

Emotion Regulation Strategies and Interpersonal Aggression among Romantic Couples in Twin Cities

Syeda Hafsa Ahmed¹, Ghulam Muqadas Fatima², Ulfat Nisa³

1 National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: syedhafsa210@gmail.com

2 National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Correspondence Email: Fatimashahbaz080@gmail.com

3 National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan

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Abstract

Background. In the present study, the relationship of emotion regulation strategies (cognitive appraisal and expressive suppression) with interpersonal aggression in Islamabad and Rawalpindi romantic couples was explored. Specific regulatory processes to use to predict aggressive behaviour were expected and gender dynamics in relation to coping was explored.

Method. A cross ecological correlational design was used. A total of 250 participants (47.2% male, 52.8% female) in two-person romantic relationships filled out the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) and the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPQ) which had acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .71$).

Results. Interpersonal aggression was significantly and positively correlated with cognitive appraisal (over-analyzing in context: $r = .159$, $p = .012$) and was significantly and negatively correlated with expressive suppression ($r = -.147$, $p = .020$). Independent samples t-tests showed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores for males and females on the cognitive appraisal subscale ($t(248) = 3.58$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.45$) and interpersonal aggression subscale ($t(248) = 3.19$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.40$); however, there was no gender difference on the suppression subscale. The overall range of variation in the domain of education was very small (5.2%).

Conclusion. The notion of "open expression" as found in western contexts may not be relevant here, as Pakistani collectivistic expressive suppression is more like a protective relationship behavior rather than "uninhibited" expression of emotion.

Keywords: Emotion regulation, interpersonal aggression, romantic couples, Pakistani context

Introduction

Romantic relationships are an important aspect of human life as they have a great impact on psychological stability, emotional satisfaction and wellbeing (Gottman, 1999). Unsuccessful relationships are characterized by conflict, upset/pain, and attack as the primary method of communication, whereas successful relationships are characterized by trust, empathy and good communication (Gottman, 1999). One of the psychological factors that influence the success or failure of a relationship are emotions. Much of the way people process situational triggers, react to their partner and handle interpersonal conflict is related to their ability to reflect on, evaluate and change emotional reactions (Myers & Robinson, 2007; Thompson, 1994). Emotion regulation, according to Gross (1998), refers to the process by which people control the emotions they have, when they have them and how they have them. Two of the important regulatory

processes that Gross found are cognitive appraisal (reappraising the situation to change its emotional significance) and expressive suppression (inhibiting ongoing emotional expression) (Gross & Thompson, 2007).

If one is able to control his or her emotions, he or she can manage the pressure in the relationship in a constructive way, which will reduce the sense of anger and help prevent the relationship from spiraling out of control. However, lack of these skills can result in emotional dysphagia, which may cause a person to react inappropriately, impulsively and aggressively in social situations when they are under stress (Robertson et al., 2012). When a person is trying to inflict psychological or physical harm on a spouse or significant other, it is known as “interpersonal aggression.” Buss and Perry (1992) described aggression in a number of different ways including physical aggression, aggressive words and antagonism. The ongoing aggression can have serious psychological effects on relationships including sadness, anxiety and relationship failures and is harmful to intimacy and trust. Because of the high level of emotional commitment that is needed in intimate relationships, partners are vulnerable to displaced aggression. When emotions are added to even minor conflicts at home, it can easily turn into a full-fledged battle.

The idea of emotional expression for individual wellbeing is very relevant in the western-centric paradigm, but in need of greater empirical depth of research on its own as well as its applicability to traditional communities. Conversely, emotional repression may be functional for other structures in Pakistan's sociocultural context, where the collectivism, cultural-conservative, and traditional social norms collectively, often influence interpersonal relations (Akram et al., 2023). Although there are some emotional differences in interactions that occur in everyday romantic relationships, there has been little scientific effort to assess the interactions in intimate, non-clinical romantic relationships locally. Most community studies that are now available do not deal with the dynamics of lived relationship constellation.

