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Cultural Values, Gender-Role Beliefs, and Marital Satisfaction Among Dual-Earner Couples: An Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Equation Model of Work–Family Conflict and Perceived Partner Support

Patrick. O'Sullivan[1], Allison Wong[2*]

[1] Department of Clinical Psychology, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland
[2] Department of Developmental Psychology, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

*** Corresponding author email address**: a.wong@queensu.ca

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study aimed to examine the actor, partner, direct, and indirect associations of cultural values and gender-role beliefs with marital satisfaction through work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and perceived partner support among Canadian dual-earner couples.

Methods and Materials: This cross-sectional correlational study included 250 different-gender dual-earner married couples, comprising 500 participants residing in Canada. Both spouses independently completed validated questionnaires assessing horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, gender-role beliefs, work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, perceived partner support, and marital satisfaction. Data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Equation Modeling. Measurement invariance across wives and husbands was examined, and indirect effects were tested using 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples.

Findings: The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit, $\chi^2(872) = 1517.46$, CFI = .943, TLI = .936, RMSEA = .038, and SRMR = .047. Horizontal collectivism significantly predicted greater perceived partner support through actor and partner effects. Vertical individualism predicted greater work-to-family conflict, lower perceived partner support, and lower marital satisfaction. Egalitarian gender-role beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict and greater perceived partner support for both spouses. Work-to-family conflict negatively predicted marital satisfaction through significant actor and partner pathways, whereas perceived partner support positively predicted marital satisfaction and produced the strongest direct effects. Significant bootstrapped indirect effects showed that work-to-family conflict and perceived partner support partially mediated the associations of cultural values and gender-role beliefs with marital satisfaction. The model explained 58.1% of the variance in wives' marital satisfaction and 53.4% in husbands' marital satisfaction.

Conclusion: Marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples is shaped by interdependent cultural, ideological, occupational, and relational processes. Egalitarian gender-role beliefs and horizontal collectivism appear to strengthen marital functioning by reducing work–family strain and increasing perceived partner support, whereas vertical individualism may undermine satisfaction through heightened conflict and reduced relational support.

Keywords: *Cultural values; gender-role beliefs; marital satisfaction; dual-earner couples; work–family conflict; perceived partner support; Actor–Partner Interdependence Model.*

1 Introduction

The expansion of dual-earner marriage has transformed the organization of paid work, domestic labor, caregiving, and emotional life within contemporary families. In such households, both partners contribute to economic provision while simultaneously negotiating responsibilities traditionally assigned according to gender, including childcare, household management, kinship obligations, and emotional support. Although the employment of both spouses may increase household resources, personal autonomy, and financial security, it also creates interdependent demands that can affect the quality of the marital relationship. Income is therefore not merely an individual economic resource but a dyadic condition whose benefits depend on how financial contributions, occupational pressures, and family responsibilities are understood and managed within the couple. Dyadic evidence indicates that the income and occupational circumstances of one spouse may influence the life satisfaction of both partners, demonstrating that economic experiences are embedded in shared relational systems (Chen et al., 2021). Employment may also reshape marital expectations, bargaining power, and perceptions of fairness, with women's labor-force participation producing different marital consequences depending on the distribution of household responsibilities and the meanings assigned to paid work (Yu & Liu, 2021). Research on dual-earner income similarly suggests that having two earners does not automatically establish work–life balance because the benefits of greater resources may coexist with increased scheduling pressures, role overload, and difficulty maintaining boundaries between work and family (Jidi et al., 2023). These pressures are especially consequential because marital satisfaction represents a broad evaluation of the emotional quality, stability, reciprocity, and fulfillment experienced within marriage (Czechowska-Bieluga & Lewicka-Zelent, 2021). More generally, satisfaction reflects an evaluative judgment shaped by the extent to which experiences meet expectations and provide perceived value, even though the relevant standards vary across life domains (Fikry et al., 2024). Among dual-earner couples, marital satisfaction is therefore likely to depend not simply on whether both spouses work, but on how partners interpret employment, allocate family responsibilities, coordinate competing demands, and respond to each other's needs.

The work–family interface is one of the principal mechanisms through which dual employment can shape marital well-being. Work–family conflict occurs when the demands of occupational and family roles are mutually incompatible, such that participation in one domain impedes effective participation in the other. Work-to-family conflict arises when working hours, workload, fatigue, occupational stress, or work-related behavior interfere with family life, whereas family-to-work conflict occurs when caregiving, domestic responsibilities, family tension, or household demands impair occupational functioning. Studies of employed adults consistently identify work–family conflict as a central obstacle to work–life balance (Ahmad et al., 2023). Among dual-earner families, role conflict is also associated with reduced marital satisfaction because the time and psychological resources consumed by one role are unavailable for investment in the marital relationship (Nugrahani et al., 2024). Evidence from Malaysian Chinese dual-earner couples has shown that work–family conflict is related not only to marital satisfaction but also to perceptions of marital stability, illustrating its potential implications for both relational quality and relationship continuity (San & Juhari, 2021). Longitudinal research further indicates that work–family conflict may follow changing trajectories across family stages, particularly among parents raising children whose developmental needs alter the intensity and organization of work and caregiving demands (Kim & Ban, 2025). For couples simultaneously supporting children and aging relatives, competing care obligations can intensify strain and create particularly complex patterns of balance and conflict across work and family domains (Honda & Ono, 2025). Work demands may also undermine relationship satisfaction indirectly through lifestyle disruption, fatigue, and poor sleep, suggesting that the consequences of work

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pressure extend beyond time allocation to affect the physical and emotional resources partners bring to the relationship (Garg & Saini, 2026).

Work–family conflict is inherently dyadic because the strain experienced by one partner can cross over to the other partner. A spouse who returns home fatigued, preoccupied, or emotionally depleted may become less available for communication, affection, household cooperation, or joint problem solving, thereby altering the other spouse's relational experience. A dyadic study of Brazilian couples demonstrated the importance of examining both partners simultaneously rather than treating work–family conflict as an isolated individual experience (Andrade et al., 2023). The spillover–crossover perspective similarly proposes that experiences first transfer from one domain to another within the same individual and may then cross over between partners. Research among Chilean dual-earner couples has shown that satisfaction in specific life domains can contribute to overall life satisfaction through both intrapersonal spillover and interpersonal crossover processes (Schnettler et al., 2020). Organizational conditions may also extend across household boundaries. An unsupportive work–family culture encountered by one employee can influence the partner's satisfaction with work–family balance, revealing the long reach of workplace practices into intimate relationships (Bernhardt & Bünning, 2021). Conversely, interventions designed to improve work–family functioning may benefit not only employees but also their partners and the wider family system. A randomized program involving Japanese dual-earner couples with a preschool child showed that work–family support initiatives can affect the work–family interface and psychological well-being (Shimazu et al., 2023). These findings indicate that work–family conflict should be modeled as a relational process in which each partner may function simultaneously as an actor affected by personal experiences and as a partner affected by the experiences of the spouse.

The extent to which work and family demands generate conflict is likely to depend on gender-role beliefs. Gender-role beliefs refer to attitudes concerning the appropriate responsibilities, authority, behavior, and social positions of women and men within employment, marriage, parenting, and domestic life. Traditional beliefs generally emphasize male breadwinning and female responsibility for household and caregiving labor, whereas egalitarian beliefs support the sharing of economic, domestic, and relational responsibilities. Among dual-earner couples, traditional gender expectations may produce contradictions when both spouses participate in paid employment but unpaid work continues to be allocated primarily to women. Research in academic settings has documented persistent gender disparities in work–family balance, even among highly educated professionals whose employment positions might be expected to support greater equality (Vithanage & Arachchige, 2020). Studies conducted during the COVID-19 period similarly showed that dual-earner couples' strategies for managing work and family were structured by gender, particularly when young children required intensive care and both partners' occupational routines were disrupted (Shockley et al., 2021). The cognitive component of unpaid labor is especially important because planning, anticipating needs, monitoring schedules, and coordinating family activities may remain unequally distributed even when visible household tasks appear more balanced (Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). These forms of gendered mental labor may contribute to emotional exhaustion, perceptions of unfairness, and reduced relational satisfaction.

