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TECHNOFERENCE AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED PARTNER RESPONSIVENESS AMONG MARRIED COUPLES

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Abstract
The present research investigated the association between Technoference and Relationship Satisfaction and the mediating effect of Perceived Partner Responsiveness in married couples. A correlation study design in a cross-sectional manner was used to collect data from 200 married couples (100 couples) via purposive sampling. Standardized questionnaires such as Partner Phubbing Scale, Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale, and Relationship Assessment Scale were used to find relationships between the variables. The data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistic, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis by using Hayes' PROCESS Macro in SPSS Version 20. It was found that Technoference has a negative relationship with relationship satisfaction, but Perceived Partner Responsiveness has a positive relationship with Relationship Satisfaction. Perceived Partner Responsiveness significantly mediates the relationship between Technoference and Relationship Satisfaction. These results emphasize the importance of emotionally responsive behavior and regulation of technology use boundary conditions for maintaining couple relationships in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION
Technology has now become a fundamental part of the daily life, affecting communication, work daily life and closeness among people. Smartphones and other electronic devices enable communication and accessibility but can have a negative impact on quality of relationship when overused when face to face. Technoference impact on interpersonal relations can be understood through the process of interpersonal

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communication of romantic partners that is disrupted by technology (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Existing literature has found that technological interruptions can have negative consequences on a human's ability to communicate with others, emotional withdrawal, conflict and decreased relationship satisfaction (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2019).

Relationship satisfaction is a person's subjective judgment about the good or bad of the quality of his or her relationship and even rests on certain quality of the interaction-takes place daily between the partners. Perceived partner responsiveness, which is defined as the extent to which individuals feel their partner understands, validates and cares for them is an important dimension of relationship well-being (Reis et al., 2004). Emotional responsiveness may improve relationship well-being, trust and increased closeness during partnerships. Frequent smartphone use in couples' interactions, however, can hinder emotional availability in interactions and lower the perception of partner responsiveness experienced by each partner such that relationship satisfaction is lower (Wang et al., 2017; Dwyer et al., 2019).

Many research founds a negative correlation between the level of technoference and relationship satisfaction; however, few studies have investigated the psychological processes by which this occurs.This relationship, especially between women and men in Pakistan, comes with intricacies.This relationship, especially between women and men in Pakistan, has its nuances. In particular, it is not known if perceived partner responsiveness can explain the link between technoference and relationship satisfaction. Thus, the present study examined mediation role of perceived partner responsiveness between the relationship of perceived technoference to relationship satisfaction for married people. The results could be useful for the contribution to the literature on the function of relationships in the digital age and have practical implications for relationship education and marriage counselling.

Rationale of the Study

As people become more reliant on digital devices and smartphones, it's affect mixed personal interaction with face-to-face relationship communication, causing problems with more in-person interactions. Terms of technoference, being interrupted during an interpersonal interaction that occurs because of the use of technology, have been linked to diminished quality of communication and lower satisfaction regarding relationships (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Thus, it is important to gain a greater understanding of how and why technoference may be linked to relationship satisfaction.

To better understand how interruptions with technology relate to relationship satisfaction, perceived partner responsiveness in which people perceive their partners as caring and understanding and emotionally supportive may be a factor (Reis et al., 2004). In spite of the fact that in recent decades, many studies have been conducted on technoference however most of this research has been conducted from Western context and limited studies are available regarding this issue in the context of a marriage in Pakistan. As family relations and connectedness among individuals plays an important role in the context of the Pakistani culture, the effects of technology related interruptions on perceptions of partner responsiveness is especially noteworthy.

The aim of the present study was to analyze the association of technoference, perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction between married couples in Pakistan. The present study seeks to improve the understanding of the interpersonal process between technology-related interrupt and some satisfaction between couples by exploring perceived partner responsiveness as a mediator. The results could potentially add to the literature with evidence from a Pakistan context and could be used to help inform relationship counseling and interventions aimed in encouraging healthy technology use and better marital relationships.

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Hypotheses

H1: Technoference would negatively predict perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction, whereas perceived partner responsiveness would positively predict relationship satisfaction.

H2: Perceived partner responsiveness would mediate the relationship between technoference and relationship satisfaction.

Research Methodology Research Design

A cross-sectional correlational research design was employed to examine the mediating role of perceived partner responsiveness in the relationship between technoference and relationship satisfaction.

