

Exploring the relationship between life satisfaction and love-relationship experiences under the light of cognitive emotion regulation and conflict resolution:  
The consequences of their interplays

**Abstract**

The research focuses on the associations between cognitive emotion regulation processes, conflict resolution strategies and life satisfaction of persons having different types of love and relationship experiences. Cognitive emotion regulation indicates cognitive reactions, related to emotional involvement, of our brain to an event that attempts to influence the elicited emotions or that event itself. The work is a cross-sectional study with 310 Bangladeshi participants with age range 20-34 (avg. 27). Several groups and sub-groups were formulated. For the overall sample, satisfaction with life had statistically significant positive correlation with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and conflict resolution styles, while it had statistically significant negative correlation with less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies ( $p < .01$ ). ANOVA and t-test analysis showed some crucial findings by comparing the primary groups and sub-groups of the study, regarding differences in life satisfaction and the differences in the uses of specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for various love experiences. Standard regression analysis of data also revealed that the model explained large portion of variance (50.40%) in life satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ). The findings are discussed along with the possible applications, limitations and recommendations for further studies.

*Keywords:* Cognitive emotion regulation; Conflict resolution strategies; Life satisfaction; Relationship experiences.

**1. Introduction**

One of the major goals of psychology as an applied field is to enhance our mental well-being. A major component of mental well-being is satisfaction with life (Andrews & Withey; 1976). Apart from that, physical well-being is also related to life satisfaction (Hirdes & Forbes; 1993). Life satisfaction is the cognitive evaluation of life where the evaluation is very broadly based- various stable personality variables and considerable situational or life circumstances variables are included in it, while current mood of a person is not significantly relevant in this context despite affecting momentary satisfaction to some extent (Pavot & Diener; 2008). Life satisfaction is not objectively determined as it is the subjective evaluation of a person's own life. The factors that influence it are bountiful. It is a mental judgmental process that involves the assessment of the quality of life based on one's unique set of criteria (Shin & Johnson; 1978). The present study focuses on the life satisfaction of people with various relationship experiences. In doing so it combines two very relevant variables with life satisfaction- cognitive emotion regulation strategies and conflict resolution styles and investigates the interrelation to look for new insights.

As cognitive-behavioral approaches are found to be effective in relationship issues and family-related counseling and therapy (Dattilio; 2005), studies involving cognitive processes with relationships can enrich our theoretical understandings as well as provide supportive data in applied areas.

Cognitive emotion regulation strategies can be defined as “cognitive responses to emotion eliciting events that consciously or unconsciously attempt to modify the magnitude and /or type of individual’s emotional experiences or the event itself” (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema; 2010). It is considered to be an important factor in determining mental well-being as well as the successful functioning ability (Thompson; 1991). These are related but separated from behavioral strategies (Garnefsky et al.; 2001). Researchers suggest that, considering the general definition of coping given by Monat and Lazarus (1991) as “an individual’s effort to master demands ( conditions of harm, threat or challenge) that are appraised ( or perceived) as exceeding or taxing his or her resources”, coping efforts by an individual are moderated by emotion regulation strategies (Garnefsky et al.; 2001). Since effective coping is positively related to overcoming the psychological distress of people (Bouchard et al.; 2004), adaptive emotion regulation is expected to be effective in coping with various issues. Men and women also differ in coping attempts, women, in general, were found to rely on more passive and emotion-focused cognitive emotion regulation strategies compared to men (Thoits; 1995). Contrast is found between currently depressed individuals and normal persons regarding emotion regulation strategies (Campbell-Sills & Barlow; 2007; Gross & John; 2003). Adaptive strategies are also related to adaptive functioning and well-being while non-adaptive ones are related to poorer well-being (Gross & Muñoz; 1995). The different factors of the cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire used in the study are associated with crucial psychological factors. Self-blaming is related to negative psychological conditions (Anderson et al.; 1994); a higher tendency in blaming others is associated with poorer emotional well-being (Tennant & Affleck; 1990); acceptance, planning, and positive reappraisal are positively related with coping, optimism and self-esteem while negatively related to anxiety (Carver et al.; 1989); ruminative style of coping tends to be associated with person’s depressive symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema et al.; 1994); catastrophizing style, in general, appears to be related significantly to maladaptation and emotional distress (Sullivan et al., 1995). Emotion regulation strategies are found to relate to levels of worry and there are also gender effects (Zlomke & Hahn; 2010). Emotion regulation is especially relevant for people with romantic relationships because both major and minor issues in close relationships significantly contribute to satisfaction from relation (Cramer; 2002).

Conflicts of different levels and types are part of almost everyone’s life and in relationships also. Cognitive interpretations are important in relational conflict, tendency to forgive results in better conflict resolution (Fincham et al.; 2004). Cooperative strategies in conflict management are

associated with positive mood and feelings (Montes, Rodriguez, and Serrano; 2010). Training for conflict resolution can be possible and it can be effective, it can be useful for enhancing couple's marital satisfaction (Sharif et al., 2013). Women are more likely to either avoid conflict or have temper tantrums in a conflicting situation while men are more likely to be competitive or exploitative (Frost, 1980). Different verbal and nonverbal behavior in conflict within a relationship can lead to a difference in satisfaction levels (Gottman, Markman, Notarius ; 1977). Cognitive aspects can be closely related to conflict-handling styles as an individual's belief of control over self can influence behavior in a situation (Bandura; 1977). Studies indicate that cooperation tendency can have a certain influence in life; cooperation has positive consequences – mutual benefit and interpersonal attraction (Deutsch; 1949). High self-control is associated with higher adjustment and fewer psychological problems (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone; 2004). In this study, a short conflict resolution style scale is taken to touch the behavioral aspect of coping while emotion regulation here was completely cognitive dependent.

Relationships can be classified by underlying cognitive emotion such as psychologist John Lee (1973) identified six broad styles of love based on cognitive processes involved. But the present research studied the participants by categorizing them concerning distinct objective relationship experiences and few subjective judgmental opinions. Studies have compared different types of relationship experiences. Comparing married and unmarried ones showed that married persons are likely to be more satisfied (Waite et al., 2003). Time is also an important aspect, according to the self-expansion model (Aron & Aron; 1986), love-related emotions are likely to decrease over time. For relationship dissolution, negative cognitions and emotional problems were found to be associated with love relationship break-ups (Sprecher et al., 1998). An impactful cognitive-emotional consequence of break-up is the alteration of self-concept (Slotter, Gardner & Finkle; 2010). In the case of divorce, it is believed that some personality traits can be associated with it (Teachman; 2008), and various factors which can be related to cognitive judgment are responsible for divorcing (Gigy & Kelly; 1993). The reasons for divorces in Bangladesh vary significantly for men and women (Nowshin; 2018), and extra-marital issues are a very common reason. Remarriage is generally considered as a positive approach after divorce, but there is no concluding evidence that remarriage brings enhanced well-being (Spanier & Furstenberg Jr; 1982). Remarried can be more unstable than the first marriage (Martin & Bumpass; 1989), thus underlying emotion regulation can be varied. In this study life satisfaction, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, and conflict resolution strategies were studied in respect to different relationship experiences.

An important concern for studies related to life satisfaction is that human needs are hierarchical (Maslow; 1943). The desire for love and belongingness generally becomes strongest only after the physiological and security needs become fulfilled. So economic background is considered in the study and only participants between certain income levels were taken. Also all the participants were heteronormative and their love relationships were heterosexual.

