

GRATITUDE, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN

Fouzia Alam Sipra

fouziaasharahad@yahoo.com

Riphah International University Islamabad, Lahore Campus

Abstract

Gratitude and social support are factors that have been noted to affect marital satisfaction, particularly when the quality of relationships is taken into account. The direct and indirect effects of gratitude and on marital satisfaction were examined among 200 married women from Punjab, both working and non-working. In this study, some validated instruments like Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS) were used. The study reached conclusive findings. The main findings include that woman from socio-culturally deprived sections reported higher levels of gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction. It was observed that, among the study variables, social support acted as a mediating variable between gratitude and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, working women had more gratitude than non-working women, in addition to having greater social support and a satisfied married life. This could be explained by their socio-economic status and availability of support networks. The results demonstrate the importance of improving marital satisfaction by encouraging more people to practice gratitude and having wider social support networks. The study carries implications for marriage counseling, effective social programs in community contexts and policies to improve socially healthy relationships in Punjab where espouses are influenced by economy and culture.

Keywords: gratitude, social support, marital satisfaction, working women, non-working women.

Introduction

Marital satisfaction lives up to its name because it describes how happy a person is in a marriage. It involves parameters such as feelings for each other, interaction, conflict resolution, intimate relationship and objectives in life shared with the partner (Javed et al., 2022). This is not only a private concern as marital satisfaction also affects the welfare of families and society. People who are satisfied with their marriage report lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression, and as a result, higher levels of physical wellness, happiness and life satisfaction (Lamers et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, marital satisfaction is not only the concern of an individual as it is a construct that is embedded within society and culture with elements such as social support, life stressors and the relationships themselves having an influence on its levels. One such experience that has been found to positively correlate with marital satisfaction is the experience of gratitude. Helping friends, inner circle and families provide emotional, informational and practical social support to lessen the levels of stress that a certain relationship might experience. The understanding of how these variables affect one another in a specific cultural environment such as Punjab is of paramount importance. This study examines the relationship between gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction among women in Punjab in relation to their employment status. It seeks to find out how gratitude enhances marital satisfaction both independently as well as with social support helping the process.

Gratitude is described as an emotional experience that is pleasant and arises when one perceives that a benefit or favor is received from someone (Gulzar et al., 2023). In the context of marriage, the feeling of gratitude can be expressed by recognizing and appreciating the work, sacrifices and efforts made by a spouse to maintain a relationship. Studies have shown that

gratitude enhances positive emotions and behaviors which include kindness, trust and intimacy which are the core aspects of marital satisfaction. Many studies have shown that gratitude has an impact on marital satisfaction. Algoe (2010) put forth that gratitude strengthens the relationship by acting as a reminder of the good in the partners' relationship, which strengthens the emotional connection and encourages good conduct. Grateful partners reported more positive exchanges, more emotional intimacy and less conflicts (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). In addition, Emmons and McCullough (2003) observed that gratitude is capable of countering bad feelings such as resentment or frustration which would otherwise reduce the level of marital satisfaction. Gratitude is also related to greater relationship stability, next to emotional closeness. Grateful couples are less likely to part ways and remain much more satisfied as time progresses. This is because gratitude fosters reciprocal behavior, where positive actions are recognized and returned, thus strengthening the connection between the partners (Algoe, 2010).

Social support is a term encompassing assistance in the form of emotion, information and instrumental resources provided by family members, friends or any significant others (Zulfiqar et al., 2025; Kazmi et al., 2023; Hameed et al., 2022; Javed et al., 2021). While analyzing the role of social support in marriage, it is seen as an important resource that helps in the alleviation of stress as well as around emotional wellbeing. Cohen and Wills (1985) through their buffering hypothesis introduced the notion that provision of social support decreases the intensity of the negative effects resultant from stressors by offering emotional support, problem solving resources and advice. For married couples, social support is beneficial in overcoming relational, health and financial problems and thus provides favorable conditions to promote marital satisfaction.

Numerous studies have verified a positive relationship between social support and marital satisfaction. Potter (2021) stated that strong support networks increase the odds of a positive perception of marriage among couples. Indeed, relief from couple-induced stress is attainable through social support by fostering emotional comfort and reducing the feeling of being lonely. Furthermore, social support promotes the use of good coping mechanisms and enhances the emotional stamina of the couples, thereby increasing their level of satisfaction in the relationship (Cutrona, 1996). However, in communities such as the Punjab region where people espouse collectivist values, the role of the extended kin network is even more important. Parents, siblings and in-laws are examples of the extended family which often provides critical assistance to young couples during stress periods, such as when they are faced with marital problems. Such a support system encourages young couples to tackle problems and pursue stability in their marriages.

The dynamics of the social support system and the expression of gratitude can be understood in terms of reciprocity. It is imperative to argue that those who have a tendency to express words of gratitude have an increased likelihood of receiving social support as well due to the positive reinforcement that is exchanged and the cycle continues. On the opposite end of the spectrum, adequate social support systems can enhance gratitude since they enable individuals to be stable enough to appreciate the input of their respective partners. Also, it has been found out that people who are able to receive support from their partners and their family tend to show more appreciation and are more satisfied in their married lives (Algoe et al., 2008). Another way to see the relationship between support and gratitude is through the lens of Emmons and McCullough (2003). They argue that social support and gratitude exist to enhance a relationship. It follows logically that as one appreciates or is appreciative of interactions of their partners and the support offered, the degree and quality of the support offered is increased. This dynamic creates a virtuous cycle of relations where the message of gratitude and support pushes for increased marital satisfaction.