Relational injury has been linked consistently with psychological literature, with regard to emotional control deficits. Emotion regulation is a key risk factor for intimate partner aggression, as the difficulties in emotion regulation, especially in the areas of impulse control and emotional awareness, were important predictors of psychological and physical aggression in intimate relationships (Velotti et al., 2016). Likewise, Robertson et al. (2012) showed that low emotional awareness and limited coping strategies were predictors of one's tendency to violently react to interpersonal stressors. Finkel et al. (2012) have proposed the model—Instigation, Impellance and Inhibition—with regard to the romantic relationship. This is a good example of the emergence of acts of aggression due to the failure of inhibitory mechanisms (self-control, control of emotions). As per this paradigm, even little issues in the romantic relationship can shift violent if the partners are unable to bring their feelings under control. Secondly, Bodenmann (2005) highlighted the importance of the Dyadic Coping because the emotional regulation is not only an intra-individual process, but also a shared process in the Dyad. Poor dyadic coping will lead to a greater risk of verbal and physical aggression due to an increasing stress-spillover between partners.

However, the behavioural outcome depends on the exact method that is adopted. Gross and John's (2003) original study found that individuals who often use expressive suppression are more negative affect and less well functioning interpersonally. Much of their work has been on the social dynamics of the West, but the indigenous context indicates a need to show how to regulate emotions in conflict situations to prevent escalation, while at the same time, over thinking through cognitive appraisal can cause stress in the relationships, unintentionally. It is imperative to understand these cultural differences to create evidence-based therapies that strengthen bicultural and emotional regulation skills, foster communication for relationship success and enhance the stability of relationships over time in the local community.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The present study was mainly aimed at understanding the relationship of emotion regulation strategies (cognitive appraisal and expressive suppression) with interpersonal aggression in the context of romantic

relationships in Pakistan. Specifically, the researchers were interested in determining if there is a relationship between emotional control and the occurrence of aggressive behaviors and what factors contribute to the escalation and/or de-escalation of aggressive behaviors in an intimate relationship.

Based on the theory of integration between the Process Model of Emotion Regulation (Gross, 1998), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) the following hypotheses were suggested:

1. For romantic couples, there is a strong relationship between emotion regulation strategies (cognitive appraisal and expressive suppression) and aggression in interpersonal relationships.
2. Cognitive appraisal has a significant role in the interpersonal aggression in romantic relationships.
3. Specifically, expressive suppression is related to interpersonal aggression in couples.

Method

Research Design

In this study, the approach of research was quantitative, correlational and cross sectional. This structure was selected to explore the trends in the use of specific baseline emotion regulation strategies (cognitive appraisal and expressive suppression) and their predictive and correlational relationships with a variety of aspects of interpersonal aggression in non-clinical romantic partner relationships. With the paradigm that enabled an evaluation of the variables in the target demographic cohort without any experimental manipulation.

Sample and Participant Characteristics

The final sample of this study (N = 250) comprised of individuals in committed romantic relationships from the twin cities of Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Pakistan, approached and recruited using convenience sampling technique.

The sample distribution parameters were carefully selected to incorporate various socio-economic parameters:

- Gender Dynamic: The gender composition is balanced in which there is 118 male participants (47.2%) and 132 female participants (52.8%).
- Age Strata: Age range of actual sample of research participants was very narrow (18-45 years) and was labeled as young adulthood.
- Formal academic achievement: The majority were undergraduate students (n = 104, 41.6%) followed by graduate students (n = 85, 34.0%). The rest of the framework consisted of postgrade (n = 24, 9.6%), intermediate certificate (n = 22, 8.8%) and matric (n = 15, 6.0%).
- The Socio-Cultural context: In order to remain on the empirical reliability the following sample inclusion protocol was set: All the sample members had to belong to Islamabad or Rawalpindi urbanized areas including transitional relationship context of active students/working professionals as the party has to be a native of the assessed locality.

