

## Relationship between Delayed Marriage, Sexual Frustration and Quality of Life Among Young Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between sexual frustration and quality of life among young males and females in Sialkot, Pakistan, while also examining the association of delayed marriage with sexual frustration and exploring gender differences in marital delay, sexual frustration, and quality of life. A cross-sectional survey design was employed using a convenience sample of 150 adults, comprising 75 males and 75 females aged 18–45 years, recruited from colleges and universities in Sialkot. Participants completed the Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (MSSCQ; 1995) and the WHOQOL-BREF (Field Trial Version). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent-samples *t*-tests. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between sexual frustration and quality of life, whereas delayed marriage was positively associated with sexual frustration. Significant gender differences were also observed, with males reporting higher levels of delayed marriage and sexual frustration, while females reported comparatively higher quality of life. The findings suggest that delayed marriage may be an important factor associated with increased sexual frustration and reduced quality of life among young adults, highlighting the need to consider psychosocial and cultural factors influencing marriage patterns, sexual well-being, and overall quality of life.*

**Keywords:** Delayed Marriage, Sexual frustration, Quality of life, Adults.

### 1. Introduction

In every culture marriage is considered to be one of the most important social institutions and a major stage in adulthood. Marriage is more than just a personal decision in Pakistan, it's a societal norm and a stage that is expected and fulfils emotional, psychological, religious, and familial needs (Ghazal et al., 2022). The

marriageable age of young adults, however, seems to have risen in recent years because of increased educational requirements, better opportunities, lack of financial security, joblessness, housing problems and shifting social attitudes (Naz et al., 2025; Lankford, 2021). Consequently, there was a period of unmarried adulthood experienced by many, known as delayed marriage (Akhtar & Malik, 2025). This problem of delayed marriage is a new social phenomenon in Pakistan owing to the severity of the problem, especially among the educated and urban population, which tends to delay marriage until they become economically stable and successful in their career (Ahmed et al., 2021). The suggestion from research is that such delays can lead to the growing mental stress, social obligation, and happiness shortage, especially when marriage is a widely embraced social norm in such societies (Arooj et al., 2025).

The postponement of marriage may have important implications for individuals' emotional and sexual well-being. Sexuality is a primary part of our functioning and lack of full satisfaction of needs for intimacy and sexuality can lead to frustration and individual psychological discomfort, and feelings of isolation from another person (Harris et al., 2023). Sexual frustration is experienced when desired or sexual intimate activities are not met. Health research has shown that a lack of intimacy needs is linked to greater stress, problematic emotional adjustment and less psychological well-being (Nimbi et al., 2022). In addition, sexual health has been recognized as a crucial part of a person's quality of life, affecting one's emotions, their relationships, self-confidence, and mental health (Bagherinia et al., 2024).

The quality of life is a person's personal assessment of his physical health, psychological state and satisfaction with the environment, as well as satisfaction with his social relations. Past studies have found that relationship status and marital experiences play significant parts in life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Marshal, 2022; Lari, 2022). People who are having longer than anticipated delays in meeting their cultural expectations – for marriage, for example – may have a poorer quality of life because they feel pressured, uncertain, and frustrated about not meeting

their culturally desired life events (Arooj et al., 2025). Late marriage can thus be associated with sexual frustration and quality of life in the context of Pakistan where marriage is an important social phenomenon (Shahzadi et al., 2025).

Although marriage delay is a growing concern in Pakistan, little empirical studies have investigated the links between marriage delay, sexual frustration and quality of life together. In addition, no great attention has been paid to any possible gender differences with regard to these variables. Accordingly, the present study set up to explore the link between delayed marriage, sexual frustration and quality of life among the young adults in Sialkot, Pakistan.

## **2. Literature Review**

Late marriage has gained more and more ground internationally, especially for young people who are seeking educational and professional growth, and economic stability. According to international research, economic insecurity, employment uncertainty and changing social norms have played a significant part in the increase of marriage ages within a multitude of societies (Gundogdu & Bulut, 2022). These trends are especially relevant within South Asian countries as marriage is highly tied to social identity, family perceived desires and psychological wellbeing. The idea of “waithood” has emerged to the stage of defining extended adolescence, in which people marry or become economically independent later in life (Shah et al., 2025).