### ***1.1. Research objectives in the study***

Several objectives were set to clearly understand what the research was intended to search for. These were-

1. To investigate the correlations among life satisfaction, adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, cooperation, and self-control.  
Also looking for the correlations of the nine specific cognitive emotion regulation types with other variables.  
The hypothesis is that significant correlations will be found between these variables.
2. To look for the gender difference in life satisfaction and in the use of cognitive emotion regulation strategies.  
It is hypothesized that significant difference will be found in life satisfaction and some of the cognitive emotion regulation strategies.
3. To search for the difference in life satisfaction among the groups and sub-groups of the study.  
The hypothesis is that significant variations of life satisfactions will be found for groups and sub-groups.
4. To study the differences in the use of specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies among the participants sub-groups of the study.  
The hypothesis is that the groups and sub-groups will differ in the uses of different cognitive emotion regulation strategies.
5. To find out if life satisfaction could be predicted from relationship conditions, gender, adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, cooperation and self-control.  
The hypothesis is that life satisfaction will be significantly predicted from these variables.

## **2. Method**

### ***2.1. Participants***

A total of 310 participants who were Bangladeshi by nationality and had been living in Dhaka city were surveyed for this cross-sectional research (male 154, female 156). The age range was 20-34 (mean, 27). None of them were clinically diagnosed with any psychological disorder at the time of the study; some of them had visited counseling psychologist but the clinically diagnosed ones were excluded. The monthly household incomes of the participants were at least 40,000 BDT. All the participants were heterosexual and did not have unconventional sexual believes according to country's normal standard.

Five different universities and several departments from those were selected according to non-probability heterogeneous sampling to incorporate diversity in the sample. These were- University of Dhaka (DU), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET),

Dhaka Medical College (DMC), Jahangirnagar University (JU) and North-South University (NSU).

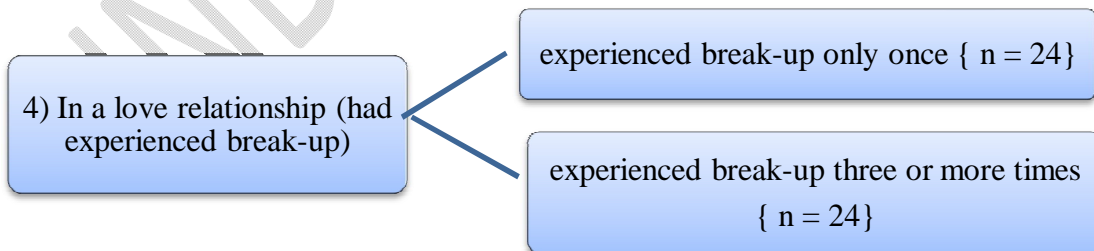
Both ongoing students and alumni of psychology, pharmacy, MBBS, CSE, economics, and political science were included. Both convenient and snowball sampling methods (because of the difficulties associated with finding divorced and remarried persons to participate) were used to collect participants from those departments. The maximum level of confidentiality of gathered data was ensured. The inclusion criteria followed were- must live in Dhaka, aged between 20-35 years, be either current student or alumnus of reputed university, having overall family income of at least 40,000 BDT, should not be diagnosed clinically for psychological issues at the time of data collection.

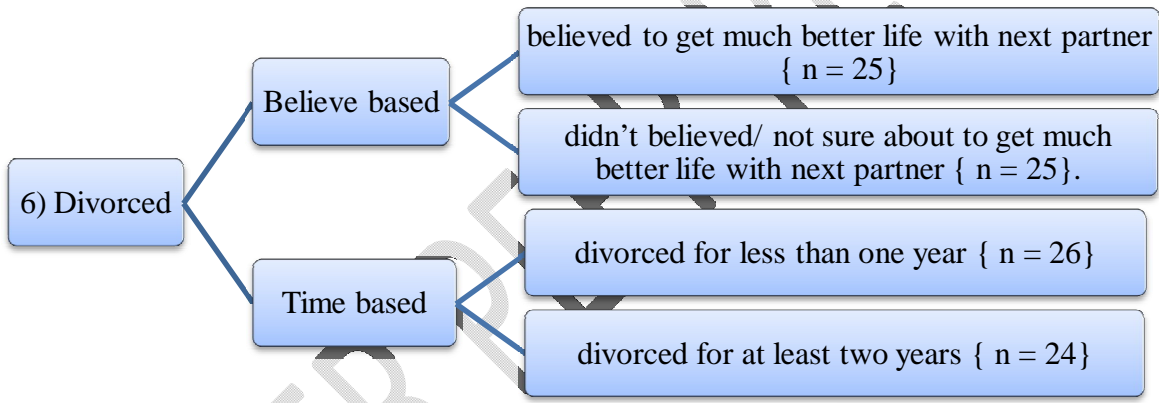
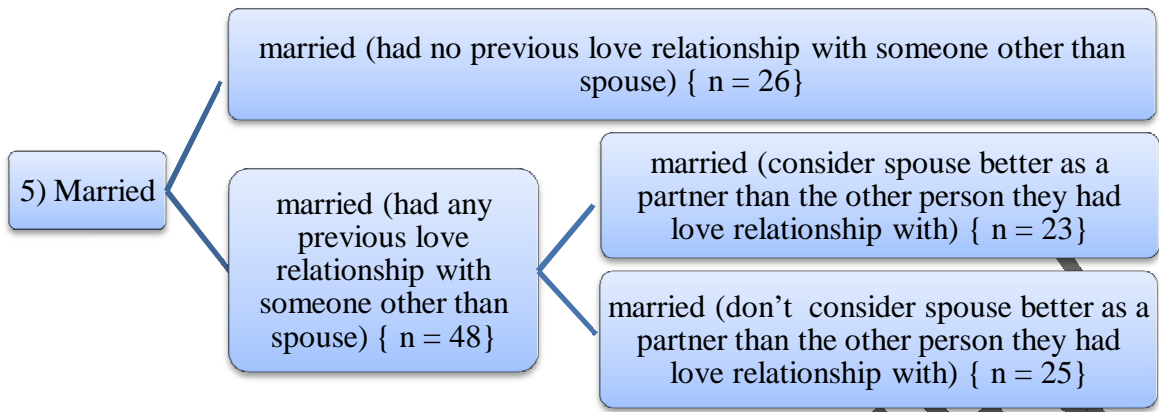
Based on relationship conditions there were seven main groups in the research-

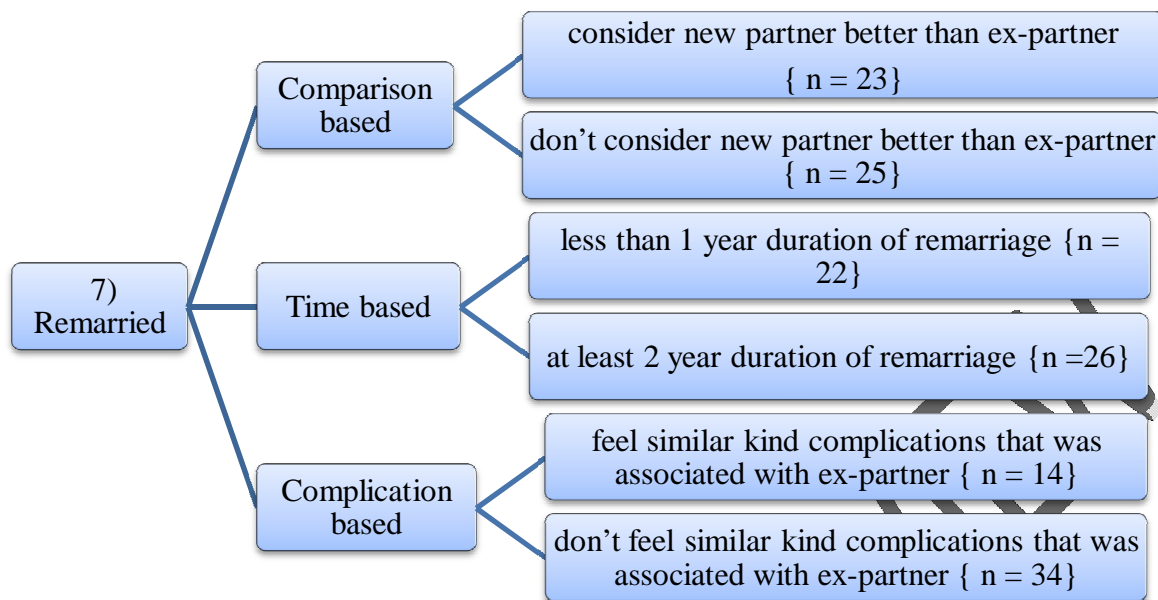
- 1) Single (never had any love relationship), [  $n = 30$  ]
- 2) Single (had experienced a break-up), [  $n = 30$  ]
- 3) In a love relationship (never experienced break-up), [  $n = 30$  ]
- 4) In a love relationship (had experienced break-up), [  $n = 48$  ]
- 5) Married, [  $n = 74$  ]
- 6) Divorced (claimer), [  $n = 50$  ]
- 7) Remarried, [  $n = 48$  ].

