Spousal Support and Marital Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Gratitude Expression

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: *Original Article* **How to cite this article:** Ben Amor, L., & Grigoryan, M. (2025). Spousal Support and Marital Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Gratitude Expression. *Applied Family Therapy Journal, 6*(4), 1-10. http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.4443 © 2025 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.	**Objective:** This study aimed to examine the direct and indirect relationships between spousal support and marital satisfaction, with gratitude expression as a mediating variable. **Methods and Materials:** A descriptive correlational design was employed with 370 married individuals from Armenia, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie sampling table. Data were collected using standardized instruments for marital satisfaction, spousal support, and gratitude expression. Analyses were conducted in two stages: Pearson correlation analysis in SPSS-27 to examine bivariate associations, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS-21 to test the hypothesized mediating model. Model fit was evaluated using established indices, including χ^2/df, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. **Findings:** Pearson correlations revealed that spousal support was significantly associated with both marital satisfaction ($r = .58$, $p < .001$) and gratitude expression ($r = .51$, $p < .001$), while gratitude expression was also correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = .46$, $p < .001$). SEM demonstrated acceptable model fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.93$, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.049). Direct effects showed that spousal support positively predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < .001$) and gratitude expression ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$), while gratitude expression also predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = 0.29$, $p = .001$). The indirect effect of spousal support on marital satisfaction through gratitude expression was significant ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = .002$), confirming partial mediation. **Conclusion:** Findings underscore the dual importance of supportive behaviors and gratitude expression in shaping marital satisfaction. Spousal support enhances satisfaction both directly and indirectly by fostering gratitude, suggesting that couples who both provide support and express appreciation are more likely to sustain fulfilling relationships. ***Keywords:*** *Spousal support; Gratitude expression; Marital satisfaction; Mediation; Structural equation modeling*

1. Introduction

Marital satisfaction—the subjective evaluation that one's marital relationship is rewarding, stable, and responsive—remains a central outcome in family research and clinical practice, yet scholars continue to refine how and why everyday partner behaviors translate into durable satisfaction. Spousal support is among the most robust predictors of marital satisfaction across cultures and life stages, with dyadic analyses showing that a partner's supportive behaviors shape both one's own and the partner's evaluations of the relationship (Cho & Kim, 2024; Koçak, 2024). At the same time, a growing literature suggests that support does not operate in a vacuum: its relational benefits may be amplified or curtailed by interpersonal processes such as the expression and reception of gratitude. In other words, supportive episodes may cultivate a cycle of appreciation that fortifies commitment and satisfaction—or, when gratitude is absent or muted, leave couples vulnerable to stagnation and strain (McNulty & Dugas, 2019; Park et al., 2019; Tissera et al., 2022). Building on this premise, the present study proposes and tests a mediational model in which spousal support enhances marital satisfaction in part through the mechanism of gratitude expression.

Evidence for the spousal support–satisfaction link is strong and diverse. Actor–partner interdependence models (APIM) indicate that perceived support predicts higher satisfaction for both members of the couple, even when interdependencies are modeled explicitly (Cho & Kim, 2024). Beyond midlife samples, dyadic need-satisfaction perspectives similarly show that the quality of daily interactions and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs channel conflict toward or away from life satisfaction, highlighting the centrality of responsiveness and care in close relationships (Koçak, 2024). In families facing acute stressors—infertility, miscarriage, or raising a child with special needs—spousal and broader social support consistently buffer distress and forecast higher marital satisfaction, suggesting that supportive responsiveness is consequential precisely when couples need it most (Kousar et al., 2024; Perlowski & Wright, 2019; Wendołowska et al., 2022). Complementing these findings, research in perinatal contexts shows that perceived support shapes adjustment and stress through marital processes, with marital satisfaction itself functioning as a pathway through which support exerts salutary effects on well-being (Wang et al., 2023). Taken together, these studies converge on the idea that support is not merely instrumental; it communicates care

and partner responsiveness that couples translate into a more satisfying marital climate (Lu et al., 2024).

