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Relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction among wives in Indonesia: The mediating role of marital commitment

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ABSTRACT

Background: Marital dissatisfaction is associated with family dysfunction and divorce risk, while Indonesian wives tend to report lower marital satisfaction than husbands.

Purpose: This cross-sectional study examined the association between relationship maintenance and wives' marital satisfaction, with marital commitment as a mediator.

Method: Participants were 414 wives married for 1–10 years and living with their husbands, recruited online through convenience and snowball sampling. Participants completed the Marital Satisfaction Scale, Relational Maintenance Behavior Measure, and Marital Commitment Scale. Data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and mediation analysis.

Findings: Relationship maintenance was significantly associated with marital commitment and marital satisfaction. Marital commitment partially mediated the association, accounting for 18.4% of the total effect (indirect effect, $b = .0996$, 95% CI [0.070, 0.131], $p < .001$), while the direct effect remained significant ($b = .4412$). However, the Marital Commitment Scale showed poor CFA fit (CFI = .724, RMSEA = .147), warranting caution in interpreting the mediation results.

Implication: Relationship maintenance had a stronger direct association with marital satisfaction than its indirect contribution through marital commitment. Family programs may therefore prioritize relationship maintenance skills while addressing marital commitment.

KEYWORDS
Marital commitment; marital satisfaction; mediation; relational maintenance; wives

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Introduction

Marital satisfaction is an individual's reflection on and assessment of the quality of their current marital relationship (Stone & Shackelford, 2007). Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) social exchange theory explains that marital satisfaction is experienced when one gains more benefits than drawbacks over the course of a marriage. Marital dissatisfaction has the potential to threaten family functioning, disrupt psychological well-being, trigger domestic violence and infidelity, and heighten the risk of divorce (Darbandi et al., 2024; Hammett et al., 2021; Kim & Kwon, 2024; Lev-Ari et al., 2021; Othman et al., 2022; Shifaw, 2024; Zuhdi & Yusuf, 2022). This phenomenon is reflected in Indonesia's high number of divorce cases, with 463,654 cases recorded in 2023. The majority of divorce filings (76% or 352,403 cases) were initiated by wives (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 2023).

Several studies have reported that, on average, husbands report higher levels of marital satisfaction than wives; however, this pattern is not universal and should be considered within its context: in China, husbands tend to have higher marital satisfaction (Jia et al., 2025); in Korea, husbands report receiving greater socioeconomic benefits from marriage (Kim & Kwon, 2023); and in Indonesia, wives who have recently become parents report lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to their husbands (Istari & Pudjiati, 2026). Researchers view this as a tendency supported by sufficiently strong empirical data, but one that remains context-dependent—thus, it should not be regarded as a universally applicable law—in line with cross-cultural variations documented in other studies (Sorokowski et al., 2017).

Low marital satisfaction among wives is influenced by poor interpersonal relationships, limited social support, husbands' lack of active involvement in domestic affairs, and diminished

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sexual fulfillment (Rahmah et al., 2023; Ramadhani et al., 2024; Sun & Wang, 2023; Veronika & Afdal, 2021). In addition, several conditions also have the potential to contribute to low marital satisfaction, such as early marriage, poor family relationships, economic condition, unemployment, not yet bearing children, and having multiple roles (Adriani & Ratnasari, 2021; Bland & McQueen, 2021; Ginanjar et al., 2020; Jaenudin & Ramdani, 2020; Nindyasari & Herawati, 2018). Various findings from previous studies indicate that wives' marital satisfaction is vulnerable to decline due to various conditions and relationship dynamics (Li et al., 2022; Frye-Cox & Yorgason, 2026). Meanwhile, low marital satisfaction among wives tends to make relationships unstable and, in the long term, increases the risk of divorce (Frye-Cox & Yorgason, 2026; Li et al., 2022; Williamson & Lavner, 2019).

