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## The Role of Islamic Gratitude in Marital Satisfaction, Mental Health, and Quality of Life: Married Muslim Women's Perspective

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**EFFAT UNIVERSITY**  
**EFFAT COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**



**The Role of Islamic Gratitude in Marital Satisfaction, Mental Health, and Quality of Life: Married Muslim Women's Perspective**

A thesis submitted for the requirements of the degree of Master of Science in Clinical Psychology

By

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كلية عفت للعلوم الانسانية  
قسم علم النفس



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ديسمبر، 2025

## APPROVAL PAGE

**Effat University**

**Deanship of Graduate Studies and Research**

This thesis, written by Student **Muna Nizar Filali** under the direction of his thesis supervisor and approved by his thesis committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research on 10th of December 2025 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Clinical Psychology

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis, titled” The Role of Islamic Gratitude in Marital Satisfaction, Mental Health, and Quality of Life: Women's Perspective," is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that the proposed dissertation has not been previously or concurrently submitted for the award of any degree at Effat University, any other University or Institution.

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**Abstract**

This qualitative study explores how Islamic gratitude (Shukr) influences marital satisfaction, mental health, and quality of life from the perspective of Saudi women. Drawing from Islamic psychological frameworks and positive psychology, the research investigates how women understand and express gratitude through verbal, emotional, and behavioral dimensions in their marital relationships. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine married women who had been in long-term marriages (seven years or more), and the findings were analyzed using thematic analysis. Six key themes emerged: marriage maintenance, interpretations of Islamic gratitude, faith-driven conduct, relational growth, factors affecting well-being, and marital advice. Results show that Islamic gratitude functions as both a spiritual and psychological coping mechanism, enhancing relational satisfaction and overall well-being. This study contributes culturally grounded insights for use in marital therapy, preventative interventions, and faith-integrated psychological models.

**Keywords:** marital satisfaction, marriage, Islamic gratitude, gratitude, women in marriage, wellbeing, quality of life, Islamic psychology

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1 Background of the Problem

Gratitude is a variable that is well studied in the field of psychology. There are many definitions of gratitude; the linguistic root is *grates*, which means thankful, appreciative, or pleasing. Also, it could be defined as “the quality or condition of being grateful, a sense of appreciation of kindness received, involving a feeling of goodwill... and desire to do something in return” (Oxford English Dictionary Online. Gratitude; 2019 as cited in Day et al., 2022, p.150). From a positive psychology perspective, Emmons and McCullough (2003) define gratitude as “the perception of a positive outcome, not necessarily deserved or earned, that is due to the actions of another person” (p. 377). Emmons (2004) added a feeling to his definition by stating that gratitude is “a sense of joy and thankfulness in response to receiving a gift” (p.554). Barlett et al. (2012) reasoned in their research that gratitude plays a crucially important positive role in relationships because it highlights the other’s kindness and thus motivates the beneficiary to act similarly. Some researchers consider gratitude from several angles as an act, behavior, emotion, habit, personality trait, feeling, coping response, virtue, attitude, mechanism, or a state (Saeidi et al., 2019; Sigala, 2019).

In Islam, the concept of gratitude is discussed in the Holy Quran and the Hadith (the words of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him). Only in the Quran has it been mentioned about 75 times (Yulian et al., 2024). From an Islamic perspective, gratitude encompasses two important meanings: the first is about being grateful to God (Allah), and the second is appreciating the fortunate circumstance of having this particular thing. In addition to that, it has the meaning of open, express, and mention the pleasure orally, and holds the firm belief that all such pleasure is from Allah. It could also convey a sense of acknowledgment, such as gratitude and pleasure, and be thankful to the giver and Allah, because He is the ultimate giver, always and forever. In the Qur'an, gratitude is mentioned over seventy-five times in various

contexts. One of the concepts that embodies greater gratitude is the increasing pleasure they derive from Allah (Suminta & Ghufron, 2022).

As stated in many Islamic regulations, gratitude in the Islamic way relies on three main aspects: the heart, which relates to the feeling; the limbs, which encompass behaviors or actions; and the tongue, which refers to what is said. By the heart means the strong beliefs of being thankful to God for the love and the miracles. Whereas the limb that shows and expresses obedience and refrains from disobedience. The tongue refers to expressing gratitude verbally and in a spoken form. However, Islamic gratitude not only applies these aspects to be fully thankful and appreciate God in these three forms, but also to extend this meaning to show these forms of gratitude to others as well (Arikhah et al., 2022). As stated in Leong et al. (2019), “Being grateful is a state: thanking is an action” (Steindl-Rast, 2004, p.286). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of expressing gratitude in developing and maintaining relationships. That is due to the feeling that gratitude is assumed to arise from perceiving that the benefactor has been responsible for one’s need, rather than seeking reciprocal benefits. Thus, expressing these feelings could strengthen the relationship. This highlights the need not only to feel gratitude, which is also a key factor, but also to express that gratitude to maximize its benefits, a powerful and fulfilling experience (Park et al., 2019).

Married women occupy a unique position in many social, economic, and cultural contexts, often balancing household responsibilities, childcare, and, in many cases, professional work. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, married women frequently make key decisions about their family's health and nutrition, yet their voices are underrepresented in broad social or policy research. In many settings, married women often experience the dual pressure of contributing to household income while maintaining traditional caregiver roles, which affects not only their marital satisfaction but also their mental health and well-being and their quality of life. These real-life dynamics underscore the importance of focusing on married

women in this study, as understanding their experiences and perspectives provides critical insight into the study's goal (Afu & Nteh, 2020; Maatta & Uusiautti, 2012).

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how married women in Saudi Arabia experience and apply Islamic gratitude in their daily lives and marital relationships. Specifically, it investigates how expressions of gratitude (verbal, emotional, and behavioral) affect marital satisfaction, psychological well-being, and perceived quality of life. The study also examines how women receive and interpret gratitude from their spouses, and the extent to which faith-based gratitude serves as a protective factor during challenges or conflict. Insights from this research aim to inform culturally and religiously sensitive clinical practices in marital and mental health interventions.

## **1.3 Research Problem**

As has been mentioned, there are many marital problems and conflicts between couples in the context of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, there is a rising rate of divorces, particularly within the first five years of marriage. However, it has been found that there is a lack of culturally adaptive and appropriate interventions informed by the actual experiences of expert psychologists in the field. This led to the current research question, which explores women's perspectives on their marital experiences.

While several studies investigated the effect of gratitude on close relationships, such as marital relationships, a body of research has also explored Islamic gratitude in individuals. However, questions were raised about how these two areas can be integrated, especially how Islamic gratitude may influence MS, and how this, in turn, could affect mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life among married women.

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of participants' personal experiences, predictions, and the meanings they assign to Islamic gratitude and how these affect their MS, mental health, and, therefore, their quality of life. This would not be captured through quantitative measures alone. Because there is still no approved centric measurement, tool, or test for such an aspect of Islamic gratitude in MS, a semi-structured interview and thematic analysis were selected, as they aligned with the study's goal of generating a rich, contextualized understanding from participants' own perspectives. This method enables the research to capture insights into the complexities of married women's daily lives and decision-making process, and into their own way of predicting and giving gratitude to their spouse, an important Islamic guidance in the three forms. This provides a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is crucial in advancing the scholarly understanding of the impact of Islamic gratitude on MS, quality of life, mental health, and overall well-being. This topic has received a dearth of work in the consulted literature. Following a thorough analysis of prior research, this study was undertaken to fill this lacuna by posing - and begin to answer - a question concerning the extent to which Islamic gratitude shapes the lived experiences of Saudi women's perspective of MS, how this practice shapes their overall quality of life, mental health, and well-being. By qualitatively addressing this gap, the study contributes meaningfully to the field of MS and psychological interventions by providing interpretive insights into how Islamic gratitude functions as a source of meaning - grounded on the narratives of Saudi women - that can shape and influence MS, quality of life, mental health, and well-being. Such a study may inform future psychological marital intervention programs and help develop premarital awareness.

## 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- **Marital satisfaction:** an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality and happiness within their marriage. It reflects the degree to which partners feel their emotional, psychological, and practical needs are being met through their relationship. One of the definitions used is that of marital satisfaction, as defined by Fowers and Olson (1993), which refers to the extent to which partners feel content and fulfilled in their marriage. Additionally, it has been defined as the individual's overall assessment of the marital relationship, including love, communication, commitment, and trust. Moreover, marital satisfaction is the balance between marital expectations and the experience of married life.
- **Gratitude:** Gratitude is found to be one of the key variables in understanding wellbeing, relationship quality, and coping (Parnell et al., 2020; Saeidi et al., 2019). Recently, more empirical work has been conducted to answer the questions raised about the meaning and effects of gratitude, in both forms—receiving and giving (Algoe et al., 2016; Leong et al., 2019).
- **Islamic gratitude:** Gratitude is referred to as Shukr. As articulated by Ibn al-Qayyim (as cited in Khalil, 2016), Shukr represents the manifestation of divine grace through the servant's acknowledgment of God's blessings. It is expressed in three dimensions: through the tongue, by offering praise and verbal acknowledgment; through the heart, by bearing witness to divine benevolence and fostering love for the Creator; and through the limbs, by demonstrating submission and obedience to God's will (Chalmiers et al., 2023).

## 1.6 Summary

This chapter introduces the research topic, which examines the role of Islamic gratitude in relation to mental health, quality of life, and overall well-being. Due to the lack of

culture-adaptive interventions used by psychologists in the field. Also, due to the increased divorce rate in Saudi Arabia, more questions were raised about applying Islamic gratuity as an approach to enhance MS. This research aimed to explore married women's experience on how to create a culture and religiously oriented approach to be supported through clinical applications.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2.1. Review of Empirical Studies

### *Gratitude*

The concept of gratitude has been introduced in numerous self-help, motivational, and social connection books. Leong et al. (2019) stated that gratitude has been described as one of the most neglected emotions, particularly in fields such as psychology, where it warrants greater attention and consideration. A growing body of research is beginning to focus on investigating the effect of gratitude from an interpersonal perspective (Algoe et al., 2016). Gratitude is found to be one of the key variables in understanding wellbeing, relationship quality, and coping (Parnell et al., 2020; Saeidi et al., 2019). Recently, more empirical work has been conducted to answer the questions raised about the meaning and effects of gratitude, in both forms—receiving and giving.

One of the most highlighted theories in this regard is *Find, Remind, and Bind Theory*. According to Algoe (2012), the value of gratitude in strengthening relationships and improving their quality is emphasized. This theory was adopted from economic guided account, which aimed to pay attention to the benefits of gratitude, including situations and social exchange through reciprocation or repayment. These findings introduce the content of gratitude, which receives empirical support from experimental, social, longitudinal, and cross-sectional studies. Gratitude is found to be a model that needs to be studied and understood from different levels (Algoe et al., 2016). As has been argued in numerous studies, gratitude enables a more focused attention on the positive aspects of an individual's life and environment (Parnell et al., 2020). Not only that, but it may also lead individuals to appreciate and value the good things and blessings in their lives. Research has shown that gratitude increases happiness and well-being (Vollmann et al., 2019). Additionally, it has a positive effect on reducing stress and promoting prosocial behaviors. Moreover, it resulted in more optimism about the future and better

progress toward their goals for individuals who regularly practice gratitude (Jiang et al., 2022; Parnell et al., 2020).

One of the most groundbreaking studies in this regard has been carried out by Emmons & McCullough (2003), which demonstrated that journaling daily about things for which one is grateful. When comparing the control group to the intervention group, they concluded that the grateful group had a higher level of well-being, describing their lives as having more flavor or enjoyment, and even using terms like "more colorful." This increases their life satisfaction level. Moreover, they have reported fewer physical symptoms of pain (Jiang et al., 2022). Additionally, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in supportive actions and assist others within their community. Similar results were found in other studies in the field, which aimed to investigate the effect of gratitude on the participants, using a different methodology. Such as using grateful letters to express gratitude to others (Chalmiers et al., 2023). Not only that, but even in the clinical setting, some therapists have adopted similar interventions to support their clients during therapy, such as gratitude journaling, which has also been found to be very effective (Sigala, 2019).

### *Marital satisfaction (MS)*

When discussing the topic of Marital satisfaction (MS), one of the oldest and most valuable questions was asked by Gottman (1989) about what differentiates a happy marriage from an unhappy one. This question was investigated empirically in their work. Thus, studies have found that 9 in 10 people are actually asking the same questions when they start committing to a relationship (Sigala, 2019). MS has many definitions, including the sense of happiness and enjoyment that couples gain from living together. Another definition is the measurement of individuals' perceptions regarding their marital relationships and how they measure the excellence of their marriage (Udofia et al., 2021). There are many terms used for

MS, such as marital success, marital happiness, marital adjustment, discord, forgiveness, companionship, social support, and marital quality (Saeidi et al., 2019).

MS could be evaluated as the most core need that couples desire. Not only that, but it is also the primary source of support, as well as protection from mental illness, and ensures healthy psychological and physical well-being (Suminta & Ghufron, 2022). MS is also seen as a reflection of life satisfaction and success in the community. That could be because marital relationships are considered the most important relationships in life. (Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Vollmann et al., 2019). It has been defined as a condition in which couples meet each other's needs and feel understood, enjoyed, fulfilled, supported, and approved by each other (Bahrani et al., 2024). A longitudinal study conducted by Gottman and others (1998) concluded that most satisfied couples have some positive emotions, like affection and humor, and are better at dealing with arguments, which ensures a longer year of marriage and a higher MS level (Gordon et al., 2011; Parnell et al., 2020).

Studies indicated that although MS could vary from time to time for the same couple depending on the difficulties and the challenges that they are going through, in general, high levels of MS have many indications such as longer life expectancy, higher quality of life, reduce risk of mental illness like depression the increase adjustment ability of social relation, more achievements at career and professional pathways (Suminta & Ghufron, 2022). Moreover, as has been highlighted in Sigala (2019), ensuring marital success, it is essential to provide a supportive and nutritious environment, which increases the level of MS. In addition to that, MS has an impact on their children as well, where it has been highlighted that those parents with higher levels of MS lead to a better quality of life for their children (Rasheed et al., 2020). such as duration of marriage, income, personality traits, education, age, emotional

intelligence, flexibility, communication, sexual relationships, and personal health (Bahrani et al., 2023).

It is essential to note that MS can be influenced by nearly all variables related to couples, including psychological, financial, physical, and socioeconomic factors, which can have either a positive or negative impact on MS. Furthermore, the complex nature of the interactions between these variables must also be considered (Asoodeha et al., 2010). These interactions may lead to undesirable outcomes, such as separation or divorce (AL-Shahrani & Hammad, 2023; Rasheed et al., 2020). These were found to have some negative implications on psychological and mental health (Abou Hannoud et al., 2022; Bahrani et al., 2023).

MS does not mean the absence of conflicts or arguments between couples. However, it means an easier path to finding the appropriate solution and a much better understanding of the perception and perspectives of the other partner, which is a result of better communication. This ensures better marital attachments and adjustments. Thus, the knowledge that even before the marriage could prevent many of the conflicts (Afu & Nteh, 2020). However, it has been found that conflicts affect not only the individual's psychological health and well-being but also their children, which could include issues like stress, anxiety, depression, drug abuse, child abuse, and neglect. Studies found that there is a significant relationship between family connections and couples' burnout, which means the increase in family connections decreases the couple's burnout (Javdan et al., 2023).