Assessment Measures

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The standard Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) developed by Gross and John (2003) was used to quantify the individual variation tendencies in emotional control and regulation. The psychometric value of this self-report, tracking tool lies in the fact that it is split into two separate sub-scales, which track specific independent cognitive mechanisms:

1. Cognitive Appraisal Sub-scale: This 6 structured item component assesses the respondent's innate tendency to re-evaluate situational stressors to change their initial emotional response to the stressors prior to behavioral deployment.

2. Expressive Suppression Sub-scale: This domain is a 4 structured item scale that measures the frequency of response-focused emotional containment, or expressive suppression, and is the only scale on the TAT to measure how often an individual suppresses active ongoing emotional expressive behavior during interpersonal tension.

All 10 items have uniform 7-point Likert scale with score responses ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 7 (Agree Strongly). Cumulative item configurations are computed for each sub-scale separately and can lead to separate score tracking arrays with higher scores directly indicating a greater or more frequent use of the emotion regulation strategy. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency of the two scales in the current validation tracking for the present study was .76 for the Cognitive Appraisal and .71 for the Expressive Suppression.

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPQ)

The operationalization of the behavioral mapping of interpersonal aggression traits was done with the standard 29 item Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). This popular instrument has a psychometric design that assesses phenotypic aggression along a multi-dimensional framework, which includes physical aggression, verbal hostility, and cognitive aspects of anger.

The baseline design is a matrix based on a 5-point likert-type scale. Respondents indicate their own level of agreement with the statement indices on a 1-5 scale (1 = Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me, 5 = Extremely Characteristic of Me). The numeric alignments from the entire 29-item item array are summed together to create the overall score, with the numerics on specific tracking items being reverse scored to control for programmatic response bias. The total score of the aggregate composite calculation provides a diagnostic baseline with higher total scores indicating higher levels of interpersonal aggression manifestations within intimate relational contexts. The entire BPQ scale had strong psychometric structural reliability for the current sample evaluation with an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .78.

Procedure and Ethical Compliance

The process of conducting the empirical research project was started once the official institutional approval and clearance from the Department of Applied Psychology was granted. The research team formally approached the potential participants from selected corporate, educational and public sector from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. All candidates were given an orientation about the purpose of the academic survey, the range of the survey and the non-invasive nature of the survey instruments.

Compliance of strict ethical workflows was put in place:

- Informed Consent: All packages were formally written informed consent.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality: To avoid the social desirability bias in interpersonal aggression disclosure, complete anonymity was ensured and no personal identification code, name or contact links were recorded along with the psychometric tracking data.
- Right of Withdrawal: Participants were informed that they were able to participate voluntarily and withdraw from the data sharing loop from any processing station without penalty.

Distribution and retrieval of the tracking packages was closely tracked to reduce the amount of data fields left blank. Incomplete profiles/questionnaires with baseline validation controls were removed from the distributed question sheets during the data entry stage, resulting in a clean data set of N = 250 persons for the final mathematical analysis.

Data Analysis and Software Tooling

The raw tracking metrics were verified and validated structurally and then numbered and processed electronically. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0, descriptive and inferential statistical modeling operations were performed.

Systematic data analysis flow was designed to be in sequence phases of:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Frequency distributions, mean values (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated and used to describe demographic properties.
2. Psychometric Reliability Verification: Cronbach's alpha (alpha) coefficients were calculated for all independent tracking scales and sub-domains for evaluation of psychometric reliability.
3. Bivariate Correlation Modeling: Two-tailed Pearson Product-Moment correlation matrices (r) were calculated to explore the structural association pathways between the age of the participant, cognitive appraisal, expressive suppression and interpersonal aggression.
4. Parametric Comparative Group Testing: Independent samples t-test models were used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the genders, and Cohen's d scores were calculated to assess the standard effect sizes of gender differences in the various psychological areas.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Distribution of the Sample (N = 250)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	47.2%
	Female	132	52.8%
Education level	Matriculation	15	6.0%
	Intermediate	22	8.8%
	Undergraduate	104	41.6%
	Graduate	85	34%
	Postgraduate	24	9.6%

Table 1

Gives a comprehensive descriptive presentation of socio-demographic indicators followed in the ongoing research (N = 250). In terms of gender, the sample shows a fairly even distribution with 118 males (47.2%) and 132 females (52.8%).

