

Research Paper

Preliminary Psychometric Evaluation of The Sound Relationship House Questionnaire Among Individuals in Dual-Income Marriages

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ABSTRACT

The Sound Relationship House Questionnaire (SRHQ) developed by Gottman and Gottman, is a self-report measure, its purpose is to assess key relational processes within couple relationships based on Sound Relationship House (SRH) theoretical model. This pilot study aims to examine the psychometric properties of the SRHQ among married individuals in dual-income households in India. The SRHQ consist of five clusters, namely, Friendship and Intimacy, Shared Meaning, Sex, Romance and Passion, Conflict Processes and Conflict Management. Through purposive sampling 41 participants were selected and data was collected using SRHQ-Short Form, Marital Adjustment Inventory and Personal data schedule. Internal consistency reliability was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha, as normality assumptions were violated (Shapiro–Wilk, $p < .05$), convergent validity was examined through Spearman's rank-order correlations between SRH clusters and marital adjustment. All statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 21. All the five clusters demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ranging from .69 to .92. The SRH clusters Friendship and Intimacy, Shared Meaning, and Sex, Romance and Passion were positively correlated with marital adjustment, whereas Conflict Processes showed a negative correlation, the direction of correlation is consistent with SRH theoretical model. However, Conflict Management was not significantly correlated. The feedback collected from participants indicate preliminary endorsement regarding the item relevance and cultural appropriateness. These findings provide preliminary evidence of the reliability and validity of the SRH clusters in this context; however large-scale studies are required to examine the factorial structure and broader generalizability.

Keywords: *Sound Relationship House, Marital Adjustment, Dual-Income Couples*

In India, the number of dual-income households is steadily rising; up to 45% of urban Indian households now have both partners employed. Economic demands, changing gender roles, and increasing participation of women in the workforce are among the contributing factors to this rise (Sheykhi, 2020; Thadathil & Sriram, 2019). Even though this contributes to better financial stability, it also brings in stressors that can deteriorate relationship quality (San & Juhari, 2021). Excessive workload and work-family conflict are among them (Frisco & Williams, 2003). As both partners pursuing their careers and

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contributing to family finance, is the new normal, along with rise in people experiencing work stress (Sukumar et al., 2023) and the increase in divorce rate (Tharakan, 2024), it's highly relevant to understand the relationship dynamics of dual-income couples.

Marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person (Stone & Shackelford, 2007). A growing body of research links marital quality with better physical health (Robles et al., 2013), cognitive functioning (Haghighi et al., 2024), and mental wellbeing (Pieh et al., 2020) thus highlights the importance in human wellbeing. Marital satisfaction of a couple is not just crucial for the well-being of the dyad; it plays a central role in the mental well-being of their children as well (Wahyuningsih et al., 2020). Given the key role intimate partnerships play in adult development, there is an increasing need for reliable and culturally appropriate tools to assess couple functioning and relationship processes.

The Sound Relationship House (SRH) theory by John and Julie Gottman is one of the most widely recognized frameworks for understanding and improving couple relationships. Through decades of longitudinal and observational research they identified the key elements that support healthy, resilient relationships and provided a structured approach for couple's therapy. The Sound Relationship House (SRH) theory, which forms the foundation of Gottman Method Couple Therapy, consists of building love maps, sharing fondness and admiration, turning towards instead of away, maintaining a positive perspective, managing conflict, making life dreams come true, and creating a shared meaning in marriage (Brigance et al., 2024; Gottman, 2011). Based on this theoretical model, the Sound Relationship House Questionnaire was developed as a practical tool to assess key dimensions of couple functioning.

The SRH questionnaires have been developed and widely applied in Western contexts; however, from cross-cultural studies, it's evident that the relationship dynamics of Indian couples are often different from those of Western couples (Lehman et al., 2004). In collectivistic societies like India, indirect conflict resolution strategies involving extended family is often seen. Additionally, males have held more voice while making major life decisions. This contrasts sharply with Western relationship norms, where both partners share decision-making equally (Walter, 2003; Uddin, 2009). There is a risk of overlooking central Indian themes or overemphasizing culturally less salient behaviours when using tools developed in Western culture without proper adaptation (Kanth & Indumathy, 2025).