This examines the reasons beyond the strong family relationships that actually lead to higher levels of MS than in couples who have poor family connections. It has also been approved that family performance is one of the fundamental indicators of the individual's quality of life and mental health well-being. This indicates that unhealthy connection patterns among family members are considered one of the main factors contributing to mental disorders.

Healthy communication between family members was found to be one of the key factors that nourish their relationship (Javdan et al., 2023; Alluhaibi et al., 2022).

### *Marital satisfaction and mental health*

Couples' relationship quality plays a significant role in their mental health, and MS is one of the leading indicators of success in marriage (Saeidi et al., 2019). Therefore, enhancing and improving the quality of family relationships, especially the couple's relationship, could play a crucial role in preventing marital burnout—one central aspect of developing conflict resolution styles (Javdan et al., 2023). Conflicts arise when couples attempt to align their behaviors and expectations with those of their partner (Afu & Nteh, 2020). Adjustments that both couples attempt to make can play a crucial role in strengthening their marital relationship and enhancing stability, continuity, and, consequently, overall well-being. These adjustments were found to have a negative impact on social, physical, and economic status. As well as the psychological health and well-being of both partners (Shaikh et al., 2020).

Couples who are experiencing conflicts could lead to some negative implications that affect their psychological well-being. However, marital conflict is expected due to the nature of the relationship and the individual differences between them, but the fundamental point is how couples deal with such issues. Otherwise, these underlying and uncommunicated conflicts could worsen and result in the couple's burnout. This is the gradual loss of emotional attachment between them, which leads to an increasing lack of attention, dependency, disinterest in everyday enjoyable activities, and emotional alienation, which could lead to emotional separation or actual divorce. It has been linked between couples' burnout and the high level of marital dissatisfaction (Arzeen et al., 2023; Shaikh et al., 2020; Udofia et al., 2021).

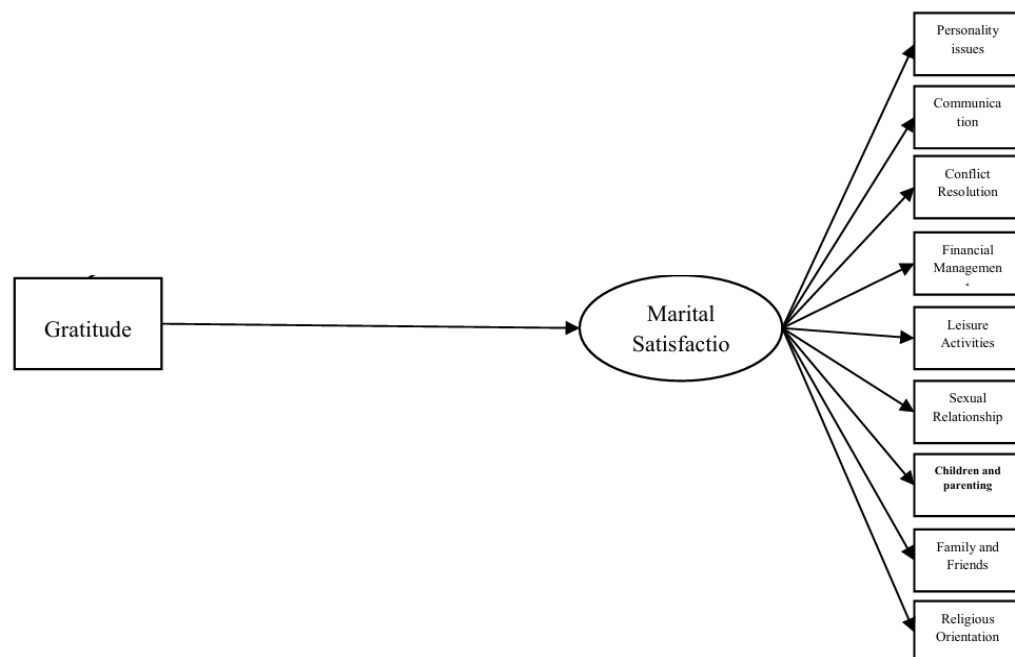
In recent years, there has been an increase in the body of research investigating the positive aspects of relationship functioning. Studies have highlighted the need to understand how individual factors, such as positive affectivity and optimization, are associated with relationship satisfaction (Saeidi et al., 2019). It directly links with both psychological health and well-being, as well as the physical health of the individual. It also has a direct impact on improving the quality of life for the individual (Sigala, 2019).

### *Gratitude in marriage*

According to Mahatma Gandhi in Fincham & May (2021), “Properly understood and applied, it [prayer] is the most potent instrument of action.” It has been noted that a substantial amount of research highlights the positive impact of gratitude on an individual’s health and well-being. That also could be applied to the aspect of marriage. However, some attention has been paid to the effect of gratitude in couples’ relationships, especially in the form of gratitude to a higher power, such as God. Additionally, research has shown that gratitude to God has a positive impact on psychological well-being, particularly in relation to reducing specific depressive symptoms (Park et al., 2019). Not only that, but it could be valuable in physical health and pain management. Researchers described gratitude in three main features: a sense of abundance, gratefulness for the daily pleasures in life, and, thirdly, an attitude of thankfulness toward the way that others endorse their well-being (Sigala, 2019).

In close relationships, longitudinal studies have found that gratitude typically leads to a higher level of self-satisfaction and perceived social support. Not only that, but it also has an impact on their individual quality of life and reduces some anxiety and depression related symptoms (Parnell et al., 2020). Moreover, some studies have found a direct link between gratitude and improved mood. Others are associated with facilitating better coping with difficult or challenging times, as well as having a less negative impact on unpleasant memories

(Vollmann et al., 2019). As well-represented in William James' saying, "the deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated," (Park et al., 2019, p. 801). In literature, gratitude is an episodic experience that extends its positive benefits not only to the receivers but also to the givers, potentially spreading to their relationships and societies (Leong et al., 2019; Parnell et al., 2020). Additionally, it has been noted that gratitude plays a crucial role in activating positive emotions, which in turn lead to more positive behaviors, ultimately strengthening the relationship between couples through effective communication, engaged listening, validation, and appreciation (Parnell et al., 2020). As seen in Figure 1, the direct and indirect effects of gratitude on marital satisfaction (Seaidi et al., 2019).



**Figure 1.** The direct and indirect effect of gratitude on marital satisfaction (Seaidi et al., 2019)

Saying a prayer (which is considered vocal gratitude) has been approved to be very effective when constantly said, in comparison to a control group, as stated in one of the studies. This could be explained by the fact that saying a prayer involves multiple layers of cognitive and emotional tasks. When saying prayers, the individuals have to recognize the things that

they are grateful for, feel that gratitude, and then express it in vocal form (thoughts of gratitude and expression of gratitude) (Leong et al., 2019). This reflection is supported by the fact that thanking is one of the most common forms that people use when saying their prayers. This highlights the need not only to feel gratitude, which is also a key factor, but also to express that gratitude to maximize its benefits (Park et al., 2019).

Another study, mentioned in Fincham & May (2021), concluded that journaling that includes sharing gratitude with another individual can enhance their relationship. Fichman & May (2021) took those findings to another level, discussing in their study how shared gratitude can manifest in the form of showing gratitude and prayer to express thanks to God for the things their partner has done, and then sharing that with their partner. Which they found significantly affected their relationships. Allowing a higher level of noticing goodness in their partner and thanking them for it would enhance the ability to reinforce that behavior and increase it in the future. That was even more noticeable when wives show vocal frustrations toward their husbands (Lausen & Schacht, 2018). That could be explained by the fact of the gender differences, where males value showing appreciation as one of the main aspects in their relationships (Kurdek, 2005). Surprisingly, it has also been found that such a form of gratitude enhances individuals' self-satisfaction and, therefore, improves their psychological well-being (Fincham & May, 2021). As stated in Leong et al. (2019), both expressing and receiving gratitude enhances the MS and generates a positive outcome. Webb (2020) noted that receiving gratitude from another person has a positive impact on feelings of worthiness, which in turn encourages positive emotions and favorable emotional outcomes. From a psychological perspective, the feeling of being worthy is one of the essential emotions that an individual must experience to reduce mental health issues and ensure better psychological well-being, not only toward the giver but in life in general. That carried worthiness feeling could be spread to another person in the form of social exchange, maintaining an ongoing relationship (That

highlighted the need not only to feel gratitude, which is also a key, but also to be able to express that gratitude to maximize its benefits (Park et al., 2019).

Acknowledging God and being thankful to God for their relationship, whether expressing this to their partner or simply feeling it, is reported to be a social manifestation of a magnificent positive emotion inherent in the gratitude experience. That was also found to be a factor that strengthens the relationship between couples (Fincham & May, 2021).

In the context of marriage, gratitude also brings numerous benefits to couples. For instance, it has a favorable implication of appreciation for a partner, which can also predict relationship stability. Research has demonstrated that emotions of gratitude support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of high-quality relationships with partners in various ways (Fincham & May, 2021). Additionally, it is considered essential for promoting relationships, maintaining positive attitudes, and fostering a higher level of appreciation. This also provides security and better communication between them (Webb, 2020). Moreover, the attitude resulted in better psychological outcomes and a much better MS for married couples. Expressing gratitude not only strengthens the bonds between them but also enhances their overall well-being. Additionally, it is considered a reinforcement for MS and improves the quality of life for those affected (Gordon et al., 2011). It could also shift the partner's perception in a more positive direction and increase the desire and enjoyment of spending more time together (Parnell et al., 2020). Not only is expressive gratitude essential and beneficial, but cultivating gratitude is equally essential and beneficial (Arzeen et al., 2023).

According to Webb (2020), it is beneficial for couples to understand the positive impact that practicing gratitude toward them can have on enhancing the quality of their relationship. Because partners would feel grateful, of course, but in addition to that, they would also feel more satisfied, happier, more connected, and more committed to their relationship.

Also, to motivate them to continue nurturing their relationship. This maintains much more lasting relationships, which is found to be one of the standard features of happily married (Asoodeha et al., 2010; Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Additionally, it has been noted that marital relationships can be more fulfilling and secure when both partners express some form of gratitude (Parnell et al., 2020).

Regarding the forms of gratitude, males and females tend to express it in different ways. Studies have shown that males are more likely to express their gratitude to their wives through physical acts of service, such as preparing or ordering a meal after a stressful or overwhelming day for their wives. That shows a level of appreciation and understanding toward their partner for the hard day that she was going through. Partners' gratitude for their partners' behaviors plays a key role in motivating similar behaviors from their spouses. Showing a level of thankfulness is very motivating to fulfill the partner's desires and satisfy their needs. This allows some security in their relationship (Jiang et al., 2022). On the other hand, Leong et al. (2019) agreed that although both partners would feel much better about themselves and raise their marital satisfaction after reviving any form of gratitude. Males are more likely to feel a much better mood when receiving gratitude for their actions. Additionally, they would pay more attention not only to the expression of gratitude but also to the motivation behind such behavior.

When observing long-term marriages, it has been observed that inward (felt) gratitude is considered more effective than outward (expressed) forms of gratitude. Nevertheless, both consider it important in developing and strengthening their relationship (Webb, 2020).

For couples struggling in marriage or experiencing conflicts, gratitude is also found to be very effective in allowing the whole picture to be seen. It has been shown that couples who have some marital issues tend to focus more on the negative or the weaknesses of the

relationship. Moreover, individuals who appear to be less grateful toward their partner are usually more self-focused, unlike more grateful individuals, who tend to view their relationship as a partnership and are more connected to it. Many psychological interventions are designed to help couples gain a broader perspective and expand the narrow scope that partners typically have in viewing their relationship (Sigala, 2019). Gratitude should be considered and used in marital intervention by therapists. It has been highlighted that couples who do not show any level of gratitude to their partner are highly associated with experiencing a decreased feeling of satisfaction and worthiness. Not only that, but it is perceived as appreciative toward their partner.

Leong et al. (2019) suggested in their study that gratitude should be incorporated into the daily routine of any marriage. However, couples who are struggling with their marriage should pay much more attention to that, which would have a significant impact on their relationship. It has been argued that in a 14-day daily diary study, participants found that when feeling grateful on a given day, they felt more connected and more satisfied with their relationships, which in turn increased the maintenance behaviors between couples. Furthermore, when sharing and discussing these diary products, they enhance personal and psychological well-being (Jiang et al., 2022).

Studies have also found that during tough and challenging times, such as physical or chronic pain, a partner perceives gratitude as a key factor in determining one's willingness to be more helpful and practice supportive behaviors. That means that when parents receive some form of gratitude and feel thankful for their help, they are more likely to engage and support their partner more (Leong et al., 2019). Studies conducted during the COVID-19 quarantine showed that individuals who perceived more positive support felt greater gratitude and reported less stress (Jiang et al., 2022).

A growing body of research investigates the effect of gratitude as a moderator between MS and psychological well-being among married couples (Arzeen et al., 2023). They have reported a positive correlation between the two variables mentioned. This means that individuals who experienced a higher level of gratitude showed more substantial positive implications in their MS. Another longitudinal study confirms this correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction. It is essential to note that gratitude can be expressed in various forms, not just verbally. Thus, there are other forms of showing gratitude, one of which is verbal, encompassing services that one partner provides to another. Alternatively, even the actions couples take for each other, in the form of gifts, also show appreciation (Algoe et al., 2010). However, studies have not explored the effect of gratitude in depth for both partners or only for the giver or the receiver. Further investigation is needed into this issue. Gratitude has been defined as “aware of thankful for the good things that happen” (Seliman et al., 2005, p.412). In this regard, more studies pay more attention to the impact of gratitude on marital relationships. It has been reported that marital satisfaction (MS) may be influenced by individual differences in gratitude, both in the short and long term (Gordon et al., 2010).

Despite growing research on gratitude and relationship satisfaction, there is a lack of culturally nuanced frameworks that account for Islamic values and the unique socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia. This study builds on previous findings by integrating spiritual expressions of gratitude with relational dynamics, addressing a gap in literature concerning non-Western populations and religion-informed psychological practices.

## **2.2.Theoretical framework**

In Islamic terminology, gratitude is referred to as Shukr. As articulated by Ibn al-Qayyim (as cited in Khalil, 2016), in Sufi terminology, “Shukr” represents the manifestation of divine grace through the servant’s acknowledgment of God’s blessings. It is expressed in three dimensions: through the tongue, by offering praise and verbal acknowledgment; through the

heart, by bearing witness to divine benevolence and fostering love for the Creator; and through the limbs, by demonstrating submission and obedience to God's will.

Similarly, al-Imam al-Ghazali (as cited in Yulian et al., 2024) conceptualized Shukr across three interrelated dimensions: knowledge ('Ilm), state (ḥāl), and action ('Amal). The knowledge of gratitude entails recognizing that all blessings originate solely from Allah, who is both the source and the one deserving of gratitude. The state of gratitude refers to the inner disposition of joy and humility that arises from recognizing divine bounty. The action of gratitude, in turn, involves the conscious endeavor to act in ways that please Allah. This action manifests in the heart, through sincere intention and love; on the tongue, through verbal expressions of praise; and in the limbs, through the righteous use of God's blessings in obedience and avoidance of sin (Arikhah et al., 2022). Expanding upon al-Ghazali's framework, as stated in Yulian et al. (2024), delineates Shukr into hierarchical stages or ranks: gratitude for the gift, gratitude for the withholding, and gratitude for the very capacity to be grateful. While ordinary believers express gratitude primarily for the blessings they have received, the Sufi perspective extends this principle to include thankfulness even in the face of deprivation or adversity. Genuine gratitude, therefore, encompasses perceiving divine wisdom in affliction and recognizing hidden blessings in trials. The highest form of gratitude, as noted by Schimmel, lies in the realization that no amount of human devotion can ever suffice to repay divine grace, and that even the capacity to experience gratitude is itself a gift from God. Ibn Atallah (1988 as cited in Arikhah et al., 2022) stated in his book that "let no bounty come to confuse you to fulfill your obligation to be grateful for it, because doing so will lower your self-esteem. "Makam Alshukr – great gratitude- is sufficient for human to express their gratefulness by mouth, heart, and deeds. He said in his book that, alsukr (being grateful) is no blessing greater than saying (Alhumdeull Lillah) – thanks God- all praise is due to Allah- for it

is better than blessing itself, since the joy of being inspired to say (Alhumdeull Lilah) is greater than the joy of the original blessing.