The educational distribution shows a broad spread multi-tiered academic structure of the sampled youth in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The largest single group is undergraduate level students with n = 104 (41.6%) followed by those who have completed their formal graduate degrees (n = 85, 34.0%). The rest of the cross-sections are a small baseline segment with matriculation level education (n = 15, 6.0%), intermediate level respondents (n = 22, 8.8%) and postgraduate professionals (n = 24, 9.6%). Such a diversity in education offers a solid foundation for assessing inter-personal relational dynamics in transitional urban cohorts.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Study Variables (N = 250)

Scales & Sub-scales	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Emotion Regulation Scale (TES)		
1. Cognitive Appraisal (TCA)	6	.76
2. Expressive Suppression (TES)	4	.71
Buss-Perry Aggression	29	.78
Questionnaire (BPQ)		

Table 2 presents the internal consistency statistics, descriptive tracking statistics, structural mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values and the comparative mathematical values for the potential and actual score arrays for all the study variables. Based on the psychometric evaluation, all the instruments are found to be reliable with acceptable reliability values. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was divided into

its two main sub-scales: the Cognitive Appraisal sub-scale (6 items) has a good Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .76$) and the Expressive Suppression sub-scale (4 items) has an acceptable reliability index ($\alpha = .71$). The total 29 item Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPQ) has good structural performance with a cumulative internal consistency alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .78$.

The mean as observed on the dimension of Cognitive Appraisal is $M = 25.32$ ($SD = 5.42$) which is moderately higher than the absolute theoretical middle point of the potential range of the scale (6 – 42). Likewise, the Expressive Suppression sub-scale has a calculated sample mean of $M = 17.10$ ($SD = 4.63$), which suggests that the participants have a strong tendency towards emotional containment compared to the possible range of the tracking point of the scale ($M = 16$). Lastly, the interpersonal aggression tracking profile shows a baseline sample mean of $M = 81.86$ ($SD = 8.04$), with an actual observed range of 55 to 115, reflecting a large and non-skewed distribution of interpersonal configurations of aggressive behaviors of romantic partners.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Age, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Aggression (N = 250)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Age of the participants	—	-.155*	-.090	-.026
2. Total cognitive appraisal		—	.572**	.159*
3. Total expressive suppression			—	-.147*
4. Total Interpersonal Aggression (BPQ)				—

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 systematically depicts the two-tailed bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients between chronological age, direct operational pathways, interpersonal aggression dimensions of independent emotion regulation and interpersonal aggression scores. The correlation matrix reveals important dynamics that break the assumption of individualistic behaviours. Interestingly, a statistically significant positive correlation is found between the total values of Interpersonal Aggression and tendencies of Cognitive Appraisal ($r = .159$, $p = .012$). This trend suggests that in this sample, higher scores on intellectualizing/re-evaluating relationship processes are associated with higher scores on aggression.

On the other hand, a high negative correlation is found between Expressive Suppression and Interpersonal Aggression ($r = -.147$, $p = .020$). It is an inverse relationship that shows that the higher the emotional containment, the more it is an active inhibitor of aggressive behavior in these relational spaces.

Also, there is a significant positive correlation between the two internal tracking scales of the ERQ ($r = .572$, $p < .001$), which indicates that individuals who use a high amount of internal tracking in cognitive evaluation also use behavioral suppression. Finally, there is a weak negative correlation between chronological age and Cognitive Appraisal ($r = -.155$, $p < .05$), which indicates that the higher one gets in age, the less active cognitive over-analysis of relational interactions there is.