Several factors can influence marital satisfaction, including demographic factors (such as age, educational attainment, and number of children) (Kowal et al., 2021; Tavakol et al., 2017), as well as intrapersonal factors (physical and mental health conditions, conflict management abilities, and emotional maturity) (Anisah et al., 2023; Fitrianah et al., 2023; Zuhdi & Yusuf, 2022; Tavakol et al., 2017). The level of marital satisfaction may fluctuate as the stages of the family life cycle change, with this change forming a "U" shape or being referred to as *"U-shaped"* (Aflatooni & Daneshpour, 2026; Fischer et al., 2019; Proulx et al., 2017). Fluctuations in marital satisfaction levels typically involve a decline during the initial 10 years of marriage (Bühler et al., 2021; Chopik et al., 2022), followed by a potential increase again during late adulthood (Bühler et al., 2021; Lee & McKinnish, 2018; Sander et al., 2017).

Marital satisfaction is also related to marital commitment and relationship maintenance, as well as cultural and contextual factors (Fakher, 2018; Khawaja et al., 2025; Maharti & Mansoer, 2018). Marital commitment encourages individuals to make efforts to find meaning in and maintain their ongoing relationships, which ultimately influences the level of marital satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2021; Maharani & Kinanthi, 2018; Tavakol et al., 2017; Rahmananda et al., 2022). Meanwhile, relationship maintenance refers to the actual actions taken by individuals to maintain the continuity of the relationship and increase relationship satisfaction (Ogolsky & Stafford, 2023). Cultural or contextual differences also influence how individuals engage in relationships and perceive marital satisfaction (Grau et al., 2025; Nordin et al., 2023; Sorokowski et al., 2017; Uhlich et al., 2022; Yi et al., 2019).

Relationship maintenance serves to maintain relationships so that they function as desired, including relationship satisfaction, commitment, mutual regard, and loving emotional connection (Canary & Yum, 2015; Fowler & Gasiorek, 2017; Ventura-León et al., 2023). Previous research has found that relationship maintenance has a significant effect and positive relationship with relationship satisfaction (Ogolsky et al., 2017; Ogolsky & Stafford, 2023), serves as a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction (Pasaribu & Arjadi, 2023; Weiser et al., 2016), and is strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction (Legkauskas & Pazniokaitė, 2018). Relationship maintenance is also associated with commitment and functions as an internal force within the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Hu et al., 2023; Kazemi & Motlagh, 2020; Lioe, 2023; Stafford & Canary, 1991), which is subsequently also associated with satisfaction and stability in marital relationships (Ghezelseflo et al., 2016; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Righetti et al., 2022). Referring to Rusbult's (1980) investment model, individuals tend to make efforts to maintain commitment when they perceive that the investments in the relationship provide benefits; the more valuable resources an individual invests in the relationship (emotional, financial, time, and effort investments), the greater the likelihood that the individual will maintain their commitment (Rusbult et al., 2011).

This study seeks to address three distinct research gaps. Theoretically, the systematic literature review by Ogolsky and Stafford (2023) on relationship maintenance research indicates that marital commitment has generally been studied alongside relationship satisfaction variables. Meanwhile, only a limited number of studies have explicitly examined the role of marital commitment as a mediating variable. The study by Hu et al. (2023) involving 192 married couples showed a similar pattern, positioning marital commitment as an outcome moderated by marital satisfaction, rather than as a mediator in the relationship between relationship maintenance → marital commitment → marital satisfaction. Chandler et al. (2024), in contrast, proposed a model

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in which marital commitment serves as an antecedent of daily investment behaviors or has a causal direction opposite to that examined in the present study.

The researchers argue, referring to Rusbult's (1980) investment model, that marital commitment can conceptually be tested as a mediating variable because relationship maintenance behaviors constitute a form of actual investment (providing emotional investment, time, and effort) to maintain the relationship. This is consistent with the investment model, which explains that investments in a relationship are associated with the level of commitment, which subsequently is also related to marital satisfaction. However, the researchers emphasize that this pattern of relationships, as tested using cross-sectional data, only indicates consistency with the proposed mediation model and cannot establish the causal sequence among the variables at a single point.