Within this spiritual framework, Sufism, as the mystical essence of Islam, presents a comprehensive paradigm that integrates theology, psychology, and ethical practice. Sufi psychology, in particular, concerns itself with the purification and harmony of the soul, aiming toward the realization of tawḥīd (divine oneness), as embodied in the declaration *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (“There is no god but God”). Through this ontological alignment, the individual seeks to harmonize every dimension of being with divine reality. As Wilcox (2014) observes, the Prophet Muhammad’s teachings exemplify this spiritual integration, guiding believers toward a state in which every aspect of the self is unified in awareness of the Divine. When such alignment is achieved, the seeker attains an experiential knowledge of oneness (*ma‘rifa*), wherein existence itself is perceived as a manifestation of God’s presence (Khalil, 2016).

### *Islamic gratitude*

A limited number of studies investigate the effect of gratitude to God and its contribution to individual satisfaction in personal and relational contexts. Research in this regard found that over 80% of the world population is religious, and the majority are following the Abrahamic faiths, which are Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In these religions, the state of Gratitude is strongly encouraged. Thus, studies also concluded that one of the fundamental motivations in human behavior is driven by their beliefs, and therefore by their religion. Still, some studies agree that gratitude to God has a favorable implication for individuals’ health and well-being. It has been linked to the high rate of gratitude daily practice and the low level of depressive symptoms in many studies (Arikhah et al., 2022). Not only that, but it could also indicate good physical well-being. According to a national survey, gratitude to God was

positively linked to stronger hope, which in turn related to overall self-satisfaction and greater flexibility in managing life's stressful events (Fincham & May, 2021; Jiang et al., 2022).

### **2.3. The Case for a Saudi Sample**

In the case of Saudi Arabia, Saudi families have undergone rapid socioeconomic changes in the last few years. Contributing to significant shifts in society and having an impact on their quality of life and mental health status. Such a social transformation impacts family structures, marriage dynamics, and, therefore, their mental health statuses. Even though marriage remains a central institution in Saudi Arabian society, the country has seen a noticeable rise in the divorce rate. Over 65% of divorces now occur within the first year of marriage (AL-Shahrani & Hammad, 2023). Pointing to a potential mismatch between marital expectations and their readiness for commitments. Studies highlighted contributing factors such as unrealistic marital expectations, lack of communication skills, and social pressure (Rasheed et al., 2020). Emotional divorce is also prevalent, with a study conducted by Rasheed et al. (2020) finding that 77% of women experienced moderate to severe emotional disengagement in their marriages (AL-Shahrani & Hammad, 2023).

Meanwhile, mental health concerns are increasingly recognized as a public health issue in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi National Health Survey reported that about 34% of Saudis have experienced a mental health disorder in their lifetime. However, despite the high prevalence, seeking professional help is still limited. Only around 13% of individuals with mental health issues are seeking professional support (Saudi Ministry of Health, 2022, as cited in AL-Shahrani & Hammad, 2023).

While mental health awareness has gradually improved in Saudi Arabia, the majority of psychological interventions remain rooted in Western theories and treatment models, which may not fully align with the Kingdom's cultural, religious, and social context. Cognitive

behavioral therapy (CBT), for example, is widely used across the public and private sectors; yet, many of its core principles, such as individualism, assertiveness, and autonomy, may conflict with collectivist values and the centrality of family and religion in Saudi society (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). This cultural disparity can create barriers to treatment effectiveness and patient engagement (Alhumaidan et al., 2024).

Research shows that despite a growing prevalence of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and marital stress. A significant portion of the population does not seek preprofessional help, which could be due to concerns that these services lack cultural sensitivity (Alangari et al, 2021)—in a study conducted by Almutairi et al. (2024) mentioned that many Saudis prefer religious or traditional healing methods over clinical psychological services, particularly when those services are perceived as foreign or disconnected from Islamic values. Moreover, there is a limited availability of culturally adapted therapeutic models that integrate faith-based principles with psychological science. Although some emerging frameworks, such as Islamic psychology and spiritually integrated therapy, have shown promise. This gap highlighted an urgent need to localize and culturally adapt psychological interventions to improve their relevance, acceptability, and impact in the Saudi context. Without this shift, efforts to promote mental health literacy and expand psychological care may fall short of addressing the needs of diverse Saudi populations (Alhumaidan et al., 2024).

#### **2.4. Gaps in Literature**

As has been mentioned, there are many marital problems and conflicts between couples in the context of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, there is a rising rate of divorces, particularly within the first five years of marriage. However, it has been found that there is a lack of culturally adaptive and appropriate interventions informed by the actual experiences of expert psychologists in the field. This led to the current research question, which explores women's perspectives on their marital experiences.

While several studies investigated the effect of gratitude on close relationships, such as marital relationships, a body of research has also explored Islamic gratitude in individuals. However, questions were raised about how these two areas can be integrated, especially how Islamic gratitude may influence MS, and how this, in turn, could affect individuals' mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life among married women.

## **2.5. Research Aim**

The goal of the current study is to develop a deeper understanding of how Islamic gratitude influences married women's MS and how this influence extends to their overall quality of life and mental health.

The study aims to examine how women interpret, practice, and internalize Islamic gratitude in their daily lives, with a focus on its three central dimensions: vocal expression, emotional feelings, and actions based on practices. Through this in-depth exploration of women's perception, the study aims to investigate how Islamic identity functions as a spiritual and psychological resource that contributes to their mental health and well-being. In addition, this study aims to highlight the interconnected ways in which Islamic gratitude, MS, and well-being interact to shape the lived experiences of married women in terms of their quality of life, providing insights that may enhance and inform culturally and religiously adopted therapeutic and psychotherapy practices and interventions.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Research design**

This is a qualitative methods design study, which aims to gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of Islamic gratitude among married women and its role in their mental health and overall quality of life.

A semi-structured interview was conducted to explore the role of Islamic gratitude in marital satisfaction, mental health, and quality of life from the perspectives of married women. Specifically, the meaning of “gratitude to Allah” (Verbal) — giving & receiving (Emotional) — giving & receiving, (Physical/Behavioral) — giving & receiving. Also, about other life domains — expressing and receiving gratitude. How Islamic belief shapes conduct. The second theme focused on the overall quality of the relationship. Strengths & growth areas. Conflicts & decisions. Commitment in difficult times. Third theme: quality of life & health, including contributors to well-being. Impact of marital and spirituality on mental health.

### **3.2. Participants (inclusion & exclusion)**

#### *Inclusion Criteria:*

- Married females living in Saudi Arabia
- Aged above 18years.
- Must be married for at least 7 years

#### *Exclusion Criteria:*

- Male participants
- Single females
- Less than 18 years
- Married for less than 7 years.

The choice of including only women married for at least seven years was intentional to ensure participants had extensive experience in long-term relational dynamics, conflict resolution, and marital adjustment (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010). This duration allowed for richer insights into how gratitude evolves over time within a stable marital structure.

### 3.3. Instruments

After signing the consent form, participants were asked first to fill in a set of questionnaires, including the World Health Organization (WHO) quality of life questionnaire (Arabic version), the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale DASS assessment tool, the shortened version (Arabic version) - Islamic gratitude scale in Arabic- Marital gratitude in Arabic - Religiosity (five-item scale). The following is the description for each of the scales used:

#### 1. *World Health Organization Quality of Life Instrument (WHOQOL-BREF)*

The WHOQOL-BREF is a standardized instrument developed by the World Health Organization, which is a widely used questionnaire for comparing quality of life indices across cultures. The questionnaire comprises 26 items, covering the domains of physical health (7 items), social relationships (3 items), environmental health (8 items), and psychological health (6 items). Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, with the highest score meaning a better quality of life. The scale is developed to highlight both the negative and positive aspects of wellbeing and has been widely validated across cultures and languages, adopting scales that include the Arabic version used (Dalky et al., 2016). It is considered one of the most efficient assessments for evaluating the quality of life among individuals. It is widely used in academic research, practical settings, and health community settings (World Health Organization, 1998, as cited in Skevington et al., 2004).

## 2. *Marital Gratitude in the Marital Relationship Scale*

This culture and adopted linguistic scale offer a good tool for measuring marital gratitude within the context of family counseling and marital therapy. It is designed to assess how gratitude manifests in marital relationships, to reduce marital distress and emotional divorce. The final scale comprises 18 items, divided into two dimensions: the manifestations of gratitude and the importance of gratitude in marital relationships (AlSayed & AlZahrani, 2003).

## 3- *Five-Item Religiosity Scale:*

Consider one of the brief scales designed to assess an individual's degree of religious commitment and engagement. It typically measures core dimensions of religiosity such as experience, beliefs, knowledge, morals, practice, and consequences. Each item is ranked using a Likert-type scale, which allows for a deeper understanding of personal faith. Usually used with other scales to assess this specific aspect as one of several other psychological or social variables or used in larger surveys or studies. Despite its brevity, the scale has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity in assessing overall religiosity (Huber & Huber, 2012). The Arabic adoptive version was used, which has been approved for reliability and validity (Fekih-Romdhane et al., 2023).

## 4. *Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS):*

DASS is a self-report scale used to assess the emotional state of depression, anxiety, and stress in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Developed in 1995, Lovibond has been used since then. The most commonly used version is the short version, which includes 21 items, divided equally among the three subscales, but in a mixed order. Each item is rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 0, which indicates no score detected (Did not apply to me at

all), to 3, which is the maximum (applied to me very much or most of the time). Scores for each scale are summed. The scale measures symptoms experienced over the past week, allowing for the identification of varying levels of emotional distress. DASS has been consistently and validly applied across different cultures and languages, including the Arabic adoptive version. DASS is commonly used in psychological research and clinical practice to evaluate mental health and mood changes over time (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1994).

#### *5. The Islamic Gratitude Scale:*

This Islamic gratitude scale was developed by a team of researchers in 2022, which was designed to assess gratitude from an Islamic perspective (Shukr) in the Muslim population, addressing the conceptual gap in gratitude measurement instruments that are often used to assess three main concepts in Islamic psychology: the emotional feeling, the vocal expression, and the action. This scale comprises 30 items and employs a five-point Likert-type response format. It also includes negatively worded items to control for response bias, which aim to help researchers understand the relationship between Islamic gratitude and outcomes such as well-being, family dynamics, especially marital dynamics, and coping (Amri et al., 2022).

### **3.4. Procedures**

Participants were identified using a self-selection recruitment strategy. An online Google Form was used to disseminate information about the study via relevant communication channels. The form provided a detailed description of the study objectives, participants' requirements (completion of the questionnaire and interviews), and the criteria for the conclusion. Individuals were informed that participation was voluntary and that submitting the form was considered an expression of interest rather than immediate enrollment.

The form collects basic contact information (phone number) from respondents who meet the inclusion criteria and express interest in participation. This information was used

exclusively to follow up with a visible response, provide additional study information, and obtain informed consent prior to data collection.

Those who agreed to participate were asked to provide their names and contact details. In total, 12 participants were recruited, but only nine women were enrolled. Each participant first completed a short questionnaire, after which a suitable time was scheduled for the interview. Only nine participants were interviewed due to data saturation.

The interviews took place via Zoom, with participants' consent, and were fully recorded. Each interview lasted around 45 minutes. A semi-structured format was employed, allowing for flexibility while addressing the primary research questions. There were three main themes, along with approximately 14 subthemes and core questions, addressing the following themes. The main themes were Islamic Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, Mental Health, and Quality of Life. Whereas the subthemes were Subtheme; Meaning of “gratitude to Allah”, (Verbal) — giving & receiving, (Emotional) — giving & receiving, (Physical/Behavioral) — giving & receiving, Other life domains — expressing, Other life domains — receiving, Islamic belief shaping conduct, Overall relationship quality, Strengths & growth areas, Conflicts & decisions, Commitment in difficult times, Quality of life & health, Contributors to well-being, and Marital impact & spirituality. Table 1 presents the themes, subthemes, and emergent questions from the interviews.

*Table 1. Interview themes, subthemes, core questions, and optional probes*

Theme	Subtheme	Core question	Optional probes
Islamic Gratitude	Meaning of “gratitude to Allah.”	In your own words, what does “gratitude to Allah” mean to you?	Do you feel grateful to Allah for your marriage and partner? A recent example?
	(Verbal) giving & receiving	How do you and your partner give and receive verbal gratitude or appreciation?	Specific phrases that feel sincere? At times, it felt missing.

	(Emotional) giving & receiving	How do you and your partner show and sense emotional gratitude?	What signs tell you your partner is grateful? How do you communicate emotional appreciation?
	(Physical/Behavioral) giving & receiving	What actions or practical behaviors show gratitude between you and your partner?	A recent act that felt like gratitude-in-action—from you or your partner?
	Other life domains — expressing	Outside marriage, how do you express gratitude (e.g., family, work/study, community, worship)?	Which practices carry over into your marriage?
	Other life domains — receiving	Outside marriage, how do you tend to receive gratitude?	Any differences from how it happens in your marriage?
	Islamic belief shaping conduct	In your view, what role does Islamic belief play in how you treat your partner day-to-day?	Do any teachings (Quran/Hadith) guide your actions?
Marital Satisfaction	Overall relationship quality	How would you describe the overall relationship between you and your partner?	What feels most characteristic about it?
	Strengths & growth areas	What aspects of your relationship work well, and which need improvement?	Where does gratitude help? Where could it help more?
	Conflicts & decisions	How do you and your partner resolve disagreements and make household decisions?	Recent example from disagreement to resolution; any role for gratitude?
	Commitment in difficult times	What helps you stay committed during difficult times?	People, practices, or beliefs that make a difference.
Mental Health & QoL	Quality of life & health	How would you rate your current quality of life, and are you satisfied with your physical and emotional health?	What would improve it?
	Contributors to well-being	What factors contribute most to your happiness and comfort in life?	Daily routines or supports that matter most?
	Marital impact & spirituality	Do you feel your marital life enhances or affects your overall well-being?  How does your sense of purpose or spirituality affect your quality of life?	Any links you notice between gratitude to Allah and your mental health?

Full interview scripts are included in Appendix 2. All interviews were conducted in Arabic; the Arabic version of the interview script is available in Appendix 1. Transcriptions were created using the microphone feature in the Notes application and later checked for accuracy.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Plan**

Qualitative thematic analysis was used using ATLAS. Thematic coding software facilitates a nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives on Islamic gratitude and its influence on their marital well-being, quality of life, and overall satisfaction.