There were sub-groups within the last four of these main groups, they are shown with charts. Within the data collection process, the number of male and female participants for sub-groups was taken almost equal in number.

Flow chart 1 : Flow chart showing different relationship standard







## 2.2. Measures

### 2.2.1. Question sheet for current relationship status

For determining participant's positions within the seven primary groups and further on any sub-groups (if applicable), a questionnaire sheet in the Bengali language was provided. Participants had to put tick marks on the options given on the relationship related questions. Age, sex, and family income were also asked in it.

Adapted versions of three scales were used. The scales were-

### 2.2.2. The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ)

The original scale of CERQ was developed by Garnefski et al. (2001). Nine cognitive emotion regulation strategies (sub-scale) were distinguished within the CERQ on a theoretical and empirical basis; each has 4 items and refers to what someone thinks after the experience of threatening or stressful events. It is a 36-item questionnaire. The scale measures cognitive emotion regulation on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The subscales can be grouped into adaptive and less adaptive emotion regulation strategies. Acceptance, Positive Refocusing, Refocus on Planning, Positive Reappraisal, and Putting into Perspective are in the adaptive group. The less adaptive strategies include Self-blame, Rumination, Catastrophizing, and Blaming Others. For analysis purposes, nine subscales scores can be obtained separately by adding up four items (range: from 4 to 20). The CERQ has a satisfactory level of internal consistency within sub-scales, high test-retest reliabilities, good factorial validity, discriminative properties and construct validity (Garnefski et al. 2002).

Adaptation within Bangladeshi culture: The Bengali version of CERQ was adapted by Dr. A.K.M. Rezaul Karim (Professor, Department of Psychology, Dhaka University) and his student.

The reliability of the Bengali version of the full CERQ was found 0.78. Five judges reported its satisfactory level of validity ( Karim et al., 2013).

### **2.2.3. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)**

The original “Satisfaction with Life Scale” (SWLS) was developed by ED Diener, Robert A Emmons, Randy J. Larsen, and Sharon Griffin (1985) to assess subjective life satisfaction. The 5-items SWLS, as per a body of research on subjective well-being, refers to the cognitive judgmental aspects of general life satisfaction. Each item is scored from 1 to 7 representing from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Item scores are summed for a total score, which ranges from 5 to 35, with higher scores reflecting more satisfaction with life. The SWLS reveals the individual’s judgment of his or her quality of life. The SWLS was developed on a sample of 176 undergraduates from the University of Illinois. The mean was 23.50 with a standard deviation of 6.43. The researchers also report a mean of 25.80 for a sample of 53 elderly citizens. The instrument’s internal consistency has been very good with an alpha of .87. The instrument appears to have excellent test-retest reliability with a correlation of .82 for a two-month period, suggesting it is very stable.

Adaptation within Bangladeshi culture: The Bengali version of SWLS was adapted by Q. S. M. Ilyas (2002). Significant correlation between English and Bangla versions [  $r = .625$ ,  $P < 0.0005$  ] were found when administered to 30 subjects with a gap of 7 days ( Ilyas, 2002).

### **2.2.4. The Conflict Resolution – Individual Protective Factors Index**

The original scale was developed by Phillips and Springer (1992) to measure two conflict resolution skills: cooperation and self-control. It has 12 items, 6 for cooperation and 6 for self-control. Each item has 4 response options, ranging from YES=1, yes=2, no=3, NO=4. A higher score indicates more cooperation and self-control. The internal consistency was .65. The scale measures conflict handling on a general level. The Bengali adaptation was made by Sharmin and Karim in 2012 at the University of Dhaka. Its reliability and validity were found satisfactory among a sample of undergraduate students in Dhaka University (Sharmin and Karim).

## **2.3. Data Analysis**

Different types of analyses were conducted using SPSS.

*Correlation* - Pearson bivariate coefficient was measured in search of the first research question. Before, the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity was tested by normal Q-Q plots, partial regression plots and scatter plots. In the correlation fourteen (5+9) scores of the participants were used- adaptive cognitive emotion regulation score of CERQ, less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation scores of CERQ, cooperation strategy score, self-control strategy score and life satisfaction score and nine subscales measures of CERQ.

*ANOVA and t-tests* - For comparison of groups and sub-groups- to find gender difference and relationship condition difference in scores on the scales and sub-scales of the questionnaire, several t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores depending on- gender, marital status, break-up event and duration (converted into categorical). Levene’s tests were used with t-test to assess the assumption of equality of variances.

*Regression analysis* - In order to predict life satisfaction from cognitive emotion regulation, conflict regulation strategies and love relationship was the main goal of the study so, multiple regression analysis was performed. Use of adaptive and less-adaptive Linearity was tested with partial regression plots and scatter plots, and multicollinearity was checked by predictor's tolerance.

2-Way ANOVA – To see the effect of gender and different relationship experiences simultaneously, 2-Way ANOVA was performed and are shown in graphs.

### 3. Results

#### *List 1 : Participant's demographic information summery*

Age	Household income	Residential place	Latest educational institution
20 - 34 years Avg. 27	40,000 – 1,00,000 BDT/month	Dhaka city (for at least last 5 years)	DU, BUET, DMC, JU, NSU

#### *3.1. Correlation over whole sample*

Life satisfaction was significantly correlated with all other variables ( $p < .01$ ). Cooperation and self-control also were significantly correlated with the other variables. Satisfaction with life was significantly positively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies (.545), cooperation style of conflict resolution (.394) and self-control style of conflict resolution (.367), while it had significant negative correlation (-.579) with less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies ( $p < .01$ ). Out of the four less-adaptive strategies rumination had the highest negative correlation (-.512) followed by catastrophizing (-.442). Positive reappraisal (.493) and putting into perspective (.466) had two of the highest correlations with life satisfaction among the adaptive strategies. Both adaptive sub-scales and less-adaptive sub-scales had significant positive correlations within themselves. Some adaptive and less-adaptive strategies had significant negative correlation (refocus on planning and catastrophizing:  $r = -.275$ ) while some didn't have (putting into perspective and self-blame:  $r = -.026$ ). The results obtained from SPSS outputs of Pearson bivariate correlations are shown in Table 1.