In Punjab, the concept of marital satisfaction is influenced by a unique set of cultural norms and values. Punjab, with its predominantly collectivist culture, places a strong emphasis on family interdependence and communal ties. In such a context, marriage is not just a union between two individuals but a union between families. As a result, the extended family plays a central role in supporting married couples emotionally and practically. This extended network of support significantly enhances marital satisfaction, as it provides couples with a robust support system that can help them navigate the complexities of marriage. Punjabi culture also emphasizes the importance of gratitude in maintaining harmonious relationships. Islamic teachings, which are prevalent in Punjab, highlight gratitude (Shukr) as an essential virtue in personal and relational life. Couples are encouraged to express gratitude for each other's efforts, thereby fostering a sense of appreciation and mutual respect. This cultural and religious emphasis on gratitude further strengthens the emotional bond between spouses, contributing to marital satisfaction.

In Punjab, the perception of marital satisfaction is shaped by a different set of cultural norms and values. Punjab is largely collectivist in its culture, which encourages family bonding and strong group relations. In this case, marriage is treated as an alliance of families rather than two individuals. This is what makes the extended family important for married partners because it provides emotional and practical encouragement to the couple. The extended family network therefore has a positive effect on the level of marital satisfaction since it offers the couple with ample resources that can be useful in coping with the challenges of marriage. Also, Punjabi culture indicates a strong belief that thankfulness helps preserve functional relationships. Islam regards gratitude (Shukr) as one of the important virtues of a person and every aspect of one's life relating to relationships. So, the husband and wife are said to appreciate each other's efforts and thank one another, which creates a sense of respect and appreciation. This cultural and religious focus on gratitude also serves to reinforce the emotional closeness between the partners, thus enhancing the level of marital satisfaction.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction in working and non-working women. To find out the mediation role of perceived social support between gratitude and marital satisfaction, while at the same time, comparing the levels of gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction among different demographics.

Hypotheses

- There would likely to be a significant positive relationship among gratitude, social support, and marital satisfaction in working and non-working women.
- It was hypothesized that gratitude and social support would be significant predictors of marital satisfaction.
- Social support would likely to mediate the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction.

Method

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational design which is appropriate in establishing the relationships among the variables of interest at a given time. This design was suitable as it made it possible to assess the relationships of gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction, without changing any variables. Non-probability Purposive sampling technique was used to recruit data from the participants. Married women in the age group of 25 to 45 years, form

the sample of 200 married women were studied. This age bracket was selected because these women were perceived to have better exposure to married life and, hence, could contribute more to the study. The sample was arranged in two categories, working women ($n = 103$) and non-working women ($n = 97$). The research was held in urban suburb of Lahore. The location was selected because of its cultural and socio-economic diversity which could help us achieve better interpretation of the subject. The participants in the research were selected based on strict criteria. Only married women, within the age bracket of 25 to 45 years, who were married for not less than 3 years, had at least one child and were willing to participate freely and voluntarily. Women with no children and who were severely physically disabled or cognitively impaired and were unable to complete the survey successfully, were excluded. All ethics outlined by the APA were followed.

Instruments

Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6)

The GQ-6 developed by McCullough et al. (2002) is a 6-item scale measuring gratitude, rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Sample items include: "I have so much in life to be thankful for." The total score reflects overall gratitude. The scale has been reliably used in various studies worldwide, including non-Western contexts, making it suitable for this study.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

The 12-item scale developed by Zimet et al. (2016) measures perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others. Respondents rate items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very strongly disagree, 5 = Very strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger perceived support. Widely used across cultures, the scale has demonstrated strong reliability and validity in research.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS)

The 15-item Marital Satisfaction Scale developed by Fowers and Olson, (1993) assesses overall satisfaction in marriage, covering communication, conflict resolution, intimacy, emotional support, and shared goals. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater differences in marital satisfaction. Widely used in marriage research, the scale has proven reliability and validity across cultures.

Procedure

The study was conducted after receiving approval from Institutional Review Board. Respondents were selected from the community centers, social groups and educational institutions from Lahore. Participants were then required to complete informed consent forms which explained the nature of the study, their rights and that their participation was voluntary. After this, participants filled out the questionnaires in their homes or a neutral place of their choice where they could be assured of privacy. The questionnaires' duration was approximately 30 minutes.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the study. Utilizing a variety of statistical analyses conducted in SPSS 27, the initial step involved frequency analysis to understand the prevalence of gratitude, social support and marriage satisfaction among working and non-working women. Following this, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to uncover any potential links between gratitude, social support and marriage satisfaction in the sample group. Furthermore, mediation analysis, utilizing the Hayes Process Macro 4.2, was utilized to probe the role of social support as a mediator in the relationship between gratitude and marriage satisfaction. Subsequently, hierarchical regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to how age predicts levels of

gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction. Additionally, comparisons between groups of working and non-working women were made using independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA.