In Pakistan delayed marriage has become a crucial social problem. According to Akhtar and Malik (2025) financial constraints were highlighted as among the major factors that delay marriage in Punjab, as were career establishment, education and changing gender norms. Their works showed that the status of young people in social and psychological conditions is quite high, however, their postponement of marriage is obvious. In a similar way, Ramzan (2025) noted that family traditions, caste norms,

dowry system and tribal norms often make it difficult for the people in marriage as they suffer emotional stress and anxiety.

Late marriage has been associated with a number of negative psychological consequences. In a study conducted in 2025, reported that Pakistan adults married late were linked to the less life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of them with more hopelessness (Arooj et al., 2025). The authors proposed that people who suffer involuntary delays in marriage may feel that they have not met the life event expectations which are generally a part of the social and psychological process of getting married, leading to emotional problems and decreased well-being (Navarro-Sanchez et al., 2021). Similarly, study found that extended transition-to-marriage also instils uncertainty and psychosocial problems among the young population of Pakistan, especially when economic and family-based constraints lead to few opportunities for marriage (Shah et al., 2025).

Delayed marriage also has other serious consequences including sexual frustration. Sexual frustration involves feeling distressed due to wants in sexual activity and intimacy that are not being fulfilled (Fatima, 2023). While there is minimal discussion about sexuality in Pakistani society, sexual and relational needs are present and are associated with loneliness, emotional dissatisfaction and psychological distress in available evidence (Shahzadi et al., 2025). Past international studies have found a strong link between sexual well-being and positive psychological health and quality of life (Shuaakazemi et al., 2020; Lari, 2022). A systematic review and meta-analysis assert sexual health, which has protective effects, is highly linked to emotional health, satisfaction with relationship and quality of life in adults (Bagherinia et al., 2024).

Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept which covers physical, psychological, social and environmental dimensions. Marital relationship and intimacy satisfaction have been proven to be positively related to life satisfaction and psychological adjustment in the past (Evans & Lankford, 2024). People with conditions that affect

the ability to meet emotional and relational needs may complain about reduced quality of life because of heightened stress, loneliness and lack of satisfaction (Bagherinia et al., 2024). The same goes for research carried out in Pakistan which has also found that relationship factors and emotional connectedness are significant determinants in psychological wellbeing and quality of life among young adults (Ahmed et al. 2021).

A distinction between males and females in the delayed marriage and its psychological corresponding effects have also been documented. Studies in Pakistan noted that, males were burdened with larger financial issues and societal expectations of being ready to marry, leaving them more susceptible to marriage postponement and Marriage Related stressors (Naz et al., 2025). In Pakistan studies indicated that males' experiences higher financial burden and societal expectations, being ready to marry them made them vulnerable to delay of marriage and associated stress (Akhtar & Malik, 2025). At the same time, there may be other aspects of social pressure that affect women, such as age and cultural expectations regarding marriage and children. Pakistani research study found that there were significant gender differences between the psychological outcomes of delayed marriage, indicating that the effects of delayed marriage may differ for both women and men (Arooj et al., 2025).

In conclusion, literature reviewed found that overall, delay marriage can cause sexual frustration and a decrease in quality of life, and gender is able to affect the power of marriage. But there is still limited empirical research exploring these variables collectively in the Pakistani setting.

## **2.1 Rationale and Objectives**

The study fills a void in Pakistani Literature that aims to reduce the incidence of sexual frustration and its association with the Quality of Life. Economic and other important problems are given lots of attention, but sexual frustration is not as well-studied as it

is truly important because of its potential impact on well-being. Recognizing these relationships can help in lowering aggressive behavior and other negative consequences that can arise due to un-met sexual demands. This study is also designed to determine why the males are experiencing sexual frustration, such as use of pornography and other factors which can have a negative effect. Findings can provide feedback for treatment of sexual problems.

The aim of this study included: (1) exploring the relationship of sexual frustration with quality of life of young females and males; (2) exploring the relationship of sexual frustration with late marriage; and (3) exploring the gender difference among study variables.

## **2.2 Hypotheses**

H1: There would likely to be a relationship between delayed marriage and sexual frustration.