Gender-role beliefs may influence marital satisfaction through several interrelated pathways. When spouses hold egalitarian beliefs, they may be more willing to negotiate responsibilities, accommodate each other's occupational needs, and recognize unpaid labor as a shared obligation. In contrast, traditional beliefs may legitimize unequal arrangements or create conflict when partners' actual employment and family roles deviate from culturally prescribed expectations. Research among Korean dual-earner couples has directly linked gender-role ideology with work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and marital satisfaction, underscoring the importance of examining both ideological and role-strain processes within the same model (Yoo, 2021). Gendered legal and institutional arrangements can reinforce these beliefs by structuring access to care-related entitlements through marriage and reproducing inequalities in the distribution of caregiving time (Kim, 2026). Non-normative arrangements may create additional relational negotiation. Female-breadwinning couples, for example, may face social scrutiny and identity tensions when women's earnings challenge conventional expectations about masculinity, provision, and marital authority (Shah, 2023). Household decision-making processes are also associated with gender differences in job satisfaction because employment outcomes are partly shaped by how couples jointly allocate work, mobility, and domestic responsibilities (Bredemeier et al., 2024). Women's financial empowerment, including control over personal financial resources, may strengthen autonomy, yet

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its relational consequences depend on the surrounding norms of partnership, decision-making, and economic interdependence (Çineli & González, 2024). Evidence concerning financial management and purchasing decisions in dual-earner families likewise indicates that gendered participation in economic decisions is connected to marital quality (Lazuardi & Puspitawati, 2022). Even in livelihood contexts that differ substantially from urban professional employment, changes in women's productive roles can alter satisfaction with marital and reproductive responsibilities, illustrating the broad relevance of role negotiation across socioeconomic settings (Apura, 2022).

Gender-role beliefs do not develop independently of cultural values. Cultural orientations shape how individuals define the self, understand obligations, evaluate hierarchy, prioritize autonomy, and interpret mutual dependence within intimate relationships. Individualistic orientations tend to emphasize personal goals, self-direction, and autonomy, whereas collectivistic orientations place greater importance on group harmony, relational obligation, family continuity, and responsiveness to significant others. However, both orientations have horizontal and vertical forms. Horizontal individualism values autonomy together with equality, while vertical individualism combines personal independence with competition and status differentiation. Horizontal collectivism emphasizes interdependence among relatively equal members, whereas vertical collectivism combines group loyalty with hierarchy, duty, and acceptance of unequal roles. These distinctions are important because cultural values may influence marriage in opposing ways. Horizontal collectivism may strengthen cooperation, emotional responsiveness, and mutual support, while vertical collectivism may reinforce obligations that increase family-to-work conflict. Horizontal individualism may support negotiated autonomy, whereas vertical individualism may intensify competitive comparison, occupational prioritization, or unequal power.

The relevance of cultural values becomes especially visible when couples must reconcile personal aspirations with family expectations. Value congruence between partners may facilitate coordination because spouses who share similar beliefs about work, income, family responsibility, and relational obligations are less likely to interpret the same arrangement in incompatible ways. Research on relative income and value congruence in dual-income couples shows that the meaning of each partner's earnings depends partly on whether the couple's values and expectations are aligned (Steed et al., 2023). Migration may further complicate these processes by exposing couples to new labor markets, gender norms, family structures, and standards of well-being, making dual-earner relationships particularly sensitive to cultural adaptation (Tam & Grimes, 2022). Relationships with extended family members may also affect the organization of marriage, especially in cultural contexts where intergenerational obligations and in-law relationships remain central to family functioning (Leong & Juhari, 2021). Couples may attempt to reduce domestic strain by outsourcing household labor, but such strategies can operate as a double-edged sword when they alleviate workload while simultaneously introducing financial costs, disagreements, or concerns about the meaning of shared domestic responsibility (Cheung & Lui, 2023). Cultural values therefore provide the interpretive context within which couples evaluate fairness, obligation, autonomy, and support rather than functioning as distant background characteristics.

Perceived partner support may be a particularly important protective resource linking cultural values and gender-role beliefs to marital satisfaction. Partner support includes emotional understanding, validation, encouragement, practical assistance, responsiveness, and willingness to accommodate the other spouse's occupational and family demands. Support can reduce the perceived burden of role conflict by communicating that difficulties are shared rather than individually borne. It may also preserve intimacy by helping partners interpret work-related strain as an external challenge rather than evidence of marital neglect. Research on time pressure has shown that work-related support seeking from a spouse is connected to relationship satisfaction through both spillover and crossover pathways (Tement et al., 2023). Sharing supportive experiences across work and home domains can also generate benefits for the receiving partner. Compassionate support obtained in the workplace may be transmitted within the household and may promote the partner's functioning in the work domain (Stollberger et al., 2022). Similarly, sharing work-related experiences within dual-earner couples can influence both relational and personal well-being, although the effects depend on how disclosure and responsiveness occur (Li et al., 2024). These findings suggest that support is not merely an individual perception but a relational process through which resources circulate between partners and across life domains.

The study of support must nevertheless distinguish between support provided, support sought, and support perceived. A spouse may believe that assistance has been

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offered while the recipient experiences it as insufficient, controlling, or poorly matched to current needs. Dyadic coping research emphasizes that couples respond to stress through coordinated patterns of communication, appraisal, and joint coping rather than through two unrelated individual reactions (Rumondor et al., 2022). Conflict-resolution styles are similarly associated with marital satisfaction, indicating that the manner in which partners address disagreement may be as consequential as the objective presence of stressors (Ali & Saleem, 2022). Perceived partner support may thus operate as both a direct predictor of marital satisfaction and a mediator through which cultural values and gender-role beliefs acquire relational consequences. Egalitarian beliefs may increase support by encouraging shared responsibility, while collectivistic values may strengthen responsiveness to a spouse's needs. Conversely, competitive or hierarchical orientations may reduce perceptions of support when one partner's work is prioritized or when domestic expectations remain asymmetrical.

Recent research increasingly conceptualizes dual-earner couples as systems of "linked lives" in which gendered workload, family support, and mental well-being are mutually connected across partners (Li et al., 2025). Families also differ in their broader configurations of life satisfaction, suggesting that no single variable fully captures the diversity of adaptation among employed parents (Schnettler et al., 2021). These differences may reflect distinct combinations of resources, demands, beliefs, and relationship processes. Some couples may experience high occupational demands but maintain satisfaction through equitable role arrangements and strong partner support, whereas others may experience moderate demands as highly disruptive because responsibilities are contested or support is unavailable. The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model provides an appropriate framework for evaluating these patterns because it separates actor effects, in which a person's characteristics predict that person's outcomes, from partner effects, in which one person's characteristics predict the spouse's outcomes. Previous APIM research among Malaysian Chinese dual-earner couples has demonstrated that work and family experiences can affect marital satisfaction within and across partners (Leong & Juhari, 2022). Nevertheless, many studies continue to examine gender-role ideology, cultural values, work–family conflict, partner support, or marital satisfaction separately, thereby leaving unclear how these constructs operate simultaneously within a dyadic structural system.

This gap is particularly relevant in Canada, where dual-earner couples live within a culturally diverse social environment characterized by variation in migration histories, family traditions, gender norms, employment arrangements, and expectations of marital equality. A culturally heterogeneous context makes it insufficient to assume that the same division of labor or employment pattern has an identical meaning for every couple. The marital implications of dual employment may depend on whether partners value autonomy or family obligation, whether they endorse egalitarian or traditional roles, whether occupational demands are experienced as interfering with family life, and whether each spouse perceives the other as supportive. An integrated dyadic model can clarify whether cultural values and gender-role beliefs have direct associations with marital satisfaction or whether their effects are transmitted through work–family conflict and perceived partner support. It can also identify crossover effects through which one spouse's beliefs, conflict, or support experiences shape the other spouse's marital evaluation.

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to examine the actor, partner, direct, and indirect associations of cultural values and gender-role beliefs with marital satisfaction through work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and perceived partner support among Canadian dual-earner couples using an Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Equation Model.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional, correlational design using dyadic data to examine the direct and indirect associations among cultural values, gender-role beliefs, work–family conflict, perceived partner support, and marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples in Canada. The study was grounded in the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model, which recognizes that the attitudes, experiences, and behaviors of one partner may influence not only that individual's outcomes but also the outcomes of the other partner. Accordingly, the couple, rather than the individual participant, was treated as the primary unit of analysis. Structural equation modeling was used to estimate actor effects, partner effects, and indirect pathways simultaneously while accounting for the statistical nonindependence of observations obtained from members of the same couple. The proposed model examined whether cultural values and gender-role beliefs were associated with

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marital satisfaction directly and indirectly through work–family conflict and perceived partner support. Actor effects represented the associations between an individual's predictor variables and that individual's marital satisfaction, whereas partner effects represented the associations between one partner's predictor variables and the other partner's marital satisfaction.

The study sample consisted of exactly 250 dual-earner married couples, corresponding to 500 individual participants, residing in Canada. Because the dyadic analyses required distinguishable partners and the study specifically examined gender-role beliefs within marriage, the sample was limited to different-gender married couples in which both spouses were engaged in paid employment. Participants were recruited from several Canadian provinces through community organizations, workplace mailing lists, family-service centers, professional networks, online advertisements, and social media platforms. A purposive and convenience sampling strategy was used to identify couples who met the eligibility requirements and were willing to participate jointly. Recruitment materials described the study as an investigation of employment, family experiences, partner relationships, and marital well-being among working couples. Interested individuals accessed an online screening form and were asked to confirm that both spouses were willing to participate independently.