Sample Characteristics

The study sample comprised 200 women aged 25–45 years ($M = 34$). The distribution between working (51.5%) and non-working women (48.5%) was nearly equal. Most had a Master's degree (36.5%), followed by Bachelor's (26.5%), MS/M.Phil (21.0%), and Intermediate (16.0%). Marriage duration was evenly split between 1–10 years (49.0%) and 11–20 years (51.0%). Most had 2–3 children (57.5%), while 33.0% had one child and 9.5% had more than three. Socioeconomic status was mainly middle (55.5%), high (32.5%), and low (12.0%). Family structure was evenly divided between nuclear (51.0%) and joint (49.0%) families. All participants were from rural backgrounds, with no reported illnesses.

Table 4.1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Sample ($N = 200$)

Characteristics		<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>
Age	25-45 Years	200	100.0	34 years
Working Status	Working Women	103	51.5	
	Non-Working Women	97	48.5	
Education	Intermediate	32	16.0	
	Graduation	53	26.5	
	Masters	73	36.5	
	MS/M.Phil.	42	21.0	
Marriage Duration	1-10 Years	98	49.0	
	11-20 Years	102	51.0	
Number of Children	One Child	66	33.0	
	2-3 Children	116	57.5	
	More than 3 Children	19	9.5	
Socioeconomic Status	Low	24	12.0	
	Middle	111	55.5	
	High	65	32.5	
Family Structure	Nuclear	102	51.0	
	Joint	98	49.0	
Family Background	rural	200	100.0	
Mother Illness	None	200	100.0	
Children Illness	None	200	100.0	

Table 4.2

Percentage of Within Groups Sample Distribution by Work Status in Two Groups of the Study

Percentage of Women Groups Sample Distribution by Work Status in Two Groups of the Study							
Characteristics		Non-Working		Working		Total	
		Women		Women			
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Education	Intermediate	24	24.7%	8	7.8%	32	16.0%

	Graduation	41	42.3%	12	11.7%	53	26.5%
	Masters	32	33.0%	41	39.8%	73	36.5%
	MS/M.Phil.	0	0.0%	42	40.8%	42	21.0%
Marital Duration	1-10 years	40	41.2%	58	56.3%	98	49.0%
	11-20 years	57	58.8%	45	43.7%	102	51.0%
Number of Children	One Child	34	35.1%	32	31.1%	66	33.0%
	2-3 Children	54	55.7%	61	59.2%	115	57.5%
	> 3 Children	9	9.3%	10	9.7%	19	9.5%
Socioeconomic Status	Low	10	10.3%	14	13.6%	24	12.0%
	Middle	49	50.5%	62	60.2%	111	55.5%
	High	38	39.2%	27	26.2%	65	32.5%
Family Structure	Nuclear	52	53.6%	50	48.5%	102	51.0%
	Joint	45	46.4%	53	51.5%	98	49.0%

Table 4.2 highlights group differences in education, marital duration, children, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Non-working women had higher percentages in Intermediate (24.7%) and Graduation (42.3%), while working women had more at the Master's (39.8%) and MS/M.Phil. (40.8%) levels. More working women were married for 1–10 years (56.3%), whereas non-working women had a higher percentage in the 11–20 years category (58.8%). Child distribution was similar across groups, with most having 2–3 children. More working women belonged to the middle class (60.2%), whereas non-working women had a higher percentage in the high socioeconomic class (39.2%). Family structure was nearly equal, with non-working women slightly favoring nuclear families (53.6%) and working women slightly favoring joint families (51.5%). Visual results are in Figures 4.1–4.5.