Participants

Sample The sample was of 200 married participants (100 married couple samples, 100 husbands, and 100 wives), with an age range of 25 to 35 years. Sample was purposively selected from both urban and rural populations of Faisalabad and Sargodha.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for participating in this study were as follows: participants had to be married (legally), cohabitate, and be between the ages of 25 and 35 years old. Participants also had to be able to read and understand the English language. Participants who were not married, separated, in long-distance marriages, or had been married for less than one year were excluded because of the assumption that they may not experience normal face-to-face relationships within their marriages. Participants who could not read English were also excluded because of the inability to complete the standardized questionnaires.

Instruments

Demographic Information Sheet

Participants were asked to complete a demographic information sheet, capturing information about their backgrounds, such as age, gender, educational level, family system, time married, order of marriage, occupation, number of children, and average daily time spent using technology.

Partner Phubbing Scale (PPS)

Technoference was assessed using the Partner Phubbing Scale (PPS, Roberts & David, 2016). The Partner Phubbing Scale (PPS, Roberts & David, 2016) is a nine-item instrument rated on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores being indicative of greater partner phubbing. The scale has reported acceptable psychometric properties, and in this study, it demonstrated good internal consistency (α =.89).

Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS)

Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS), developed by Reis et al. (2004). Items are rated on a 7 point Likert scale and are designed to measure the degree to which one views one's partner as being understanding, validating, and caring. Higher scores reflect greater perceived partner responsiveness. The scale was highly internally consistent in this study (α =.96).

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

Relationship Satisfaction. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS: Hendrick, 1988) was used to assess overall romantic relationship satisfaction. The RAS is composed of seven five-point Likert items that tap the degree of satisfaction with one's romantic relationship. Total scores on the scale range from seven to thirty-five, with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction. The scale had acceptable reliability in the current study (α =.70).

Procedure

The study was approved by the Board of Studies and Faculty Board of Department of Applied Psychology, Government College University Faisalabad. The authorization to use the instruments of the study was taken from authors of the study where necessary. University and

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residential sampling method was used for recruitment of participants in institutions and residential areas of Faisalabad and Sargodha. An informed consent was taken from all the participants prior to the data collection. The demographic form and standardized questionnaire were administered to each participant separately with standard instructions for response. The questionnaires were checked for missing responses before data entry and each questionnaire was checked before data entry. The collected data was coded and then analyzed using SPSS 20.

Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by the relevant ethics committee and all ethical considerations were adhered to. The participants gave their informed consent and were assured of their rights to withdraw at any stage of the research without any repercussions. All confidentialities were assured and kept; information provided by the participants were used for research purposes only, and the participants were debriefed at the end of the research.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 20). Descriptive statistics and reliability analyses were conducted to assess the psychometric properties of the measures. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to determine the relationships among variables. Multiple regression analyses were used to assess the effects of technoference and perceived partner responsiveness on relationship satisfaction. Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4, 5,000 bootstrap samples) was used to assess the mediating effect of perceived partner responsiveness on the relationship between technoference and relationship satisfaction.

Results Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 200)

Demographic Variable	f	%
Age Group		
25–30 years	84	42.0
31–35 years	116	58.0
Demographic Variable	**f**	**%**
Gender		
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
Education Level		
Bachelor's	54	27.0
Master's	146	73.0
Family System		
Nuclear	116	58.0
Joint	84	42.0
Marriage Duration		

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3–4 years	132	66.0
5–6 years	68	34.0

Table 1 gives the demographics of the participants included in this study. 200 participants were included in the study, all of them married, with equal numbers of males (n=100, 50%) and females (n=100, 50%). Most of the participants were within the age of 31-35 years (n=116, 58%) and 84(42%) were between the age of 25-30 years. Most of them had a master degree (n=146, 73%) and 54(27%) had a bachelor degree. More than half the participants belonged to a nuclear family system (n=116, 58%) and 84(42%) were from a joint family system. As to duration of marriage, 132(66%) were married for 3-4 years, while 68(34%) were married for 5-6 years.

Table 2 Reliability of Study Measures (N = 200)

Variables	No. of items	Alpha (α)
Technoference	9	.89
Perceived Partner Responsiveness	18	.96
Relationship Satisfaction	7	.70

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2 shows the reliability coefficients of the measures in the study. The Partner Phubbing Scale had good internal consistency (α =.89), and the Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale had excellent internal consistency (α =.96). The Relationship Assessment Scale internal consistency was acceptable at α =.70. These results suggest that all measures in this study had acceptable internal consistency for the current analyses.

Table 3 Correlation among study variables.