#### *Table 1*

Pearson product moment (bivariate) correlations on total score of SWL, nine sub-scale scores of CERQ, adaptive and less-adaptive scores of CERQ, cooperation and self-control scores of conflict resolution scale (total 14 different scores) over the total participant group

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Self-blame													
2. Acceptance	-.074												
3. Rumination	.417**	-.072											
4. Positive refocus	-.173**	.202**	-.127*										
5. Refocus on plan	-.077	.381**	-.244**	.365**									
6. Positive reappraisal	-.192**	.348**	-.191**	.387**	.531**								
7. Put into perspective	-.026	.440**	-.238**	.223**	.531**	.477**							
8. Catastrophizing	.371**	-.064	.492**	-.252**	-.275**	-.279**	-.139*						
9. Blaming other	.140*	-.103	.445**	-.206**	-.251**	-.143*	-.229**	.441**					
10. Cooperation	-.254**	.233**	-.271**	.244**	.281**	.351**	.297**	-.283**	-.320**				
11. Self-control	-.209**	.144**	-.286**	.196**	.255**	.221**	.175**	-.207**	-.307**	.228**			
12. Adaptive strategy	-.154**	.653**	-.245**	.604**	.782**	.788**	.748**	-.280**	-.257**	.394**	.277**		
13. Less-adaptive strategy	.647**	-.104	.801**	-.259**	-.290**	-.271**	-.215**	.800**	.686**	-.380**	-.339**	-.320**	
14. Life satisfaction	-.381**	.277**	-.512**	.281**	.411**	.493**	.466**	-.442**	-.371**	.394**	.367**	.545**	-.579**

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ; \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### 3.2. Overall gender difference

Comparing mean scores by t-tests revealed major gender differences in three adaptive strategies-refocus on planning, positive reappraisal and putting into perspective, and as a result in overall adaptive strategy. Life satisfaction was slightly higher for male but that was not significant.

**Table 2.1.**

t-test: comparing gender difference for SWL scores and three adaptive strategies

		Mean	SD	F	Sig	t	df	Sig
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	Male	22.59	5.41	1.29	.256	.595	308	.553
	Female	22.24	4.92					
<b>Refocus on planning</b>	Male	15.74	2.68	.16	.689	2.293	308	.022
	Female	15.03	3.03					
<b>Positive reappraisal</b>	Male	15.37	3.20	1.45	.229	2.094	308	.037
	Female	14.57	3.50					

### 3.3. Comparison of SWL scores

#### 3.3.1. Primary groups

Output for ANOVA ( $F(23.71,199.29) = 8.404, p < .001$ ) revealed that there was significant difference in life satisfaction within the seven main participants groups. Post-hoc (Tukey) analysis indicated that 'In a love relationship (never experienced break-up)' group was significantly higher in satisfaction with life than five of the other six groups. 'Single (never had any love relationship)' group was slightly low in life satisfaction than 'In a love relationship (never experienced break-up)' group. Both these groups were significantly higher than the rest other groups. Apart from this, married participants had significant higher mean than both divorced and remarried groups and single having experienced a break-up group. Although, the remarried group had slightly higher mean than the divorced group, but statistically it was not significant.

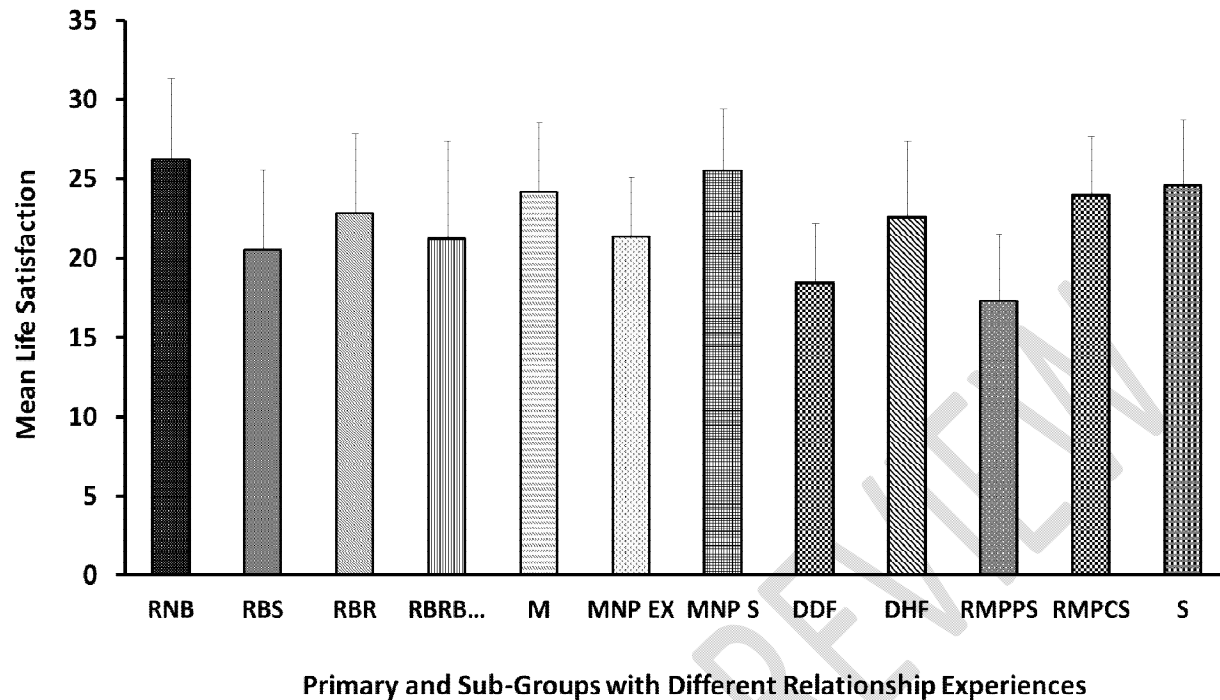
**Table 2.2.**

t-test: comparing mean life satisfaction of married, divorced and remarried participants

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	Married	74	23.66	4.30	1.10	.296	4.041	112	.000
	Divorced	50	20.30	4.88					
	Married	74	23.66	4.30	2.14	.145	3.655	120	.000
	Remarried	48	20.50	5.18					

### ***3.3.2. Graphical representations of life satisfaction: primary groups (which are not divided into sub-groups) and sub-groups***

To visualize the scores in life satisfaction within relevant primary groups and sub-groups of participants, a graphical representation is shown here. According to this, persons with love relationship and never experiencing break-up had the highest life satisfaction and persons who are remarried and consider their ex-partners as better than current partners had the lowest life satisfaction.



**Figure 1: Mean life satisfactions of participants belong to different primary group (which are not divided into sub-groups) and sub-groups. [RNB= in a love relationship (never experienced break-up), RBS= Single (had experienced a break-up), RBR= in a love relationship (experienced break-up only once), RBRB...= In a love relationship (experienced break-up more than two times), M= married (had no previous love relationship with someone other than spouse), MNP EX= married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had love relationship with), MNP S= married (consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had love relationship with), DDF= divorced (didn't believed/ not sure about to get much better life with next partner), DHF= divorced (believed to get much better life with next partner ), RMPPS= remarried (don't consider new partner better than ex-partner), RMPCS= remarried (consider new partner better than ex-partner), S= Single (never had any love relationship)]**

### ***3.4. Comparison of the sub-groups of the study***

#### ***3.4.1. In a love relationship (experienced break-up only once) vs. In a love relationship (experienced break-up more than two times)***

Life satisfaction although not found to be significantly different, the mean was higher for ‘In a love relationship (experienced break-up only once)’ group. Refocus on Planning and Blaming others, both were higher for ‘In a love relationship (experienced break-up more than two times)’ group.

**Table 3.1.**

t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for In a love relationship (experienced break-up only once) and In a love relationship (experienced break-up more than two times) sub-groups.