Data analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2008) six-phase process of thematic analysis (1. Familiarize yourself with the data, 2. Generate initial codes, 3. Search for themes, 4. Review themes, 5. Identify and name themes, 6. Produce the report). In Phase 1, all interviews were recorded on Zoom, and the researcher prepared the transcripts. Participants were assigned identifiable codes to maintain their autonomy and to facilitate the management of their data. Using an inductive approach, the researchers familiarize themselves with the data by reading and rereading the interview transcripts. In phase 2, the initial codes were selected. These codes were discussed with the supervisors, and necessary changes were made to ensure accuracy. In phase 3, throughout the process of thinking and evaluating the codes, and making appropriate connections. In Phase 4, 103 codes were identified, and the coding tree continued the process of thematic analysis. At the thesis stage, after interviewing the ninth participant, data saturation was found, and the supervisor advised that no more participants should be interviewed. In Phase 5, six themes were identified, along with several subthemes. In Phase 6, selected quotes from the participants were used to illustrate the identified themes and subthemes.

Several measures were implemented to ensure readability and consistency. Supervisors' feedback was sought through the research process, including the review of data collection instrument, coding process, and preliminary interpretation, which helped identify and minimize potential bias. The researcher maintained a reflex journal to document decisions, assumptions, and reflections during data collection and analysis, promoting transparency and self-awareness. Moreover, as has been mentioned, systematic procedures were followed in data coding and analysis to ensure consistency across cases, and repeated cross-checking of data helped verify the accuracy of findings. These steps collectively enhanced the rigor and reliability of the study.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations were taken into account in the selection of participants. First, clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to recruitment to ensure alignment between participants' characteristics and study objectives. Second, participation was entirely voluntary. Third, all participants were provided with comprehensive information about the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and the expected time commitment, allowing potential participants to make informed decisions before expressing interest. Individuals were informed that submitting the form did not constitute automatic enrollment and that they could withdraw their interest at any stage without penalty.

An initial screening was conducted using a Google Form to identify individuals who met the inclusion criteria. Only those who met these criteria were contacted for further participation, thereby ensuring methodological relevance while minimizing unnecessary data collection from individuals.

Fourth, all participants were sent the debriefing via WhatsApp, and then they were asked to sign the consent form. All of them were reminded at the beginning of the interview that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of their study without giving any clarification.

Confidentiality was ensured by storing the transcript only on the researcher's computer, which is protected by a password and saved in a password-protected folder. The transcript will be deleted after data coding. Fifth, all data were handled confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes. According to the participants' information, the data was restricted to the research, handled confidentiality, and participants were assigned codes instead of using their names.

Participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw at any point without justification and the right to refuse to answer any questions without providing reasons. Besides, although no sensitive questions were asked during the interview. Participants were advised to seek professional help if needed after the interview, particularly if they discussed the topics raised or experienced concerns or distress. Information about relevant support services, including online mental health helpline services and Mental Health Promotion Call center numbers, was provided.

Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee at Effat University (Approval number: RCI\_REC/11. September 2025/7.1.Exp.66), and participants were assured that their information would be kept confidential.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **RESULTS**

#### 4.1. Demographics of study sample

The current study included nine participants, all of whom were Saudi married women with more than seven years of marriage. Table 1 presents their profiles. Approximately two-thirds of them (66.7%) were aged between 35 and 45 years, while only one participant was under 30 years old. In terms of marriage duration, only one participant has been married for less than 10 years, whereas the rest have been married for more than 10 years, and one participant has been married for over 30 years.

Overall, their education levels were relatively high: four out of nine participants had a bachelor's degree, four had a master's degree, and only one held a PhD. Three participants are living in Saudi Arabia; seven of them reside in their own homes, while two rent their accommodations. Three participants held government-related positions, three worked in the private sector, one owned her own business, and four were housewives.

Regarding their husbands, 66% were aged between 35 and 45 years, and one was over 60 years old. The majority of the husbands (77%) were employed in the private sector. Two participants had no children, one had two children, three had three children, two had four children, and one had five children.

*Table 2. Participants profiles*

Identifier	Age	Marriage duration	Occupation statue	Education level	Husband's age	Husband's occupation	Number of children
P1	45 to 55	25 to 30	Housewife	Bachelor's	45 to 55	Government-related job	2
P2	35 to 45	20 to 25	Housewife	master	35 to 45	Private sector	5
P3	45 to 55	Over 30	Government-related job	Bachelor's	Over 60	Private sector	3

<b>P4</b>	35 to 45	15 to 20	Private work	Master	35 to 45	Government- related job	4
<b>P5</b>	35 to 45	15 to 20	Government- related job	Master	35 to 45	Private sector	3
<b>P6</b>	35 to 45	10 to 15	Government- related job	Master	35 to 45	Private sector	0
<b>P7</b>	35 to 45	15 to 20	Housewife	PhD	35 to 45	Private sector	2
<b>P8</b>	25 to 35	7 to 10	Business owner	Bachelor's	25 to 35	Private sector	0
<b>P9</b>	35 to 45	10 to 15	Housewife	Bachelor's	35 to 45	Private sector	3

As mentioned, five questionnaires were applied. Table 3 presents their results for each questionnaire, specifically the World Health Organization Quality of Life Instrument - WHOQOL-BREF ( $M = 93$ ,  $SD = 20$ ). This indicated a high quality of life, with an average of ( $M = 13.3$ ,  $SD = 2.9$ ). As for the marital gratitude questionnaire ( $M = 74.4$ ,  $SD = 7.8$ ), which also indicates a high level of marital gratitude toward their partner. Additionally, the religiosity score was high ( $M = 21.7$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ). Another high result was observed on the Gratitude scale ( $M = 138.8$ ,  $SD = 7.8$ ), indicating that participants are actively engaging in gratitude in their lives. Regarding the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS), the overall score was mild ( $M = 6.2$ ,  $SD = 4.9$ ). The participants' highest score was in their stress level ( $M = 8.7$ ,  $SD = 6.3$ ). One of the participants had a moderate anxiety level and a moderate depression level.

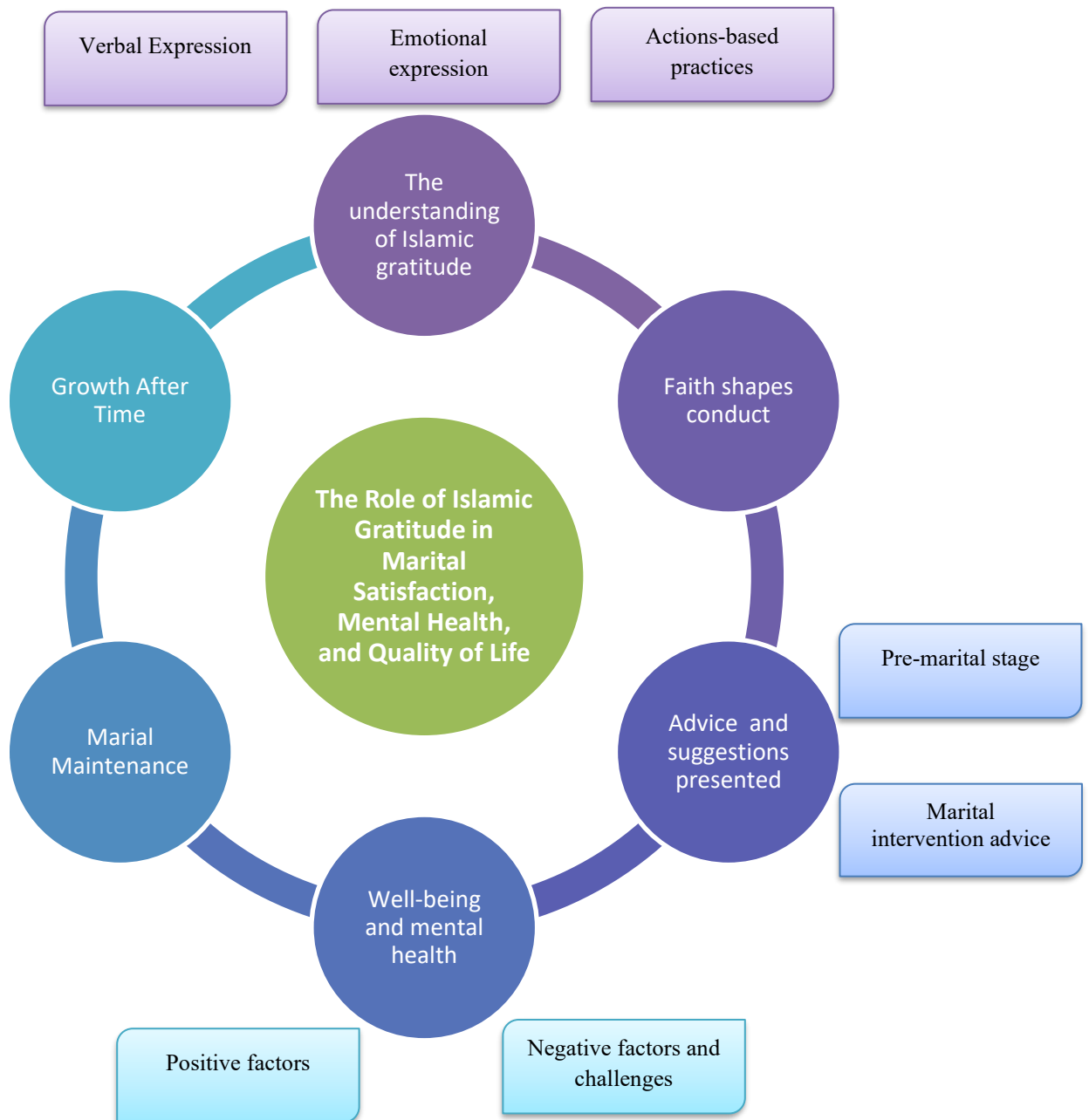
**Table 3.** Participants' results in questionnaires.

Identifier	Quality of life	Marital Gratitude	Religiosity	DASS	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
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<b>P1</b>	Very high	Very high	Very High	6	Normal	Normal	Normal
<b>P2</b>	Very high	Very high	Very High	1	Normal	Normal	Normal
<b>P3</b>	Very high	High	Very High	8	Normal	Mild	Normal
<b>P4</b>	Very high	Very high	Very High	6	Normal	Normal	Normal
<b>P5</b>	Moderate	Very high	Very High	1	Normal	Normal	Normal
<b>P6</b>	Very high	Very high	High	1	Normal	Normal	Normal
<b>P7</b>	High	Very high	Very High	12	Mild	Mild	Mild
<b>P8</b>	High	High	Very High	15	Moderate	Moderate	Mild
<b>P9</b>	Very high	Very high	Moderate	6	Normal	Normal	Normal

#### 4.2. Qualitative findings in terms of themes, Patterns, and Relationships

Six main themes and seven subthemes were extracted from the interviews: Marriage Maintenance, Islamic gratitude (three subthemes included: vocal expression, emotional feelings, and actions based on practices), Faith shapes conduct, Growth over time, Well-being and Quality of Life (two sub themes emerged which are positive and negative factors), and advices and suggestions (two subthemes were included, one for the premarital stage and the other for therapy related suggestion). Figure 2 provides a visual depiction of the themes and their interrelated nature. Additionally, Table 4 presents the themes and their corresponding subthemes.



*Figure 2. provides a visual depiction of the themes and their interrelated nature*

*Table 4. Themes, subthemes, descriptives, and participants*

<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Sub themes</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>Marriage Maintenance</b>		Strategies and support that help maintain a marriage.	P5, P8, P1 , P3, P9, P4, P2, P7,P6
<b>Islamic gratitude</b>	Emotional	Understanding Islamic gratitude from an emotional perspective	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P4, P5
	Physical	applying Islamic gratitude physically towards the husband	P1, P5, P9, P2, P5, P7, P8, P4, P3
	Vocal	Expressing Islamic gratitude verbally to the partner	P3, P5, P6, P8, P9, P2, P1, P4, P7
<b>Faith shapes conduct</b>		How religious and spiritual are considered the foundation for individuals' behaviors and perspectives	P4, P6, P7, P9, P2, P1, P5, P3, P8
<b>Growth over time</b>		How the relationship has improved as couples become more understanding and satisfied	P1, P2, P4, P6, P3, P5, P8, P7, P9
<b>Well-being and quality of life</b>	Positive factors	Factors that contribute to positive outcomes, well-being, and overall quality of life	P2, P3, P8, P7, P6, P5, P1, P4, P9
	Negative factors	Negative factors, challenges, and current stressors affecting well-being	P9, P1, P3, P6, P7, P2, P8, P4,
<b>Advice and suggestions presented</b>	Pre-marital stage	Advice relevant to the premarital stage	P4, P5, P1, P9, P8, P7, P6, P2, P3
	Marital intervention advice	Suggested advice for therapeutic or marital-related intervention	P5, P1, P9, P2, P3, P7, P6, P8, P4

### ***Theme 1: Marriage Maintenance:***

This theme explores the daily relational strategies participants use to preserve emotional connection and harmony in marriage. These include patience, forgiveness, conflict de-escalation, and the ability to reflect before reacting, often framed as both practical and faith-guided behaviors. Participants consistently emphasize the importance of ongoing effort, strong communication, being responsible, being grateful, understanding gender differences, Effective conflict resolution, and several other factors that ensure the continuance of their marriage. The themes include codes such as “appreciation,” which has been mentioned around 18 times in almost every participant’s interview. One participant (P7) said, *“For me, appreciation is the most important thing. He values the small things I do, such as the sacrifices, and everything in general. Just give me some appreciation for what you see and recognize that I am doing. I feel like that alone would be enough for me.”* That reflects the need for appreciation as a way to maintain their marriage. Another participant (P6) has also mentioned *“ Sometimes appreciation is also, honestly - I mean, he appreciates the things that I do, I appreciate the things he does, and the effort that he puts in. So, yes, we can say communication and appreciation are essential things.”*

Participants also highlighted a variety of factors that support them in maintaining their marriage, such as spending quality time and making joint decisions. Several participants also highlighted the need for attention from their partner. One of the participants (P1) expressed, *“Attention – for me, for example, it could mean, just yesterday I remembered the book *The 5 Love Languages*. It is about how each person needs to understand, through experience, not just in the moment, but also over the years and through shared experiences, what expresses love to them the most. For me, I feel that attention is what matters: the more someone shows me care, the more I care about them in return. Neglect, on the other hand, shows the opposite – that I do not like”.*

The codes “learning from the negative things’ and “focus on the positive side” are also repetitive codes that participants have mentioned many times through the same theme, one participant (P2) highlighted “*Remember the good things of the other side when one is sad he does not see the bad but if the person wants to continue I mean to be honest - remember the good things and remember the good times and remember these things I mean he forces yourself to remember the good things of the other side he remembers myself in need of the other side I mean no one is dispensed with one of these things that make the one pass and bear and exceed*”.