A parallel line of inquiry positions gratitude—both as a felt emotion and as an expressed interpersonal signal—as a key relational currency that sustains satisfaction and commitment. Experimental and longitudinal evidence indicates that saying "thank you" protects relationship quality against the erosive effects of vulnerabilities such as attachment insecurity, in part by signaling partner responsiveness and mutual investment (Park et al., 2019). At the dyadic level, gratitude processes are not uniformly beneficial: when one partner consistently expresses little gratitude, that "weak link" can dampen overall relational functioning, underscoring that gratitude is a genuinely systemic (two-person) phenomenon (McNulty & Dugas, 2019). Accuracy–bias frameworks further suggest that perceiving a partner's gratitude—over and above objective behavior—relates to satisfaction, pointing to the communicative and interpretive layers through which gratitude operates in daily life (Tissera et al., 2022). In applied and cultural contexts, gratitude also links values and outcomes: greater materialism predicts lower marital satisfaction via reduced gratitude, while trait gratitude and optimism show both direct and indirect associations with marital satisfaction, emphasizing the motivational and cognitive underpinnings of appreciative responding (Sadia et al., 2022; Saeidi et al., 2019).

Crucially, recent studies connect these strands by showing that gratitude can mediate the benefits of adaptive couple processes. In community and cross-national samples, dyadic coping—partners' coordinated efforts to manage stress—improves relationship satisfaction partly because it fosters gratitude between partners, creating upward spirals of positive emotion and supportive exchange (Roth et al., 2024; Shujja & Adil, 2023). In Pakistani couples, both general dyadic coping and dyadic-coping–based gratitude independently predict satisfaction, indicating that the coping–gratitude–satisfaction pathway is robust in collectivistic and interdependent cultural settings (Shujja et al., 2022). Similar mediational logic appears outside strictly marital outcomes: among young adults, existential gratitude relates to life satisfaction through social support, while among older adults, gratitude predicts life satisfaction via enjoyment of life and social support, underscoring that gratitude can act as a bridge between supportive social contexts and subjective well-being (Mogeda El Sayed El et al., 2023; Parabuac, 2024). Within couples specifically, marital support has been identified as a mediator linking

couples' psychological resources to marital satisfaction, suggesting that intraindividual strengths are translated into better relationships through patterns of giving and receiving help (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024).

These insights resonate with a broader relationship science narrative that emphasizes communication and responsiveness as mechanisms of change. For example, among Chinese couples, attachment styles shape marital satisfaction via perceived partner responsiveness, a process conceptually adjacent to gratitude because both signal that one is seen, valued, and cared for (Lu et al., 2024). Likewise, financial values influence marital outcomes through financial communication, indicating that the way partners interpret and discuss important domains mediates the effect of deeper orientations on satisfaction (LeBaron-Black et al., 2022). In global stressors, prepandemic satisfaction forecasted lower postpandemic anxiety, pointing to satisfaction not only as an outcome but as a protective asset that couples "carry" into crises (Ou et al., 2022). Even ostensibly technological disruptions, such as partner phubbing, undermine marital satisfaction through their effects on interaction quality and conflict, again underscoring that relational signals (or their absence) structure satisfaction trajectories (Wang & Zhao, 2022). After retirement, patterns of couple communication continue to shape well-being, illustrating that supportive, appreciative talk retains its importance across the lifespan (Nashef-Hamuda, 2024).

Contextualized studies help clarify where spousal support, gratitude, and satisfaction intersect most vividly. In couples coping with breast cancer, partner communication and illness acceptance are intertwined with marital satisfaction, suggesting that supportive responsiveness and appreciative meaning-making can help couples assimilate adversity (Krok et al., 2023). In miscarriage and infertility, perceived social support and partners' self-control predict relationship satisfaction, implying that both structural (available support) and procedural (how support is enacted) dimensions matter (Kousar et al., 2024; Wendołowska et al., 2022). Among parents of children with special needs, spousal support and contextual resources such as job flexibility bolster marital satisfaction, reinforcing that supportive relational climates and enabling conditions work in tandem (Perlowski & Wright, 2019). In military families facing separations, self-disclosure and gratitude correlate with marital satisfaction, highlighting the communicative work that sustains connection under strain (Pratiwi & Mukhoyyaroh, 2024). In Indonesia, everyday communication intensity and spousal social support predict marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives, with gendered nuances that invite attention to how gratitude is expressed and received across partners (Nugraha & Malueka, 2023). Finally, during the transition to parenthood, dyadic approaches show that marital satisfaction can mediate the impact of stress on prenatal depression, accentuating its role as a mechanism through which couple processes affect mental health (Mangialavori et al., 2021).