		Mean	SD	F	Sig	t	df	Sig
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	22.83	5.05	1.16	.287	.975	46	.335
	B	21.25	6.14					
<b>Refocus on Planning</b>	A	14.12	2.92	.349	.558	-3.14	46	.003
	B	16.66	2.68					
<b>Blaming others</b>	A	9.96	3.08	1.62	.209	-3.07	46	.004
	B	13.04	3.82					

*\*A- In a love relationship (experienced break-up only once), n = 24*

*\*B- In a love relationship (experienced break-up three or more times), n = 24*

**3.4.2. Married (consider spouse better as a partner than the other person they had a love relationship with) vs. Married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the other person they had a love relationship with)**

Two groups were compared here. Difference between ‘Married (consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with)’ and ‘Married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with)’. The former one scored higher on life satisfaction, and positive reappraisal while the latter group along with scoring lower on life satisfaction, showed increased use of three less-adaptive strategies- self-blame, rumination, and blaming others.

**Table 3.2.**

t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for Married (consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with) and Married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with) sub-groups.

		Mean	SD	F	Sig	t	df	Sig
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	25.52	3.89	.090	.765	3.76	46	.000
	B	21.40	3.69					
<b>Self-blame</b>	A	10.78	2.62	.205	.653	-3.20	46	.002
	B	13.12	2.42					
<b>Rumination</b>	A	11.04	3.68	2.75	.104	-3.30	46	.002
	B	14.04	2.54					
<b>Positive reappraisal</b>	A	15.17	4.11	14.58	.001	2.12	46	.039
	B	13.24	1.85					
<b>Blaming others</b>	A	10.82	2.94	1.27	.256	-2.55	46	.014
	B	12.72	2.15					

\* A- (consider spouse better as a partner than the other person they had a love relationship with), n = 23 \*B- Married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the other person they had a love relationship with), n =25

3.4.2. (Graph) Comparing the change in mean life satisfaction scores for these two sub-groups taking the effect of gender into account.

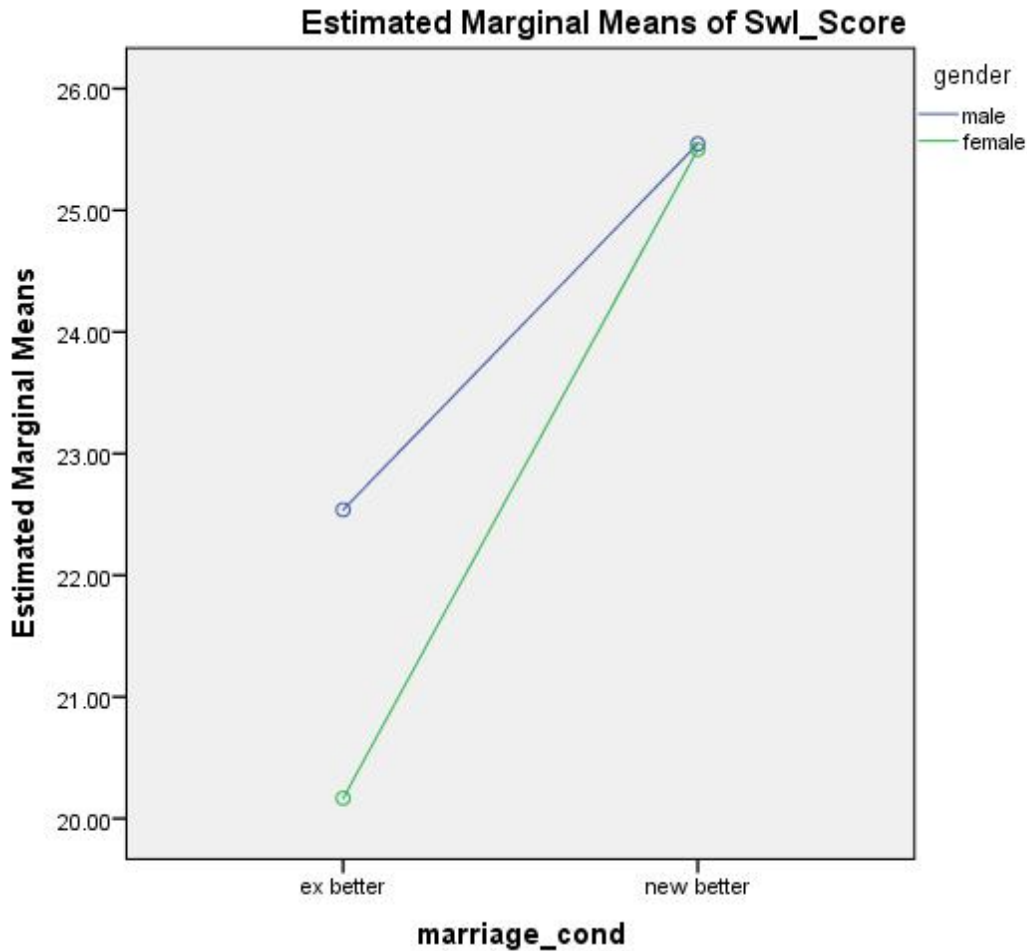


Fig 2: Estimated marginal means in marriage condition

Average SWLS score for male and female who consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with (new better) and who don't consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with (ex better).

### 3.4.3. Divorced (believed to get much better life with next partner) vs. Divorced (didn't believed/ not sure about to get much better life with next partner)

Comparing two different believe sets about post-divorced life revealed the differences in life satisfaction and cognitive emotion regulation of those two groups. Believing about getting much better partner was also related with higher life satisfaction and higher Positive reappraisal, while being not sure about that or negative believe were more associated with higher use of self-blame and catastrophizing.

Table 3.3.

t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for Divorced (believed to get much better life with next partner) and Divorced (didn't believed/ not sure about to get much better life with next partner) sub-groups.

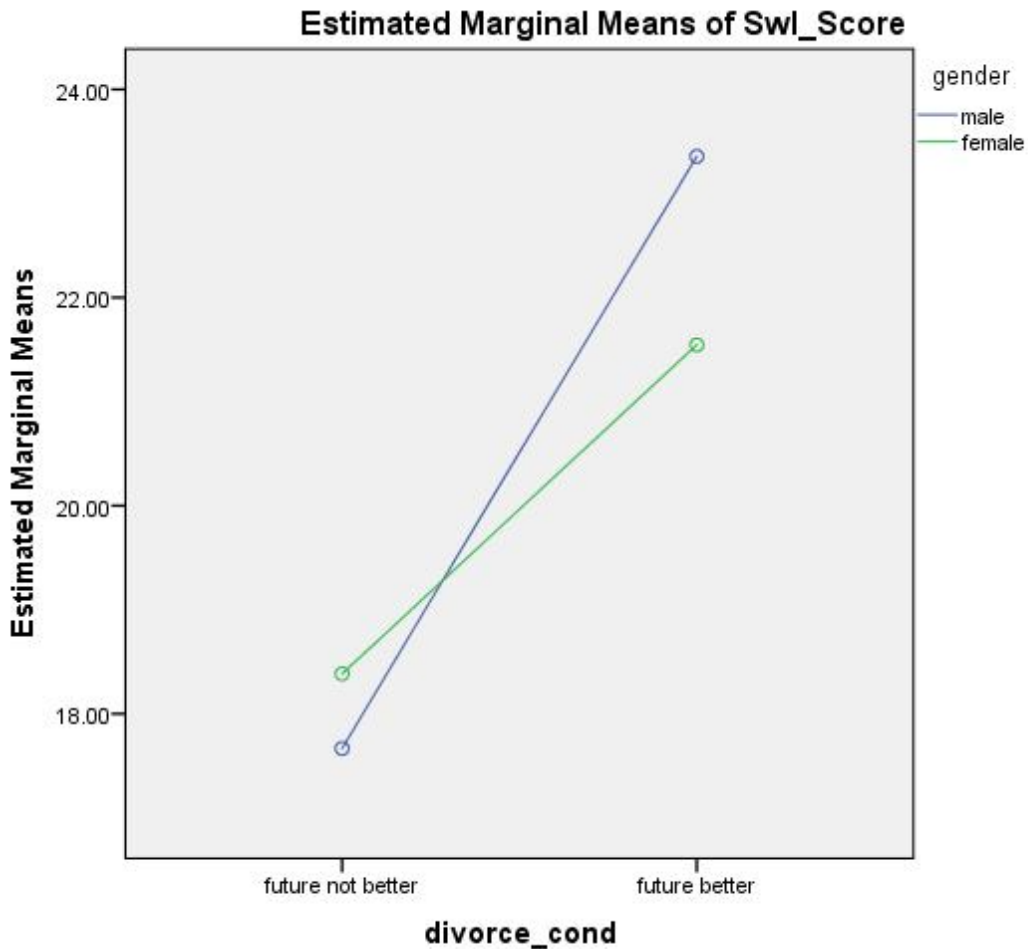
		Mean	SD	F	Sig	t	df	Sig
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	22.56	3.81	2.65	.110	3.66	48	.001
	B	18.04	4.84					
<b>Self-blame</b>	A	10.60	2.70	.005	.945	-2.61	48	.012
	B	12.56	2.59					
<b>Positive reappraisal</b>	A	15.08	2.59	.276	.601	3.21	48	.002
	B	12.68	2.68					
<b>Catstrophizing</b>	A	10.68	3.32	1.08	.303	-3.84	48	.000
	B	14.00	2.75					