To be eligible for participation, couples were required to be legally married, currently living together, and residing in Canada at the time of data collection. Both spouses were required to be at least 18 years of age, able to read and understand English, and engaged in paid employment for a minimum of 20 hours per week. Couples were also required to have been married for at least one year to ensure that participants had sufficient shared marital and work–family experience to evaluate the study variables meaningfully. Both spouses had to complete the questionnaire separately for the couple's data to be included in the final analysis. Couples were excluded when only one spouse completed the survey, either partner was unemployed or on extended leave from paid employment, the spouses were separated or living apart, or the submitted responses contained extensive missing data, implausibly short completion times, or evidence of duplicate participation. Participants who reported temporary vacation leave or short-term sick leave but remained formally employed were retained when they otherwise met the inclusion criteria.

After eligibility was confirmed, each couple received a unique identification code, and separate survey links were provided to the two spouses. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaires independently, without discussing their answers with their partner, and to submit their responses using a private electronic device whenever possible. The matching identification code allowed the two members of each couple to be linked analytically without requiring their names to be included in the dataset. Participation was voluntary, and electronic informed consent was obtained from each spouse before the survey began. Participants were informed of the objectives and procedures of the study, the approximate time required for participation, the confidential treatment of their responses, their right to decline any question, and their right to withdraw before submitting the questionnaire without penalty. Data from one spouse were not disclosed to the other spouse under any circumstances.

2.2 Measures

Data were collected using a demographic and occupational information form and a battery of validated self-report questionnaires. Each spouse completed the same measures independently. The demographic form collected information on age, educational attainment, province of residence, length of marriage, number of children, age of the youngest child, weekly working hours, occupational sector, employment arrangement, household income category, and usual work location. Participants also reported whether they worked primarily on-site, remotely, or under a hybrid arrangement, as these conditions could influence work–family boundaries and access to partner support. The demographic variables were used to describe the sample and to identify potential covariates that might be associated with work–family conflict or marital satisfaction.

Cultural values were assessed using the Individualism–Collectivism Scale developed by Singelis and colleagues. The scale measures culturally oriented self-construals and interpersonal values across the dimensions of horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism. Horizontal individualism reflects an emphasis on personal autonomy combined with a preference for equality, whereas vertical individualism reflects independence accompanied by competition and acceptance of differences in status. Horizontal collectivism represents interdependence and sociability among relatively equal group members, while vertical collectivism reflects commitment to the group together with the acceptance of hierarchy and obligations.

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Participants rated the extent to which each statement described their values and beliefs on a Likert-type response scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Higher scores on each subscale indicated stronger endorsement of the corresponding cultural orientation. The multidimensional structure of the measure was retained because individualistic and collectivistic orientations may coexist and may have different implications for work allocation, family obligations, support expectations, and marital functioning. In the structural model, the cultural-value dimensions were examined as correlated latent constructs rather than being combined into a single global score.

Gender-role beliefs were measured using the Gender Role Beliefs Scale developed by Kerr and Holden. The instrument assesses the extent to which respondents endorse traditional or egalitarian beliefs concerning the social, occupational, domestic, and familial roles of women and men. Items address beliefs about paid employment, household responsibilities, decision-making, authority, caregiving, and the appropriateness of different roles for spouses. Participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement on a Likert-type scale. Items were coded in the same conceptual direction after reverse-scored statements had been recoded. Higher total scores represented stronger endorsement of egalitarian gender-role beliefs, whereas lower scores represented greater endorsement of traditional gender-role expectations. The measure was selected because it captures beliefs that are directly relevant to the division of paid and unpaid labor within dual-earner marriages. Before testing the structural model, the factorial validity and measurement properties of the scale were evaluated separately for women and men.

Work–family conflict was assessed using the multidimensional Work–Family Conflict Scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams. This instrument conceptualizes work–family conflict as a bidirectional form of inter-role incompatibility and distinguishes interference originating in the work domain from interference originating in the family domain. The scale includes time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based dimensions of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Time-based conflict occurs when time devoted to one role limits participation in another role, strain-based conflict occurs when stress or fatigue arising in one domain impairs functioning in the other domain, and behavior-based conflict occurs when behavioral patterns required in one role are incompatible with expectations in the other role. Participants rated each item on a Likert-type response scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Higher scores indicated greater work–family conflict. Separate latent variables were specified for work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict because the direction of interference may have distinct implications for the individual experiencing the conflict and for the individual's spouse.

Perceived partner support was measured using the Support in Intimate Relationships Rating Scale developed by Dehle, Larsen, and Landers. The scale evaluates the degree to which individuals perceive their intimate partner as emotionally available, understanding, encouraging, responsive, and helpful when they face personal, occupational, or family-related demands. The measure reflects both emotional support and practical assistance and is therefore suitable for examining partner support in the context of dual-earner relationships. Participants rated how accurately each statement represented the support they generally received from their spouse. Higher scores indicated stronger perceived partner support. The instructions emphasized support received from the spouse rather than support provided to the spouse so that the measure represented each participant's subjective experience of partner responsiveness. Perceived partner support was modeled as an individual-level latent variable, allowing each spouse's perception of support to predict both that spouse's marital satisfaction and the marital satisfaction of the other spouse.

Marital satisfaction was assessed using the 16-item Couples Satisfaction Index developed by Funk and Rogge. The index was designed to provide a precise and sensitive assessment of global relationship satisfaction and includes items evaluating happiness, emotional connection, relationship quality, relationship strength, and the degree to which the relationship meets the respondent's expectations. Participants responded using the item-specific rating formats provided in the original instrument. Items were recoded where necessary so that higher total scores consistently represented greater marital satisfaction. The Couples Satisfaction Index was selected because of its strong psychometric performance and its suitability for detecting variation across both satisfied and distressed relationships. In the hypothesized model, marital satisfaction was treated as the primary endogenous outcome for each partner.

All questionnaires were administered in English through a secure online survey platform. The order of the primary instruments was randomized across participants to reduce systematic order effects, while demographic questions were

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presented at the end of the survey. Mandatory-response settings were not applied to sensitive questions because participants were permitted to omit any item they did not wish to answer. Attention-check items and survey-duration indicators were used to assess response quality. The internal consistency of each scale and subscale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega. Coefficients of .70 or higher were regarded as acceptable for research purposes, although reliability estimates were interpreted in conjunction with factor loadings, composite reliability, and the conceptual breadth of the constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted before testing structural relationships to verify that the questionnaire items adequately represented the intended latent variables in the Canadian dual-earner couple sample.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics and structural equation modeling software capable of estimating dyadic models with latent variables. Preliminary data screening included checking participant eligibility, matching spouses through their identification codes, identifying duplicate responses, examining survey completion time, evaluating missing data, and assessing univariate and multivariate outliers. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, ranges, frequencies, percentages, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated for the demographic characteristics and primary study variables. The distributions of continuous variables were examined using histograms, normal probability plots, standardized skewness and kurtosis values, and the Mahalanobis distance. Missingness patterns were evaluated to determine whether missing responses were plausibly random. Because structural equation modeling with full-information maximum likelihood uses all available information without replacing missing values directly, this procedure was used to manage item-level missing data when the amount of missingness was limited and the assumptions of the method were considered reasonable.

The nonindependence of partners' responses was evaluated by calculating within-couple correlations and intraclass associations for the principal constructs. Statistically significant correlations between spouses' scores were expected because partners share a household, relationship history, economic environment, and family system. Conventional analytical procedures that assume independent observations were therefore considered inappropriate for testing the primary hypotheses. The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model was used to account explicitly for this dyadic dependency. The partners were treated as distinguishable by gender, permitting separate estimation of pathways for wives and husbands. Corresponding exogenous variables, mediator variables, outcome variables, and residual terms were allowed to correlate between partners whenever theoretically and statistically justified.

The measurement model was evaluated before the structural model. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to examine the factor structure of cultural values, gender-role beliefs, work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, perceived partner support, and marital satisfaction. Standardized factor loadings, indicator residuals, construct correlations, composite reliability, and average variance extracted were examined to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Standardized factor loadings of approximately .50 or higher were considered desirable, although indicators were retained or removed on the basis of conceptual relevance, overall model performance, and evidence from multiple psychometric criteria rather than an isolated statistical threshold. Discriminant validity was evaluated by examining whether the latent constructs were empirically distinguishable and whether confidence intervals around interconstruct correlations excluded unity.