H2: It would be expected that there would be a correlation between the sexual frustration and quality of life.

H3: The likelihood of correlating high for gender difference of sexual frustration with quality of life of young males and females of Sialkot was high.

## **3. Methodology**

The current study employed Quantitative, Cross-sectional research design. A purposive sampling technique was used. Our sample consisted of 150 individuals conveniently selected via online data collection plus by visiting colleges and universities of Sialkot, Pakistan. There were 75 females and 75 males aged 18 to 45 years.

### 3.1 Measures

- **Demographic Questionnaire:** A self-created sheet that evaluated age, gender, education level, employment status, family system, and delayed marital status.
- William E. Snell, Jr.'s (1998) shortened version of the **Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (MSSCQ)**, which consisted of 36 items measuring sexuality, was used. Can be assessed as either 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It takes about 10-15 minutes to take the scale.
- **Quality of Life Scale-Brief (WHOQOL-BREF):** field trial version (Burckhardt et al., 2003) consists of four dimensions, namely: physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment. The scale has 26 items and will take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

### 3.2 Procedure

For data collection process, approval letter from institutes and permission from the scale authors and distributing of scale through offline and online process throughout Sialkot district. Demographic sheet, MSSCQ and WHOQOL-BREF were completed with informed consent in advance of the data collection. The participants were assured of confidentiality and the consent that data would be used only for academic purposes. The descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and independent samples t-test were performed using SPSS Version 25 software.

## 4. Results

**Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables (N = 150)**

| Variable | Category | <i>f</i> | % |
|----------|----------|----------|---|
| Gender   |          |          |   |

|                                |                    |    |      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----|------|
|                                | Male               | 75 | 50.0 |
|                                | Female             | 75 | 50.0 |
| <b>Age</b>                     |                    |    |      |
|                                | 18–27 years        | 58 | 38.7 |
|                                | 28–36 years        | 61 | 40.7 |
|                                | 37–45 years        | 31 | 20.6 |
| <b>Education</b>               |                    |    |      |
|                                | Intermediate       | 35 | 23.3 |
|                                | Bachelor's         | 72 | 48.0 |
|                                | Master's           | 43 | 28.7 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>       |                    |    |      |
|                                | Employed           | 82 | 54.7 |
|                                | Unemployed         | 68 | 45.3 |
| <b>Family System</b>           |                    |    |      |
|                                | Nuclear            | 89 | 59.3 |
|                                | Joint              | 61 | 40.7 |
| <b>Delayed Marriage Status</b> |                    |    |      |
|                                | Moderately Delayed | 52 | 34.7 |
|                                | Delayed            | 61 | 40.7 |
|                                | Highly Delayed     | 37 | 24.6 |

**Note.** *N* = 150

**Table 4.2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations among Delayed Marriage, Sexual Frustration, and Quality of Life (N = 150)**

| Variables             | M     | SD    | 1      | 2      | 3 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Delayed Marriage   | 32.84 | 7.12  | —      |        |   |
| 2. Sexual Frustration | 64.27 | 10.53 | .61**  | —      |   |
| 3. Quality of Life    | 61.45 | 9.81  | -.46** | -.58** | — |

**Note.**  $p < .01$ .

**Table 4.3: Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Delayed Marriage, Sexual Frustration, and Quality of Life (N = 150)**

| Variable           | Male (n = 75)<br>M (SD) | Female (n = 75) M<br>(SD) | t(148) | p        | Cohen's<br>d |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|--------------|
| Delayed Marriage   | 34.16 (6.88)            | 31.52 (7.10)              | 2.32   | .022*    | .37          |
| Sexual Frustration | 68.41 (9.76)            | 60.13 (10.08)             | 5.13   | < .001** | .83          |
| Quality of Life    | 58.37 (9.43)            | 64.53 (9.12)              | -4.07  | < .001** | .65          |

**Note.**  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

Results of the correlation analysis showed significant and positive correlation with sexual frustration ( $r = .61$ ,  $p < .01$ ) which supported H1 (Table 2). Sexual frustration, which showed significant negative relationship with quality of life ( $r = -.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ) confirmed H2 (Table 2). Further, there was a negative correlation with quality of life ( $r = -.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ) (Table 2) with delayed marriage. Gender difference for all study variables was significant as revealed by independent samples t-tests. Males reported higher delay in marriage and sexual frustration while females reported higher satisfaction in their lives. Hence, H3 also was supported. From the findings, it was concluded that sexual frustration is higher among young adult age group in Sialkot who are delayed in marriage and Quality of Life is lower in Sialkot (Table 3).