\* A- Divorced (believed to get much better life with next partner), n = 25

\* B- Divorced (didn't believed/ not sure about to get much better life with next partner), n =25

3.4.3. (Graph) Comparing the change in mean life satisfaction scores for these two sub-groups taking the effect of gender into account.

**Fig.3 Estimated marginal means in divorce condition**



Average SWLS score for male and female who were divorced and believed to get much better life with next partner (future better) and who were divorced and didn't believe/ not sure about to get much better life with next partner (future not better).

#### **3.4.4. Divorced (for less than 1 year) vs. Divorced (for at least 2 years)**

Since the current study is cross-sectional, time differences can't be attributable to change with time for certain category of person. But it can still provide some further research ideas as there is scarcity of major longitudinal study of divorced people tested with CERQ.

The relatively newly divorced group was significantly higher at blaming others while the group divorced for at least 2 years showed very close to significantly higher ( $p=.086$ ) in putting into perspective strategy. Out of 26 'Divorced (for less than 1 year)' participants, 15 (57.7%) were from 'Divorced (believed to get much better life with next partner)' group, and out of 24

‘Divorced (for at least 2 years)’ participants 10 (41.6%) were from ‘Divorced (didn’t believed/not sure about to get much better life with next partner)’ group.

**Table 3.4.**

t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for Divorced (for less than 1 year) and Divorced (for at least 2 years) sub-groups.

		Mean	SD	F	Sig	t	df	Sig
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	20.57	4.76	.166	.686	.414	48	.681
	B	20.00	5.09					
<b>Putting into perspective</b>	A	13.80	2.34	.625	.433	-1.75	48	.086
	B	15.08	2.79					
<b>Blaming others</b>	A	13.11	2.64	2.226	.124	2.92	48	.005
	B	10.58	3.46					

\* A- Divorced (for less than 1 year), n = 26

\* B- Divorced (for at least 2 years), n =24

**3.4.5. Remarried (consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner) vs. Remarried (do not consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner)**

There were plenty of differences between these two groups. Considering current partner better was associated with significantly higher life satisfaction, acceptance, positive reappraisal, and Putting into perspective, and significant lower rumination, catastrophizing and blaming others.

**Table 3.5.**

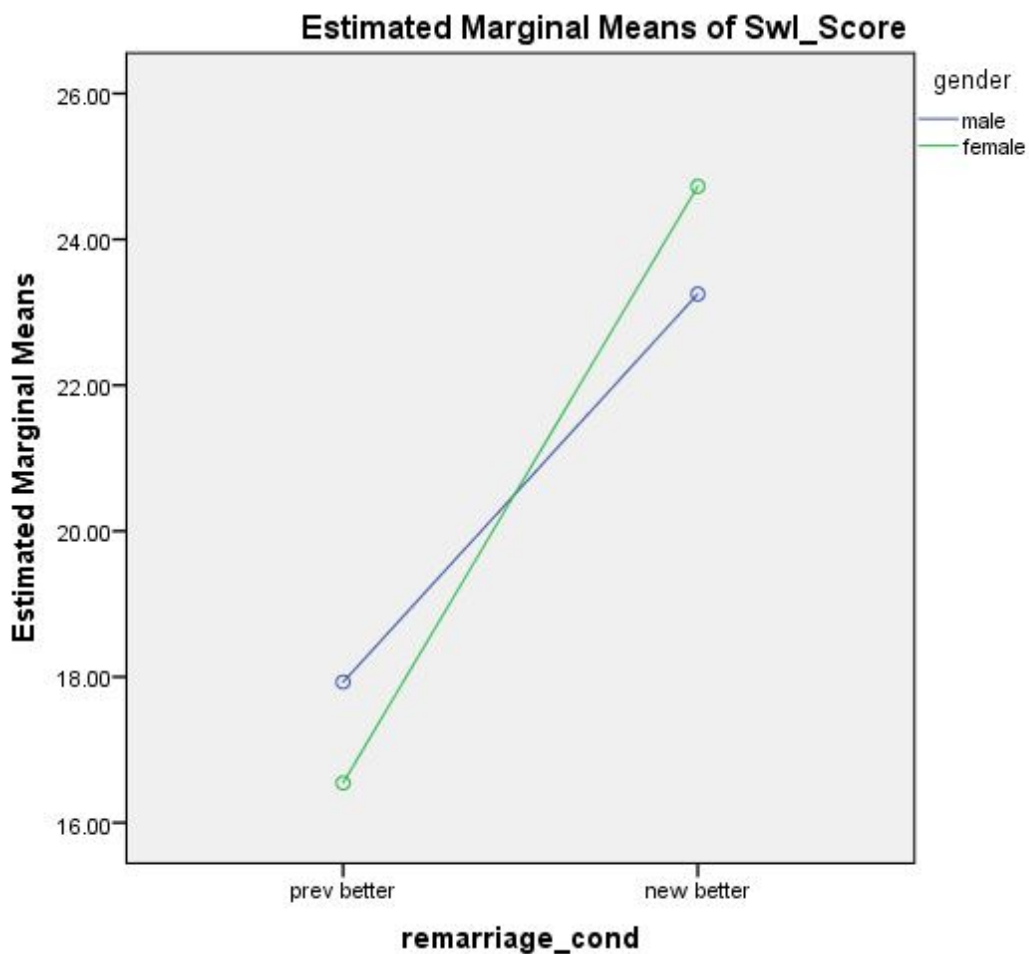
t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for Remarried (consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner) and Remarried (do not consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner) sub-groups.

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	23.95	3.75	.178	.675	5.75	46	.000
	B	17.32	4.20					
<b>Acceptance</b>	A	14.78	2.31	.001	.989	2.27	46	.027
	B	13.32	2.13					
<b>Rumination</b>	A	11.82	1.89	7.07	.011	-2.74	46	.009
	B	13.80	2.92					
<b>Positive reappraisal</b>	A	15.47	2.31	.016	.899	2.97	46	.005
	B	13.48	2.32					
<b>Putting into perspective</b>	A	14.95	1.89	1.08	.302	2.96	46	.005
	B	13.20	2.17					
<b>Catastrophizing</b>	A	10.43	1.85	1.33	.254	-4.06	46	.000
	B	13.20	2.73					
<b>Blaming others</b>	A	10.08	2.42	.001	.977	-3.62	46	.001
	B	12.60	2.38					

\* **A- Remarried (consider current prtner as better choice than ex-partner), n = 23**

\* **B- Remarried (do not consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner), n =25**

3.4.5. (Graph) Comparing the change in mean life satisfaction scores for these two sub-groups taking the effect of gender into account.