Because comparisons of actor and partner effects across wives and husbands require the measures to represent the same constructs in comparable ways, measurement invariance was evaluated across partner gender. Configural invariance was first assessed by testing whether the same general factor structure was supported for both partners. Metric invariance was then examined by constraining corresponding factor loadings to equality across wives and husbands. Scalar invariance was assessed by constraining corresponding item intercepts when mean comparisons or equality tests required this assumption. Changes in comparative fit indices, root mean square error of approximation, and chi-square values were considered when evaluating invariance. Partial measurement invariance was accepted when a small number of parameters required release and the remaining constraints supported meaningful comparisons.

The hypothesized structural model estimated actor and partner pathways from cultural values and gender-role beliefs to work–family conflict, perceived partner support, and marital satisfaction. Actor effects included, for example, the association between a wife's gender-role beliefs and her

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own work–family conflict or marital satisfaction, and the corresponding associations for husbands. Partner effects included the association between a wife's gender-role beliefs and her husband's work–family conflict or marital satisfaction, as well as the association between a husband's beliefs and his wife's outcomes. Similar actor and partner pathways were specified for the cultural-value dimensions. Work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were modeled as potential mechanisms through which personal cultural values and gender-role beliefs were associated with marital satisfaction. Perceived partner support was also examined as a mediator and as an interpersonal resource that could be associated with lower conflict and higher satisfaction for both members of the couple.

Indirect effects were tested using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when its 95% bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero. This procedure was selected because indirect effects frequently have nonnormal sampling distributions. Total effects were calculated as the sum of direct and indirect effects. Where theoretically appropriate, serial indirect pathways were also examined, including pathways in which cultural values or gender-role beliefs predicted work–family conflict, which was subsequently associated with perceived partner support and marital satisfaction. These pathways were interpreted cautiously because the cross-sectional design did not permit definitive conclusions regarding temporal or causal ordering.

Potential confounding variables were examined before being included in the final structural model. Age, length of marriage, number of children, age of the youngest child, weekly working hours, household income, educational attainment, and work arrangement were considered as possible covariates. A covariate was retained when it demonstrated a theoretically meaningful or statistically significant association with a mediator or outcome variable and when its inclusion improved the adequacy of the model. The same covariate structure was used for both partners whenever possible to preserve model comparability. Correlations among exogenous predictors were freely estimated to account for the possibility that cultural values, gender-role beliefs, and demographic characteristics were interrelated.

Model estimation was conducted using robust maximum likelihood to reduce sensitivity to moderate deviations from multivariate normality. Overall model fit was evaluated using the chi-square statistic, the chi-square-to-degrees-of-freedom ratio, the comparative fit index, the Tucker–Lewis index, the root mean square error of approximation with its 90% confidence interval, and the standardized root mean square residual. Comparative fit index and Tucker–Lewis index values of .90 or higher were interpreted as indicating acceptable fit, with values near or above .95 indicating strong fit. Root mean square error of approximation values below .08 and standardized root mean square residual values below .08 were considered indicative of acceptable approximation. Because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size and model complexity, decisions regarding model adequacy were based on the collective pattern of fit indices, parameter estimates, residuals, and theoretical coherence rather than on the chi-square test alone.

Standardized regression coefficients, unstandardized estimates, standard errors, critical ratios, exact probability values, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for the principal structural pathways. Statistical significance was evaluated using a two-tailed alpha level of .05. Equality constraints were used to determine whether corresponding actor and partner effects differed between wives and husbands. Nested models were compared by constraining selected pathways to equality and evaluating whether the constraints produced a meaningful deterioration in model fit. Modification indices were reviewed only after the theoretically specified model had been tested. Correlated residuals or additional pathways were added solely when they were substantively defensible and did not represent data-driven capitalization on chance. The final model was interpreted with emphasis on the magnitude, direction, precision, and interpersonal pattern of the estimated actor and partner effects.

3 Findings and Results

The final analytical sample consisted of 250 different-gender dual-earner married couples, representing 500 individual participants. All couples provided matched and independently completed questionnaires from both spouses. Wives ranged in age from 24 to 58 years, with a mean age of 38.42 years (SD = 7.16), whereas husbands ranged in age from 25 to 61 years, with a mean age of 40.11 years (SD = 7.52). The mean age difference within couples was 1.69 years (SD = 3.84). The couples had been married for an average of 11.84 years (SD = 7.02), with marital duration ranging from 1 to 33 years. A total of 205 couples (82.0%) had at least one child, whereas 45 couples (18.0%) had no children. Across the full sample, the mean number of

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children was 1.41 (SD = 1.02), and among couples with children, the mean age of the youngest child was 7.63 years (SD = 5.21). Fifty-eight couples (23.2%) had at least one child younger than six years of age. Regarding place of residence, 96 couples (38.4%) lived in Ontario, 48 (19.2%) in Quebec, 42 (16.8%) in British Columbia, 35 (14.0%) in Alberta, 17 (6.8%) in the Atlantic provinces, and 12 (4.8%) in Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

In terms of educational attainment, 44 wives (17.6%) had completed secondary education or an equivalent qualification, 79 (31.6%) held a college diploma or technical qualification, 89 (35.6%) held a bachelor's degree, and 38 (15.2%) held a graduate or professional degree. Among husbands, 52 (20.8%) had completed secondary education, 72 (28.8%) held a college or technical qualification, 88 (35.2%) held a bachelor's degree, and 38 (15.2%) held a graduate or professional degree. Most participants were employed full-time. Specifically, 210 wives (84.0%) and 228 husbands (91.2%) worked 30 or more hours per week, while the remaining participants worked between 20 and 29 hours per week. Wives reported working an average of 37.26 hours per week (SD = 7.48), compared with 40.63 hours per week (SD = 7.96) among husbands. The within-couple difference in weekly working hours was statistically significant, $t(249) = -5.17$, $p < .001$, indicating that husbands worked, on average, 3.37 more paid hours per week than their wives. Among wives, 112 (44.8%) worked primarily on-site, 84 (33.6%) followed a hybrid arrangement, and 54 (21.6%) worked primarily from home. Among husbands, 126 (50.4%) worked primarily on-site, 81 (32.4%) followed a hybrid arrangement, and 43 (17.2%) worked primarily from home. Household annual income was below CAD 75,000 for 47 couples (18.8%), between CAD 75,000 and CAD 124,999 for 98 couples (39.2%), between CAD 125,000 and CAD 174,999 for 69 couples (27.6%), and CAD 175,000 or higher for 36 couples (14.4%).

Data screening indicated that item-level missingness was low, ranging from 0.0% to 1.7% across the study measures, with an overall missing-data rate of 0.9%. Little's test did not reject the assumption that the data were missing completely at random, $\chi^2(814) = 839.62$, $p = .257$. Full-information maximum-likelihood estimation was therefore used to retain all 250 couples in the structural analyses. Standardized skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits, with absolute skewness values ranging from 0.04 to 0.91 and absolute kurtosis values ranging from 0.02 to 1.18. Six individual responses exceeded the conventional Mahalanobis-distance criterion for potential multivariate outliers. Inspection of these responses did not reveal data-entry errors, invalid response patterns, or implausible combinations of scores. The cases were therefore retained, and sensitivity analyses excluding them produced no substantive changes in the direction, magnitude, or statistical significance of the principal pathways. The variance inflation factors for the exogenous predictors ranged from 1.18 to 2.31, indicating that multicollinearity did not threaten the stability of the parameter estimates.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Coefficients, and Within-Couple Associations for the Study Variables

Variable	Possible range	Wives M	Wives SD	Wives α	Wives ω	Husbands M	Husbands SD	Husbands α	Husbands ω	Within-couple r
Horizontal collectivism	1–9	6.41	1.02	.82	.83	6.28	1.07	.83	.84	.31***
Vertical collectivism	1–9	5.57	1.11	.85	.86	5.73	1.09	.84	.85	.36***
Horizontal individualism	1–9	6.20	1.04	.80	.81	6.31	1.01	.81	.82	.28***
Vertical individualism	1–9	4.87	1.18	.86	.87	5.15	1.15	.87	.88	.34***
Egalitarian gender-role beliefs	1–7	5.62	0.83	.90	.91	5.31	0.89	.91	.92	.42***
Work-to-family conflict	1–5	2.94	0.71	.91	.92	3.16	0.74	.92	.93	.29***
Family-to-work conflict	1–5	2.58	0.68	.89	.90	2.47	0.65	.90	.91	.25***
Perceived partner support	1–5	4.02	0.62	.93	.94	3.89	0.66	.92	.93	.40***
Marital satisfaction	0–81	61.84	10.26	.95	.95	59.73	10.91	.94	.95	.48***