This concern is reinforced by findings from previous adaptation studies. For example, when researchers directly applied the Western-standardized Marital Satisfaction Inventory–Revised (MSI-R) among middle-class urban Hindu couples, they observed a poor model fit, which indicated a serious conceptual mismatch (Chand et al., 2018). Research has further noted that the lack of culturally validated scales remains a major barrier to relationship research in India (Kumar, 2021).

At the same time, Indian society is undergoing rapid social change due to globalization, urbanization, and media influence. According to Sharma (2025), young adults are placing more importance on individuality and independence in romantic relationships. This suggests that SRH clusters might function meaningfully in modern Indian marriages. Even though relational norms are evolving, it is still influenced by collectivistic values in India.

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Despite the growing relevance of dual-income marriages and the theoretical robustness of the SRH framework, to our knowledge, no published study has examined the reliability and validity of the SRH questionnaires among Indian couples, particularly within dual-income relationships. Most research studies in India either use locally developed or Western-adapted scales of marital satisfaction. There has been comparatively little focus on frameworks such as the SRH scale that assess different dimensions of relationship such as emotional connection, conflict processes, and shared meaning within an integrated cohesive structure. Accordingly, the present study aims to provide preliminary psychometric evidence for the use of the Sound Relationship House questionnaire among dual-income couples in India. The objectives of the present study are: (1) to assess the internal consistency of the SRH clusters in a sample of dual-income married individuals, and (2) to examine the convergent validity of the SRH clusters with a standardized measure of marital satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous instruments to assess marital satisfaction such as the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), Marital Adjustment Inventory, Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ), Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI), Quality Marriage Index (QMI), ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS), Marital Satisfaction Inventory–Revised (MSI-R), Relationship Assessment Scale, Marital Selflessness Scale (MSS), Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale (CMSS), and Marital Status Inventory (MSI) (Nair, 2019).

These instruments have made significant contributions to research in marital relationships; however, they largely focused on global satisfaction or adjustment. They do not assess multiple, interrelated relational processes such as emotional connection, conflict regulation, shared meaning, and repair attempts within a single theoretical framework. Existing Indian studies have similarly relied on locally developed or Western-adapted measures that focus largely on marital satisfaction rather than multidimensional relational processes.

However, the Sound Relationship House theory conceptualizes intimate relationships as structured around interconnected processes that promote stability and satisfaction. The central themes of Sound Relationship House theory include Love Maps, representing partners' knowledge of each other's inner psychological world; Fondness and Admiration, is about building a culture of appreciation, respect and affection through everyday interactions; and Turning Toward, which refers to responses to bids for emotional connection (Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Gottman, 2011).

Shared Meaning refers to the creation of relational identity through shared rituals, roles, goals, and symbols (Gottman & Gottman, 2015). The framework also identifies maladaptive conflict processes such as Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt, and Stonewalling collectively termed the Four Horsemen—as well as Harsh Start-Up, Negative Sentiment Override, Gridlock on Perpetual Issues, and Flooding (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, 2011). On the other hand, constructive interactional processes such as Accepting Influence, Compromise, and Effective Repair Attempts foster emotional bonding and marital stability. Thus, Gottman described a core triad of balance in couple relationships that includes interactive behaviour, perception, and physiology (Oliver, 2015).

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The development of the SRH framework followed from longitudinal studies conducted over four decades, in which relational variables derived from observational coding and physiological measures predicted relationship stability and happiness. Based on this theoretical model, Gottman developed the Sound Relationship House Questionnaires as brief self-report scales assessing key relational processes. Each subscale typically contains approximately five items and employs a True/False response format, making it suitable for research and clinical applications.