## 5. Discussion

The present study investigated the relationship between delayed marriage, sexual frustration and quality of life among the young adults of Sialkot, Pakistan. It was found that marriage was delayed positively and the sexual frustration was delayed

negatively to the quality of life and also delayed marriage is positively associated with sexual frustration. Measuring of the differences between genders also revealed that males indicated higher concerns for delayed marriage and sexual frustrations while females indicated higher quality of life.

The first hypothesis assumed, that there would be a positive relationship between delayed marriage and sexual frustration, was supported. These results indicate that those with a longer marriage delay indicated higher level of sexual frustration. The study findings are in line with recent study in Pakistan which has shown that instability, lack of employment, career development, education and social aspirations play a significant role in delaying the age of marriage (Naz et al., 2025). The resulting time lags can add to emotional distress, intimacy expectations and psychological strain among young adults (Akhtar & Malik, 2025; Arooj et al., 2025). An additional dimension of “waithood” is the extended period of transition to adulthood that involves postponing marriage and independence which may impact psychosocial functioning.

Support was provided for a second idea that sexual frustration was related to quality of life. Results showed that there is a significant negative correlation, meaning that increasing level of sexual frustration is associated with decreasing quality of life (Harris et al., 2023; Maqbool et al., 2022). Poor emotional and relationship needs can lead to feelings of loneliness, stress, depression and lower life satisfaction. Past studies also have demonstrated that relationship satisfaction and emotional quality of life are other variables that play an important role in psychological adjustment and in life quality (Shahzadi et al., 2025; Nimbi et al., 2020).

Delays marriage was also found to be negatively related to quality of life. The research findings indicates that postponement of marriage may reduce life satisfaction and increase psychological distress among young adults (Fatima 2023; Marshal 2022). Pakistani society, with marriage being seen as a critical developmental event, also places expectations and pressures on marriage ages which can lead to emotional struggles and uncertainty for those who are not married (Ghazal et al., 2022).

Gender differences obtained in the study were also statistically important. The results of the delayed marriage concerns and sexual frustration of males were higher which could be linked to the cultural expectation that men should first get financially stable, find work and establish their career prior to marriage (Off et al., 2022; Ramzan 2025). The results indicate that marriage delay is a serious psychosocial issue that deserves attention among the young adults in Pakistan with stronger emphasis on need of mental health awareness, mental health counseling services and future longitudinal studies to understand the long-term psychological consequences of delayed marriage (Ahmed et al., 2021; Bilbas et al., 2025).

## **6. Conclusion**

The current research study throws a glimpse of sexual frustration and the evaluation of the quality of life among the young adults of Sialkot, in Pakistan. The moderation of sexual frustration demonstrated a significant positive relationship with the quality of life that was contrary to the hypothesis of sexual frustration as a negative relation with quality of life. For both measurements no appreciable sex differences were seen. The findings offer some preliminary insights into the perceptions of the Pakistani adult populations regarding sexual health and suggest the need for research on sexuality and well-being that is sensitive to culture. However, there was a positive relationship between sexual frustration and quality of life, thus indicating that moderate sexual frustration does not necessarily indicate a decrease in the quality of life but could be related to increased sexual awareness or desire.

### **6.1 Limitations and Recommendations**

The limitation of the present study was that it was of a cross-section type, the number of participants was small, the tools used were self-reports and the observations were made in only unmarried young adults in Sialkot which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, participants' responses to sexual frustration may have been affected by its sensitivity. Larger and diverse samples across Pakistan with a longitudinal and mixed method design and analyze other variables including social support, level of religiosity, mental health and

socioeconomic status are suggested for future study. Moreover, there is a need for intervention-based studies to formulate effective strategies for enhancing psychological welfare and quality of life of those whose marriage has been delayed.

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