This mosaic sets the stage for the present study's focus on gratitude expression as the mediating hinge between spousal support and marital satisfaction. While many investigations affirm the direct effect of perceived support on satisfaction (Cho & Kim, 2024; Wang et al., 2023), and others show gratitude's robust association with satisfaction and commitment (McNulty & Dugas, 2019; Park et al., 2019; Tissera et al., 2022), fewer studies place gratitude expression squarely between day-to-day supportive interactions and global marital appraisals within the same model. Theoretically, supportive behavior may prompt beneficiaries to notice benevolence, feel cared for, and experience elevation—affective states that are naturally encoded and communicated as gratitude. Expressing gratitude then functions as a prosocial signal that rewards the helper, reinforces supportive scripts, and strengthens relational efficacy and commitment—thereby raising satisfaction. Evidence that dyadic coping cultivates gratitude which, in turn, predicts satisfaction, offers a close analogue for this proposed pathway (Roth et al., 2024; Shujja & Adil, 2023; Shujja et al., 2022). Relatedly, studies in materialism and values show that when orienting frameworks dampen gratitude, satisfaction suffers (Sadia et al., 2022). Conversely, when psychological resources increase supportive exchanges that are recognized and appreciated, marital satisfaction improves, often with support processes mediating these benefits (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024).

Our approach also responds to emerging calls to examine interpersonal accuracy and signal reception. Because partners derive meaning not only from what is done but from what is acknowledged, gratitude expression can be viewed as a meta-communicative response that confers significance on support and converts it into a shared narrative of responsiveness (Lu et al., 2024; Tissera et al., 2022). In fragile contexts—infertility, miscarriage, chronic caregiving—such appreciative signaling may be especially crucial to prevent supportive acts from being overlooked or misinterpreted (Kousar et al., 2024; Perlowski & Wright, 2019; Wendołowska et al., 2022). Similarly, in phases of

transition or strain—retirement, pandemic upheaval, perinatal adjustments—gratitude can fortify the link between supportive routines and sustained satisfaction, complementing the protective function of satisfaction documented under broader stress (Mangialavori et al., 2021; Nashef-Hamuda, 2024; Ou et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

In sum, the extant literature supports three propositions that the present study integrates: (a) spousal support is a reliable antecedent of marital satisfaction across populations and stress contexts (Cho & Kim, 2024; Koçak, 2024; Perlowski & Wright, 2019; Wang et al., 2023); (b) gratitude—especially as it is expressed and perceived—sustains satisfaction and commitment but can become a relational weak link when absent (McNulty & Dugas, 2019; Park et al., 2019; Tissera et al., 2022); and (c) gratitude frequently operates as a mediator linking adaptive dyadic processes with relationship quality (Mogeda El Sayed El et al., 2023; Parabuac, 2024; Roth et al., 2024; Shujja & Adil, 2023; Shujja et al., 2022). By testing gratitude expression as a mediator of the spousal support–marital satisfaction association, this research aims to clarify a tractable mechanism that couple therapists and educators can target: helping partners not only to enact support but also to notice and articulate appreciation for it, thereby translating supportive moments into enduring marital satisfaction

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive correlational design aimed at investigating the relationship between spousal support, gratitude expression, and marital satisfaction. The sample consisted of 370 married individuals residing in Armenia. The sample size was determined using Morgan and Krejcie's (1970) table, ensuring adequacy for statistical generalization. Participants were selected through simple random sampling to represent diverse sociodemographic backgrounds, including differences in age, gender, education, and duration of marriage.

2.2. Measures

Marital satisfaction was measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) developed by Spanier (1976). This widely used instrument consists of 32 items and includes four subscales: Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, and Affectional Expression. Items are scored on Likert-type scales with varying response formats,

and higher scores indicate greater marital satisfaction and adjustment. The DAS has been extensively validated across cultures, with numerous studies confirming its strong internal consistency, high test–retest reliability, and robust construct validity. It remains one of the most reliable and standard tools for assessing marital satisfaction in couples research.