They conducted initial reliability and validity testing of the long-form SRH scales in a sample of 51 couples, which examined internal consistency and associations with the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, the Marital Status Inventory, and the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised. Later a study with 130 couples transitioning to parenthood examined how SRH self-report measures and observational coding methods related, which supported construct validity. However, the majority of these validation studies have been conducted in Western cultural contexts, which raise questions regarding cross-cultural generalizability. Despite the empirical grounding of the SRH framework, no published studies have examined the reliability and validity of the SRH questionnaire among Indian couples, particularly where both partners have full time employment status.

The adaptation and validation of Western-developed relationship measures often highlight the importance of context-specific psychometric evaluation when applying them in non-Western settings. For instance, translation–validation studies of relationship instruments such as the Tamil version of the Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (IERQ) and the Hindi adaptations of the Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised (ECR-R) and Experiences in Close Relationships–Relationship Structures (ECR-RS), have shown that even when core constructs are retained, often there is a need to revise specific items and factor structures to achieve adequate fit in Indian samples (Kumar, 2021; Kumar, 2022). Similarly, to establish the reliability and validity of the Tamil version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale rigorous empirical examination was required (Kanth & Indumathy, 2025). Internal consistency is often reported in research studies on the adaptation of relationship measures as evidence for reliability. For instance, in a pilot study the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) reported acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .70$) (Naeem et al., 2021), and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale reported high internal consistency ($\alpha = .936$) in a rural Indian sample (Chauhan & Sekher, 2023). Evidence for convergent validity of a scale is commonly established through its meaningful associations with conceptually related constructs. For example, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale have reported satisfactory convergent validity with constructs such as communication patterns and dyadic coping, whereas the Tamil version of the Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Questionnaire has shown meaningful associations with dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction, both of which are validation studies done in India (Kanth & Indumathy, 2025; Kanth & Indumathy, 2022). Similar to this, for the validation of Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale its correlations with established measures such as the Relationship Assessment Scale, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, and the Couples Satisfaction Index–4 was assessed. (Maroufizadeh et al., 2020).

According to Cheung et al. (2023) it is often inadequate to report Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis report while using established scales in new populations. However, when clearly identified as preliminary work, assessing the internal consistency and convergent validity is considered acceptable before more rigorous validation in larger

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samples. This methodological pattern supports the rationale for conducting a pilot validation study of the Sound Relationship House (SRH) questionnaire in India before a large-scale validation study.

METHOD

A correlational research design was employed to assess the preliminary psychometric properties of the Sound Relationship House (SRH) Questionnaire among individuals in dual-income marriages in India.

Participants

The participants consisted of 41 individuals (20 men, 48.8%; 21 women, 51.2%) from urban, semi-urban, and rural regions of India. The age of the participants' ranged from 23 to 58 years ($M = 40.32$, $SD = 10.05$), and the duration of marriage from 1 to 35 years ($M = 13.07$, $SD = 9.68$). Most participants belonged to middle socioeconomic backgrounds and had completed at least an undergraduate level of education. The sample consists of individuals from diverse occupational sectors and family structures, with the majority having a fixed work schedule and living in the same household as their spouse.

For inclusion in the study, individuals must be above the age of 18, legally married, cohabiting for at least one year, part of a dual-income household, able to read and follow the questions in English. Individuals were excluded from the study if they were diagnosed with any mental health conditions previously or have a history of marital or psychological therapy. To ensure that all participants met the specific inclusion criteria of belonging to a dual-income household, purposive sampling method was used. This enabled evaluation of the instrument's relevance within this particular population.

Instruments

1. Sound Relationship House Questionnaire, Short Form (SRHQ)

The Sound Relationship House Questionnaire, Short Form has 107 items in total, comprising 16 constructs with 5 items each and the Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion scale with 27 items. The 16 constructs are grouped into four clusters following Brigrance et al. (2024): Friendship and Intimacy (love maps, fondness and admiration, turning toward or away, emotional distance and loneliness), Shared Meaning (shared meaning rituals, roles, goals, and symbols), Conflict Processes (harsh start-up, flooding, negative sentiment override, the Four Horsemen, and gridlock on perpetual issues), and Conflict Management (accepting influence, compromise, and effective repair attempts). The Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion scale included within the SRHQ short form assessment battery is the fifth analytic domain. Reliability analyses were conducted at the cluster level for the five SRH clusters. All scales were scored using dichotomous responses, items were summed to obtain total scores for each analytic domain. Emotional Disengagement items were reverse coded to ensure consistent score directionality. Higher scores reflected greater endorsement of the construct being assessed.