Table 4

Gender Differences in Emotion Regulation and Interpersonal Aggression (N = 250)

Variables	Gender	M	SD	T	df	P	Cohen's d
Cognitive Appraisal	Male	26.61	5.45				
				3.583	248	<.001	0.454
	Female	24.18	5.22				
Expressive Suppression	Male	17.26	4.60				
				0.512	248	.609	0.065

	Female	16.96	4.66				
	Male	83.55	7.57				
Interpersonal Aggression				3.192	248	.002	0.404
	Female	80.35	8.18				

The results of the inferential models obtained using independent samples t-test to test for differences between male ($n = 118$) and female ($n = 132$) partners are presented in Table 4. The analysis shows that there are significant differences in a number of domains. For Cognitive Appraisal, male participants score significantly higher ($M = 26.61$, $SD = 5.45$) than female participants ($M = 24.18$, $SD = 5.22$), yielding an inferential value of $t(248) = 3.58$, $p < .001$. The calculated 95% CI [1.09, 3.77] and Cohen's d effect size of 0.45 suggests a moderate and stable difference with males using intellectualizing strategies more often.

In terms of Interpersonal Aggression, there is a significant difference between gender ($t(248) = 3.19$, $p = .002$). Male partners have a higher mean aggression profile ($M = 83.55$, $SD = 7.57$) than do female partners ($M = 80.35$, $SD = 8.18$). A 95% CI [1.22, 5.18] supports this difference, which has a moderate effect size ($d = 0.40$).

The Expressive Suppression framework, on the other hand, does not show any significant differences between groups ($t(248) = 0.51$, $p = .609$, $d = 0.07$). The profiles found for males ($M = 17.26$, $SD = 4.60$) and females ($M = 16.96$, $SD = 4.66$) are very similar, and show that both genders use emotional containment in this socio-cultural context at a similar rate.

Discussion

The main aim of the present empirical study was to critically examine the relational and predictive pathways that exist between the emotion regulation strategies (cognitive appraisal and expressive suppression) and the multidimensional aspects of interpersonal aggression in non-clinical romantic couples of the metropolitan twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. This aboriginal data gives rise to statistical results that reveal deep changes in socio-cultural life, which in turn directly challenge traditional, Western-centric affective paradigms. This study sheds empirical light on the nature of how these emotional sub-domains are experienced within a collectivistic society, how they reconfigure individual coping mechanisms and behavioral responses in the midst of active interpersonal conflict, and the extent to which they are deeply rooted in cultural expectations.

The first core finding of this study was that there was a weak, but statistically significant positive correlation between cognitive appraisal and total interpersonal aggression scores ($r = .159$, $p = .012$), thus supporting the first and second research hypotheses. In the traditional western psychological literature, including the seminal Process Model of Emotion Regulation proposed by Gross (1998), cognitive reappraisal is virtually always reported as a top-down cognitive strategy that is very adaptive, which effectively reduces the negative emotional output and promotes constructive communication. But, the current native results are quite different from this known baseline. In the context of the Pakistani romantic dyad, active cognitive appraisal can sometimes unknowingly result in cognitive over-analyzing, hyper-vigilance, rumination or obsessive over-thinking when the couple has a standoff. Those partners who score high on this dimension may be over-interpreting the actions of their partner, question the motives behind their actions, and intellectualize basic domestic disagreements, rather than healthily re-framing the emotional impact of the stressor. The General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) suggests that these over-thought, extended thoughts of hostility are immediate inputs to the system that increase rather than reduce distress. This structural pattern thus increases the conflict envelope and extends active arguments and, ultimately, the empirical tracking scores of interpersonal aggressions in the relationship.

On the other hand, the second main result showed that there was a negative correlation between expressive suppression and interpersonal aggression ($r = -.147$, $p = .020$) which successfully validated the third

research hypothesis. In mainstream individualistic western models, the suppression of emotions is often considered an overly reactive, dysfunctional and ineffective coping style, and is associated with significant psychological problems and impaired interpersonal functioning over time (Gross & John, 2003). But in the collectivistic, culturally conservative and structurally hierarchical social system of Pakistan, expressive suppression seems to fulfil a totally different protective role. In this local context, the suppression of the immediate affective expression of anger, the suppression of the overt facial expression of anger and the conscious restraint of the voice become a very functional and face saving coping mechanism. In the case of intimate conflict, behavioral containment is immediately used to prevent escalation of the conflict, to respect strict relational limits and to maintain domestic harmony. This mechanism is similar to the structural mechanics of the I³ Model of aggression (Finkel et al., 2012) that suggests that the enactment of aggressive behavior is largely driven by the ratio of impelling forces in the situation and internal inhibitory control mechanisms. Here, the expressive suppression is an important, culturally sanctioned inhibitory mechanism, which reduces the probability of an overt verbal and/or physical attack between partners.