Spousal support was assessed using the Social Support Behaviors Scale (SS-B) created by Vaux, Riedel, and Stewart (1987). This instrument contains 45 items and measures different dimensions of perceived social support behaviors, including emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, companionship, and esteem support. Responses are given on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting stronger perceived support from a spouse or partner. The SS-B has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with studies reporting high internal consistency, acceptable factor structure, and good predictive validity, making it a standard measure for evaluating spousal support in marital and family studies.

Gratitude expression was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form (GQ-6) developed by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002). The scale includes six items that assess individual differences in the tendency to experience and express gratitude in daily life. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a greater disposition toward gratitude expression. The GQ-6 has been validated in multiple populations, showing high internal consistency, convergent validity with related constructs such as well-being and optimism, and stability across time. It is widely considered a standard and reliable tool for measuring gratitude in psychological research.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. First, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were computed to provide an overview of the participants' characteristics and study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was then performed in SPSS version 27 to examine the bivariate relationships between marital satisfaction (dependent variable) and the independent variables (spousal support and gratitude expression). In the second phase, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was tested using AMOS version 21 to evaluate the hypothesized mediating role of gratitude expression in the relationship

between spousal support and marital satisfaction. Goodness-of-fit indices (e.g., CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and χ²/df) were used to confirm the adequacy of the model.

3. Findings and Results

Of the 370 participants, 188 were female (50.81%) and 182 were male (49.19%). The mean age of participants was 34.78 years (SD = 6.92), with a range from 21 to 52 years.

In terms of education, 142 participants (38.38%) had completed undergraduate education, 167 (45.14%) held a master's degree, and 61 (16.49%) had a doctoral degree. Regarding marital duration, 97 participants (26.22%) reported being married for less than five years, 146 (39.46%) between five and ten years, and 127 (34.32%) more than ten years. These distributions reflect the demographic diversity of the study sample.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD
Marital Satisfaction	113.42	14.87
Spousal Support	127.36	16.54
Gratitude Expression	29.74	5.61

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that participants reported relatively high levels of marital satisfaction (M = 113.42, SD = 14.87) and spousal support (M = 127.36, SD = 16.54). Gratitude expression was also at a moderate-to-high level (M = 29.74, SD = 5.61). These results suggest that the sample generally reflected positive relational and emotional dynamics.

Prior to conducting the main analyses, statistical assumptions were evaluated and confirmed. The normality of data distribution was checked using skewness and kurtosis

values, which ranged from −0.82 to +1.04, falling within the acceptable ±2 threshold. Homoscedasticity was assessed through Levene's test, which was non-significant for all variables (p-values ranging from .138 to .287), indicating equal variance across groups. Multicollinearity was also examined by calculating Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), which ranged from 1.21 to 2.08, well below the cut-off value of 5.0. These results confirmed that the assumptions for both Pearson correlation and SEM analyses were met.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Marital Satisfaction	—		
2. Spousal Support	.58** (p = .000)	—	
3. Gratitude Expression	.46** (p = .000)	.51** (p = .000)	—

As shown in Table 2, marital satisfaction correlated positively and significantly with spousal support (r = .58, p < .001) and gratitude expression (r = .46, p < .001). In addition, spousal support was significantly correlated with

gratitude expression (r = .51, p < .001). These findings indicate meaningful associations between the study variables, justifying the use of SEM for mediation testing.

Table 3

Fit Indices of the Structural Equation Model

Fit Index	χ²	df	χ²/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Model Value	243.61	126	1.93	0.93	0.91	0.96	0.95	0.049

The fit indices presented in Table 3 demonstrate an acceptable model fit. The chi-square statistic was significant, χ² (126) = 243.61, but the ratio χ²/df = 1.93 indicated a good

fit (values below 3.00 are considered acceptable). Other indices were also satisfactory: GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.049, all within

recommended thresholds. These indices confirm that the hypothesized model adequately represents the observed data.

Table 4

*Direct, Indirect, and Total Path Coefficients in the Structural Model*

Path	b	S.E	β	p
Spousal Support → Marital Satisfaction (direct)	0.42	0.08	0.37	.000
Spousal Support → Gratitude Expression	0.51	0.07	0.44	.000
Gratitude Expression → Marital Satisfaction	0.36	0.09	0.29	.001
Spousal Support → Marital Satisfaction (indirect via Gratitude)	0.18	0.05	0.13	.002
Spousal Support → Marital Satisfaction (total)	0.60	0.09	0.50	.000

Table 4 displays the path coefficients of the structural model. Results show that spousal support had a significant direct effect on marital satisfaction (β = 0.37, p < .001), as well as a significant positive effect on gratitude expression (β = 0.44, p < .001). Gratitude expression also significantly predicted marital satisfaction (β = 0.29, p = .001). Moreover, the indirect effect of spousal support on marital satisfaction through gratitude expression was significant (β = 0.13, p = .002). The total effect of spousal support on marital satisfaction was strong (β = 0.50, p < .001), confirming the mediating role of gratitude expression.