**Fig.4 : Estimated marginal means in re-marriage condition**

Average SWLS score for male and female who were remarried and considered current prtner as better choice than ex-partner (new better) and who were remarried and did not consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner (prev better).

**3.4.6. Remarried (less than 1 year duration of remarriage) vs. Remarried (at least 2 year duration of remarriage)**

Differences were also found for time duration of remarried participants. ‘Remarried (less than 1 year duration of remarriage)’ group were very close to significantly higher at positive refocusing ( $p=.075$ ) on the other hand ‘Remarried (at least 2 year duration of remarriage)’ were higher at acceptance and putting into perspective. Similar to the that of divorced participants, this difference is not any concluding evidence rather an indication of the necessity of further study for remarried participants with CERQ and life satisfaction.

**Table 3.6.**

t-test: comparing mean differences in SWL and specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies for Remarried (less than 1 year duration of remarriage) and Remarried (at least 2 year duration of remarriage) sub-groups.

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Life satisfaction</b>	A	21.18	5.27	.051	.822	.836	46	.408
	B	19.92	5.12					
<b>Acceptance</b>	A	13.13	1.35	7.32	.010	-2.57	46	.013
	B	14.76	2.70					
<b>Positive refocusing</b>	A	15.22	2.36	.348	.558	1.82	46	.075
	B	14.03	2.14					
<b>Putting into perspective</b>	A	13.18	2.17	.676	.415	-2.63	46	.012
	B	14.76	2.00					

\* A- Remarried (less than 1 year duration of remarriage), n = 22

\* B- Remarried (at least 2 year duration of remarriage), n =26

#### **3.4.7. Remarried (feel similar kind complications that was associated with ex-partner) vs. Remarried (don't feel similar kind complications that was associated with ex-partner)**

Based on the question was asked to the remarried participants- 'do you feel that the similar complications that were associated with your ex-partner, are also present in this marriage?' two different answering groups were compared. Out of 48 remarried participants 34 of them replied in the negative to that question.

Only two participants who had similar complications belonged to 'Remarried (consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner)' group and twelve others with similar complications belonged to Remarried '(do not consider current partner as better choice than ex-partner)' group. Because of small numbers it is not possible to analyze but the indication is that most of the time having similar complication in remarriage might lead to negative judgment about new partner.

### **3.4. Regression**

Table 4 shows the standard multiple regression result.

**Table 4**

Regression analysis: Prediction of life satisfaction with Gender, relationship condition (primary groups), adaptive and less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and two conflict resolution strategies

Predictors	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$		
(Constant)	13.31	3.306		4.029	.000
Gender	-.328	.421	-.032	-.779	.437
Relationship condition	-.311	.097	-.129	-3.22	.001
Adaptive strategies	.173	.022	.359	7.874	.000
Less-adaptive strategies	-.098	.048	-.185	-8.781	.000
Cooperation	.175	.106	.075	1.650	.100
Self-control	.243	.100	.106	2.428	.016

$R = .717, R^2 = .514, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .504 (F = 53.426, p < .001)$

The model was significant and it explained 50.4% of the variance in life satisfaction (adjusted  $R^2 = .504$ ;  $F = 53.426, p < .001$ ). The table shows that life satisfaction has a functional relationship with these variables. Relationship condition, self-control, adaptive strategies and less-adaptive strategies were strong predictors. Cooperation was a weak predictor and gender was non-significant.

#### 4. Discussions

The results have brought out some considerable findings. Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, cooperation, and self-control style of conflict resolution were strongly positively correlated with life satisfaction, while it had a high negative correlation with less-adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Even though several different primary groups and various sub-groups were purposively included in the study, these relatively large correlations

suggest that these variables are deeply connected. It can also be that for love-related relationships, cognitive emotion regulation and ways of conflict resolution play important roles in the satisfaction of life. Each of the nine sub-scales had a statistically significant correlation with life satisfaction. All the subscales were correlated with anxiety and depressive symptoms when developed (Garnefsky et al.; 2001) and here they all correlated with life satisfaction also. Positive reappraisal had the highest positive correlation ( $r=.493$ ) while rumination had the highest negative correlation ( $r=-.512$ ). The items of the positive reappraisal sub-scales- ‘I think I can learn something...’, ‘I look for the positive sides...’ perhaps fit best for interpersonal emotional involvement related situations. Rumination is a very important concept to look for in love relational situations and even a special rumination questionnaire has been developed recently for it (Senkans et al.; 2016). These sub-scales also significantly correlated with two conflict resolution styles. Blaming others had the highest negative correlation with cooperation ( $r=-.311$ ) and possibly relatively lower cooperation with others is linked to blaming others to some degree. Various sub-scales have significant correlations between themselves. These results support the first hypothesis of the study.

Results for gender differences showed that overall males had slightly higher life satisfaction than females but not quite significant. But there was a significant difference in two adaptive strategies – refocus on planning and positive reappraisal. It was understood from the studies that women fell short compared to men in using active coping strategies (Vingerhoets & Van Heck; 1990). Similar results were also found in a recent study in Iran using CERQ and SWLS (Esmailinasab et al., 2016), but women were slightly more satisfied there. Knowing these differences women themselves can be aware of their emotion regulation in certain situations. The second hypothesis of the study is proven by the results.

The seven primary participant groups differed significantly by life satisfaction. Two groups were mostly different from the rest other groups- those who were never involved in relationships and those in a relationship in addition to never experiencing break-up had scored significantly higher in life satisfaction than any other participant groups. Distressful events, independent of self-esteem can cause depressive symptoms (Orth et al.; 2009). Not experiencing any kind of relationship dissolution might cause these groups to feel less dissatisfied with life on average. Also, relationship dissolution is not only a negative event itself it can be negative by creating other problems as sleep disturbance and disorganized behavior (Field et al.; 2011). Also, married persons were significantly more satisfied with life than divorced persons overall. Since divorce is closely associated with more occurrence of depressive symptoms (Wade & Pevalin; 2004), such difference is expected. Although married ones were also higher at life satisfaction than remarried ones, the difference is not quite significant. Similarly, remarried participants had higher mean life satisfaction than the divorced participants but not statistically significant.

From the graphical presentation it was learnt that in general, married persons without any previous relations were higher at satisfaction with life than married persons who don’t consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had love relationship with, while slightly lower

than married persons who do consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had love relationship with, and interestingly their scores were very similar with persons who never experienced any relationships. A different age range in study could have shown another result. The lowest score among all was for the remarried and not considering current partner better than ex-partner group, even lower than that of divorced ones without believe of better future partner. These outcomes of the study provide significant evidences for accepting the third hypothesis.

The most interesting outcomes were found in various sub-group comparisons. Firstly, there was a comparison between two groups both in a relationship, different by the number of previous break-ups, 'In a love relationship (experienced break-up only once)' and 'In a love relationship (experienced break-up more than two times)'. The idea behind this selection was that it is seen that some young males and females do experience break-ups many times and easily get into another new relationship after a break-up. Being not significantly different in life satisfaction this participant group scored higher in an adaptive strategy - refocus on planning, and higher also in a less-adaptive strategy - blaming others. More use of refocusing on planning predicts enhanced resilience which can help in anxiety and depression (Min et al.; 2013). A higher score on planning for persons with several break-ups and still being in a relationship might indicate that this adaptive strategy might be a helpful factor for them to mitigate the adverse effects of relationship break-ups. Blaming others more is perhaps one of the defense mechanism for them.