Another key element that emerged from the theme is the urgent for being patient, which has been repeated around 11 times, one participant (P9) said “*of course patience certainly, I mean - thank God - being patience for everything not only for harm and the thing that bothers us only, but patience, for the thing that we want and what happened, to be patient for the thing we want in our life and want them to happen, and we really need time to fix things - to be honest practicing being patience is required. Patience, everything, everything.*” Participant P4 also added, “*If you are grateful all the time—for the good and the bad, for ease and hardship—and you are grateful to God, then your mental state will definitely feel more at peace, one million percent. Of course, we are human; we will cry and feel sad, but there will always come a time when you say, “Alhamdulillah.” When you see someone else’s hardship, your own feels lighter, and the problem or pain you are in becomes easier to bear. God does not put us in any situation without a reason—either as a test or a trial. In all cases, it is a reminder from God when you drift away from Him. Whether through goodness or hardship, through gratitude or patience, it is all from Him.*”

### ***Theme 2: Islamic gratitude***

This theme captures how participants conceptualize gratitude not only as a feeling or response, but as an Islamic spiritual practice rooted in the concept of Shukr. Their perspectives

reveal how religion, emotion, and daily behavior converge in their marital experience: the verbal expression, the feeling, and the actions. When asked about their perspective on giving and receiving marital gratitude toward their partner or from them, participants express a variety of ways that convey such a feeling of gratitude. Their answers highlighted aspects such as expressing gratitude vocally, which were repeated approximately 13 times in the participants' responses. one participant (P3) has mentioned *“In my life it can appear in many expression- for example, I might say “thank you for making the time today and sit with us at home” or “thank you for spending the time with us” or thank you for bringing us this thing” ... I love to reinforce that idea that he is the one behind everything we have in our life”*. Another participant (P8) also highlighted her preference by saying *“I always love to express myself with words. For example, when I say “May God bless you”, “I appreciate your,” or “thank you, may God give you the strength,” “These are the kind of things I use to express gratitude and appreciation to my partner.”*

The participants viewed the Islamic gratitude via action in many different ways. They received care and services almost 13 times. One participant (P2) expressed her gratitude to him by mentioning that *“I love to cook for him ... this is my way to show gratitude, or when I am very thankful for him or something that he did”*.

Gifting was another one of the expressed ways to show physical gratitude, one participant (P1) said, *“For example – he might bring me something I have been waiting for a long time – something that I have really wished for – and when he gives it to me, I see it as him fulfilling something I wanted”*. Another participant (P5) also shared a similar concept about gifting: *“As for me, I usually express gratitude through words. However, sometimes, it can also be through gifts – like when I want to buy a present to make someone happy, even without any special occasion. That too can sometimes be a way of showing appreciation. It could be something simple – like remembering what they love or seeing something in a store and*

*thinking of that person, feeling like that would suit them – so I get it for them. So, for me, expressing gratitude can come through both actions and words.*

Spending quality time together as a way of physical gratitude. A participant (P5) said, *“For example, when we go out to have coffee or something like that, I feel that it is the time that he wants to spend with me. So, the time he dedicated to me, I consider that as a form of appreciation and show gratitude in our relationship.”*

Supporting and active listening as a participant (P3) has highlighted that *“It is also through actions – for example, by standing by him when he is going through problems, by listening to him when he is facing something, by spending time with him, so I can actively listen. I try to discuss issues with him and find solutions to the problems he is facing. So, it is more about taking actions rather than just expressing things in words- for me, maybe that is the stronger way of showing it.”*

Thirdly, emotional gratitude was expressed in a variety of ways, depending on how they understood it. From their perspective, one participant (P1) mentions the attention as her way to express emotional gratitude: *“ For me, attention is very important. For example, just yesterday—Subhan Allah—I thought about the book \*The Five Love Languages\*. It explains that each person needs to understand, not only through experience but over the years and through shared life, what truly makes them feel loved. What expresses love more strongly for them. For me personally, attention means everything. The more someone cares about me, the more I care about them in return. Usually, neglect shows the opposite—it makes me feel like the person does not love me. And kind, gentle words also express love honestly”*. Another participant (P2) understood it as appreciation. *“For me, emotionally, it means that I genuinely appreciate the effort he has made. Deep down, I truly recognize and believe in the time, effort, money, or any sacrifice he has given. Yes, appreciation – especially appreciation for what he gives and the effort he puts in – that is the real feeling.*

### ***Theme 3: Faith shapes conduct***

This theme explores how participants' Islamic faith directly influences their thoughts, behaviors, and decision-making within marriage. Rather than separating religious beliefs from daily actions, participants described how their conduct toward their spouse, especially during conflict, hardship, or caregiving, was guided by Islamic teachings. Faith provided not only a moral compass but also a practical framework for expressing gratitude, patience, and compassion in their marital relationships. One participant (P4) answered this question in her own words by saying, *“From the start, when we got married, both of us had it in mind that our relationship should be based on what pleases Allah. Thank God, I come from a generation where religion was deeply rooted in us – praise be to God. We were raised to preserve our faith and to teach our children the same values we learned whether through school or from our parents’ Islamic upbringing. So, when I deal with my husband, I do so according to Islamic teachings – what God has commanded and what the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, taught about marital relationships. When something happens between my husband and me, the first thing that comes to my mind is that this is a test from Allah. Secondly, I remind myself that marriage is not perfect or always smooth. When a problem arises, the first thing I try to do is find a way to solve it in a manner that pleases Allah – and that also satisfies both my husband and me. The reason I put “pleasing Allah” first is that if I do something that displeases Allah, then in the end, neither of us will truly be content.”* Another participant (P7) agreed that *“everything in our life, we relate to God and religion. I feel that if we follow this, things will go the right way. We ensure that everything we do is for the sake of God, and that is what truly matters. For me, I feel that marriage is, as they say, peaceful and guided by this principle.*

### ***Theme 4: Growth over time***

This theme highlights the way gratitude fosters ongoing personal and relational development over time. Participants described how expressing and receiving gratitude

contributed to emotional maturity, deepened intimacy, and strengthened trust between spouses. The relationship was seen as evolving through shared experiences, where gratitude played a key role in reinforcing commitment and transforming everyday moments into sources of meaning and connection. This theme indicates that relationships have improved over time. Not only that, but also, as couples become more understanding and satisfied over time. This theme has been mentioned over 26 times during the interview. Participants expressed greater satisfaction with their marriage in recent years than at the beginning of their marriage. Where the challenges and misunderstandings were a barrier to their MS. Not only that, but also the differences in individual nature, values, background, and personality traits, which affect the relationship. With time, they become more adaptive and are aware of these differences and work on meeting each other's needs to reach a higher level of MS. A participant (P1) reported, *“Over the years, Subhan Allah, a person’s understanding changes, and their behavior changes based on experiences and shared life. This, in itself, is something to be grateful for—that I was able to deal with my husband with greater awareness. It is, as you said, a form of gratitude for the years that God has blessed us with and favored us through—that we were able to continue together, by the grace of God first and foremost.”*

Also, another participant (P5) said, *“We often see that husbands change after a few years of marriage. Over time, they become more flexible, and gradually, certain things change. There is no need to make every issue a big deal – with understanding, everything can improve and become better. Another participant (P7) agreed, “I feel that after about 10 years, a person starts to really understand their partner .... People naturally change, and with time, you get to really know your life partner”.* A participant (P9), who has been married for more than 10 years, highlighted, *“You could say that thanks God, the marital situation has completely changed in the last four years.” It has really transformed. Of course, Alhamdulillah, it required much patience and many compromises, but the result is beautiful, and I am satisfied”.*

### ***Theme 5: Well-being and quality of life***

This theme examines the broader internal and external factors that influence participants' psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction. It includes how personal mindset, religious practices, social environment, and emotional support systems( especially those within the marriage) interact to shape mental health outcomes. Gratitude was described not only as an outcome of well-being but also as a contributor to maintaining it during both positive and challenging periods. Regarding the well-being and quality of life. Participants drew attention to two types of factors. One, positive factors, which mean the factors that positively impact their well-being and enhance their quality of life. One participant (P5) mentioned, *“There are many things that affect the quality of life – for me – emotional stability, psychological stability, financial stability, and career or job stability – there are so many factors. I feel they are all interconnected”*. Another participant (P3) also said, *“We become more aware that as a person gets older, we need to take better care of their health – not just one aspect, like diet, sleep, or exercise, but all of these things together. We need to organize and manage them because if my health is not good, I will not be able to live well”*. Another participant (P7) also mentions having a personal goal in life, which enhances the quality of life. Participant (P9) believed that independence is one of the most important factors that has affected my life. *“That was probably the most significant issue – I was not living independently; I was living with my husband’s family. Now, independence had an impact on me, and my perspective on things had changed”*.

On the other hand, they have identified negative factors, challenges, and current stressors that affect their well-being. One of the participants (P4) reported that *“physically, thanks God, I am okay, but I am no longer the way that I used to be. I mean, maybe fatigue affects me more now. I could say that life’s demands have increased – children have grown, responsibilities have increased, and work pressure has increased. I think this has affected me.*

*The thing that affects me the most, I would say, is my physical and mental health. Moreover, the work-life imbalance was also an issue, another participant (P4) said. “The ups and downs of life, due to mood swings, the children grow, and their needs affect me – they affect me and also affect the household. Life’s demands, the house, the work pressure...I am working, and even my husband is. You feel that each of us has pressures that affect, in one way or another, whether slightly or strongly, our relationships with each other, whether with our children or without, and the overall household dynamic”.*

Other life challenges also affect their mental health. One of the participants (P2) has mentioned, *“thanks god in all circumstances, but you came at a very sensitive time. Right now, I am being treated for cancer, so what you are saying is some at a very stressful moment. My health is not the best at the moment but thank God for everything. Hopefully, things will get better, God willing. As for the cancer, thank God there is nothing severe right now. I am not stratified at the moment, thank God”.*

### ***Theme 6: Advice and suggestions presented***

This theme reflects the insights, reflections, and guidance participants would offer to other women navigating marriage. Often framed through both religious wisdom and lived experience, this advice emphasized the importance of mutual appreciation, prayer, emotional regulation, and maintaining a long-term perspective on marital life. It also reinforced the value of gratitude as a proactive tool for sustaining happiness and resilience in the face of marital challenges. There are two subthemes related to the advice and suggestions presented by the participants. The first is the suggestion that was for the pre-marital stage. Many suggestions have been emphasized, a participant (P1) *“ all about the awareness – and more awareness. A person should not leave themselves to their own moods or whims. No, some things can truly help us – reading, seeking advice. Like, having a balanced environment in life really helps. I used to seek a lot constantly; I never just left myself to struggle alone or go through life*

*aimlessly*". Another participant (P3) also believed, "*honestly, I feel that a person should be aware of all aspects of their life and try to improve in every possible way. We should not focus on one area and neglect others. The foundation of it all is your relationship with God – to fear Him both in private and in public. When these values are strong within you, you can start an authentic, meaningful life and continue on the right path*".

The other subtheme was advice relevant to marital intervention for couples experiencing relationship conflicts. Counselling with an expert was one of the leading suggestions presented by the participants. One of the participants (P2) highlighted, "*I feel like I do not know how to handle things, so I went back to seek help from professionals, and I saw a really great impact on myself. The first step was identifying the root of the problem. I began to see things that were once huge and unsolvable in a much clearer light. A specialist helped me look at the situation from a different perspective and guided me towards the right solutions. Honestly, they have played a major role in helping me*".

Another participant (P8) agreed, "*I am asking: if I am 100% sure that this person is very rational— I am not talking about someone who comes to complain, seek attention, or simply talk and vent. That kind of talk does not help. When there is a real problem that needs a solution, a person can go to a trusted family member if they truly trust their judgment, go to a specialist, or keep the problem to themselves and work through it on their own. That way, later on, if they face something even bigger, they will know how to handle it. When I think about it, I am married to this person—what are the problems that we truly would not be able to solve together, he and I? What is something we could not figure out together? Because honestly, if there are problems that are not normal—if he, as a person, is doing something fundamentally wrong—that is a different issue altogether. That means there is something wrong with the person himself. However, if they are normal people living their lives without significant issues, and someone keeps digging and searching for problems, that is an entirely different matter. So,*

*in all cases, I believe in privacy: keep your problems to yourselves and solve them together. And if you really cannot, then go to a specialist, because they are a neutral third party—not biased toward you or against you. They look at the situation from the outside, professionally. They have studied this, understood it, and have seen many cases before. Honestly, this is my advice”.*

The need for an acceptance-oriented approach was one of the primary themes that emerged from the interviews, mentioned nearly 17 times. One of the participants (P2) believed that *“honestly, being content with what God has destined for me makes a huge difference. Having hope in Allah /almighty and having certainty in His power – that is what eases a person’s heart and helps them overcome life’s hardships”*. Moreover, another participant (P8) added, *“ I am truly, truly, truly grateful to Allah. I know that everything that has happened in my life is written – and that it is all ultimately for my own good. Even if it is not in life, then it is for my good in the Hereafter. That is why, thanks God, I am very aware and fully convinced that Allah’s choices for me are far better than my own choices, or the things I want or desire in my life”*. In addition to that another participant (P6) added *“if you have any issues or say conflicts; focus on the good side – the positive things you already have. Regarding the other issues, address them calmly, patiently, and with understanding and open discussion. Things can be resolved and moved forward. As long as I keep seeing the good more than the bad, the mistakes and problems eventually sort themselves out through mature understanding. It is all about focusing on the bright side – as they say, focus on the positive and on what you have, and be grateful for, the grass is not always greener on the other side”*.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to explore how Islamic gratitude shapes marital satisfaction, mental health, and quality of life among Saudi women. The thematic findings revealed that gratitude is expressed not only through words and actions but through spiritual practices deeply embedded in participants' religious lives. Gratitude functioned as both a psychological coping strategy and a spiritual duty, reinforcing the link between faith and emotional resilience in marriage. The findings of this study highlight the integral role Islamic gratitude plays in enhancing marital satisfaction, particularly in a Saudi cultural context where spiritual practices are embedded in daily life. Participants emphasized that gratitude, expressed through action, prayer, and emotional support, not only strengthened their connection with their spouse but also promoted psychological resilience. These results align with previous studies (e.g., Algoe, 2012; Gordon et al., 2011) that emphasize gratitude's role in relational bonding, but this study extends the literature by demonstrating how faith-specific gratitude (Shukr) creates meaning and fosters long-term marital commitment. Focusing on presenting the main themes that emerged from the interview, which include marriage maintenance, understanding of Islamic gratitude, faith shaping conduct, growth over time, well-being, and quality of life, as well as the advice and suggestions that were presented. These results contribute to the growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of Islamic gratitude on MS, mental health, and well-being. As well as the quality of life.

### *Islamic gratitude*

The results demonstrated a belief in the need to apply Islamic gratitude, as presented in the three ways within the current framework, as outlined by Al-Ghazali, who investigated the three dimensions of Islamic gratitude three central dimensions: vocal expression, emotional feelings, and actions based on practices, and how they are connected firmly to the wider and broader understanding of Islamic gratitude, which is continuous gratitude for Allah. According

to Arikhah et al. (2022), gratitude in Islam is not a skill, but rather a quality, which means it varies across individuals, depending on their level of spirituality. This expands on Western definitions of gratitude, which often focus on interpersonal exchanges (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), by showing how gratitude toward God becomes a foundation for human relational behavior in the Islamic worldview. This leads to the second finding, which is how beliefs shape the participants' behavior and how their acceptance of what is happening in their lives (both positive and negative) enables them to continue being grateful to Allah, as they held a firm belief that everything happens for a reason. Allah decrees nothing but good for us. Such a belief was presented clearly from the participant's perspective, which shapes their behaviors and values in life, particularly in marital relationships. That acceptance-oriented approach would enhance their satisfaction and encourage them to persevere through tough times in their marriage. Not only that, but it also highlighted the marital relationship as a blessing that should be cherished and appreciated, even in the face of all the challenges that come with it. The Holy Quran describes this relationship as a firm covenant, meaning a sacred and binding bond between spouses, which is repeated approximately 5 to 10 times. This is also supported by Fatima and Ajmal (2012), who stated that marriages are made in heaven and celebrated on earth, a widespread belief primarily due to the unique bond shared between two individuals. They also reported that religions and religious practices may contribute to the development of MS. This is supported by a study conducted by Amjad et al. (2013), which found a correlation between religious gratitude and MS, as well as overall life satisfaction. In another study, a correlation was found between religious coping and cultural adoption, and they noted several times that gratitude was a common and essential practice in the coping strategies of Syrian refugee youth in Turkey (Arici Ozcan & Kaya, 2018).

