

Effects of Holding Opposite Political Opinion on the Quality of Marital Relationship and Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study focuses on the impact of the individuals' political beliefs on their marital relationships and satisfaction when the two are of opposite opinions. The study used an exploratory sequential research design where two phases were used: A qualitative phase with semi structured interviews from eight married persons (four males and four females) and a quantitative phase that involved a survey of 150 married persons (75 males and 75 females with varying political opinions with regards to their partners). In interviews, key themes were derived through thematic analysis, which consisted of intense political allegiance, political polarization, communication challenge and its effect on marital quality. To quantify the relationships, Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-32) and the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) were used to measure relationship satisfaction. Further, Statistical analyses such as t-tests and ANOVA, revealed that those with opposite political opinion from one's spouse had lower marital satisfaction and quality, but marital satisfaction remains similar among men and women. But women viewed their marriages as lower in quality compared to men. The more political affiliations were tied to strength, the more associated it was with marital distress. According to the researchers, political differences have the potential to cause a significant amount of conflict and decrease intimacy within relationships, and thus require better relationships strategies when relationships are politically polarized partners.

Key Words: Opposite Political Opinions, Marital Relationship Satisfaction, Marital Relationship Quality, Political Polarization, Gender Differences in Marital Quality

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions, providing individuals with companionship, emotional security, and a sense of belonging. Success in marriage mostly develops from mutual beliefs combined with good communication abilities and effective disagreement management (Thomas et al., 2017). Differing fundamental beliefs that include religious perspectives and cultural standards together with political convictions produce obstacles for couples who want to maintain their marital contentment.

Political beliefs represent the largest source of disputes in relationships, particularly among politically divided nations. The prevalence of political discussions during the past decade has raised tensions within couples because they possess opposing ideologies. Science indicates political disagreements between partners that generate relationship problems that cause frustration together with decreased closeness along with relationship unhappiness (Pew Research Center, 2019). The way an individual understands politics extends beyond simple policy positions because their fundamental values combine with personal

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self-image and philosophical view of life. Personal relationships face serious quality and endurance issues because intense political differences between spouses create extensive emotional confrontations.

Around the world political polarization has become more common because it impacts both national dialogue and personal connection between people (Iyengar et al., 2012). Dialog about politics between partners often shifts from policy disagreements to emotional confrontations which forge negative feelings between them. The chief obstacle for these partnerships involves the requirement to pass through political disagreements without damaging mutual understanding or emotional closeness or respect. Some relationship pairs succeed at keeping political discussions out of their family life, yet others fail to resolve their ideological differences leading to worse interpersonal interaction.

Literature Review

Political ideology forms an essential part of an individual's identity and is a basis on which personal beliefs, values and decision-making processes are made. Political differences between a couple within a marital relationship will lead to ideological conflicts, communication barriers and less relationship satisfaction. This literature review addresses past research in political differences in marital quality, political polarisation in relationships, communication problems with respect to political issues, and gender differences in the way political disagreements are managed.

Political Ideology and Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction refers to the degree to which people feel that their marriage meets their expectation of a fulfilling, harmonious and supportive (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). It seems that partners sharing the same political ideologies tend to be happier in marriage than when they have opposing views, as research suggests (Peacock & Pederson, 2022). According to Murray, (2021), people in politically the same relationships, were shown to have a strong emotional connection, while an enormous amount of trust, yet people in politically different relationships were proven to have a great deal of conflict and dissatisfaction with each other.

Fangmeier et al., (2020) explored the effect of political party identification on the romantic relationship quality. The partners who voted for different parties felt more tension and were less satisfied in the relationship than those who were politically inclined towards the same party. In sum, it is found that a political agreement between spouses creates relational stability while ideological differences bring stress and discord to relationships. For example, Bernhold et al., (2022) examined how political and religious similarity relate to relationship satisfaction. Finally, the concluding finding of this study was that the couples who found alignment in their political and religious beliefs experienced more emotional bonding and better communication. These findings suggest that having ideological similarity is very important in keeping the relationship harmony.

Political Polarization and Marital Conflict

Increasing political polarization characterized by rising ideological divide caused an augmentation in interpersonal conflicts especially in romantic relationships (Iyengar et al., 2012). Although the same research indicates that strong partisan identities lead to heightened emotional reactions to political discussions and thus reduce the likelihood of constructive dialogue (Jost et al., 2017), for many marriages, political discussion is inevitable.