2. Marital Adjustment Inventory (MAI-s)

Marital Adjustment Inventory (MAI-s) developed by Dr Har Mohan Singh (1972) assess the general marital adjustment of the individual. The inventory consists of two forms: form A for men and form B for women and each form has 10 items. Each item can be answered with either a yes or a no. Each yes or no is then be answered by placing (✓) on only one point out of ten points on the rating scale, ranging from +10 (most favourable) to +1 (least

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favourable). Only selected answers are recorded and scored. To calculate the overall marital adjustment score, the values for each item are totalled using scoring key. An item can have a maximum of score 10, a minimum of score 1, and a score 0 if the response does not match what the scoring key indicates. The reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.94 for the general population. The scale demonstrates construct validity through known-group (extreme group) differentiation, indicating its effectiveness in distinguishing between well-adjusted and poorly adjusted individuals.

Procedure

Participants completed the questionnaires individually using a secure online Google Form. The form contained the demographic sheet, the SRHQ, and the marital adjustment inventory. Participants were asked two additional open-ended questions regarding whether the scale items reflected their relationship experiences and whether any items were unclear, culturally inappropriate, or difficult to answer.

Participants were informed that their participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous, and informed consent was provided electronically. The study adhered to ethical principles of confidentiality and voluntary participation and no identifying information were collected. Ethical clearance was obtained from Institutional Ethics Committee.

Data Analysis

As empirical evidence shows that psychological data often violate normality assumptions (Ferr, 2025). The Shapiro–Wilk was used to test normality, which indicated significant deviations from normality across study variables ($p < .05$). As the sample size is small and data violated normality assumptions, non-parametric analyses were employed. Internal consistency was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha for each SRH cluster. The convergent validity of SRH scale was examined by computing Spearman's rank-order correlations between each SRH cluster scores and marital adjustment. Means and standard deviations were computed for all demographic variables. All statistical analyses were done using IBM SPSS (Version 21).

RESULTS

Data from 41 married individuals were analysed. No missing data were observed.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the Sound Relationship House clusters are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Internal Consistency Reliability of SRH Clusters (N = 41)

SRH clusters	k	α
Friendship and Intimacy	20	.812
Conflict Process	25	.922
Conflict Management	15	.698
Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion	27	.915
Shared Meaning	20	.855

Note. k = number of items; α = Cronbach's alpha.

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Convergent Validity

Spearman's rank-order correlations between SRH clusters and marital adjustment are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Spearman Correlations Between SRH Clusters and Marital Adjustment (N = 41)

SRH Clusters	r_s	p
Friendship and Intimacy	.462**	.002
Conflict Process	-.330*	.035
Conflict Management	-.009	.954
Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion	.422**	.006
Shared Meaning	.416**	.007

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. N = 41.

Participants Feedback on Scale Items

Majority of participants perceived the items as reflective of their real relationship experiences, with most responses indicating agreement (e.g., "Yes," "Correct," "Of course"). With regard to clarity and cultural appropriateness, most participants reported that the items were clear and did not pose significant difficulty. However, a few participants noted that the dichotomous response format limited their ability to express nuanced responses. Additionally, one participant indicated that items related to sexual aspects of the relationship were somewhat detailed and could be more concise. Overall, the feedback from participants suggests that the items are clear and culturally relevant in the present sample.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the reliability and validity of the Gottman SRH questionnaire in Indian dual-income couples. Overall, findings provide preliminary psychometric support for using this scale in this particular cultural context.