Figure 4.1

Bar Chart of Total Sample Distribution by Education in Two Groups of the Study

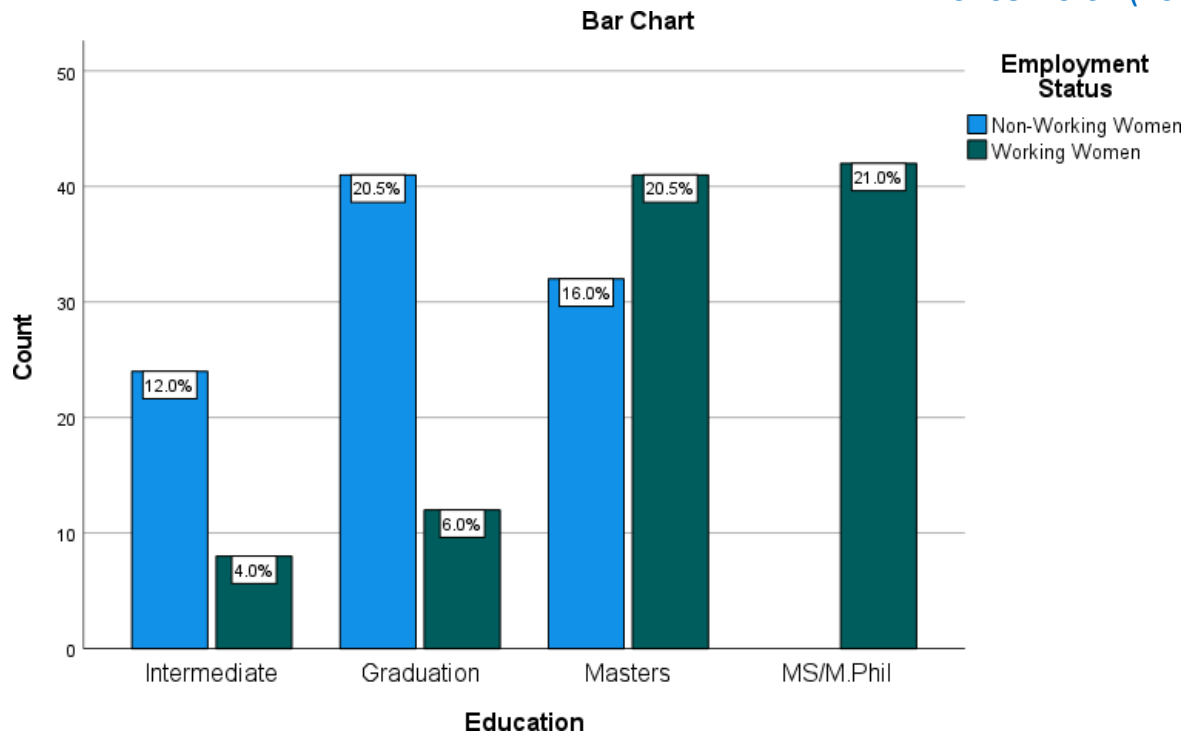


Figure 4.2

Bar Chart of Total Sample Distribution by Marriage Duration in Two Groups of the Study

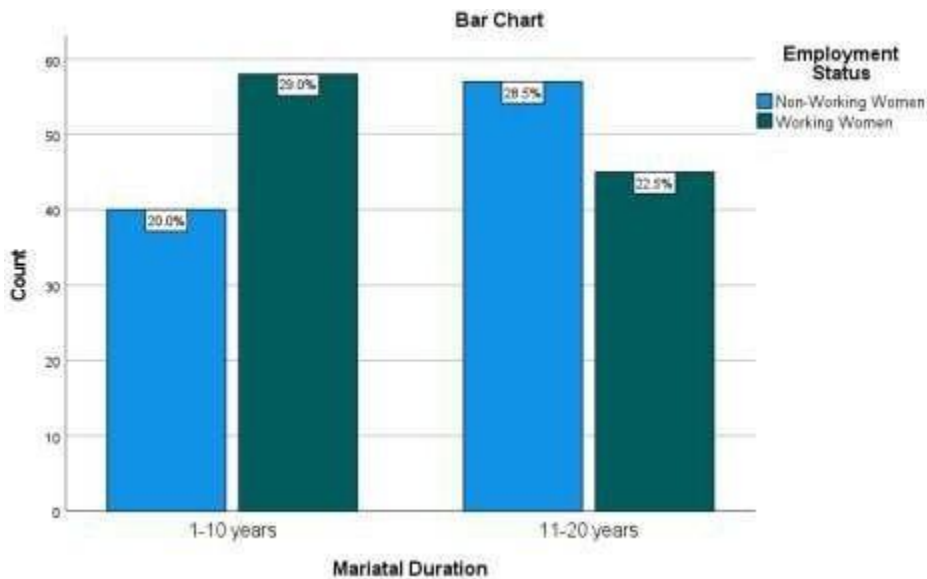


Figure 4.3

Bar Chart of Total Sample Distribution by Number of Children in Two Groups of the Study

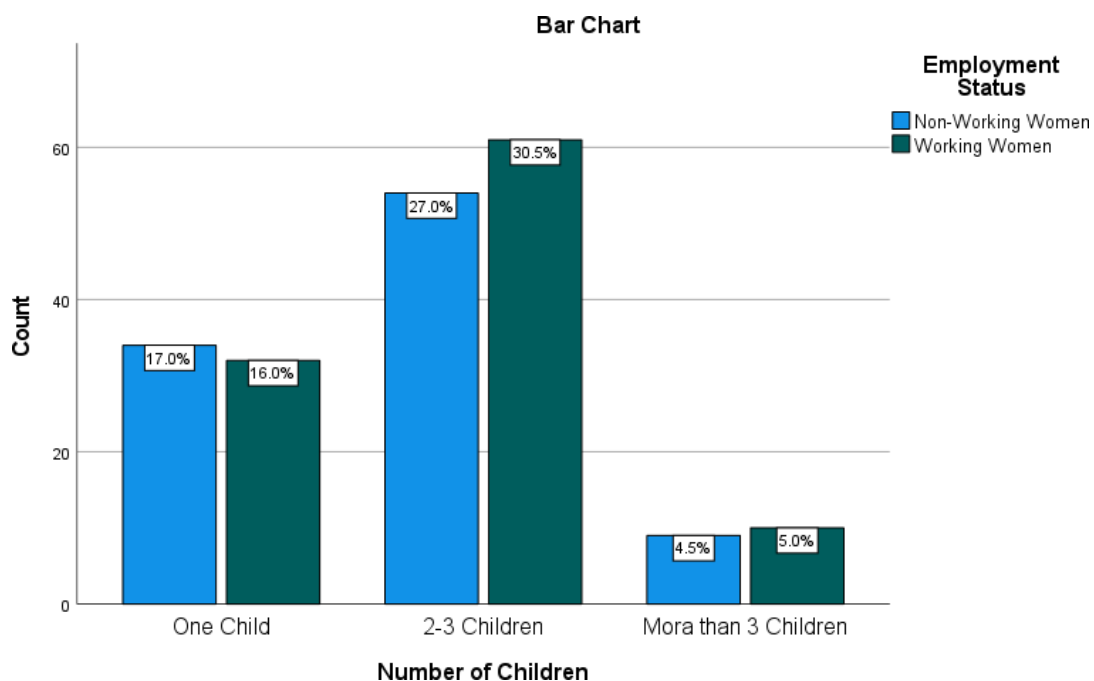


Figure 4.4

Bar Chart of Total Sample Distribution by Socioeconomic Status in Two Groups of the Study