The Pew Research Center (2019) study on political temperatures in the household found that couples who disagree politically tend to fight more and more intensely than those who agree in politics. The study also found that couples with opposite political views experienced greater amounts of stress and emotional exhaustion as a result of ideological disputes.

In Huber and Malhotra (2017), we studied political homophily, the fact that individuals prefer to date people with similar political beliefs. The key factor in relationship formation found was political alignment; that is, individuals favored the other as a partner if they had similar political views. The results indicate that similarity in politics helps keep a relationship intact and the presence of ideological differences increases the probability of conflict.



Communication Challenges in Politically Dissimilar Marriages

Communication is effective for solving conflicts and keeping the relationship in a satisfied relationship. However, when it comes to couples' political affiliations, communication can become strained, and there can be misunderstandings and resentment (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018).

According to Kelley et al., (2018), communication plays a significant role in reducing marital stress and maintaining relationship satisfaction, and it suggested that staying open and respectful in communication was needed. The key point of the study was that while political conversations between couples may be difficult, those who discussed the issues in a nonconfrontational manner had the best chance of negotiating differences in political ideologies.

Afifi et al., (2020) also looked at the effects of political disagreements in romantic partnerships around the time of the U.S. presidential election. This study found that political conflicts created both emotional stresses, less intimacy, as well as increased relational strain. Also, the study indicated that couples who listened actively and refrained from personal attacks on each other when discussing politics, hardly suffered any negative outcomes from the discussions.

Gender Differences in Political Disagreements

Reports have shown that men and women tend to deal differently political disagreements in their romantic relationships. Using the data from gender differences in marital satisfaction meta-analysis and using it in regression analysis, Peacock and Pederson (2022) found that women are less satisfied with the marriage when political differences exist. The higher emotional sensitivity and relational harmony tendency of women was attributed to this.

Men are more inclined to rational political discussions while women has higher emotional distress during political conflicts, it turned out to be the other way around. This points toward the role of gender in determining the effect of political disagreements on marital satisfaction.

Long-Term Impact of Political Differences on Relationship Stability

The long-term effects of political differences on the quality and stability of a relationship has been examined in longitudinal studies. In VanLaningham et al., (2001), 17-year panel data on marital satisfaction are analyzed and it is found that using political issues frequently in arguments with their spouse worsens the quality of couples' relationships over time. Additionally, unresolved political conflicts played a part in emotional distance and in dissatisfaction.

Sauerheber et al., (2021) investigated how political and religious scales influence marital duration in marriage. The study discovered that couples who were ideologically similar had lower rates of divorce and higher relationship satisfaction over time. Such results show that unless addressed properly, discrepancies in politics during courtship can significantly cast a detrimental effect on the relationship of married couples.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

From a theoretical perspective, the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1954) offers a theoretical lens under which to view the effects of political differences on marriages; although, there are two primary independent variables that alter marital relationships. Based on this view, individuals feel psychological discomfort if they hold contradictory ideas and feel the urge to change their point leads or to evade such situations which produce discordancy.

Cognitive dissonance can arise in couples who are politically dissimilar since one partner's ideological belief will not match their partner's beliefs. Instructors should be aware of this and only seek to inform; avoidance behaviors, argumentative interactions, a decline in emotional intimacy can occur (Balestrino & Ciardi, 2008). The theory posits that open minded conversation about things in common might assist in putting inconsistent thoughts aside and help preserve relationship satisfaction.

Though research has been conducted on the way in which political ideology affects social relationships, the relationship between political differences and marital satisfaction has not been explored thoroughly,

especially in a diverse cultural context like Pakistan. As a result of the rise in political awareness and political involvement of individuals, as well as political orientations, we must examine the relation between the difference in political orientation and marital quality when it does not influence children. This is because people's attachment to political beliefs is strongly emotional and ideological thus their influence on intimate relationships is important to understand.

Besides, the spread of gender differences in relationship dynamics is particularly interesting. Men and women could possibly feel conflict in politics differently; women more than men could experience emotional stress in relationships (Peacock & Pederson, 2022). This study seeks to get deeper insight into how political differences, influenced by gender, affect marital satisfaction.

Research Objectives and Questions

The objectives of the study are as follows

1. To find out the Effects of holding opposite political opinion on the quality of marital relationships and satisfaction.