Variable	1	2	3
1. Technoference	—		
2. Perceived Partner Responsiveness	−.478**	—	
3. Relationship Satisfaction	−.358**	.654**	—

Table 3. Technoference was negatively correlated with perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction. Perceived partner responsiveness was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. The negatively correlated relationship between technoference and

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relationship satisfaction suggests that as technoference levels increase, perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction tend to decrease; however, the positively correlated relationship between perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction suggests that as perceived partner responsiveness increases, relationship satisfaction tends to increase.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis Examining the Effects of Technoference and Perceived Partner Responsiveness on Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	LL	UL
Constant	17.25	1.58	—	10.86	< .001	14.12	20.38
Technoference	−.031	.035	−.05	−.88	.380	−.100	.038
PPR	.085	.008	.63	10.23	< .001	.069	.101

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. R^2 = .43, F(2, 197) = 73.94, p < .001.PPR(perceived partner responsiveness).

Table 4 displays the results of the multiple regression analysis which was used to determine the influences of perception of partner responsiveness and technoference on relationship satisfaction. The overall regression model was significant with F (2, 197) = 73.94, p <.001. Perception of partner responsiveness was a significant positive predictor of relationship satisfaction (β =.63, p <.001). We found that when one partner was more responsive, the couple reported being more satisfied with their relationship. There was not a statistically significant relationship between the extent of technoference and relationship satisfaction once perceived partner responsiveness was accounted for (β =.05, p =.380).

Table 5 Mediation of the Relationship Between Technoference and Relationship Satisfaction Through Perceived Partner Responsiveness

Effect	B	SE	T	p	95% CI
Total Effect	−0.203	0.038	−5.32	<.001	[−0.278, −0.128]
Direct Effect	−0.031	0.035	−0.880	.380	[−0.100, 0.038]
Indirect Effect	−0.1718	0.0287	—	—	[−0.2318, −0.1167]

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Note. Bootstrap samples = 5,000; CI = confidence interval. Mediation is supported when the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect does not include zero.

As shown in the fifth table, the total effect of technoference on relationship satisfaction was significant and negative, B = 0.203, p <.001. When perceived partner responsiveness was added as a mediator, the direct effect was nonsignificant, B = 0.031, p = 0.380. There was a significant indirect effect through perceived partner responsiveness, B = 0.1718, BootSE = 0.0287, 95% Boot CI [0.2318, 0.1167], because zero was not within the confidence interval. Therefore, perceived partner responsiveness fully mediated the effect of technoference on relationship satisfaction.

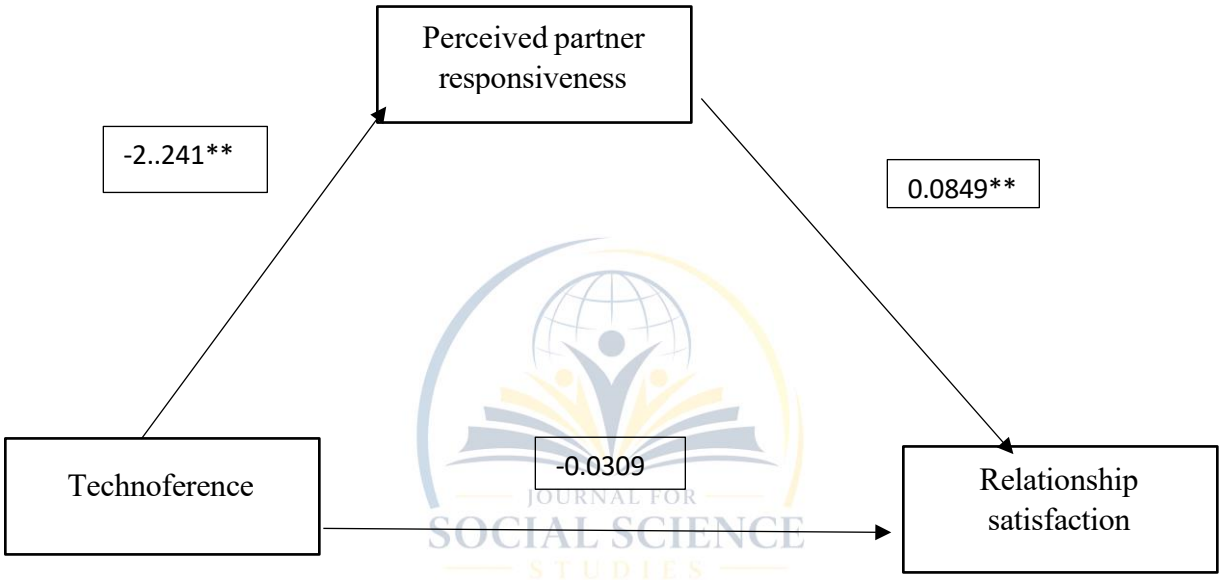


Figure 1. Mediating effect of perceived partner responsiveness between technoference and relationship satisfaction .