Figure 1

Model with Beta Coefficients
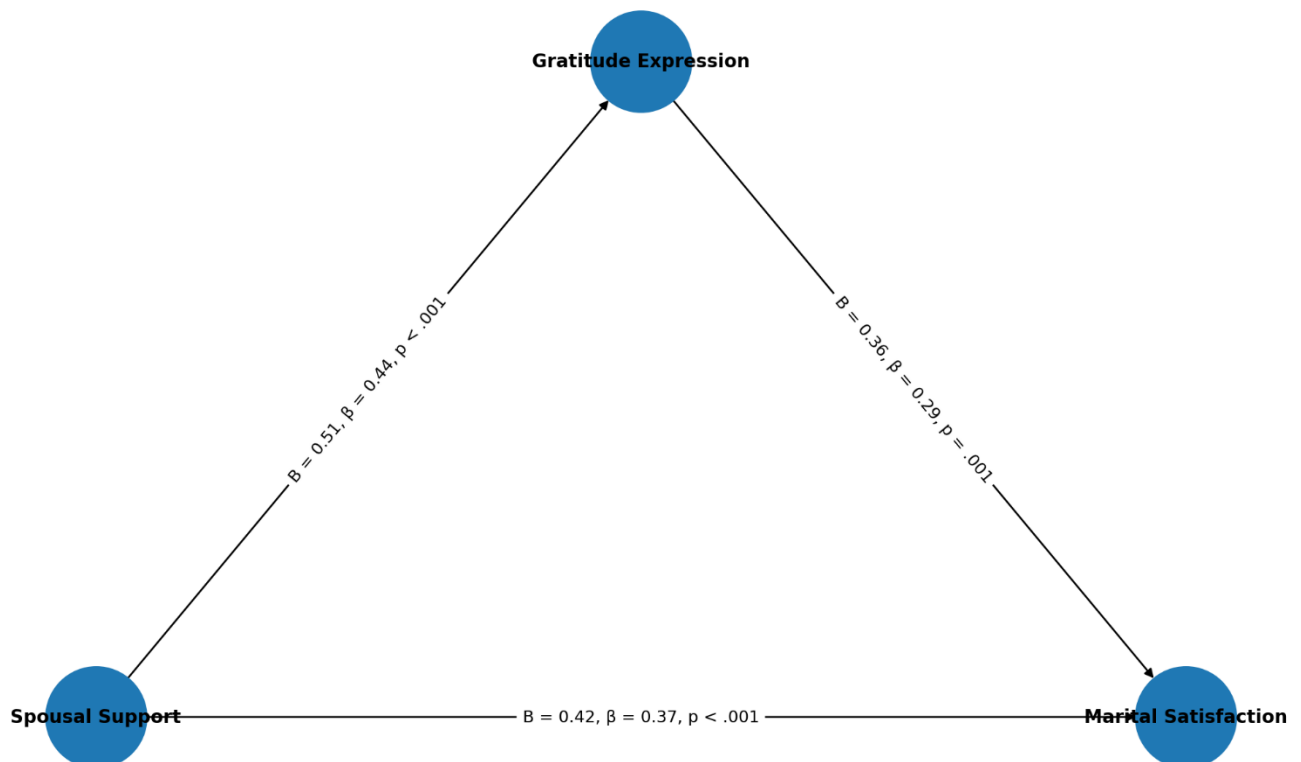
4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined the relationships between spousal support, gratitude expression, and marital satisfaction in a sample of Armenian couples. Results demonstrated three important findings. First, spousal support directly predicted marital satisfaction, indicating

that partners who perceived greater levels of emotional, instrumental, and relational support reported higher levels of satisfaction in their marriages. Second, gratitude expression was positively associated with marital satisfaction, suggesting that appreciation functions as a relational mechanism that sustains commitment and harmony. Third, structural equation modeling confirmed that gratitude expression partially mediated the link between spousal support and marital satisfaction, highlighting that support becomes most effective when it is translated into cycles of recognition and appreciation. Together, these results extend the growing body of dyadic research that emphasizes the interplay between supportive processes and emotional expressions in fostering stable and fulfilling marriages.