Research Question

1. What are the effects of holding opposite political opinions on the quality of marital relationship and satisfaction?

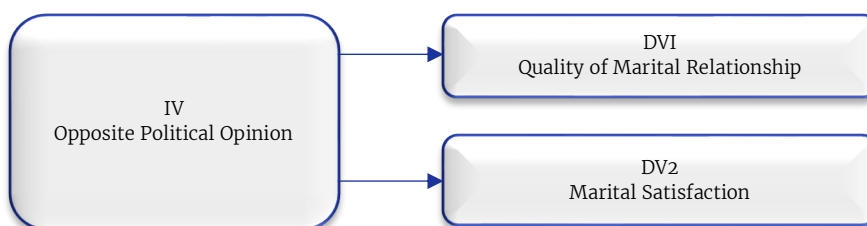
Methods

The research utilized an exploratory sequential design which split its procedures into qualitative investigations before moving onto quantitative investigations. The researchers conducted qualitative investigations with married people who maintained political convictions at odds with their spouses. The research team conducted four male and four female participants in depth semi-structured interviews through purposive sampling. After the interviews researchers converted the data into written text which then got translated into English before employing thematic analysis to discover common themes regarding political disagreement and marriage quality and relationship satisfaction elements.

A survey was distributed to 150 married individuals comprised of 75 males and 75 females located throughout different areas of Pakistan in the quantitative section. The researchers employed purposive sampling to gather participants based on their difference in political beliefs compared to their spouses. The study employed established scales including Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-32) for marital quality assessment and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) for measuring marital satisfaction. Both political affiliation assessments and spouse political affiliation assessments were

included among the demographic questionnaires. We ran several statistical tests including descriptive statistics as well as independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA through IBM SPSS 26.0 to study how political differences affect marital satisfaction and quality. Participation in the study followed ethical practices through strict guarantees of participant confidentiality together with informed consent and voluntary participation.

Conceptual Model



Results

The analysis derives its findings from qualitative methods and quantitative measures. The first part of the study explored political differences in marital relationships through qualitative research methods while statistical analyses evaluated their effects on marital satisfaction and quality in the second part.



Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of interviews with eight married individuals revealed five key themes: (1) Intense Quantitative Findings Political Allegiance, (2) Political Polarization, (3) Influence on Communication, (4) Political Participation, and (5) Impact on Relationship Quality. The findings suggested that strong political affiliations often led to ideological conflicts, communication challenges, and emotional strain in relationships. Participants reported frequent arguments, avoidance behaviors, and reduced intimacy due to differing political views. However, some couples managed their disagreements through mutual respect and conflict resolution strategies.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	50
	Female	75	50
Age Group	18–24 years	35	23.3
	25–34 years	47	31.3
	35–44 years	39	26.0
	45–54 years	29	19.3
Married Years	6 months – 6 years	49	32.6
	7–13 years	36	24.0
	14–20 years	35	23.3
	21+ years	30	20.0
Political Affiliation	PTI	105	70.0
	PML-N	24	16.0
	PPP	7	4.7
	Jamaat-e-Islami	12	8.0
	Tehreek-e-Labbaik	2	1.3

The analyzed group included 150 married adults split into equal male and female numbers. Most survey participants belonged to the demographic between 25–44 years old with degrees beyond the bachelor level. Political party affiliation among respondents was strong because most people selected between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) as their preferred parties.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (N = 150)

Measure	N	Items	α	M	SD	Range (Actual)	Range (Potential)
DAS-32	150	32	.92	87.15	29.42	9 – 141	0 – 151
EMSS	150	15	.95	27.23	7.11	13 – 40	15 – 75

High internal consistency scores showed the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-32) and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) with Cronbach's α equaling .92 and .95 respectively. People married to someone who differs politically reported average relationship marital quality score of 87.15 (SD = 29.42) and average marital satisfaction score of 27.23 (SD = 7.11).

Table 3

Correlation of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) with Married Years, Age, and Education Level (N = 150)

Variable	DAS	EMSS	Married Years	Age	Education Level
DAS	1	.86**	-.29**	-.23**	-.06
EMSS	.86**	1	-.24**	-.15	-.03

Note: $p < .01$. DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale, EMSS = Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale.

A positive relationship of .86 was detected between marital quality and marital satisfaction ($p < .01$) which means declining relationship quality leads to decreased satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction Gender Differences in Marital Satisfaction and Quality decreases during married years according to the data ($r = -.24$ and $p < .01$).