The SRH clusters showed satisfactory to excellent internal consistency. Friendship and Intimacy ($\alpha = .812$) and Shared Meaning ($\alpha = .855$) showed strong reliability, whereas Conflict Processes ($\alpha = .922$) and Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion ($\alpha = .915$) demonstrated excellent internal consistency. For Conflict Management, a slightly lower Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .698$) is observed. Being a pilot study, the value is close to the standard acceptable range of .70.

These findings are consistent with previous research that relied on instruments developed by Gottman. For instance, Brigance et al. (2024), in their study on couples facing infertility using the SRH questionnaire, reported reliability coefficients of Friendship and Intimacy ($\alpha = .76$), Shared Meaning ($\alpha = .82$), Conflict Processes ($\alpha = .89$), and Quality of Sex, Romance and Passion ($\alpha = .85$). Similar to the present study, Conflict Management showed the lowest Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .68$).

Additionally, the Cronbach's α coefficients reported here remain within the range of cross-cultural validation studies on other marital satisfaction scales. Maroufizadeh et al. (2020) reported internal consistency coefficients ranging from .66 to .84 for the subscales of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) in infertile patients of Iran.

The convergent validity was assessed through Spearman correlations between SRH clusters and marital adjustment. Friendship and Intimacy ($r_s = .462$, $p = .002$), Shared Meaning ($r_s =$

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.416, $p = .007$), and Quality of Sex and Romance ($r_s = .422$, $p = .006$) showed significant positive correlation with marital adjustment, whereas, Conflict Processes showed a significant negative correlation ($r_s = -.330$, $p = .035$).

All of this is consistent with Gottman's Sound Relationship House theory, which states that couples with a strong emotional connection, deeper shared meaning and satisfying sexual life have better marital adjustment, whereas couples who experience maladaptive conflict processes, such as flooding, negative sentiments, experience poor relationship quality. (Gottman & Gottman, 2015).

There was no significant correlation between Conflict Management and marital adjustment ($r_s = -.009$, $p = .954$). According to Gottman and Tabares (2017), even when couples engage in a destructive conflict process, conflict management skills such as compromise and repair attempts act as protective mechanisms that reduce the negative effect of such maladaptive behaviours. Therefore, rather than a direct measure that is associated with marital satisfaction, it is possible that conflict management might be functioning as a buffering variable.

This is further supported by Brigance et al. (2024) as they found Conflict Management significantly moderated the relationship between relational quality and Conflict Processes in couples facing infertility. The absence of a significant correlation with marital adjustment could therefore be reflecting the protective, interactional nature of conflict management processes. The feedback collected from participants provide initial support that the core constructs of the SRH framework appear relevant in the Indian context. However further research is required to evaluate the face validity and cultural appropriateness of SRHQ as well as, to test whether Conflict Management functions as a buffer between.

CONCLUSION

The present findings provide preliminary support for the cross-cultural applicability of core constructs within the Sound Relationship House model. Even though the relational norms between individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ, the underlying mechanisms of emotional connection and conflict regulation might be functioning in similar ways across cultural contexts. Despite the fact that the present study is limited to dual-income couples, the findings do offer initial support for the applicability of the SRH framework as a potentially useful assessment tool for research purpose as well as for psychologists in understanding relational processes in populations experiencing contextual stressors. These findings have clinical relevance as well, this framework could not only help mental health professionals to identify strengths and areas of difficulty of couples, but also in guiding targeted intervention strategies within therapeutic practice.

A number of limitations must be taken into consideration while interpreting this study. For the present pilot study only 41 participants were recruited, it does exceed the recommended minimum of 30 for pilot studies aimed at preliminary scale evaluation, and falls within the suggested interval of 24 to 36 representative participants (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Additionally, the sample was drawn from a specific demographic context, which limited generalizability and statistical power. Although internal consistency and convergent validity with marital adjustment is established, other important psychometric properties, such as test-retest reliability, discriminant validity, and predictive validity, were not evaluated.

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Future research should employ larger, multi-site samples, beyond dual-income couples, in order to generalize the findings. To examine the factorial validity of the scale and assess the structural adequacy of the proposed model, confirmatory factor analysis should be done. Further studies should also examine measurement invariance across gender and other demographic subgroups.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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