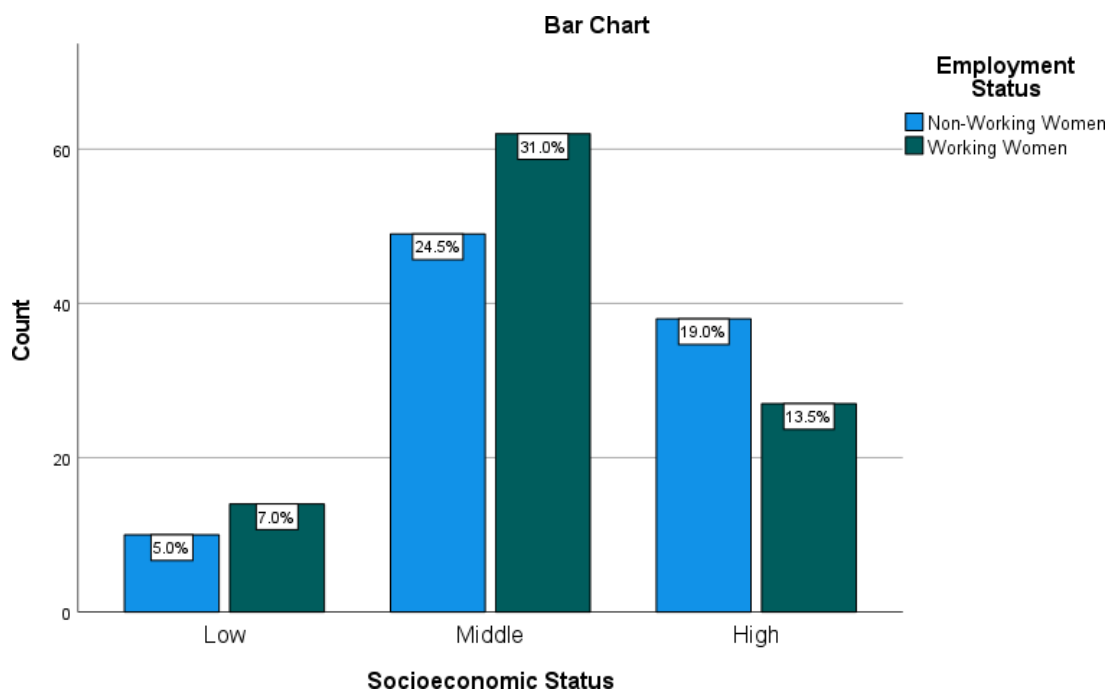


Figure 4.5

Bar Chart of Total Sample Distribution by Family Structure in Two Groups of the Study

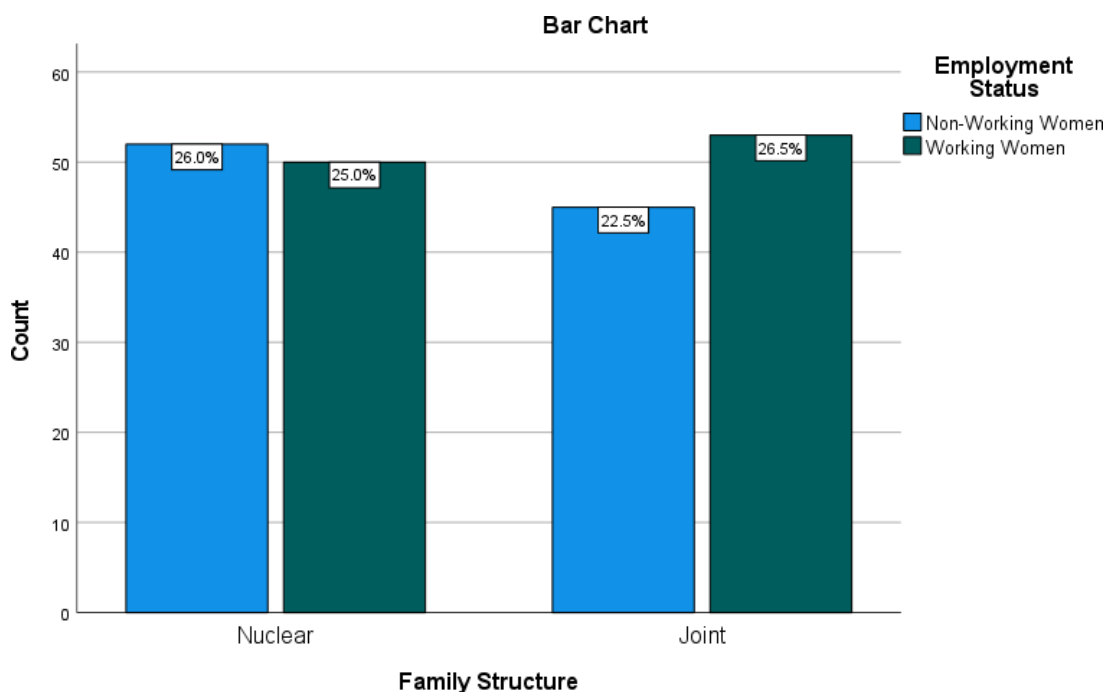


Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties for Study Scales

Scales	K	M	SD	Range	α
Gratitude Scale	6	27.21	6.62	6-42	.87
Social Support Scale	12	59.68	18.08	12-84	.95
Social Support from Significant Others	4	20.24	7.19	4-28	.93
Social Support from Family	4	19.99	6.61	4-28	.91
Social Support from Friends	4	19.45	6.03	4-28	.89
Marital Satisfaction Scale	15	53.60	13.08	15-75	.91