### *Marital maintenance*

This extended the scope of gratitude research by investigating how Islamic gratitude can affect MS. Studies in this regard have shown that several factors are essential for maintaining a lasting, happy marriage, including similarities in beliefs, effective communication, trust, care, understanding, commitment, compromise, and respect. For instance, partners may have different views, needs, and ideas. Comparing these differences makes life somewhat difficult for both partners. Respecting such a difference and not forcing each other to change leads to a better life (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Many of these factors also contributed to the findings of the current study. Love, respect, strong communication, sharing similar backgrounds, friendships, trust, awareness, appreciation, and being responsible are also mentioned in the findings of the current study. Participants emphasized that marriage is not easy, but partners must be aware of this and overlook minor issues that may contribute to difficulties in their relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Care was also found to be a genuine expression of love, which was also contributed. Fulfilling each other's needs helps relationships grow and maintain. However, one of the central aspects repeatedly presented in the interview was the importance of being patient. The participants have stated that one of the key components of maintaining a marriage is patience, and they refer to the value of this quality in Islam. Chalmiers et al. (2023) connected the concept of gratitude to being patient through tough times.

Marital expectations and setting realistic expectations are fundamental aspects of a healthy marriage. Conflicts arise when couples either have very high expectations of each other or fail to share their expectations of their marriage, often due to a lack of healthy communication between them. The reasons behind these unrealistic expectations vary but are mainly related to the person's traits, personality, beliefs, and experiences, which can all be influenced by culture and society (Shaikh et al., 2020). Many issues can arise from high and

false expectations, exaggeration, generalization, and intimidation of the couples to a level that is inconsistent with the actual abilities of the other partner (Bafrani et al., 2024). However, other studies have indicated that high expectations are not always a negative aspect of marriage; they can sometimes lead to greater fulfillment and increased effort in achieving these expectations. Thus, the key here is communication, open discussion, and clear agreements even in the premarital stage, which leads to a better MS (Rasheed et al., 2020).

### *Mental Health and Wellbeing*

The interviewees mentioned several factors that can enhance individuals' well-being and quality of life. One of them is being grateful not only for the good things but also learning from the negative things, which is observed as a more acceptance-oriented perspective that relates directly to gratitude. This may be associated with various positive emotions, including life satisfaction and happiness, as well as greater ease in forgiving others. It is also less likely to lead to feelings of isolation and depression. It has been shown to act as a booster for higher spirituality and mindfulness, leading to increased self-esteem, which in turn enhances the ability to create positive memories. Additionally, it makes it easier to set goals and achieve them. Moreover, it may enable access to higher levels of social resources and improve both physical and mental health. It has also been reported by the participants that there is a correlation between gratitude and well-being. This may lead to an increased level of an individual's self-awareness and introspective behavior, which in turn enhances their quality of life and ultimately increases their level of gratitude. This means that gratitude and satisfaction operate within an adaptive cycle of benefit (Arikhah et al., 2022). Studies found that happily married people consider one of the main factors that affects the well-being and quality of life (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Asoodeha et al. (2010) demonstrated that happily married couples share many common factors, including similar values and beliefs, equality, and effective

communication, which were found to be key in their sample studies and also in the current study's findings.

In a study conducted by Amjad et al. (2013) on the benefits of gratitude, participants were asked to note ten things for which they were grateful each day for six months. Found a significant difference between the control and intervention groups in mood improvement and feeling more grateful, which affects overall life satisfaction. Chalmiers et al. (2023) stated that gratitude has a favorable implication for mental health, as it has been established that gratitude allows individuals to reframe memories of adverse events. This means that individuals who practice gratitude often have shifted perspectives; for example, they view difficult times as opportunities to realign their form. At the same time, others would believe that tough times would strengthen them. On the other hand, some people would adopt an acceptance approach in their way of dealing with difficult times. Moreover, some individuals would train themselves to focus on the positive side of the picture, rather than limiting their perspective to the negative side only. Some are always grateful for the mere fact that the tough times or hardships they encounter are not greater, and the situation could be worse, which is actually endorsed by the Quran and Hadith sources as well (Chalmiers et al., 2023).

There are also negative factors that decrease the quality of life and psychological well-being, including current stressors and challenges. One of the barriers that affects mental health and quality of life, as presented in the current study, is the work–life imbalance, which was counted as a stressor in their life. Maatta and Uusiautti (2012) found that the connection between work and family life has been a growing concern since women began entering the workforce in significant numbers. It has been argued that work conflicts can significantly impact an individual's family life, leading to increased stress levels and negatively affecting their overall health and well-being.

Couples' relationship quality plays a significant role in their mental health. Therefore, enhancing and improving the quality of family relationships, especially the couple's relationship, could play a crucial role in preventing marital burnout. This includes one primary aspect, developing conflict resolution styles (Javdan et al., 2023). Conflicts arise when couples attempt to align their behaviors and expectations with those of their partner (Afu & Nteh, 2020). Adjustments that both couples attempt to make can play a crucial role in strengthening their marital relationship and enhancing its stability, continuity, and, consequently, their overall well-being. These adjustments were found to have a positive impact on social, physical, and economic status, as well as the psychological health and well-being of both partners (Afu & Nteh, 2020; Shaikh et al., 2020).

Conflicts that happen between couples could have negative implications that affect their psychological well-being. However, marital conflict is expected due to the nature of the relationship and the individual differences between them, but the fundamental point is how couples deal with such issues. Otherwise, these underlying and uncommunicated conflicts could worsen, resulting in the couple's burnout. This is the gradual loss of emotional attachment between them, which leads to an increasing lack of attention, dependency, disposition to everyday enjoyable activities, and emotional alienation, which could actually lead to emotional separation or actual divorce. A link exists between couples' burnout and high levels of marital dissatisfaction (Udofia et al., 2021; Shaikh et al., 2020).

#### *Growth over time*

It has been highlighted that couples' relationships and their level of satisfaction have improved significantly over the years. Participants have stated that their relationship has improved over the years, due to the higher level of understanding that develops between couples. Understanding each other's personality differences, love languages, and habits is

essential. In a study by Lavner and Bradbury (2010) argued that MS is significantly decreased after the honeymoon period and decreases from 4 years of marriage until 10 years, and starts to improve gradually, which is known as the honeymoon-is-over effect. A longitudinal study conducted by Belsky and Hsieh (1998) assessed newly married couples and again when the wives were pregnant, when the child was 3, 9, and 36 months old, finding a pattern of decline in their satisfaction. Another longitudinal study examined MS over the 5th and 10th years of marriage and found that couples maintain a high level of marital functioning over time. Other studies have indicated that MS would not change significantly over time, meaning that if couples started their first few years of marriage with an appropriate level of MS, it would be more likely to fluctuate through the years but would not change significantly or dramatically (Udofia et al., 2021; Bradbury, 2010). Couples might become more understanding, have a stronger communication pattern, and engage in joint decision-making. However, challenges differ from couple to couple, which highly affects the level of MS over the years, and that is considered a key element in MS. Therefore, each couple has its own challenges and difficulties, but how they deal with these challenges determines the strength or weakness of their relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

#### *Suggestions and advice presented*

One of the key suggestions highlighted is the importance of education, which involves raising awareness levels in relationships. It has been suggested that a culturally and religiously adopted program should be designed to raise awareness levels during the pre-marital stage and the first few years of marriage for both couples. Such an intervention would have an impact on their understanding of gender differences, allowing for a higher level of participation and preparation for marriage (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012; Kurdek, 2005). Various types of marital interventions are employed in couples counseling and psychotherapy. No doubt, each case would have a unique treatment plan designed to meet the needs of these couples, enhance their

relationship, and foster a healthier pattern of communication and conflict resolution. For example, some couples are experiencing marital crises that affect their relationship and require a different intervention to help and support them through such a challenging time (Abdulrahman & Alnagar, 2024). At the same time, others have compatibility differences due to factors other than their personality, such as background differences, religion, and personality differences, among others, which require a different type of designed approach to allow a higher level of understanding for these differences. Counselling centers and authorities responsible for marital completion should consider implementing such a program within an appropriate and approved setting, given the high need and the significant influence of approved premarital programs on future marriages (Udofia et al., 2021).

Marriage counseling, couple therapy, or family psychotherapy are all names for psychotherapy that licensed therapist's conduct. Usually involves both partners. This type of therapy aims to help couples identify and address underlying issues, ultimately improving their relationship. Not only that, but it also aims to support married couples in making thoughtful decisions, overcoming differences, and improving their communication. Additionally, it helps couples cope with various types of stress throughout their journey (Shanmugavel & Arumuga, 2020). It is essential to note that marriage succeeds when couples choose to nurture and enhance their relationship, creating an environment where love and trust can flourish. However, many reasons could affect these relationships and increase the conflicts between couples, and therefore decrease their MS and their quality of life. This leads to a high need for marital counseling (Udofia et al, 2021).

One of the main aspects of family therapy is marital and premarital counseling, which is based on the belief that psychological disturbances arise as much from conflicts between people as from conflicts within a person. While couples seek the help they need from therapy, each has their own perspective, intention, perception, experience, and beliefs, as well as

different levels of commitment, and all these factors determine the outcomes of therapy (Ahmed & Hasona, 2023). This resulted in more couples attempting to avoid reaching such a point and, therefore, seeking professional help and support (Khatib et al., 2023; Keverenge et al., 2019).

Studies in this regard found that marriage counseling has a favorable implication in enhancing the level of MS. Couple counseling aims to help couples understand different views, communicate better with each other, appreciate each other's needs, accept differences, have more ability to solve conflicts, build on strengths to make valuable changes and support each other through a challenging and stressful time (Soliman et al., 2022; Shanmugavel & Arumuga, 2020).

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Adoptive cultural interventions are found to be more effective when dealing with marital and marriage counseling for Muslims, even in Western countries. The primary goal of the study participants is to be understood and respected for their culture and traditions, which may vary from one region to another. Additionally, they aim to improve their communication, resolve marital conflicts, receive support, and gain a better understanding of their partners (Abou Hannoud et al., 2022; Udofia et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings of this study illustrate the deeply interconnected nature of spiritual values, emotional expression, and relational dynamics in Saudi marriages. Women described

gratitude as both a religious obligation and an interpersonal practice that sustains emotional closeness and resilience. The integration of Islamic gratitude into marital life revealed how faith can guide conflict resolution, enhance emotional security, and support long-term relational growth. By highlighting the role of Islamic gratitude in enhancing marital well-being, this study offers a culturally grounded framework for integrating faith-based values into psychological practice and marital therapy in Saudi Arabia.

### **5.1. Practical implications**

Mental health has recently gained increased importance in the Arab world; however, awareness of its importance has risen over the past several years (Alluhaibi et al., 2022). Still, many barriers prevent individuals from seeking professional help regarding their marital life, such as stigma, the inability to access services, and the availability of services. One of these barriers is related to the interventions themselves (Khatib et al., 2023). However, it is essential when applying targeted intervention to design it specifically to match the Muslim's unique beliefs and values, which differ from those in other religions or beliefs. Culturally adaptive intervention was found to be effective when discussing the concept of marital psychotherapy (Abou Hannoud et al., 2022).

In the Saudi context, family plays a fundamental role in shaping an individual's psychological identity and life decisions. Therefore, family-based and systemic approaches to therapy may be more culturally congruent than those focused exclusively on individual cognition and behaviors. Arab families, in general, tend to function within a hierarchical, interdependent dynamic, where honor, social roles, and family obligations are highly valued. Interventions that recognize and respect these dynamics, such as culturally appropriate family therapy and, more specifically, marital therapy, could have higher acceptance and greater therapeutic impact (Alhumaidan et al., 2024). In addition, religion, basically Islam, plays a central role in daily life and is often a primary source of comfort, identity, and coping. As such,

incorporating Islamic principles, such as Islamic gratitude, into the practice can enhance therapeutic outcomes. Spiritually integrated therapy models, such as Islamic CBT, combine Quranic teachings, prophetic traditions (Sunnah), and CBT frameworks to create a cluster-aligned therapeutic process (Ariff, 2025). Islamic CBT has been studied in Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, with some evidence supporting its effectiveness in reducing many psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Rassool, 2005), which could also be very effective in marital interventions (Alhumaidan et al., 2024).

Islamic psychology also provides an indigenous framework that conceptualizes mental health holistically, integrating spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions. This approach emphasizes the purification of the soul, balanced self, and remembrance of God as key elements of psychological well-being. While the model is still undergoing academic development and clinical validation, it holds significant promise for enhancing culturally relevant mental health care in Saudi Arabia (Al-Karam, 2018).

Efforts to culturally adapt existing Western models are also gaining traction. For example, therapeutic practice in Saudi Arabia has begun to incorporate CBT, reflecting local beliefs, language, and family structures. This approach involves utilizing religious beliefs, involving family members in sessions, and adjusting goals to align with communal rather than individual achievements (Alangari et al., 2021).

Thus, the development and implementation of culturally adopted therapeutic models, such as Islamic gratitude in marital intervention in Saudi Arabia, is essential. Interventions should be aligned with society's religion, family, and cultural reality to ensure both acceptability and effectiveness. The findings of the current study may be used to develop culturally appropriate and evidence-based marital satisfaction programs that incorporate the views, beliefs, and convictions of married Saudi women. For example, therapists working in

Saudi Arabia could integrate gratitude journaling with Quranic reflection or encourage couples to engage in shared prayer as a means of strengthening emotional bonds. As well as reflecting on some of Prophet Mohammad's (peace be upon him) behaviors and practices in expressing gratitude. Moreover, daily practices that enhance the meaning of Islamic gratitude nourish individuals' lives and, more specifically, their marital relationships, such as verbally thanking their spouses. The success of such culturally adopted intervention in therapy may also provide a model for other Muslim majority societies facing similar challenges in mental health care delivery (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).

Counseling centers and the authorities for marital completion should consider having such programs within an appropriate and approved setting due to the high need and the significant influence that approved of the premarital program on the future MS. Future studies should design and evaluate the context of such a program to design the most helpful version of targeted programs (Udofia et al, 2021; Keverenge et al., 2019). It is recommended that families receive necessary training in healthy relationships. In addition, organizations are required to include identifying effective conflict resolution patterns in marital relationships on their agenda to support families in overcoming couple burnout through training (Javdan et al., 2023; Rasheed et al., 2020).

These findings suggest that clinical psychologists and marital therapists in Saudi Arabia may benefit from incorporating Islamic gratitude practices (such as verbal praise, shared prayer, and gratitude journaling) into culturally adapted therapeutic interventions. Gratitude rituals rooted in faith may enhance emotional attunement and reduce marital conflict, especially when delivered in group therapy or premarital counseling programs.

## **5.2. Limitations of the study**

Every research study has certain limitations that should be addressed and acknowledged to provide a clear understanding of the findings. In the current study on the role of Islamic gratitude on MS, quality of life, mental health, and well-being, several constraints may have influenced the results. First, the sample size was limited to female participants from specific geographic areas, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the scales used were self-reported, which could be affected by the participants' subjective perceptions. Also, it was made sure and clear to avoid sensitive questions (such as intimacy and abuse) in the interview, because, however, it is still considered sensitive to talk about marital life, especially in the Arab and Saudi population, who may still consider it a sensitive topic to talk freely about. Moreover, seven years of marriage (which was one of the inclusion criteria for enrolment in the study) could be considered a relatively short period for marriage length, and it is recommended to include couples who have been married for a longer period. Additionally, the marital satisfaction in the current sample was relatively high, which was suitable for the study's purpose. Nevertheless, although participants' marital satisfaction level was relatively high and they were satisfied with their marriage (as they stated when asked during the interviews), no scale was administered to assess the participants' marital satisfaction level before the interview to ensure that they were considered a valid source of suggestions and that their opinions and advice were taken into account. Finally, one of the participants had a moderate anxiety and depression level, and she was advised to consider having professional support. However, no follow-up was made to ensure she made such an essential step for her mental health and well-being.