Note. A = effect of technoference on perceived partner responsiveness, b = effect of perceived partner responsiveness on relationship satisfaction; c = direct effect of technoference on relationship satisfaction controlling for perceived partner responsiveness. The indirect effect was significant, B = 0.1718, BootSE = 0.0287, 95% Boot CI [0.2318, 0.1167].

Discussion

This study investigated the connection between relationship satisfaction, perceived partner responsiveness and technoference in an example of married couples, specifically analyzing whether perceived partner responsiveness mediates the connection. The results show that perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction are negatively connected with technoference and positively connected, and perceived partner responsiveness is positively connected with relationship satisfaction. These results reveal that perceived partner responsiveness is an important mediator between a technoference and relationship satisfaction negatively and point to the fact that lessened computer use may be associated with decreased relationship satisfaction in part by decreased perceived partner responsiveness.

The inverse correlation of technoference with satisfaction replicated prior research showing that

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"technoference" during couple interactions predicted poorer relationship outcomes. McDaniel and Coyne (2016) reported that technoference was associated with conflict about technology use and lower relationship satisfaction. And Wang et al. (2017) found that higher partner phubbing scores predicted lower relationship satisfaction among married adults.Technology in couple interactions could become especially salient when it disrupts authentic social communication.

The association between higher perceived partner responsiveness and higher relationship satisfaction supports the interpersonal process model of intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988) that intimacy in relationships is created when partners disclose personal experiences and are perceived by their partner as understanding, validating, and caring. The construct of perceived partner responsiveness is thus an important interpersonal process in close relationships. Technology-related interruptions causing distraction may limit receptive availability (Reis & Shaver, 1988) and thus the potential for responsive exchanges, which can also affect perceived partner responsiveness and intimate connection.

The notable mediation result adds to our understanding of the association between technoference and satisfaction in the following way. The impact of technoference on relationship satisfaction was significant when viewed overall, but it was no longer significant when perceived partner responsiveness was added to the statistical model. There was a significant indirect effect, however, such that the impact of technoference on relationship satisfaction operated through perceived partner responsiveness. This suggests that perceived partner responsiveness is a key process through which technoference influences relationship satisfaction and not that technoference has a direct causal influence on satisfaction.

The present findings also extend prior research by studying this interpersonal process among married couples in Pakistan. Prior research has primarily studied technology interruptions and partner phubbing across Western and other international samples. Prior studies have shown the negative relationship between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction and examined perceived partner responsiveness as one of the mechanisms contributing to this relationship. The current study contributes findings from a Pakistani sample and emphasizes the importance of perceived emotional responsiveness in understanding technology-related experiences.

In sum, these results imply that engaging in healthy technology use and emotionally responsive communication may contribute to relationship health. Relationship education and marriage counselling programs may promote active listening and responsive communication in couples by providing guidance on mediated communication and establishing relationship-friendly technology-use limits. These efforts may foster couples' access to and experience of active listening and responsive communication.

Conclusion

The current findings contribute to the literature on technology use and romantic partners by showing that perceived partner responsiveness plays a significant mediating role in the association between technoference and relationship satisfaction. Participants who experienced more disruptions from technology were more likely to report that their partner was not responsive and consequently less satisfied in their marriage. These results reinforce the importance of using technology in ways that promotes both healthy boundaries and emotionally responsive communication for a satisfying marriage in the digital age.

Practical Implications

The results may be of interest to psychologists, marriage counsellors, and family therapists. Relationship therapists may help facilitate the setting of boundaries around technology use between partners, particularly during couple time,

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and also promote the use of active listening, emotional validation, and responsive communication when talking to one another each day. Psychoeducational and couple-focussed marital therapy could include instructions for managing technology use between partners during couple time.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present findings need to be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents from making causal interpretation of the findings. Second, the reliance on self-report data may suffer from self-report bias. Third, the purposive sampling technique used in the present study limits the generalizability of the present results to all people across the country as data were collected from only two cities of Punjab province. Future research is suggested to study samples from across various parts of Pakistan and adopt longitudinal or experimental research designs. Possible mediating or moderating variables, such as communication or conflict handling, need to be explored.

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