Note. K= Number of items, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, α = Cronbach Alpha

Table 4.3 presents the reliability of the scales and subscales using Cronbach's alpha. The Gratitude Scale (6 items) had a mean of 27.21 (SD = 6.62) with high reliability (α = .87) and a score range of 6–42. The Social Support Scale (12 items) showed excellent reliability (α = .95), a mean of 59.68 (SD = 18.08), and a range of 12–84. Its sub-factors also demonstrated high reliability: Significant Others (M = 20.24, SD = 7.19, α = .93), Family (M = 19.99, SD = 6.61, α = .91), and Friends (M = 19.45, SD = 6.03, α = .89), each ranging from 4–28. The Marital Satisfaction Scale (15 items) had a mean of 53.60 (SD = 13.08), high reliability (α = .91), and a range of 15–75.

Table 4.4

Correlation among Study Variables of Non-Working Women (N = 97)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	33.91	5.12	--											
2. Education	3.08	.75	.28**	--										
3. Marital Duration	1.59	.49	.32**	.25*	--									
4. Number of Children	1.74	.61	.29**	-.08	.02	--								
5. Socioeconomic Status	2.29	.64	-.16	.14	.21*	-.23*	--							
6. Family Structure	1.46	.50	-.19	-.21*	-.18	-.11	.00	--						
7. Gratitude	25.01	7.71	.23*	.33**	.61**	-.03	.28**	-.23*	--					
8. Perceived Social Support	15.66	4.57	.17	.37**	.55**	-.14	.22*	-.30**	.42**	--				
9. PSS from Significant Others	5.35	1.79	.20*	.30**	.54**	-.15	.17	-.27**	.42**	.93**	--			
10. PSS from Family	5.19	1.62	.21*	.40**	.54**	-.10	.21*	-.33**	.37**	.94**	.85**	--		
11. PSS from Friends	5.10	1.52	.06	.32**	.43**	-.15	.24*	-.24*	.37**	.89**	.73**	.76**	--	
12. Marital Satisfaction	56.10	12.68	.27**	.25*	.45**	-.14	.04	-.24*	.59**	.52**	.50**	.47**	.46**	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4.4 presents the relationships among various study variables for a sample of 97 non-working women. Age is positively correlated with education, marital duration, number of children, gratitude, and perceived social support (PSS) from significant others and family. Education shows significant positive correlations with gratitude, perceived social support (overall, from significant others, family, and friends), and marital satisfaction. Marital duration is also positively related to gratitude, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction. Socioeconomic status is negatively correlated with the number of children but positively with marital duration and gratitude. Family structure has negative correlations with gratitude, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction. Gratitude is strongly associated with marital satisfaction and various forms of perceived social support. Lastly, perceived social support is consistently positively related to marital satisfaction. The correlations suggest interconnectedness between personal demographics, socio-economic factors, emotional well-being, and relationship satisfaction in this sample.

Table 4.5

Correlation among Study Variables of Working Women (N = 103)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	33.36	4.66	--											
13. Education	4.14	.90	.18	--										
14. Marital Duration	1.44	.49	.32**	.40**	--									
15. Number of Children	1.79	.60	.37**	.07	.18	--								
16. Socioeconomic Status	2.13	.62	-.01	.33**	.04	-.05	--							
17. Family Structure	1.51	.50	-.08	-.28**	-.28**	.13	-.05	--						
18. Gratitude	29.28	4.54	.34**	.24*	.40**	.02	.14	-.29**	--					
19. Perceived Social Support	14.22	4.37	.20*	.67**	.48**	.20*	-.00	-.20*	.16	--				
20. PSS from Significant Others	4.77	1.76	.21*	.70**	.48**	.16	.05	-.21*	.17	.92**	--			
21. PSS from Family	4.81	1.66	.23*	.57**	.36**	.25**	.03	-.16	.10	.88**	.72**	--		
22. PSS from Friends	4.62	1.46	.08	.52**	.45**	.12	-.11	-.17	.14	.87**	.74**	.61**	--	
23. Marital Satisfaction	51.24	13.06	.30**	.49**	.35**	.06	.15	-.39**	.54**	.20*	.29**	.12	.13	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4.5 presents the correlation for working women ($N = 103$), that reveals several significant relationships among the study variables. Age is positively correlated with marital duration, number of children, gratitude, perceived social support (PSS) from significant others and family, and marital satisfaction. Education shows a strong positive correlation with marital duration, socioeconomic status, and various forms of perceived social support, as well as marital satisfaction. Marital duration is positively associated with gratitude, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction. The number of children is positively correlated with PSS from family and friends. Socioeconomic status is positively related to education but shows no significant relationship with most other variables. Family structure is negatively correlated with education, marital duration, gratitude, and marital satisfaction. Gratitude is positively associated with marital satisfaction, perceived social support, and PSS from significant others. Perceived social support, particularly from significant others and family, is also positively related to marital satisfaction. Overall, these correlations suggest that personal demographics, socio-economic factors, emotional well-being, and relationship satisfaction are interconnected, with some differences in how they relate compared to non-working women.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 103 working women (51.5%) and 97 non-working women (48.5%). The mean age of the women was 32.4 years ($SD = 4.2$) with most of them (55%) having Bachelor's and Master's degrees. In terms of marital duration, the average length of marriage was 8.6 years ($SD = 3.1$) with minimum of 3 and maximum of 22 years. It was established from the data that for all three variables, working women scored significantly higher than non-working women with gratitude at $M = 4.2$ ($SD = 0.8$), social support at $M = 4.1$ ($SD = 0.7$) and marital satisfaction: $M = 4.0$ ($SD = 0.9$). The non-working women reported gratitude at $M = 3.6$ ($SD = 0.9$), social support at $M = 3.5$ ($SD = 0.8$) and marital satisfaction at $M = 3.3$ ($SD = 0.8$).