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As shown in Table 1, the internal consistency of all study measures was satisfactory to excellent for both wives and husbands. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .80 to .95 for wives and from .81 to .94 for husbands, while McDonald's omega coefficients ranged from .81 to .95 for wives and from .82 to .95 for husbands. These findings supported the reliability of the scale scores before estimation of the latent-variable model. The statistically significant within-couple correlations, which ranged from r = .25 for family-to-work conflict to r = .48 for marital satisfaction, confirmed that spouses' scores were not statistically independent. The strongest dyadic resemblance was observed for marital satisfaction, followed by egalitarian gender-role beliefs and perceived partner support. This pattern supported the use of an actor–partner analytical framework rather than conventional individual-level regression analysis. Paired-samples comparisons showed that wives endorsed more egalitarian gender-role beliefs than husbands, $t(249) = 5.28$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.33$. Husbands reported higher vertical individualism, $t(249) = -3.31$, $p = .001$, $d = -0.21$, and greater work-to-family conflict, $t(249) = -4.02$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.25$. Wives reported slightly greater family-to-work conflict, $t(249) = 2.13$, $p = .034$, $d = 0.14$, greater perceived partner support, $t(249) = 2.93$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.19$, and higher marital satisfaction, $t(249) = 3.09$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.20$. Husbands also reported marginally higher vertical collectivism, $t(249) = -2.03$, $p = .043$, although the magnitude of this difference was small. No statistically significant gender differences were found for horizontal collectivism or horizontal individualism.

Zero-order associations were consistent with the proposed conceptual model. Among wives, egalitarian gender-role beliefs were negatively correlated with work-to-family conflict, $r = -.34$, $p < .001$, and positively correlated with perceived partner support, $r = .41$, $p < .001$, and marital satisfaction, $r = .38$, $p < .001$. Among husbands, egalitarian gender-role beliefs were similarly associated with lower work-to-family conflict, $r = -.29$, $p < .001$, greater perceived partner support, $r = .35$, $p < .001$, and greater marital satisfaction, $r = .31$, $p < .001$. Work-to-family conflict was negatively associated with marital satisfaction among both wives, $r = -.49$, $p < .001$, and husbands, $r = -.44$, $p < .001$. Perceived partner support demonstrated the strongest zero-order association with marital satisfaction for both wives, $r = .62$, $p < .001$, and husbands, $r = .58$, $p < .001$. Cross-partner correlations were also evident. Wives' work-to-family conflict was negatively related to husbands' marital satisfaction, $r = -.31$, $p < .001$, while husbands' work-to-family conflict was negatively related to wives' marital satisfaction, $r = -.37$, $p < .001$. Wives' perceived partner support was positively correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction, $r = .39$, $p < .001$, and husbands' perceived partner support was positively correlated with wives' marital satisfaction, $r = .43$, $p < .001$.

Table 2

Measurement-Model Properties and Tests of Measurement Invariance Across Wives and Husbands

Panel A. Standardized Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Wives loading range	Wives CR	Wives AVE	Husbands loading range	Husbands CR	Husbands AVE
Horizontal collectivism	.58–.79	.84	.51	.56–.81	.85	.52
Vertical collectivism	.61–.83	.87	.55	.59–.82	.86	.54
Horizontal individualism	.57–.80	.83	.50	.58–.79	.84	.51
Vertical individualism	.60–.84	.87	.55	.62–.85	.88	.57
Egalitarian gender-role beliefs	.54–.82	.91	.53	.56–.84	.92	.55
Work-to-family conflict	.66–.86	.92	.65	.67–.88	.93	.67
Family-to-work conflict	.64–.84	.90	.61	.65–.85	.91	.63
Perceived partner support	.63–.88	.94	.66	.61–.87	.93	.64
Marital satisfaction	.68–.91	.95	.70	.66–.90	.95	.68

Panel B. Measurement-Invariance Tests

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR	ΔCFI
Configural invariance	1468.25	836	1.76	.945	.937	.039 [.036, .042]	.045	—
Metric invariance	1511.42	876	1.73	.944	.939	.038 [.035, .041]	.048	−.001
Scalar invariance	1556.87	913	1.71	.943	.940	.038 [.035, .041]	.051	−.001
Strict residual invariance	1629.73	959	1.70	.939	.938	.039 [.036, .042]	.057	−.004

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The measurement results presented in Table 2 supported the psychometric adequacy of the latent constructs. All standardized factor loadings were positive and statistically significant at $p < .001$. The loadings ranged from .54 to .91 among wives and from .56 to .90 among husbands, indicating that the observed indicators adequately represented their intended latent variables. Composite reliability values ranged from .83 to .95 for wives and from .84 to .95 for husbands, exceeding the conventional criterion of .70. Average variance extracted values ranged from .50 to .70 for wives and from .51 to .68 for husbands, supporting convergent validity. The square root of the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other latent constructs, and no estimated latent correlation approached unity, supporting discriminant validity. The unconstrained measurement model demonstrated satisfactory fit, $\chi^2(818) = 1436.82$, $\chi^2/df = 1.76$, CFI = .947, TLI = .939, RMSEA = .039, 90% CI [.036, .042], and SRMR = .043. The configural model also fit the data adequately, demonstrating that the same general factor structure applied to wives and husbands. Constraining corresponding factor loadings to equality produced a change in CFI of only −.001, supporting metric invariance. The scalar-invariance model produced a further ΔCFI of −.001, while the strict residual-invariance model produced a ΔCFI of −.004. Because all changes were smaller than .010 and the remaining fit indices remained within acceptable ranges, the measures were considered sufficiently invariant across partner gender. It was therefore appropriate to compare corresponding structural coefficients and to test whether actor and partner pathways differed between wives and husbands.

Table 3

Standardized Direct Effects in the Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Equation Model

Predictor	Outcome	Effect type	β	SE	z	p	95% CI
Wife horizontal collectivism	Wife perceived partner support	Actor	.22	.055	4.00	<.001	[.11, .33]
Husband horizontal collectivism	Husband perceived partner support	Actor	.19	.056	3.39	.001	[.08, .30]
Wife horizontal collectivism	Husband perceived partner support	Partner	.11	.049	2.24	.025	[.01, .21]
Husband horizontal collectivism	Wife perceived partner support	Partner	.13	.050	2.60	.009	[.03, .23]
Wife vertical collectivism	Wife family-to-work conflict	Actor	.16	.052	3.08	.002	[.06, .26]
Husband vertical collectivism	Husband family-to-work conflict	Actor	.18	.053	3.40	.001	[.08, .28]
Wife vertical collectivism	Husband family-to-work conflict	Partner	.08	.048	1.67	.096	[−.01, .17]
Husband vertical collectivism	Wife family-to-work conflict	Partner	.10	.049	2.04	.041	[.00, .20]
Wife horizontal individualism	Wife work-to-family conflict	Actor	−.07	.051	−1.37	.170	[−.17, .03]
Husband horizontal individualism	Husband work-to-family conflict	Actor	−.05	.052	−0.96	.336	[−.15, .05]
Wife vertical individualism	Wife work-to-family conflict	Actor	.17	.052	3.27	.001	[.07, .27]
Husband vertical individualism	Husband work-to-family conflict	Actor	.21	.053	3.96	<.001	[.11, .31]
Wife vertical individualism	Wife perceived partner support	Actor	−.12	.050	−2.40	.016	[−.22, −.02]
Husband vertical individualism	Husband perceived partner support	Actor	−.14	.051	−2.75	.006	[−.24, −.04]
Wife egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Wife work-to-family conflict	Actor	−.25	.052	−4.81	<.001	[−.35, −.15]
Husband egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Husband work-to-family conflict	Actor	−.20	.053	−3.77	<.001	[−.30, −.10]
Wife egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Husband work-to-family conflict	Partner	−.12	.049	−2.45	.014	[−.22, −.02]
Husband egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Wife work-to-family conflict	Partner	−.17	.050	−3.40	.001	[−.27, −.07]
Wife egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Wife perceived partner support	Actor	.23	.052	4.42	<.001	[.13, .33]
Husband egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Husband perceived partner support	Actor	.18	.053	3.40	.001	[.08, .28]
Wife egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Husband perceived partner support	Partner	.14	.049	2.86	.004	[.04, .24]
Husband egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Wife perceived partner support	Partner	.16	.050	3.20	.001	[.06, .26]
Wife work-to-family conflict	Wife perceived partner support	Actor	−.26	.050	−5.20	<.001	[−.36, −.16]
Husband work-to-family conflict	Husband perceived partner support	Actor	−.23	.051	−4.51	<.001	[−.33, −.13]
Wife work-to-family conflict	Husband perceived partner support	Partner	−.11	.047	−2.34	.019	[−.20, −.02]
Husband work-to-family conflict	Wife perceived partner support	Partner	−.15	.048	−3.13	.002	[−.24, −.06]
Wife work-to-family conflict	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor	−.28	.049	−5.71	<.001	[−.38, −.18]
Husband work-to-family conflict	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor	−.24	.050	−4.80	<.001	[−.34, −.14]
Wife work-to-family conflict	Husband marital satisfaction	Partner	−.13	.046	−2.83	.005	[−.22, −.04]
Husband work-to-family conflict	Wife marital satisfaction	Partner	−.18	.047	−3.83	<.001	[−.27, −.09]
Wife family-to-work conflict	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor	−.14	.047	−2.98	.003	[−.23, −.05]
Husband family-to-work conflict	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor	−.12	.048	−2.50	.012	[−.21, −.03]
Wife perceived partner support	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor	.39	.047	8.30	<.001	[.30, .48]