The direct positive relationship between spousal support and marital satisfaction found in this study aligns with an extensive literature across cultural contexts. Research using actor–partner interdependence models has consistently shown that support received from a spouse significantly predicts not only one's own satisfaction but also the partner's reported quality of the marriage (Cho & Kim, 2024). Similarly, findings from dyadic analyses emphasize that basic psychological need satisfaction during daily interactions reduces conflict and enhances overall life satisfaction (Koçak, 2024). The present results reinforce these conclusions, demonstrating that when spouses perceive their partners as responsive, attentive, and reliable, their marital evaluations improve.

This outcome is further supported by research conducted in families facing specific stressors. For example, couples navigating infertility or miscarriage have been found to rely heavily on perceived partner support, which functions as a buffer against psychological distress while sustaining relationship satisfaction (Kousar et al., 2024; Wendołowska et al., 2022). Parents of children with special needs likewise benefit from a combination of spousal support and structural resources such as job flexibility, which together predict higher marital satisfaction (Perlowski & Wright, 2019). Our study confirms these observations in a general sample, indicating that regardless of stress context, spousal support remains a foundational predictor of marital well-being.

The significance of spousal support is also evident in research exploring postpartum adaptation and maternal stress, where social support improves adjustment through enhanced marital satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). In East Asian contexts, attachment studies reveal that perceived partner responsiveness mediates the effects of insecure attachment styles on satisfaction (Lu et al., 2024), providing additional evidence that supportive processes bridge individual vulnerabilities and relational outcomes. Taken together, the current study's findings fit squarely within this literature, emphasizing that support not only provides practical and emotional resources but also communicates partner investment and concern, thereby reinforcing the relational bond.

In addition to confirming the value of spousal support, this study highlighted the importance of gratitude expression as a predictor of marital satisfaction. Participants who expressed greater appreciation toward their partners reported higher satisfaction levels, a finding consistent with prior research demonstrating the protective role of gratitude. In long-term romantic partnerships, expressions of gratitude buffer against the negative effects of attachment insecurity on satisfaction and commitment (Park et al., 2019). By signaling acknowledgment of partner efforts, gratitude fosters cycles of positive reciprocity that solidify relational bonds.

However, gratitude is not uniformly beneficial. As demonstrated by work adopting a dyadic perspective, low or absent gratitude can act as a "weak link," undermining the positive dynamics of the relationship (McNulty & Dugas, 2019). Other research suggests that it is not merely the act of gratitude but the partner's perception of gratitude that shapes satisfaction. Using an accuracy–bias framework, perceiving gratitude—even when biased—has been shown to predict greater relationship satisfaction (Tissera et al., 2022). The present results resonate with these findings, underscoring that gratitude expression is both an internal and interpersonal process that contributes meaningfully to the quality of marriage.

Beyond individual couples, cultural and contextual studies further highlight the universality of this effect. For instance, among Pakistani couples, dyadic coping-based gratitude was found to mediate the link between dyadic coping and satisfaction, suggesting that appreciation functions as a consistent mechanism of relational resilience (Shujja & Adil, 2023; Shujja et al., 2022). Research in Saudi Arabia and among young adults in the Philippines likewise demonstrates that gratitude fosters life satisfaction through supportive mechanisms (Mogeda El Sayed El et al., 2023; Parabuac, 2024). Our findings add to this evidence by confirming that gratitude expression is not only correlated with satisfaction but also functions as a mediating pathway through which spousal support exerts its influence.

The most novel contribution of this study is the confirmation that gratitude expression partially mediates the

effect of spousal support on marital satisfaction. This suggests that the benefits of support are maximized when they are noticed, acknowledged, and reciprocated through appreciative communication. This aligns with recent work that positions gratitude as a mediator in couple processes. For example, gratitude has been shown to mediate the link between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction in romantic couples across different cultural backgrounds (Roth et al., 2024). Similarly, gratitude mediates the relationship between materialism and marital satisfaction, with higher materialistic values reducing satisfaction via lower gratitude (Sadia et al., 2022). In another context, couples' psychological resources improve marital satisfaction through marital support, which echoes the mediational logic of the present study (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024).