Variables	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age in years				
25-45 years			33.63	4.89
Working Status				
Working Women	103	51.5		
Non-Working Women	97	48.5		
Education				
Intermediate	32	16.0		
Graduation	53	26.5		
Masters	73	36.5		
MS/M.Phil.	42	21.0		
Marriage Duration				
1-10 years	98	49.0		
11-20 years	102	51.0		
Number of Children				
One Child	66	33.0		
2-3 Children	116	57.5		
More than 3 Children	19	9.5		
Socioeconomic Status				

Low	24	12.0
Middle	111	55.5
High	65	32.5
Family Structure		
Nuclear	102	51.0
Joint	98	49.0
Family Background		
Urban	200	100.0

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's evaluations show that gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction works in harmony with one another. Individuals that have higher levels of gratitude scored higher on the marital satisfaction index as well. Similarly, support extended received a moderate positive correlation with gratitude ($r = .42, p < .01$), meaning there was an increase in perceived social support and expressed gratitude. In addition, social support was noted to be positively correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = .51, p < .01$). These observations demonstrate how essential social support is for enhancing marital satisfaction.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis conducted using Haye's PROCESS Macro sought to find out whether social support had mediated the relation between gratitude and spousal satisfaction. The findings showed that social support was able to account for a significant level of relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction ($\beta = .32, p < .05$). Specifically, gratitude influenced marital satisfaction in two ways e.g., general satisfaction ($\beta = .46, p < .01$) and through social support ($\beta = .32, p < .05$). This determined that gratitude not only increases marital satisfaction but also positively effects perceptions of social support.

Group Comparisons

The levels of gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction for working and non-working women were analyzed using independent sample t-tests and ANOVA. Working women had significantly greater scores on gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction as compared to non-working women ($p < .05$). In addition, non-working women devoted more time to receive social support from their extended family which served as a difference from working women who mainly drew support from colleagues and friends.

Discussion

The results of the study under review corroborate the hypothesis that states that there exists a positive correlation between gratitude and marital satisfaction and that the social support is a mediator of the relationship. These findings are in line with the previous studies conducted by Algoe, (2010); Emmons & McCullough, (2003). The mediation analysis also endorses that social support plays a significant role in buffering stress and enhancing positive effects of gratitude on marital satisfaction. It is the emotional benefits that gratitude brings which amplifies how gratitude and marital satisfaction are positively linked. Grateful individuals show that appreciation in their partners' performance elevates the bond even more. This appreciation can lessen grudges, demonstrate more emotional connection and encourage affirmative actions and, therefore, results in greater marital satisfaction. The results support existing literature regarding the role of gratitude in relationships, by suggesting that the couples who express gratitude are more likely to attain higher levels of marital satisfaction (Algoe, 2010; Gable & Gosnell, 2011)

The findings from the mediation analysis highlighted the fact that social support strengthens the impact of gratitude on marital satisfaction. This means that spouses are more likely to be satisfied with the marriage when they are supported by each other as well by their family or friends. A social support system gives a person the emotional strength that is required to withstand any kind of external stresses like work stress, family pressure etc. and results in higher level of marital satisfaction. For working women, being able to receive social support from their workmates and friends may strengthen their capacity to balance their professional and marital roles. In the case of non-working women, family support can be of considerable importance as the major source of support in countering stress, which partly explains the dependency of their marital satisfaction on the quality of family support. The findings are aligned with the existing body of literature for i.e., Iqbal et al. (2025) they have found the same findings in their study. Similarly, Umar et al. (2024) conducted a study to investigate perceived social support as a moderator of selfie posting behavior and loneliness among university students, and they have found the significant results. Moreover, Iqbal et al. (2025, 2023, 2021) investigated work-life conflict and family-work interference among working females. Their findings indicate that working women often experience conflicts where their family roles are frequently compromised due to household responsibilities. As a result, while managing their family duties, they encounter work-family conflict.

It is paramount to note that most of the times families in Punjab remain interconnected and a system of joint families exists. This study focused on the need for family and community support networks that enhance marital satisfaction. It clearly showed how interdependence within a family and feelings of gratitude are emphasized in cultures where marriage is viewed as one of the relationships within extensive families. Since women in Punjab do opt for work and some remain non-working, the current findings suggest that policies seeking to enhance the ability of women to combine work with other life activities can enhance marital satisfaction. For example, workplaces with flexible hours, child care facilities and family friendly policies may ease the role stress of the working women and enhance their marital satisfaction.