## **5.3. Recommendations for Future Research**

Furthermore, research on the experience of gratitude has not given appropriate attention to its development and changes over time, across various situations, and in response to life

events. The participants' personal characteristics can also be considered identical. Therefore, future studies should include more diverse subjects and multiple phases of participatory observations and investigate their perspectives before and after applying Islamic gratitude in their lives. Longitudinal data collection should be considered to identify which factors are most consistent and contribute most to the development of gratitude.

In response to the limitation, improvement would definitely be considered in future research. One of the leading suggestions would be to expand the sample to include both wives and husbands and compare their perspectives on their experiences. Moreover, comparative studies would be valuable, comparing happily married couples with those who experience conflicts in their practice of Islamic gratitude. Additionally, it would be valuable to compare newly married couples with those who have been married for a long time. Not only that, but also to evaluate the role of Islamic gratitude in parenting practices and how it impacts the parent-child relationship, and to compare different age groups, such as children in early childhood and adolescents. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, there is a need for a premarital program to increase awareness among premarital couples. However, future studies should evaluate the context of such a program and design the most effective version.

The use of mixed methods would add another advantage, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Islamic gratitude effect on MS, which could enhance the generalizability of the findings, allowing for more significant statistical findings on some of the observed correlations or any other statistical tests that would be appropriate to apply to their scale's results. Another broader suggestion is to evaluate the effect of Islamic gratitude not only on personal relationships but also in wider environments, such as workplaces, and how that would impact personal growth. Additionally, we suggest investigating the role of Islamic gratitude among individuals experiencing a current

challenge or going through a tough time to gain a deeper understanding of their perspective on applying this approach as a supportive intervention during such times.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study offers novel insight into the lived experiences of Saudi women who integrate Islamic gratitude into their marital lives. By framing gratitude not only as a psychological virtue but as a spiritual duty, participants revealed how faith-driven expressions enhance emotional connection, strengthen conflict resolution, and promote well-being. These findings reinforce the importance of localized, culturally relevant models in clinical psychology and pave the way for interventions that honor both psychological principles and religious values. Ultimately, this research affirms the value of culturally rooted psychological constructs and demonstrates how Islamic gratitude can serve as a foundation for emotionally resilient, spiritually grounded marital relationships.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1

### Research interview questions in Arabic

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

شكرًا جزيلاً لك على تخصيص وقتك للمشاركة في هذا اللقاء. نحن نُجري هذه المقابلة كجزء من دراسة تهدف إلى فهم تجارب الأزواج في التعبير عن الشكر والامتنان، وخاصة من منظور إسلامي، وكيف يمكن لذلك أن يؤثر على العلاقة الزوجية والصحة النفسية وجودة الحياة.

لا توجد إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة، فنحن مهتمون بسماع وجهة نظرك الشخصية وتجاربك الخاصة. إذا شعرت في أي وقت بعدم الراحة في الإجابة عن أي سؤال، يمكنك تجاوز السؤال أو إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت.

هل أنت مستعدة لنبدأ؟

#### الموضوع الأول: الشكر لله (الامتنان الإسلامي)

المحور الفرعي: معنى "الشكر لله"

- السؤال الأساسي : ما معنى "الشكر لله" بالنسبة لك بكلماتك الخاصة؟
- هل تشعر بالامتنان لله من أجل زواجك أو شريك حياتك؟ هل هناك مثال حديث؟

المحور الفرعي: اللسان أو الأقوال — تقديم وتلقي الامتنان اللفظي

- السؤال الأساسي : كيف تعبر أنت وشريكك عن الامتنان أو التقدير بالكلمات؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
  - هل هناك عبارات معينة تشعر أنها صادقة تجاه الامتنان؟
  - هل هناك مواقف شعرت فيها أن التقدير اللفظي كان مفقوداً؟

المحور الفرعي: القلب — تقديم وتلقي الامتنان العاطفي

- السؤال الأساسي : كيف تُظهر أنت وشريكك الامتنان العاطفي؟ وكيف تشعر به؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
  - ما العلامات التي تجعلك تشعر أن شريكك ممتن لك؟
  - كيف تعبر عن التقدير العاطفي؟

المحور الفرعي: الجوارح — تقديم وتلقي الامتنان السلوكي/العملي

- السؤال الأساسي : ما هي الأفعال أو السلوكيات التي تُظهر الامتنان بينك وبين شريكك؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:

- هل يمكنك مشاركة موقف حديث شعرت فيه أن شريكك عبّر عن امتنانه بالفعل؟ أو أنت؟

#### المحور الفرعي: دور العقيدة الإسلامية في السلوك

- السؤال الأساسي : برأيك، ما هو دور العقيدة / التعاليم الإسلامية في كيفية تعاملك مع شريك حياتك بشكل يومي؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- هل هناك تعاليم من القرآن أو السنة تشعر أنها تُرشدك في علاقتك؟

#### المحور الفرعي: الامتنان في مجالات أخرى من الحياة — التعبير

- السؤال الأساسي : خارج نطاق الزواج، كيف تُعبّر عن الامتنان (مثلاً في العمل، مع العائلة، في المجتمع أو في العبادة)؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- هل هناك ممارسات تنتقل من هذه المجالات إلى زواجك؟

#### المحور الفرعي: الامتنان في مجالات أخرى من الحياة — التلقي

- السؤال الأساسي : خارج نطاق الزواج، كيف تتلقى الامتنان من الآخرين؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- هل هناك فرق بين طريقة تلقّيك للامتنان في هذه المجالات مقارنةً بالزواج؟

#### الموضوع الثاني: الرضا الزوجي

#### المحور الفرعي: جودة العلاقة العامة

- السؤال الأساسي : كيف تصف العلاقة بينك وبين شريك حياتك بشكل عام؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- ما أكثر ما يميز علاقتكما؟

#### المحور الفرعي: نقاط القوة ومجالات النمو

- السؤال الأساسي : ما هي الجوانب التي تشعر أنها تعمل جيداً في علاقتكما؟ وما الذي يحتاج إلى تحسين؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- ما دور الامتنان في هذه الجوانب؟ وأين يمكن أن يُستخدم أكثر؟

#### المحور الفرعي: الخلافات واتخاذ القرارات

- السؤال الأساسي : كيف يتم حل الخلافات، واتخاذ القرارات الحياتية أو الاسرية ؟

• أسئلة استيضاحية:

- هل يمكنك مشاركة مثال حديث من خلاف إلى حل؟ وهل للامتنان دور في ذلك؟

المحور الفرعي: الالتزام في الأوقات الصعبة

- السؤال الأساسي : ما الذي يساعدك على الاستمرار والالتزام في العلاقة خلال الأوقات الصعبة؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- هل هناك أشخاص، ممارسات، أو معتقدات تساعدك في ذلك؟

الموضوع الثالث: الصحة النفسية وجودة الحياة

المحور الفرعي: جودة الحياة والصحة

- السؤال الأساسي : كيف تقيم جودة حياتك الحالية؟ وهل أنت راضٍ عن صحتك الجسدية والنفسية؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- ما الذي يمكن أن يحسنها؟

المحور الفرعي: العوامل المساهمة في الرفاهية

- السؤال الأساسي : ما هي العوامل التي تسهم بشكل أكبر في سعادتك وراحتك في الحياة؟
- أسئلة استيضاحية:
- هل هناك روتين يومي أو دعم تشعر أنه مهم لك؟

المحور الفرعي: تأثير الزواج والروحانية على الرفاهية

- السؤال الأساسي : هل تشعر أن حياتك الزوجية تؤثر أو تعزز من صحتك العامة؟ وكيف يؤثر الجانب الروحاني والایماني واحساسك بالقيمة ووجود الهدف على جودة حياتك؟
- هل تلاحظ أي علاقة بين الامتنان لله وصحتك النفسية؟
- هل يوجد اي جوانب او اي أمور او نصيحة اخرى تحبي تشاركيها في النهاية....

شكرًا جزيلاً لك مرة أخرى على مشاركتك الصادقة والقيمة. لقد ساعدتنا كلماتك على فهم أعمق للمواضيع التي نبحث فيها، ونحن نُقدّر وقتك ومساهمته في هذا البحث.

إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة أو تعليقات لاحقاً، لا تتردد في التواصل معنا.

نسأل الله أن يبارك لك في حياتك الزوجية وأن يجعل فيها السكنينة والمودة والرحمة.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Research interview questions in English:**

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. We are conducting this interview as part of a study that aims to understand couples' experiences with expressing gratitude, especially from an Islamic perspective, and how this can impact their marital relationships, mental health, and quality of life.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in hearing your personal perspective and your own experiences. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question, you can skip it or stop the interview at your discretion.

Ready to get started?

### **First Topic: Thanking God (Islamic Gratitude)**

#### **Sub-Theme: The Meaning of "Thanksgiving to God"**

1. **The basic question:** What does "thank God" mean to you in your own words?
2. Do you feel grateful to God for your marriage or your partner? Is there a recent example?

#### **Sub-theme: Tongue or Words — Giving and Receiving Verbal Gratitude**

1. **Fundamental Question:** How do you and your partner express gratitude or appreciation in words?
  2. **Clarification Questions:**
    1. Are there certain phrases that you feel are sincere about gratitude?
    2. Have there been situations where you felt verbal appreciation was missing?
- 

#### **Subtheme: The Heart — Giving and Receiving Emotional Gratitude**

1. **Fundamental question:** How do you and your partner show emotional gratitude?
  2. **Clarification Questions:**
    1. What signs make you feel grateful to your partner?
    2. How do you express emotional appreciation?
- 

#### **Sub-Theme: Predators — Giving and Receiving Behavioral/Practical Gratitude**

1. **Fundamental Question:** What actions or behaviors show gratitude between you and your partner?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Can you share a recent situation where you felt your partner had already expressed gratitude? Or you?
- 

**Sub-Theme: The Role of the Islamic Faith in Behavior**

3. **Fundamental question:** In your opinion, what is the role of Islamic faith/teachings in how you interact with your partner on a daily basis?

4. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Are there any teachings from the Quran or Sunnah that you feel guide you in your relationship?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Gratitude in Other Areas of Life — Expression**

1. **Fundamental question:** Outside of marriage, how do you express gratitude (e.g. at work, with family, in society or in worship)?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Are there practices that carry over from these areas to your marriage?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Gratitude in Other Areas of Life — Receiving**

1. **Fundamental question:** Outside of marriage, how do you receive gratitude from others?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Is there a difference between the way you receive gratitude in these areas compared to marriage?
- 

**Second Topic: Marital Satisfaction**

**Sub-Theme: The Quality of the Public Relationship**

1. **Fundamental question:** How would you describe the relationship between you and your partner in general?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. What makes your relationship so special?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Strengths and Areas for Growth**

1. **Fundamental Question :** What aspects do you feel are working well in your relationship?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. What is the role of gratitude in these aspects? And where can it be used more?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Disagreements and Decision-Making**

1. **The fundamental question:** How are disputes resolved, and life or family decisions are made?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Can you share a recent example from disagreement to resolution? Does gratitude play a role in this?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Commitment in Difficult Times**

1. **Fundamental Question:** What helps you stay in the relationship during difficult times?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Are there people, practices, or beliefs that help you do this?
- 

**Topic Three: Mental Health and Quality of Life**

**Sub-Theme: Quality of Life and Health**

1. **Fundamental question:** How would you rate your current quality of life?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. What can improve it?
- 

**Sub-Theme: Factors Contributing to Well-Being**

1. **Fundamental Question:** What factors contribute the most to your happiness and well-being in life?

2. **Clarification Questions:**

1. Is there a daily routine or support that you feel is important to you?
- 

**Sub-Theme: The Impact of Marriage and Spirituality on Well-Being**

1. **The key question:** Do you feel that your marital life affects or enhances your overall health? How do your spiritual and faithful aspects, sense of worth, and having purpose affect your quality of life?

2. Do you notice any relationship between gratitude to God and your mental health?

3. Are there any other aspects or any other matters or advice that you would like to share in the end?
- 

Thank you very much again for your honest and valuable participation. Your words have helped us to have a deeper understanding of the topics we are researching, and we appreciate your time and contribution to this research.

If you have any questions or comments later, please feel free to reach out to us.

We ask God to bless you in your married life and to make it peaceful, affectionate and merciful.

**Appendix 3****Research Questionnaire****استبانة موحدة****أولاً: استبانة جودة الحياة (WHOQOL-BREF)**

1. الاسم
2. ما هو جنسك؟
  - ذكر
  - أنثى
2. تاريخ الميلاد \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ :
3. ما هو أعلى مستوى تعليمي حصلت عليه؟
  - لا شيء
  - الإعدادية
  - المرحلة الثانوية
  - المرحلة الابتدائية
  - الدراسات العليا
4. عدد سنوات الزواج؟
  - 7 الى 10
  - 10 الى 15
  - 15 الى 20
  - 20 الى 25
  - اكثر من 25
5. مكان السكن: .....