Husband perceived partner support	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor	.36	.048	7.50	<.001	[.27, .45]
Wife perceived partner support	Husband marital satisfaction	Partner	.17	.045	3.78	<.001	[.08, .26]
Husband perceived partner support	Wife marital satisfaction	Partner	.20	.046	4.35	<.001	[.11, .29]
Wife egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor direct	.13	.049	2.65	.008	[.03, .23]
Husband egalitarian gender-role beliefs	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor direct	.10	.050	2.00	.046	[.00, .20]
Wife horizontal collectivism	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor direct	.11	.047	2.34	.019	[.02, .20]
Husband horizontal collectivism	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor direct	.09	.048	1.88	.061	[−.00, .18]
Wife vertical individualism	Wife marital satisfaction	Actor direct	−.10	.046	−2.17	.030	[−.19, −.01]
Husband vertical individualism	Husband marital satisfaction	Actor direct	−.12	.047	−2.55	.011	[−.21, −.03]

The structural model demonstrated satisfactory overall fit, $\chi^2(872) = 1517.46$, $\chi^2/df = 1.74$, CFI = .943, TLI = .936, RMSEA = .038, 90% CI [.035, .042], and SRMR = .047. As reported in Table 3, horizontal collectivism was positively associated with perceived partner support through both actor and partner pathways. Wives' horizontal collectivism predicted their own perceived partner support, $\beta = .22$, $p < .001$, and their husbands' perceived support, $\beta = .11$, $p = .025$. Husbands' horizontal collectivism similarly predicted their own perceived support, $\beta = .19$, $p = .001$, and their wives' perceived support, $\beta = .13$, $p = .009$. Horizontal collectivism also had a small positive direct association with wives' marital satisfaction, $\beta = .11$, $p = .019$, whereas the corresponding direct effect among husbands did not reach statistical significance, $\beta = .09$, $p = .061$. Vertical collectivism was associated with greater family-to-work conflict for both wives, $\beta = .16$, $p = .002$, and husbands, $\beta = .18$, $p = .001$. The partner effect from husbands' vertical collectivism to wives' family-to-work conflict was small but statistically significant, $\beta = .10$, $p = .041$, whereas the reciprocal partner effect was not significant.

Horizontal individualism was not significantly associated with work-to-family conflict for either spouse. In contrast, vertical individualism predicted greater work-to-family conflict among wives, $\beta = .17$, $p = .001$, and husbands, $\beta = .21$, $p < .001$. Vertical individualism was also related to lower perceived partner support and lower marital satisfaction for both partners. The negative direct effect on marital satisfaction was $\beta = -.10$, $p = .030$, for wives and $\beta = -.12$, $p = .011$, for husbands. Egalitarian gender-role beliefs emerged as an important dyadic predictor. Wives' egalitarian beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict for themselves, $\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$, and for their husbands, $\beta = -.12$, $p = .014$. Husbands' egalitarian beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict for themselves, $\beta = -.20$, $p < .001$, and for their wives, $\beta = -.17$, $p = .001$. Egalitarian beliefs also predicted greater perceived partner support through all four actor and partner pathways. The actor associations were $\beta = .23$ for wives and $\beta = .18$ for husbands, while the partner associations were $\beta = .14$ from wives to husbands and $\beta = .16$ from husbands to wives. Even after work–family conflict and perceived support were included, egalitarian beliefs retained small positive direct associations with the individual's own marital satisfaction.

Work-to-family conflict was associated with lower perceived partner support within and across partners. Wives' conflict predicted lower support perceived by wives, $\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$, and husbands, $\beta = -.11$, $p = .019$. Husbands' conflict predicted lower support perceived by husbands, $\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$, and wives, $\beta = -.15$, $p = .002$. Work-to-family conflict also had significant negative actor effects on marital satisfaction for wives, $\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$, and husbands, $\beta = -.24$, $p < .001$. Significant partner effects indicated that one spouse's work-related interference extended to the other spouse's evaluation of the marriage. Wives' work-to-family conflict predicted lower marital satisfaction among husbands, $\beta = -.13$, $p = .005$, while husbands' conflict predicted lower marital satisfaction among wives, $\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$. Family-to-work conflict had smaller but significant negative actor effects on marital satisfaction. Perceived partner support was the strongest proximal predictor of marital satisfaction, with actor effects of $\beta = .39$ for wives and $\beta = .36$ for husbands. Support also demonstrated significant partner effects, indicating that a spouse's perception of being supported was associated with greater marital satisfaction in the other spouse. Equality-constraint tests indicated that most corresponding actor and partner pathways did not differ significantly by gender. The negative partner effect of husbands' work-to-family conflict on wives' marital satisfaction was, however, stronger than the reciprocal effect of wives' conflict on husbands' satisfaction, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 4.16$, $p = .041$. The actor effects of perceived partner support on marital satisfaction did not differ significantly between wives and husbands, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 0.72$, $p = .396$.

Among the covariates, weekly working hours predicted greater work-to-family conflict for both wives, $\beta = .18$, $p = .003$, and husbands, $\beta = .21$, $p < .001$. Having a child younger

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than six years predicted greater family-to-work conflict among wives, β = .14, p = .018, but not among husbands, β = .07, p = .211. Household income was weakly associated with lower work-to-family conflict among wives, β = −.10, p = .047, but was unrelated to husbands' conflict. Longer marital duration had a small positive association with husbands' marital satisfaction, β = .09, p = .048, after the other variables were controlled. No other demographic covariate had a statistically significant direct association with marital satisfaction in the final model.

Table 4

Bootstrapped Standardized Indirect Effects on Marital Satisfaction

Indirect pathway	Effect classification	β indirect	Bootstrap SE	95% bootstrap CI	p
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Wife WFC → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.070	.020	[.036, .113]	<.001
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Husband WFC → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.048	.015	[.022, .082]	.001
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Husband WFC → Husband marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.029	.012	[.008, .056]	.009
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Wife WFC → Wife marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.048	.015	[.022, .080]	.001
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.090	.022	[.052, .135]	<.001
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.065	.018	[.033, .103]	<.001
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.050	.016	[.021, .085]	.002
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.062	.018	[.031, .101]	<.001
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Wife WFC → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Serial actor	.025	.009	[.011, .045]	.002
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Husband WFC → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Serial actor	.017	.007	[.006, .033]	.006
Wife egalitarian beliefs → Husband WFC → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Serial partner	.010	.005	[.002, .022]	.019
Husband egalitarian beliefs → Wife WFC → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Serial partner	.017	.007	[.006, .032]	.005
Wife horizontal collectivism → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.086	.022	[.046, .132]	<.001
Husband horizontal collectivism → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	.068	.019	[.034, .109]	<.001
Wife horizontal collectivism → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.040	.016	[.010, .075]	.011
Husband horizontal collectivism → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Partner–actor	.051	.017	[.020, .086]	.002
Wife vertical individualism → Wife WFC → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.048	.016	[−.082, −.022]	.001
Husband vertical individualism → Husband WFC → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.050	.017	[−.087, −.025]	<.001
Wife vertical individualism → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.047	.017	[−.083, −.016]	.004
Husband vertical individualism → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.050	.018	[−.089, −.019]	.003
Wife vertical individualism → Wife WFC → Wife support → Wife marital satisfaction	Serial actor	−.017	.007	[−.033, −.006]	.005
Husband vertical individualism → Husband WFC → Husband support → Husband marital satisfaction	Serial actor	−.017	.007	[−.035, −.006]	.006
Wife vertical collectivism → Wife FWC → Wife marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.022	.009	[−.043, −.007]	.007
Husband vertical collectivism → Husband FWC → Husband marital satisfaction	Actor–actor	−.022	.010	[−.046, −.006]	.011

The indirect-effect analyses reported in Table 4 demonstrated that work-to-family conflict and perceived partner support transmitted meaningful portions of the associations between cultural and gender-role variables and marital satisfaction. Egalitarian gender-role beliefs had positive indirect associations with marital satisfaction because they were related to lower work-to-family conflict and greater perceived support. For wives, the actor indirect effect through their own work-to-family conflict was β = .070, 95% CI [.036, .113], while the corresponding actor indirect effect for husbands was β = .048, 95% CI [.022, .082]. Significant partner-mediated effects were also found. Wives' egalitarian beliefs predicted husbands' greater marital satisfaction through lower conflict experienced by husbands, β = .029, 95% CI [.008, .056], whereas husbands' egalitarian beliefs predicted wives' greater marital

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satisfaction through lower conflict experienced by wives, β = .048, 95% CI [.022, .080]. Perceived partner support accounted for additional actor and partner effects. The indirect effect from wives' egalitarian beliefs through their own perceived support to their own marital satisfaction was β = .090, and the corresponding effect among husbands was β = .065. Cross-partner support pathways were also significant, demonstrating that one spouse's egalitarian beliefs were associated with the other spouse's marital satisfaction through the support perceived by that spouse. Serial mediation was supported because egalitarian beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict, lower conflict predicted greater perceived partner support, and support predicted greater marital satisfaction.

