(a) Husband giving in (b) Wife giving in (c) Agreement by mutual give and take

2. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

(a) All of them (b) Some of them (c) Very few of them (d) None of them

3. In leisure time do you generally prefer:

(a) To be on the go (b) To stay at home

4. Does your mate generally prefer:

(a) To be on the go (b) To stay at home

5. Do you ever wish you had not married?

(a) Frequently (b) Occasionally (c) Rarely (d) Never

6. If you had your life to live over again, do you think you would:

(a) Marry the same person (b) Marry a different person (c) Not marry at all

7. Do you ever confide in your mate:

(a) Almost never (b) Rarely (c) In most things (d) In everything