Table 4Independent Sample *t*-test on Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale for Gender (*N* = 150)

Variable	Male (n = 75) M (SD)	Female (n = 75) M (SD)	t (148)	p	Cohen's d
DAS	88.39 (28.54)	85.92 (30.41)	0.51	.60	0.08
EMSS	27.45 (6.82)	27.01 (7.42)	0.37	.70	0.06

A *t*-test of independent samples determined any differences in marital quality and satisfaction between male and female participants. Marital satisfaction and relationship quality exhibited no significant differences between male and female participants according to statistical analysis ($p = .70$ and $p = .60$ respectively). However, females showed slight lower scores in relationship quality assessment compared to males.

Effect of Married Years on Marital Satisfaction and Quality

Table 5One-way ANOVA on Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale with Respect to Married Years (*N* = 150)

Variable	6 months – 6 years M (SD)	7–13 years M (SD)	14–20 years M (SD)	21+ years M (SD)	F (3,146)	η^2
DAS	94.04 (29.08)	91.03 (22.2)	74.16 (29.23)	82.11 (26.14)	4.31*	.10
EMSS	28.60 (7.37)	28.13 (6.8)	23.99 (6.69)	27.64 (3.45)	3.43*	.08

Note: $p < .05$. Higher scores indicate higher marital satisfaction and quality.

A one-way ANOVA showed a significant effect of married years on both marital quality ($p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .10$) and marital satisfaction ($p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Couples married for 14–20 years reported the lowest relationship quality and satisfaction

Table 6One-way ANOVA of Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale with Respect to Political Affiliation Strength (*N* = 150)

Variable	Moderate M (SD)	Strong M (SD)	Very Strong M (SD)	F (2,147)	η^2
DAS	94.73 (25.5)	90.58 (33.4)	74.83 (26.8)	4.97**	.12
EMSS	29.17 (5.86)	28.65 (7.79)	23.23 (6.57)	6.29**	.14

Note: $p < .001$.

A one-way ANOVA showed that individuals with stronger political affiliations reported significantly lower relationship quality and satisfaction ($p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$ and $.14$, respectively).

Discussion

Research has investigated how voting differences between marital partners affect the strength of their relationships through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research outcome reveals how political loyalty along with socio-ideological tension and communication delays together with political participation affect romantic connections. This section explains the findings by relating them to earlier studies and notes gender variations before presenting potential solutions to political conflicts in marriages facing division.

Political disagreements between couples result in reduced marital contentment along with decreased relationship quality. Study participants indicated elevated distress levels and emotional exhaustion accompanied by dissatisfaction because of having opposed political opinions with their spouses. Research findings authenticate the principle that similar political ideologies create better relationship satisfaction while disparate politics result in communication deterioration between couples (Peacock & Pederson, 2022; Fangmeier et al., 2020).

The extent to which people share strong political allegiances showed negative effects on marriage satisfaction levels ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$) according to the results. Research by Huber and Malhotra (2017) confirms that intense partisan loyalties create both relationship turmoil and harmonization deterioration



between people. Political discussions among highly engaged couples tend to transform into destructive arguments which leads to a complete blending of political beliefs with personal relationships.

The study results presented qualitatively showed numerous participants showing admiration towards their political party leaders which turned political exchanges into intensely individualized conversations. According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1954) strong disagreements between partners regarding politics result in mental tension (cognitive dissonance) that produces three possible responses which include avoidance behaviors (Balestrino & Ciardi, 2008).

This study confirms past research that demonstrates how partisan bias develops antagonism between partners. According to Iyengar et al., (Iyengar 2012) people tend to become hostile toward political dissidents who exist in their personal network of relationships. Afifi et al., (2020) discovered that political contradictions between married couples during Trump administration intensified both stress levels and harmed relationship closeness.

The study extends past research which focused mainly on Western societies by examining Pakistani marriages thereby reflecting the increasing political involvement during the last decade. The data shows that political differences inside marriages become more influential compared to nations without similar levels of political passions since Pakistan displays high emotional identification with politicians and political groups. The analysis of themes identified communication problems as the primary factor which shapes politically different married relationships. Married individuals who differ politically maintained tense interactions between them by arguing with each other or disregarding sensitive topics to stop arguments. Cowan & Baldassarri (2018) confirmed that disagreements about politics within family circles usually become aggressive personal confrontations.

Many surveyed individuals showed they had numerous arguments about politics that caused their relationships to suffer. The two groups of couples either deliberately abstained from political discussions or attempted interaction that escalated into emotional fights. Gottman, (2015) indicated that respectful communication serves as a foundation for healthy relationships yet contentious political exchanges between spouses normally result in conflicts instead of communication bonds.