Horizontal collectivism had positive indirect associations with marital satisfaction primarily through perceived partner support. The actor indirect effects were β = .086 for wives and β = .068 for husbands, while the partner-mediated effects were β = .040 from wives' horizontal collectivism to husbands' marital satisfaction and β = .051 from husbands' horizontal collectivism to wives' marital satisfaction. Conversely, vertical individualism had negative indirect associations with marital satisfaction through both elevated work-to-family conflict and diminished perceived support. For wives, the indirect effects were β = −.048 through work-to-family conflict and β = −.047 through perceived support. For husbands, the corresponding effects were β = −.050 through work-to-family conflict and β = −.050 through perceived support. Significant serial effects further indicated that vertical individualism was associated with greater work interference, which was related to lower perceived support and, in turn, reduced marital satisfaction. Vertical collectivism demonstrated comparatively smaller negative indirect effects through family-to-work conflict. Because the direct effects of egalitarian gender-role beliefs and vertical individualism remained significant after the mediators were included, the mediation pattern was partial rather than complete. In contrast, much of the relationship between horizontal collectivism and marital satisfaction was explained by perceived partner support.

The final model explained 29.1% of the variance in wives' work-to-family conflict and 24.3% of the variance in husbands' work-to-family conflict. The predictors explained 14.2% of the variance in wives' family-to-work conflict and 12.8% of the variance in husbands' family-to-work conflict. Cultural values, gender-role beliefs, work-to-family conflict, and the partner pathways collectively explained 34.2% of the variance in perceived partner support among wives and 29.4% among husbands. The complete actor–partner model explained 58.1% of the variance in wives' marital satisfaction and 53.4% of the variance in husbands' marital satisfaction. Perceived partner support made the largest unique contribution to explained variance in marital satisfaction, followed by work-to-family conflict, egalitarian gender-role beliefs, and vertical individualism.

4 Discussion

The present study examined the dyadic associations of cultural values and gender-role beliefs with marital satisfaction among Canadian dual-earner couples by modeling work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and perceived partner support as relational mechanisms. The findings provided broad support for the proposed Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Equation Model and demonstrated that marital satisfaction was shaped by both intrapersonal actor effects and interpersonal partner effects. Horizontal collectivism was associated with greater perceived partner support, vertical individualism was related to greater work-to-family conflict and lower marital satisfaction, and egalitarian gender-role beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict and stronger perceived partner support. Work-to-family conflict negatively predicted marital satisfaction both within individuals and across spouses, while perceived partner support emerged as the strongest positive proximal predictor of marital satisfaction. The significant indirect and serial indirect effects further indicated that cultural values and gender-role beliefs were linked to marital satisfaction partly through the ways in which couples experienced occupational interference and interpreted supportive behavior within the relationship. Collectively, these results reinforce the proposition that dual-earner marriages operate as interdependent systems in which the beliefs and experiences of each spouse have consequences for both partners.

One of the principal findings was that horizontal collectivism was positively associated with perceived partner support through actor and partner pathways. Individuals who emphasized relational connectedness, cooperation, and equality appeared more likely to perceive their spouse as emotionally and practically supportive, and their value orientation was also associated with more favorable support perceptions in the other partner. This result is theoretically consistent with the relational character of horizontal collectivism, which emphasizes mutuality without requiring rigid hierarchy. In dual-earner marriages,

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such values may encourage spouses to view work and family responsibilities as shared concerns rather than as separate individual obligations. This interpretation aligns with evidence that the sharing of work-related experiences can strengthen relational and personal well-being when partners respond with attention, empathy, and validation (Li et al., 2024). It is also consistent with research showing that supportive resources acquired in one domain may be transferred to the partner and contribute to functioning across the work–family boundary (Stollberger et al., 2022). The significant partner effects observed in the present study suggest that cultural values are expressed behaviorally within the relationship and may shape the interpersonal climate perceived by both spouses.

The positive indirect associations of horizontal collectivism with marital satisfaction through perceived partner support further indicated that its relational benefits operated primarily through supportive exchanges. Horizontal collectivism did not uniformly produce strong direct effects on marital satisfaction, particularly among husbands, but it contributed to satisfaction by fostering a context in which partners felt understood and assisted. This pattern suggests that cultural values may not influence marital outcomes automatically; rather, their effects depend on whether they are translated into observable relational behaviors. Dyadic coping research similarly emphasizes that shared appraisal, supportive communication, and coordinated responses to stress are central mechanisms linking couple-level resources to relationship quality (Rumondor et al., 2022). The finding also complements evidence that conflict-resolution styles are related to marital satisfaction among married professionals, because cooperative values may facilitate constructive discussion and compromise when work and family demands compete (Ali & Saleem, 2022). In this respect, horizontal collectivism may be beneficial not merely because it prioritizes the relationship, but because it combines interdependence with an egalitarian orientation that supports reciprocal care.

In contrast, vertical collectivism was associated with greater family-to-work conflict for both wives and husbands, and its indirect association with marital satisfaction was negative through this pathway. This finding suggests that family loyalty and obligation may become burdensome when they are embedded in hierarchical expectations or demanding kinship responsibilities. Individuals who strongly endorse vertical collectivist values may feel compelled to prioritize family duties, respect authority within the family, and fulfill obligations to relatives even when these demands interfere with occupational responsibilities. The result is compatible with research showing that extended-family relationships and intergenerational expectations can exert meaningful influence on marital and family functioning (Leong & Juhari, 2021). It is also relevant to the experience of sandwiched caregivers, whose simultaneous obligations to children and aging family members can intensify conflict between work and caregiving roles (Honda & Ono, 2025). Thus, collectivism should not be treated as uniformly protective. Its horizontal form may facilitate equal cooperation, whereas its vertical form may increase role strain when family duty is combined with hierarchy and limited flexibility.

Vertical individualism demonstrated the opposite relational pattern from horizontal collectivism. It predicted greater work-to-family conflict, lower perceived partner support, and lower marital satisfaction for both spouses. These findings suggest that a cultural orientation emphasizing personal advancement, competition, and status differentiation may increase the priority assigned to occupational achievement while reducing the time and psychological availability devoted to family life. In dual-earner relationships, competitive orientations may also heighten comparisons between partners' incomes, professional standing, or career opportunities. Research on relative income and value congruence indicates that the relational meaning of earnings depends on the extent to which partners' values and expectations are aligned (Steed et al., 2023). When status-based values are strong, differences in occupational success may become more salient and may create tension over whose career receives priority. The present findings are also consistent with evidence that household decisions contribute to gender differences in job satisfaction because career outcomes are shaped by negotiated family arrangements rather than by individual employment conditions alone (Bredemeier et al., 2024). The negative serial pathways from vertical individualism to marital satisfaction through work-to-family conflict and reduced partner support indicate that competitive values may undermine marriage both by increasing interference and by weakening the perception that the spouse is responsive and supportive.

Egalitarian gender-role beliefs were among the most consistent protective predictors in the model. More egalitarian beliefs were associated with lower work-to-family conflict, greater perceived partner support, and higher marital satisfaction through both actor and partner pathways.

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These findings support the view that gender-role ideology is not merely an individual attitude but a relational organizing principle that shapes the allocation of work, caregiving, household labor, and decision-making. The results closely correspond with previous dyadic research showing that gender-role ideology is associated with work–family conflict, family–work conflict, and marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples (Yoo, 2021). Egalitarian beliefs may reduce conflict by increasing both spouses' willingness to negotiate responsibilities according to practical needs rather than traditional prescriptions. They may also increase perceived fairness, particularly when both partners invest substantial time in paid employment.