Marriages and married lives in Bangladesh are influenced by so many factors. Considering spouse as a better choice than a previous romantic partner or not (for those who had) is a potentially impactful cognitive-emotional process. Significantly low life satisfaction score from the participants not considering spouse as the better choice was found along with three less-adaptive strategies used more by them- self-blame, blaming others, and rumination. They also used positive reappraisal less than the other sub-group. It is safe to assume that not considering a spouse as a better choice than the previous partner is somewhat associated with particular dissatisfaction regarding the marriage, and more often they fall victim to using less-adaptive emotion regulation strategies. Here the graph showed that females were more dissatisfied in this type of situations compared to males. It is interesting because when males and females thought their spouses as better, the life satisfaction level were almost the same. Comparing both qualitative data and case studies could be helpful to describe this pattern.

Believing about post-divorce future life was found to be an important aspect. It showed a significantly lower life satisfaction score for the ones who didn't have believe that they would live more happily with a future partner. They had also higher self-blame and catastrophizing scores. The group that had confidence over their future lives used a positive reappraisal strategy more than the other group. Although the divorced participants initiated the divorce, it's most probable that more often than not divorce was the last option for them. Personality traits have some potential effect on divorce (Eysenck; 1980) so it probably can also affect divorce-related thoughts. Two different believes were associated with much greater changes in SWLS scores for males compared to females. It is probable that although both male and female were affected similarly with different believe, the strength of opposite believes vary more for males.

Blaming self is found as a strong factor in both ‘Married(don’t consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with)’ and ‘Divorced (didn’t believe/ not sure about to get a much better life with next partner)’. This may be because their sense of marriage or divorce as a negative life event had increased the characterological blaming of self, as indicated in Peterson et al. (1981) study, not necessarily that self-blaming tendency is responsible for lower life satisfaction.

When the period of being divorced was compared, the comparatively newly divorced ones were higher at blaming others than the ones divorced for a relatively long period. The latter group was higher at putting into perspective. This may reflect the newly divorced person’s tendency to blame the partner and with the longer passage of time, the focus changes to think that situation somewhat differently. Blaming tendency can potentially decrease satisfaction in relationships as it can decrease positive feelings (Zuk, 1984). Here the study didn’t analyze the reasons behind divorce so better understanding should come after analyzing them in new studies.

Comparing between ‘Remarried (consider new partner better than ex-partner)’ and ‘Remarried (don’t consider new partner better than ex-partner)’ groups revealed several differences between these two. Remarriage although not very rare in this country but generally, some compromises are needed to make in second marriage compare to that of the first one. The significantly low life satisfaction score from the group who can’t consider the new partner better is probably by interaction from both own emotional issues and social aspects regarding it. Three less-adaptive strategies were found to be used more by them- blaming others, rumination, and catastrophizing. The other sub-group used putting into perspective, acceptance, and positive appraisal more than the second one. Women’s marital quality improvement in remarriage was found to be a good predictor of life satisfaction (Bourassa et al.; 2015). Important note is that women were more dissatisfied when considered ex-partner better than their male counterparts and were more satisfied than men when considered new partner better. Social pressure for remarried women is more for women than men in the country, which might have played a role here.

Rumination was common for both ‘Married (don’t consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with)’ and ‘Remarried (don’t consider new partner better than ex-partner)’ sub-groups. It is believed that some factors may contribute to people’s tendency to ruminate; more stressors and lack of high-quality social support are two of them (Nolen-Hoeksema et al.; 1994). Since marriage (also for remarriage) is considered as the deepest social bond and the partner is supposed to be the highest priority along with children for anyone in Bangladeshi culture, dissatisfaction with marriage can be very stressful in itself and also influence a lot of other stressors to affect. Social supports for such issues are also inconsistent. So these two issues might affect these people to involve more in rumination strategies.

Higher catastrophizing scores were found in ‘Divorced (don’t consider their divorce as the proper decision)’ and ‘Remarried (don’t consider new partner better than ex-partner)’ sub-groups. Catastrophizing is described as “the most important factor in poor coping both in laboratory and pain appears to be the presence of catastrophizing rather than differences in adaptive coping strategies” (Turk & Rudy; 1992). The results suggest that this less-adaptive strategy is particularly relevant for divorce and remarriage-related emotional regulations.

Studies had shown that positive reappraisal is an effective strategy for coping (Min et al.; 2013, Carver et al.,1989), and also related to dispositional mindfulness (Hanley & Garland; 2014). The scores on it were lower for 'Married (don't consider spouse better as a partner than the person they had a love relationship with)', 'Divorced (don't consider their divorce as the proper decision)' and 'Remarried (don't consider new partner better than ex-partner)' sub-groups. So, it was an important factor for partner-related dissatisfaction.

Similar to the findings regarding time length difference of divorce life, some changes can be seen for remarriage also. Higher scores were found in positive refocusing within the first year while acceptance and putting into perspective scores were higher for those remarried for more than a year. An important thing here is that the role of acceptance is not always adaptive but can also be less-adaptive (Martin & Dahlen; 2005). A higher acceptance score might indicate a tendency to accept something because someone feels being out of options. In both divorced and remarried groups, scores on putting into perspective were higher with more duration cases. A low score on putting into perspective can independently predict major depressive disorder (Lei et al.; 2014), so a relatively higher score might be an indication of success against negative emotions that come with a longer time. The study is cross-sectional so these differences are needed to be better understood with a longitudinal one.

Since different sub-groups differed in the uses of different cognitive emotion regulation strategies, the fourth hypothesis is proven.

The high explanatory power of the regression model (explained 50.4% of the variance in life satisfaction) shows that the variables are valuable constructs of life satisfaction especially when love relationships are considered. The satisfaction with life scale measure only global life satisfaction, it is separate from relationship satisfaction scales. So, different cofactors might have been involved. Overall the variables are impactful and useful predictors and support the fifth hypothesis.

In the conclusion, all the hypothesis of this study are proven by the findings. Life satisfaction and relationship experiences are very closely connected where cognitive emotion regulation and conflict resolution play significant interacting role here. People with different love relationship experiences have differences in their cognitive ways of interpreting and behaving, and perception of life satisfaction. The specific knowledge might be helpful in understanding of relationship and help in solving problems related to that.

#### ***4.1. Recommendations***

The study was limited to some extent in several areas. It includes a broad range of participant groups and by doing so the scope of investigating all the groups in depth became inaccessible. It was a cross-sectional study and can't conclude about the time-dependent properties that a longitudinal study could have done. It didn't look for the specific reasons in partner-related comparisons. The age range also was relatively shorter here and the numbers of participants per sub-groups were not that large. Scale for conflict resolution strategies only focuses on two types of general strategies. It's not free from the common flaws of Likert scale questionnaires.

In the context of Bangladesh, any love relationships between opposite gender are somewhat different than in European or American culture. Religious and social factors influence people's view on both own relationship and other's relationship. Comparing this study with different cultural contexts can bring new insights about the impact of culture on the interplay between cognitive emotion regulation and different love relationships. Attitudes and factors regarding relationships are always changing in today's fast-moving society. So researches about these needed to be done more often and using varieties of tools and techniques.

Apart from analyzing in itself, the study intended to identify possible areas for future researches. The knowledge from the study and further ones on this topic can be highly beneficial in theoretical and applied sense. One can understand what mental and behavioral processes are related to his/her life satisfaction and how are they interacting. People with or even without being in a relationship can relate themselves with different aspects of it. Therapists and counselors who focus on cognitive and behavioral approaches can find some useful ideas to apply. Considering that there were a few limitations in the study and the idea that it has focused on is crucial, further studies related to this are highly recommendable.

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