**القسم الثاني: الوضع الاجتماعي والاقتصادي**

6. نوع بيتك:
  - بيت ملك
  - بيت بالإيجار
  - غير ذلك (يرجى التوضيح)
7. المهنة \_\_\_\_\_ :
8. جهة العمل \_\_\_\_\_ :
9. عدد الاطفال \_\_\_\_\_ :
10. عمر الزوج \_\_\_\_\_ :
11. مكان عمله \_\_\_\_\_ :
12. محل الإقامة \_\_\_\_\_ :

**القسم الثالث: تقييم جودة الحياة**

يرجى وضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب لكل سؤال (1 = سيئ جداً، 5 = جيد جداً):

السؤال	1	2	3	4	5
كيف تقيم جودة حياتك؟					
ما مدى رضاك عن صحتك؟					
إلى أي مدى يمنعك الألم من أداء مهامك؟					
كم تحتاج إلى علاج طبي لمتابعة حياتك؟					
إلى أي مدى تستمتع بالحياة؟					
إلى أي مدى ترى أن لحياتك معنى؟					
مدى قدرتك على التركيز؟					
شعورك بالأمان؟					
تقييمك لبيئتك الصحية؟					
هل لديك طاقة كافية لمزاولة حياتك اليومية؟					
مدى تقبلك لمظهرك؟					
مدى كفاية المال لتلبية احتياجاتك؟					
مدى توفر المعلومات اللازمة لحياتك؟					
توفر الفرص للأنشطة الترفيهية؟					
مدى سهولة تنقلك وتجوّلِكَ؟					
رضاك عن نومك؟					
رضاك عن قدرتك على النشاط؟					
رضاك عن قدراتك في العمل؟					
رضاك عن نفسك؟					
رضاك عن علاقاتك الشخصية؟					
رضاك عن حياتك الجنسية؟					
رضاك عن دعم الأصدقاء؟					
رضاك عن ظروف السكن؟					
رضاك عن الرعاية الصحية؟					
رضاك عن وسائل المواصلات؟					
كم من المرات شعرت بالحزن أو الاكتئاب؟ (أبداً ← دائماً)					

### الاستبانة الثانية: مقياس الامتنان في العلاقة الزوجية

#### التعليمات:

يرجى قراءة كل عبارة بعناية، وتحديد مدى انطباقها على علاقتك الزوجية باستخدام الخيارات التالية:

- لا تنطبق
- تنطبق بدرجة قليلة
- تنطبق بدرجة متوسطة
- تنطبق بدرجة كبيرة
- تنطبق بدرجة كبيرة جداً

#### مظاهر الامتنان:

1. أدرك بالشكر والامتنان تحولاتك الزوجية
2. أقدر شريكى الزوجي لأنه جزء من تاريخي

3. أشعر بقيمة وجود شريكي الزوجي في حياتي
4. أقدر التضحيات التي قدمها لي طوال علاقتنا
5. أشارك شريكي بمشاعري بسبب هذه التضحيات
6. أعتز بفضل زوجي/زوجتي في كل اللحظات المفصلية
7. أعبر عن امتناني عند المرور بمواقف صعبة
8. أقدر شريكي لأنه أعطى للزواج معنى عميقاً
9. أشعر بالضيق إذا أضعت فرصة للتعبير عن شكري وتقديري لشريكي
10. أعبّر لشريكي باستمرار عن الحب والامتنان تجاه أفعاله وتصرفاته
11. أحرص دائماً على أن أطلب من شريكي المساعدة لتحقيق النجاح
12. أرى أن الامتنان في العلاقة الزوجية يعمق الحب
13. التعبير عن الامتنان يجعلنا أكثر سعادة ورضاً
14. يساعد الامتنان على زيادة قدرتنا على التفاهم والتعاطف
15. يؤدي الامتنان إلى استقرار علاقتنا العاطفية
16. ألاحظ أن الأزواج الذين يمارسون الامتنان ينجحون أكثر
17. يساهم الامتنان كعامل أخلاقي في التصرفات داخل الأسرة
18. لدينا ثقافة إيجابية للتعبير عن الشكر
19. نحرص على ممارسة الامتنان لزيادة الحب والتقدير
20. نحرص سويًا على تطوير وتحديث حياتنا الزوجية

### الاستبانة الثالثة: مقياس التدين المركزي (CRS-5)

#### التعليمات:

يرجى الإجابة بناءً على سلوكك ومشاعرك الدينية خلال الأسبوع الماضي باستخدام المقياس التالي:

- نادرًا جدًا / أبدًا
- نادرًا
- أحيانًا
- غالبًا
- كثيرًا جدًا / دائماً

#### البنود:

1. كم مرة تفكر في القضايا الدينية؟
2. إلى أي مدى تؤمن بوجود الله أو قوة إلهية؟
3. كم مرة تشارك في الخدمات أو الشعائر الدينية؟

4. كم مرة تقوم بالصلاة؟
5. كم مرة تمر بمواقف تشعر فيها أن الله أو قوة إلهية تتدخل في حياتك؟

### الاستبانة الرابعة: مقياس DASS-21 الاكتئاب والقلق والضغط النفسي)

#### التعليمات:

اقرأ كل عبارة وضع دائرة حول الرقم الذي يعكس تجربتك خلال الأسبوع الماضي.

#### المقياس:

- = 0 لا ينطبق عليّ بتاتاً
- = 1 ينطبق عليّ بعض الشيء أو قليلاً من الأوقات
- = 2 ينطبق عليّ بدرجة ملحوظة أو بعض الأوقات
- = 3 ينطبق عليّ كثيراً جداً أو معظم الأوقات

#### البنود:

1. وجدت صعوبة في الاسترخاء والراحة
2. شعرت بجفاف في حلقي
3. لم يبدو لي أن بإمكانني الإحساس بمشاعر إيجابية على الإطلاق
4. شعرت بصعوبة في التنفس (اللهاء بدون مجهود)
5. وجدت صعوبة في أخذ المبادرة بعمل الأشياء
6. كنت أميل إلى ردة فعل مفرطة للظروف والأحداث
7. شعرت برجفة (مثل اليدين)
8. شعرت بأنني أستهلك الكثير من الطاقة العصبية
9. كنت خائفاً من مواقف قد أفقد فيها السيطرة على أعصابي
10. شعرت بأن ليس لدي أي شيء أتطلع إليه
11. شعرت بأنني مضطرب ومنزعج
12. أجد صعوبة في الاسترخاء
13. شعرت بالحزن والغم
14. لم أستطع تحمل أي شيء يعوقني عما أريد فعله
15. شعرت بأنني على وشك الوقوع في حالة من الذعر المفاجئ بدون سبب
16. فقدت الشعور بالحماس لأي شيء
17. شعرت بأن قيمتي قليلة كشخص
18. شعرت بأنني أميل إلى الغيظ بسرعة
19. شعرت بضربات قلبي بدون مجهود (تسارع أو عدم انتظام)

20. شعرت بالخوف بدون سبب وجيه

21. شعرت بأن الحياة ليس لها معنى

### الاستبانة الخامسة : مقياس الامتحان في الجانب الديني

موافق جداً موافق موافق إلى حد ما معترض معترض جداً

م العبارة

- 1 أذكر نفسي بالأشياء الجيدة التي لدي في حياتي
- 2 أقول "شكراً" للإشارة إلى تقديري للآخرين
- 3 أشعر بمدى نجاحي في الحياة حتى الآن
- 4 أتذكر أشخاصاً قدموا لي الكثير وليسوا معي الآن
- 5 أعتقد أنه من المهم أن نشكر الله على عطايه
- 6 أعتز بفضل كل من قدم لي نصيحة
- 7 أستشعر نعم الله سبحانه في الطبيعة من حولي
- 8 أتردد في شكر من ساعدني
- 9 أمتن لكل ما حصلت عليه من الفرص في الحياة
- 10 أردد كلمات التقدير للآخرين بشكل عفوي
- 11 أشكر الله على أن منحني الصحة والعافية
- 12 أدين بالشكر لأساتذتي
- 13 لدي إحساس كبير بنعم الحياة حتى البسيطة
- 14 أبتسم في وجه الآخرين كتعبير بسيط عن شكري لهم
- 15 أفكر في أشخاص أقل حظاً مني فأشعر بما لدي من نعم
- 16 أقبل أمني وأبي تعبيراً عن امتناني لهما
- 17 التفكير في الموت يذكرني بنعمة الحياة
- 18 أشعر بالندم عند الانصراف دون شكر من قدم لي خدمة
- 19 أمتن لله سبحانه على كل يوم أعيش فيه
- 20 أبادر بتقديم هدايا بسيطة لمن أحبهم
- 21 أحمد الله سبحانه في عباداتي اليومية
- 22 أعتز للآخرين بمدى أهميتهم بالنسبة لي
- 23 أدعو الله كثيراً ليحفظ كل ما وهبني من نعم
- 24 أدرك أن عائلتي بذلت الكثير من أجلي
- 25 أشعر أن الله سخر لنا أشياء كثيرة تسعدنا
- 26 أقدر كل التضحيات التي قدمها لي والذي طوال حياتي
- 27 أرى في كل محنة نمر بها منحة من الله سبحانه
- 28 أدرك القيمة الإيجابية لعبارات الثناء والشكر بين البشر
- 29 أشكر الله سبحانه وتعالى في السراء والضراء
- 30 أدرك قيمة كل من دعمني وعلمني شيئاً في حياتي

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القسم الرابع: معلومات إضافية

• هل ساعدك أحد في تعبئة هذا الاستبيان؟ نعم / لا

• الوقت المستغرق: \_\_\_\_\_ دقيقة

• ملاحظتك حول الاستبيان \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 4****Standardized Questionnaire (ENGLISH VERSION)****First: Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF)****Name****What is your gender?**

- Male
- female

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_**What is the highest level of education you have received?**

- Did not receive any formal education
- Below High School
- High school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD

**How many years of marriage?**

2. 7 to 10
3. 10 to 15
4. 15 to 20
5. 20 to 25
6. Over 25

**Occupation****Number of children****Age of the husband****Husband's occupation****Place of Residence****Section II: Quality of Life Assessment**

Please circle the appropriate number for each question (1 = very bad, 5 = very good):

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Question</b>
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					How do you rate your quality of life?
					How satisfied are you with your health?
					To what extent does the pain prevent you from performing your tasks?
					How much medical treatment do you need to get on with your life?
					How much do you enjoy life?
					To what extent do you think your life has meaning?
					How focused are you?
					Feeling safe?
					Your assessment of your healthy environment?
					Do you have enough energy to go about your daily life?
					How receptive are you to your looks?
					How much money is enough to meet your needs?
					How much information is available for your life?
					Opportunities for recreational activities?
					How easy is it to get around?
					Are you satisfied with your sleep?
					Are you satisfied with your ability to be active?
					Are you satisfied with your abilities at work?
					Are you satisfied with yourself?
					Are you satisfied with your personal relationships?
					Your satisfaction with your sex life?

					Are you satisfied with the support of friends?
					Are you satisfied with the housing conditions?
					Your satisfaction with healthcare?
					Are you satisfied with the means of transportation?
					How often have you felt sad or depressed? (Never ← always)

### **Second Questionnaire: Gratitude Scale in Marital Relationship**

#### **Instructions:**

Please read each phrase carefully, and determine how it applies to your marital relationship using the following options:

7. Not applicable
8. Apply to a lesser degree
9. Apply to a medium degree
10. Highly applicable
11. Applicable to a very large degree

#### **Manifestations of gratitude:**

12. Realize with gratitude and gratitude your marital transformations
13. I appreciate my marital partner because it's part of my history
14. I feel the value of having my marital partner in my life
15. I appreciate the sacrifices he has made for me throughout our relationship
16. I share my partner's feelings because of these sacrifices
17. I acknowledge my husband's gratitude in every pivotal moment
18. I express my gratitude when going through difficult situations
19. I appreciate my partner because he gave marriage a deep meaning
20. I feel upset if I miss an opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to my partner
21. I constantly express to my partner love and gratitude for his actions and actions
22. I always make sure to ask my partner for help to succeed
23. I see that gratitude in a marital relationship deepens love

24. Expressing gratitude makes us happier and more satisfied
  25. Gratitude helps increase our ability to understand and empathize
  26. Gratitude stabilizes our emotional relationship
  27. I notice that couples who practice gratitude are more successful
  28. Gratitude as a moral factor contributes to behaviors within the family
  29. We have a positive culture of expressing gratitude
  30. We are keen to practice gratitude to increase love and appreciation
  31. Together, we are keen to develop and update our married life
- 

### **Questionnaire Three: Central Religiosity Scale (CRS-5)**

#### **FAQ:**

Please answer based on your behavior and religious feelings over the past week using the following scale:

32. Very rarely/never
33. Rarely
34. Once in a while
35. Often
36. Too much/always

#### **Items:**

37. How often do you think about religious issues?
  38. To what extent do you believe in the existence of God or divine power?
  39. How often do you participate in religious services or rituals?
  40. How often do you pray?
  41. How often do you go through situations where you feel like God or a divine force is interfering in your life?
- 

### **Questionnaire Four: DASS-21 Scale (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress)**

#### **FAQ:**

Read each phrase and circle the number that reflects your experience over the past week.

#### **Scale:**

1. 0 = Never applies to me
2. 1 = Applies to me a little or a little bit of the time

3. 2 = Applies to me to a noticeable degree or sometimes
4. 3 = Applies to me very often or most of the time

**Items:**

5. I found it difficult to relax and rest
6. I felt a dry throat.
7. I didn't feel like I could feel any positive emotions at all
8. I felt difficulty breathing (panting effortlessly)
9. I found it difficult to take the initiative to do things
10. I was inclined to overreact to circumstances and events
11. I felt trembling (like hands)
12. I felt like I was consuming too much nervous energy
13. I was afraid of situations where I might lose control of my temper
14. I felt like I had nothing to look forward to
15. I felt disturbed and upset
16. I find it hard to relax
17. I felt sad and sad
18. I couldn't stand anything holding me back from what I wanted to do
19. I felt like I was about to fall into a sudden panic for no reason
20. I lost the sense of enthusiasm for anything
21. I felt my value as a person was low
22. I felt like I was getting angry quickly
23. I felt my heartbeat effortlessly (acceleration or irregularity)
24. I felt scared for no good reason
25. I felt that life had no meaning

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**Questionnaire Five: Gratitude Scale in the Religious Aspect**

- extremely agree/ agree/ agree to some extent /disagree /extremely disagree
- 1 I remind myself of the good things I have in my life
  - 2 I say "thank you" to indicate my appreciation for others
  - 3 I feel how successful I am in life so far
  - 4 I remember people who gave me a lot and are not with me now

- 5 I think it is important to thank God for His gifts
- 6 I acknowledge the gratitude of everyone who has given me advice
- 7 I feel the blessings of God Almighty in nature around me
- 8 I hesitate to thank those who helped me
- 9 Be grateful for all the opportunities you've had in life
- 10 I spontaneously repeat words of appreciation to others
- 11 I thank God for giving me health and wellness
- 12 I owe thanks to my teachers
- 13 I have a great sense of life's blessings, even the simplest
- 14 I smile at others as a simple expression of my thanks to them
- 15 I think of people who are less fortunate than me, and I feel the blessings I have
- 16 I accept my mother and father as an expression of my gratitude to them
- 17 Thinking about death reminds me of the grace of life
- 18 I feel regret when I leave without thanking the one who has done me a favor
- 19 I am grateful to God Almighty for every day in which I live.
- 20 Simple Gifts for Those I Love
- 21 Thank God Almighty in my daily worship
- 22 I acknowledge to others how important they are to me
- 23 I pray to God often, that he may preserve all the blessings that he has given me.
- 24 I realize that my family has done a lot for me
- 25 I feel that God has made many things for us to delight us.
- 26 I appreciate all the sacrifices my father has made for me throughout my life
- 27 I see in every affliction we go through a gift from God Almighty.
- 28 Realize the positive value of expressions of praise and thanks among human beings
- 29 I thank God Almighty in good times and bad.
- 30 I recognize the value of everyone who has supported me and taught me something in my life

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**Additional Section: Additional Information**

26. Has anyone helped you fill out this questionnaire? Yes / No
27. Time: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes
28. Your feedback about the survey \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### Ethical approval Letter



Dean of Graduate Studies and Research  
Prof. Mady Mohammed  
PO Box 34689  
Jeddah 21478

30 September 2025

Ms. Muna Filali & Dr. Nisma Merdad

Dear Muna Filali,

As the Chairperson of the Ethics Review Committee and according to Effat University's Research Ethics Guidelines, we are pleased to inform you that your research entitled "*The Role of Islamic Gratitude in Martial Satisfaction, Mental Health, and Quality of Life: Women Perspective.*" has been approved. There is no indication that the research processes will result in any harm or discomfort for the participants. Furthermore, we are confident that you have taken all precautions to guarantee that participants are safe and their rights are respected.

The necessary 'informed consent forms' are prepared; thus, all participants will be required to formally, through signing this form, indicate their consent to participating in this study. Participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time prior to the publication of the research findings. The matter of how data will be collected and stored, with reference to Data Protection legislation if relevant, will be clarified for participants, with information being stored in locked cabinets or on IT hardware protected with the highest security software. The final thesis and possible significant elements of the project will be published and therefore openly accessible; however, no individual respondents will be identified or identifiable. The information provided by individual participants will not be made available to their employers or managers. Where key themes or ideas are drawn out, they will not be attributed to individuals. Similarly, individual case-study institutions or departments will not be named.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Mady Mohammad