Comparative testing between groups by gender (inferential) identified other significant differences that are indicative of the socio-cultural norms. Independent samples t-test models showed that male partners had significantly higher scores compared to female partners on total interpersonal aggression ($M = 83.55$ vs. $M = 80.35$; $p = .002$) and cognitive appraisal ($M = 26.61$ vs. $M = 24.18$; $p < .001$). The higher aggression profiles of males are consistent with the regional patriarchal norms as men are often given more freedom to express aggression or assert dominance, while women are heavily socially and culturally pressured to either limit or eliminate or internalize aggressive tendencies. This statistical variance is also likely to be influenced by a strong social desirability bias, in which the female participants consciously or unconsciously under-report aggressive tendencies because of fear of social stigma. Moreover, the greater male scores on cognitive appraisal indicate a more masculine style of thinking about emotional threats or using instrumental problem-solving schemas than of directly processing emotions in stressful relationships. Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference between men and women when it came to the actual use of expressive suppression ($p = .609$), suggesting that the use of emotional containment is similar for both genders. This homogeneity highlights the fact that the emotional restraint is a broader cultural and overarching mandate in Pakistani society, extending beyond gender boundaries and safeguarding the fundamental family dynamics. Finally, multi-variate demographic variance modeling using ANOVA indicated that formal education explains a small amount of variance in appraisal (5.2%), suppression (3.4%) and aggression (3.5%). This discovery strongly suggests that fundamental interpersonal relational behaviors are rooted in personality and in a fundamental, collective cultural heritage and not necessarily in formal academic achievement or degrees.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has important indigenous perspectives, but some structural limitations need to be highlighted to put the findings into perspective. First, the cross-sectional correlational research design does not allow for any conclusive causal relationships to be drawn from the variables that are monitored over time. Second, all the data were collected using self-report psychological instruments (ERQ and BPQ) that inevitably involved the risk of social desirability bias and subjective grading errors, especially in the evaluation of highly-sensitive topics like domestic hostility and interpersonal aggression. Finally, the use of convenience sampling methods in the urbanized twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi suggests that the current sample mainly represents highly educated, urban groups and findings of this study may not be directly generalized to rural, tribal or very traditional agrarian areas of Pakistan.

Future research efforts need to overcome these limitations by using a longitudinal or prospective research design to follow the course of these emotional strategies across various stages of a relationship. Multi-method evaluation strategies are also strongly encouraged, for example using self-report scales and

qualitative interviews, dyadic analysis models (simultaneous testing of both romantic partners), or behavioral observation matrices to gain a fuller picture of the dynamic reality of couple communication. Also, widening the sampling frame to comprise of a variety of socio-economic strata and rural population will significantly improve the national representativeness of the data.

Implications and Recommendations

The implications of the present study can be considered as very significant in practical and theoretical aspects for clinical psychologists, marriage counselors and family therapists working in the social context of South Asian countries. The clinical implications of these results are that local practitioners must be more attuned to indigenous cultural values and less to the uncritical and copy-paste application of western therapeutic models. In the context of a traditional Pakistani couple, the old-fashioned way of counselling, which promotes unrestrained emotional expression as the benchmark of a healthy relationship, can have the opposite effect: it can lead to a situation where small verbal disputes are magnified and can create a big crisis in the relationship. On the other hand, therapists should make healthy, structured behavioral restraint and conscious emotional containment highly effective and adaptive intervention strategies, and systematically develop them. These culture-specific mechanisms can be optimized, so couples can develop strategies to manage volatile triggers, defuse rising anger and foster more positive communication, and intentionally create stability and psychological safety in their relationship.

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