This mechanism is consistent with the broader literature on marital communication. Studies show that financial communication mediates the relationship between financial values and marital outcomes (LeBaron-Black et al., 2022), while illness acceptance and partner communication operate alongside satisfaction in couples facing chronic illness (Krok et al., 2023). Gratitude fits neatly within this framework as a communicative act that signals responsiveness and recognition, thereby transforming supportive behaviors into enduring satisfaction. Moreover, research indicates that relationship satisfaction itself can mediate the effect of supportive contexts on well-being outcomes, such as in prenatal depression (Mangialavori et al., 2021), underscoring the layered mediational models that typify relationship science.

The mediating role of gratitude also helps explain findings from diverse contexts. For example, after retirement, effective couple communication enhances well-being (Nashef-Hamuda, 2024), and in pandemic conditions, prepandemic satisfaction protects against later anxiety (Ou et al., 2022). Similarly, partner phubbing undermines satisfaction by disrupting marital interaction and increasing conflict (Wang & Zhao, 2022). Across these scenarios, the acknowledgment of partner contributions—whether financial, emotional, or social—emerges as a critical protective factor. The present study shows that gratitude expression performs this protective role in the pathway from spousal support to marital satisfaction.

Importantly, this study contributes to a growing literature that situates gratitude and support processes within cultural and developmental contexts. In collectivist societies, for example, gratitude is often expressed indirectly through supportive acts rather than verbal acknowledgment, yet it still functions as a key relational mediator (Nugraha & Malueka, 2023; Shujja et al., 2022). Among military families separated by distance, expressions of gratitude coupled with self-disclosure sustain marital satisfaction, highlighting the adaptability of gratitude in maintaining relational bonds under strain (Pratiwi & Mukhoyyaroh, 2024). In older couples, social support and enjoyment of life mediate the gratitude–satisfaction link, pointing to the evolving ways that appreciation functions across the lifespan (Mogeda El Sayed El et al., 2023).

The Armenian sample in the current study provides a new cultural lens through which to view these dynamics. The replication of findings across different countries—China, Korea, Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the Philippines—strengthens the case for gratitude as a universal mediator of marital support and satisfaction (Cho & Kim, 2024; Lu et al., 2024; Mogeda El Sayed El et al., 2023; Nugraha & Malueka, 2023; Parabuac, 2024; Shujja & Adil, 2023). At the same time, the results encourage further exploration of how gratitude is socially constructed and expressed in various relational and cultural contexts.

5.   Suggestions and Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes strong causal inferences; while structural equation modeling provides evidence for mediation, longitudinal data are needed to confirm the directionality of effects. Second, the reliance on self-report measures may have introduced bias, including social desirability effects, especially in reporting gratitude and marital satisfaction. Third, the study was conducted among married individuals in Armenia, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other cultural or relational contexts. Finally, although spousal support and gratitude were examined, other relational variables such as conflict resolution, empathy, or communication styles were not included, which may further elucidate the pathways to satisfaction.

Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to establish causal pathways between spousal support, gratitude, and satisfaction. Cross-cultural comparative studies are also necessary to identify cultural moderators that may influence how gratitude is expressed and perceived. Additionally, future work should explore dyadic data from both partners simultaneously to capture the interdependence of spousal support and gratitude processes.

Investigating other potential mediators or moderators, such as attachment style, empathy, or stress resilience, may also enrich our understanding of the dynamics underlying marital satisfaction. Finally, incorporating qualitative methods could provide richer insights into the meanings and expressions of gratitude within different cultural and relational contexts.

The findings have several practical implications. Practitioners working with couples should encourage partners not only to provide support but also to notice and explicitly acknowledge supportive acts, as gratitude expression strengthens the impact of support on satisfaction. Couple therapy interventions could integrate gratitude-focused exercises, such as daily appreciation journaling or structured gratitude exchanges, to reinforce positive cycles of recognition. Marriage education programs may also benefit from teaching couples communication skills that include both giving and receiving support and expressing appreciation. By embedding gratitude expression within everyday interactions, couples may enhance marital satisfaction and create more resilient relational bonds.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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