The research employed a cross sectional design which has some limitations on establishing cause and effect. It is not clear whether expressing gratitude results in greater marital satisfaction or is it those who are more satisfied in their marriages that express gratitude more. Other studies should be conducted that take a rather more longitudinal perspective on the changes over time that gratitude, social support and marital satisfaction among couple's experience. Qualitative researches may also enhance the understanding of the ways that gratitude is expressed by couples and how social support is perceived in different cultures. Finally, the studies should also examine the role of religious beliefs or socio-economic status on the relationship between gratitude, support and marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study indicates that gratitude and social support are key variables in improving the level of marital satisfaction in married women in Punjab. Gratitude facilitates the establishment of emotional bonds and relationships, whereas social support provides tangible assistance in dealing with challenges and enhancing the quality of the relationship. The results also highlight the notion that cultural context has an effect particularly in terms of the role of the extended family in Punjab. These results may be of help in the delivery of marital therapy, community-based programs and interventions targeted at reinforcing relationships particularly in collectivist societies.

References

- Algoe, S. B., Gable, S. L., & Maisel, N. C. (2010). It's the little things: Everyday gratitude as a booster shot for romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 17(2), 217-233.
- Algoe, S. B., Haidt, J., & Gable, S. L. (2008). Beyond reciprocity: gratitude and relationships in everyday life. *Emotion*, 8(3), 425.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological bulletin*, 98(2), 310.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996). Social support as a determinant of marital quality: The interplay of negative and supportive behaviors. In *Handbook of social support and the family* (pp. 173-194). Boston, MA: Springer US.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective wellbeing in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377-389.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family psychology*, 7(2), 176.
- Gable, S. L., & Gosnell, C. L. (2011). The positive side of close relationships. *Designing positive psychology: Taking stock and moving forward*, 265-279.
- Gulzar, I., Iqbal, M. N., & Latif, H. S. (2023). Religious Gratitude, Hope, and Post-Traumatic Growth after Diagnosis of Cardiovascular Disease. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 275-282.
- Hameed, H., Iqbal, M. N., Rafiq, M., & Javed, F. (2022). Illness Perception, Perceived Social Support and Quality of Life in Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients. *Forman J Soc Sci [Internet]*, 2(01), 1-28.
- Iqbal, M. N., & Bashir, U. (2021). Self-compassion and work-family interference across family system among women school teachers: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Education and Humanities Research (JEHR), University of Balochistan, Quetta*, 12(2), 40-46.
- Iqbal, M. N., Arif, H., Zainab, T., & Javed, F. (2023). Predictors of Work-Family Interference: A Comparative Study of Female School Teachers. *Age*, 25(4.61), 001.
- Iqbal, M. N., Emmanuel, S., Khan, S., & Javed, F. (2025). Buffering Effects of Perceived Social Support Between Self-Compassion and Work-Family Conflict in Female School Teachers: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(1), 443-449.
- Iqbal, M. N., Emmanuel, S., Khan, S., & Javed, F. (2025). Buffering effects of perceived social support between self-compassion and work-family conflict in female school teachers: a cross-sectional study. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(1), 443-449.
- Javed, F., Ahmad, M., & Iqbal, M. N. (2022). Resilience and Emotional Regulation Predicting Marital Satisfaction in Females Diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). *Pak-Euro Journal of Medical and Life Sciences*, 5(2), 391-398.
- Javed, F., Iqbal, M. N., & Qamar, S. (2021). Openness to Experience, Neuroticism and Mental Toughness in Trainee Clinical Psychologists: Mediating Role of Perceived Social Support. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 4(3), 813-822.
- Kazmi, S. M. A., Murtaza, F., Hashmi, F., Iftikhar, M., Iqbal, M. N., & Nasir, A. (2023). Predictive and Protective Role of Grit, Internal Locus of Control and Social Support in Mental Health of Cardiac Patients: Protective Role of Grit, Internal Locus of Control and Social Support in Cardiac Patients. *Pakistan Journal of Health Sciences*, 34-42.
- Lamers, S. M., Westerhof, G. J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Keyes, C. L. (2013). Mental health and illness in relation to physical health across the lifespan. In *Positive psychology* (pp. 19-33). Springer, New York, NY.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. A. (2002). The grateful disposition: a conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 82(1), 112.
- Potter, M. H. (2021). Social support and divorce among American couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 42(1), 88-109.
- Umar, S., Dad, A. M., Sehzaad, H., Haleem, M. S., & Iqbal, M. N. (2024). Narcissism As a Predictor of Selfie Posting Behavior and Loneliness Among University Students: Moderating Role of Perceived Social Support. *Migration Letters*, 21(S8), 1159-1167.
- Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., Farley, G. K., Sajatovic, M., & Ramirez, L. (2016). Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS). *Psychol Rev*, 12, 111-3.
- Zulfikar, H. M., Iqbal, M. N., Javed, F., Rafiq, M., & Zahid, R. (2025). Arthritis cannot break my spirit: functional disability, social support and life orientation in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. *Anaesthesia, Pain & Intensive Care*, 29(1), 54-60.