Results from qualitative research indicate that female respondents faced stronger emotional impacts from political disputes compared to male participants, but statistical tests did not demonstrate these differences. Political disagreements made various female respondents feel disregarded and devalued and left them feeling exhausted after heated political conversation. Results from Peacock and Pederson (2022) demonstrate how relationship conflicts impact women negatively to lower their marital quality ratings.

Male participants showed opposite tendencies by using direct political arguments that they considered intellectual debates and not emotional issues. The diverse ways men and women process politics emotionally create an explanation for why certain female respondents experienced worse marital quality throughout their relationships.

The study reveals that political conflicts between married couples tend to reduce marital quality over successive years of marriage. Married partners who spent 14 to 20 years together showed the lowest marks in relationship satisfaction together with poor quality which indicates that lengthy disagreements about political issues cause significant relationship stress.

VanLaningham et al., (2001) established that marital satisfaction deteriorates when couples face continuous ideological conflicts because of the study's findings. Extended political disagreements cause people to become emotionally detached from one another, so it becomes crucial for couples to find successful ways to resolve conflicts to sustain their relationships.

Public involvement became a contributing element to conflicts that occurred between married individuals. A significant number of participants from both studies participated in social media political discussions which enhanced conflicts with their partners. The results from Van Duyn, (2024) align with the observation that romantic couples face increased ideological disagreements because of their political activity on social media.

The participants felt discarded because their spouses focused more on political causes than their partnership. One female participant noted: He invests more time in political online debates than he does to focus on our relationship. Actual political involvement forces people to dedicate time to outside events which consequently impacts their marital contentment and disrupts their established relationships.

Implications for Conflict Resolution

Encouraging Respectful Political Discussions

Successful couples who dealt with partisan differences set priorities on showing respect to each other and maintaining an open mindset. The prevention of family disputes from mutual political disagreements depends on proper communication methods that incorporate active listening and de-escalation tactics (Bradbury & Karney, [2014](#)).

Setting Boundaries for Political Conversations

A few participants made the decision to actively prevent themselves from having political discussions to safeguard their partnership. Such an avoidance method functions for select couples yet proves unable to sustain the demands of politically engaged homes. When setting limitations for political discussions to occur frequently or to emphasize shared values one can minimize relationship conflicts.

Seeking Professional Counseling for Politically Divided Couples

Marriage counselors and therapists should create treatment programs that match the needs of couples divided by political ideologies to help them create mutual understanding and enhance their conversational skills. Research proves that focused training methods to solve conflicts produces better marital satisfaction among couples experiencing ideological differences (Du Plooy & De Beer, [2018](#)).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

1. **Limited Generalizability:** This research obtained its data from Pakistan exclusively while Western societies maintain different political and cultural characteristics. Future research must evaluate differences in results across various cultural surroundings because the strength of political variables depends on sociopolitical conditions.
2. **Self-Reported Data Bias:** The researcher-based data collection on participant responses while this approach potentially introduced self-reporting biases because people might distort their responses through social desirability bias and memory problems based recall. The study would benefit from observatory research and spouse interviews because these methods would provide an expanded view of marriage disagreements related to politics.
3. **Need for Longitudinal Studies:** The researchers studied relationships enduring over time but a design investigating couples through years would offer superior evidence about how political disagreements impact marital satisfaction.
4. **Expanding Research into Interventions:** Research needs to examine how relationship workshops together with counseling programs can create effective methods for handling political disagreements which arise between married couples.

Conclusion

The research investigated the relationship between divergent political views and marital union quality together with marital satisfaction through both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Marital satisfaction becomes negatively affected when husbands and wives possess strong partisan identities while holding political views that differ from each other. Registered couples whose political beliefs ran opposite from one another exhibited more relationship strife, communication trouble and emotional separation leading to poor relationship quality.

Political disputes regularly transform into personal battles according to qualitative data which induces both emotional distress and minimizes feelings of closeness. Determining how to combine political activities with partner relationship enjoyment became challenging for numerous couples who eventually argued with each other or maintained distance while feeling bitter. Different couples survive their political



disagreements by drawing boundaries while honoring respect and value points for relationship survival.

Statistical data confirmed these findings because political affiliation strength and marital satisfaction demonstrated a significant negative relationship ($r = -.33, p < .01$). The duration of ideological differences in political marriages creates a progressive decline in marriage quality based on survey data analysis. The quantitative data showed no statistical differences in marital satisfaction by gender, but women expressed more emotional burden when experiencing political disagreements in their relationships.

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