The partner effects of egalitarian beliefs are especially important. A spouse's endorsement of more equal gender roles predicted lower work-to-family conflict and greater support perceptions in the other partner. This indicates that the benefits of egalitarianism extend beyond the person holding those beliefs. For example, a husband's egalitarian beliefs may contribute to a wife's lower conflict by increasing his participation in household management, childcare, and emotional labor. Similarly, a wife's egalitarian beliefs may reduce pressure on a husband to conform exclusively to a provider role and may facilitate more flexible negotiation of career and family demands. This interpretation is supported by research showing that the gendered mental labor of anticipating, organizing, and monitoring household needs remains unequally distributed in many families (Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). It is also consistent with evidence that dual-earner couples' strategies for managing work and childcare are strongly influenced by gender dynamics (Shockley et al., 2021). The present findings therefore suggest that egalitarian beliefs improve marital functioning when they are enacted through a more balanced and responsive division of visible and invisible family labor.

The results concerning vertical individualism and gender-role beliefs also illuminate the role of social expectations surrounding breadwinning and financial power. Female-breadwinning couples may encounter social pressure when their arrangements conflict with normative expectations regarding masculinity, provision, and authority (Shah, 2023). Women's financial empowerment can increase independence, yet its relational effects depend on whether the couple's beliefs support equitable decision-making and respect for women's economic agency (Çineli & González, 2024). Likewise, financial management and purchasing decisions within dual-earner families are shaped by gendered role expectations and are associated with marital quality (Lazuardi & Puspitawati, 2022). The present results imply that economic participation by both spouses is most beneficial when accompanied by egalitarian beliefs and mutual support. Dual earning alone does not eliminate traditional role structures; without ideological and behavioral adjustment, it may create a situation in which both partners participate in paid work while domestic and caregiving responsibilities remain unevenly allocated.

Work-to-family conflict emerged as a strong negative predictor of marital satisfaction for both spouses. Individuals who experienced greater interference from work reported lower satisfaction with their own marriage, consistent with previous findings that role conflict is associated with diminished marital satisfaction in dual-earner families (Nugrahani et al., 2024). Similar evidence has linked work–family conflict with both marital satisfaction and marital stability (San & Juhari, 2021). Occupational demands may reduce opportunities for shared activities, increase fatigue and irritability, impair communication, and limit emotional availability. Work pressure may also compromise sleep and healthy routines, thereby reducing the psychological resources individuals bring to their intimate relationships (Garg & Saini, 2026). The observed association between longer weekly working hours and work-to-family conflict further supported the role of temporal overload in producing strain.

The significant partner effects of work-to-family conflict indicated that occupational strain crossed over between spouses. One partner's work interference was associated with lower marital satisfaction in the other partner, even after personal conflict and other predictors were controlled. This finding is consistent with dyadic evidence that work–family conflict should be understood as a shared relational process rather than an individual problem (Andrade et al., 2023). It also supports the spillover–crossover framework, in which work experiences first affect the individual's family functioning and then influence the spouse's well-being (Schnettler et al., 2020). Time pressure may produce crossover effects when stressed individuals seek support from their spouse or become less able to respond supportively to the spouse's needs (Tement et al., 2023). The stronger negative partner effect of husbands' work-to-family conflict on wives' marital satisfaction may reflect persistent gender inequalities in household labor. When husbands' work demands increase, wives may absorb additional family responsibilities, whereas husbands may not experience an equivalent increase when wives' work demands intensify.

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This interpretation corresponds with research documenting gender disparities in work–family balance among employed academics (Vithanage & Arachchige, 2020).

Perceived partner support was the strongest positive predictor of marital satisfaction and demonstrated significant actor and partner effects. Individuals who perceived their spouse as understanding, available, and practically helpful reported greater satisfaction with the marriage. Moreover, one partner's support perception was positively associated with the other partner's satisfaction, suggesting that supportive relationships create a mutually reinforcing relational climate. These results correspond with research showing that support seeking under conditions of time pressure is associated with relationship satisfaction through dyadic pathways (Tement et al., 2023). They also align with findings that supportive exchanges concerning work experiences can promote relational well-being (Li et al., 2024). Partner support may protect marital satisfaction by validating the individual's stress, sharing practical burdens, and preserving a sense of partnership when occupational demands are high.

The serial mediation findings provide a more detailed explanation of this process. Egalitarian beliefs predicted lower work-to-family conflict, which was associated with greater perceived support and, subsequently, higher marital satisfaction. Conversely, vertical individualism predicted greater conflict, which was associated with lower support and reduced satisfaction. These pathways indicate that support is partly shaped by the broader ideological and cultural organization of the relationship. A spouse may be less likely to perceive support when the division of labor is unequal, when one partner's career is consistently prioritized, or when work stress produces emotional withdrawal. Organizational conditions can further intensify this process. An unsupportive work–family culture may cross over and reduce the partner's satisfaction with work–family balance (Bernhardt & Bünning, 2021), whereas structured work–family support programs may improve the interface between employment and family life (Shimazu et al., 2023). The couple's relational resources therefore interact with broader occupational conditions rather than operating in isolation.

5 Conclusion

The model explained more than half of the variance in marital satisfaction for both wives and husbands, highlighting the combined importance of values, ideology, work–family experiences, and relational support. The slightly greater explained variance among wives may reflect women's heightened exposure to the interaction of paid work and unpaid family responsibilities. Research on gendered workload and family support similarly shows that mental well-being in dual-earner households is embedded in linked and unequal patterns of work and care (Li et al., 2025). Families also differ in their configurations of satisfaction and adaptation, indicating that similar objective demands may produce different outcomes depending on the resources and relationships available to the couple (Schnettler et al., 2021). The present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that cultural values and gender-role beliefs can be incorporated into the same dyadic structural model as conflict, support, and marital satisfaction.

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The cross-sectional design did not permit causal conclusions or definitive temporal ordering among cultural values, gender-role beliefs, work–family conflict, perceived partner support, and marital satisfaction. Although the proposed directions were theoretically justified, satisfied couples may also perceive more support, report less conflict, or endorse their values differently. All principal variables were measured using self-report questionnaires, creating the possibility of shared-method variance, social desirability, and perceptual bias. The study included English-speaking different-gender married couples in which both spouses worked at least 20 hours per week; consequently, the findings may not generalize to same-gender couples, cohabiting partners, single-earner families, couples with limited English proficiency, precariously employed workers, or couples experiencing separation. The convenience and purposive recruitment strategy may also have produced a sample with relatively high relationship stability and willingness to participate jointly. Although participants resided in several Canadian provinces, the sample was not designed to provide province-level or ethnocultural representation. In addition, cultural values were assessed at the individual level and may not fully capture migration history, ethnic identity, religiosity, institutional context, or the specific family traditions through which cultural expectations are enacted.

Future studies should employ longitudinal and intensive repeated-measure designs to determine how work demands, support exchanges, and marital satisfaction influence one another across time. Daily-diary studies could identify short-term spillover and crossover processes, while multiwave

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studies could test whether gender-role beliefs and cultural values predict changes in conflict and satisfaction across major life transitions such as childbirth, migration, caregiving for aging parents, job loss, promotion, and retirement. Future samples should include same-gender couples, cohabiting couples, single-earner households, immigrant and refugee families, Indigenous couples, and workers in precarious or nonstandard employment. Research should also measure the actual division of household labor, childcare, mental labor, income contribution, work schedules, and supportive behavior rather than relying exclusively on global perceptions. Observational assessments of couple communication and reports from multiple sources would strengthen causal and ecological validity. Multigroup APIM analyses could compare cultural, occupational, socioeconomic, and family-stage subgroups, while latent-profile approaches could identify distinct combinations of values, role beliefs, support, and conflict. Intervention studies are also needed to test whether changes in workload distribution, communication, workplace flexibility, or partner responsiveness produce corresponding improvements in marital satisfaction.

The findings indicate that interventions for dual-earner couples should address the couple as an interdependent unit rather than treating work–family strain as an individual time-management problem. Couple counselors and family practitioners should assess each partner's gender-role expectations, cultural values, occupational demands, perceptions of fairness, and experience of support. Intervention programs may help couples make invisible mental labor visible, negotiate household and caregiving responsibilities explicitly, establish procedures for periods of high work demand, and distinguish emotional support from unsolicited advice or controlling assistance. Employers can contribute by offering predictable schedules, flexible work arrangements, caregiving leave, supervisor support, and organizational norms that do not penalize employees for family responsibilities. Programs should involve both partners whenever feasible because changes in one spouse's work conditions or supportive behavior can affect the well-being of the other. Culturally responsive practice is essential; practitioners should not assume that autonomy, equality, obligation, or family involvement have identical meanings for all couples. The practical goal should be to help couples develop arrangements that are mutually endorsed, adaptable, and experienced as fair while preserving both occupational participation and relational connection.

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.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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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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