Furthermore, empirically, only a limited number of studies have examined wives residing within a collectivist culture. Several previous studies have focused on participants who were engaged in ta'aruf (Syahra, 2023), in long-distance marriages (Anisah et al., 2023), or in commuter marriages (Pasaribu & Arjadi, 2023), rather than on a population of wives who reside with their husbands. Contextually, this study is expected to contribute to addressing the population gap by examining the perspectives of wives living in Indonesia (Miles, 2017). This is because Indonesia has a highly varied and diverse sociocultural context, such that the meaning of marital experiences may differ depending on cultural, ethnic, and religious contexts (Pramudito et al., 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this study does not specifically examine differences in these contexts but seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the relationships among relationship maintenance, marital commitment, and marital satisfaction in the sample under study.

This study aims to examine the role of marital commitment as a mediator in the relationship between relationship maintenance and wives' marital satisfaction. The researcher proposes four research hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 (H1): Relationship maintenance is significantly related to marital satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 (H2): Relationship maintenance is also significantly related to marital commitment. The third hypothesis (H3) states that marital commitment is significantly associated with marital satisfaction after controlling for relationship maintenance. The fourth hypothesis (H4) states that relationship maintenance has a significant indirect relationship with marital satisfaction through marital commitment, suggesting that marital commitment acts as a mediating variable.

Method

This quantitative study used a *cross-sectional* design with a *non-random sampling* data collection technique. The variables in this study included marital satisfaction as the dependent variable, relationship maintenance as the independent variable, and marital commitment as the mediator variable.

Ethical Considerations

This study obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, under approval number 7924/UN1/PS.1/SD/PT.01.04/2025. Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants understood and provided consent through *informed consent* before completing the data collection. The identities and responses of all participants were collected anonymously and used only for research purposes.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The participants involved in this study were wives aged 19–60 years who had been married for 1–10 years, considering that marital satisfaction may decline during the initial 10 years of marriage (Bühler et al., 2021; Chopik et al., 2022). Participants were not in a long-distance marriage, were Indonesian citizens, and resided in Indonesia.

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Participants were recruited using a *non-probability convenience/snowball sampling* strategy. The research link was distributed through social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Threads). The researchers applied inclusion criteria purposively to select the respondents who had been recruited, rather than using them as a purposive sampling framework established from the beginning.

A total of 477 participants were recruited, and 63 participants were eliminated because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The exclusion process was conducted by checking the demographic data to ensure that the participants involved met the research criteria.

If respondents did not meet any of the inclusion criteria, namely (1) having been married for less than 1 year or more than 10 years, (2) being in a long-distance relationship with their husband, or (3) not residing in Indonesia, the respondents were excluded from the data. Thus, the final number of participants involved in the study was 414.

Table 1.
Participant Demographic Data (N = 414)

Demographic Category	***N***	**%**
Age		
Early adulthood (20–39 years)	404	97.6%
Middle adulthood (40–60 years)	10	2.4%
Area of Residence		
Urban	289	69.8%
Rural	125	30.2%
Family Life-Cycle Stage		
Newlywed (1–2 years)	120	29.0%
Family with children (3–4 years)	132	31.9%
Family with preschool/school-age children (5–10 years)	162	39.1%
Number of Children		
None	107	25.8%
1 child	211	51.0%
2 children	77	18.6%
More than 2 children	19	4.6%
Wife's Monthly Income		
No fixed income	36	8.7%
Unemployed	80	19.3%
< IDR 3,000,000	123	29.7%
IDR 3,000,000–5,000,000	51	12.3%
IDR 5,000,001–10,000,000	81	19.6%
> IDR 10,000,000	20	4.8%
Preferred not to answer	23	5.6%

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Table 1.
Participant Demographic Data (N = 414)

Demographic Category	***N***	**%**
Husband's Monthly Income		
No fixed income	15	3.6%
< IDR 3,000,000	87	21.0%
IDR 3,000,000–5,000,000	89	21.5%
IDR 5,000,001–10,000,000	113	27.3%
> IDR 10,000,000	77	18.6%
Preferred not to answer	33	8.0%

Demographic data show that the majority of participants reside in urban areas (69.8%). A total of 39.1% of participants have preschool- or school-aged children and have been married for 5–10 years. Furthermore, 51.0% of participants have one child. The majority of wives fall into the income bracket of less than Rp3,000,000 per month (29.7%), while the largest group of husbands has a monthly income of Rp5,000,001–Rp10,000,000 (27.3%).

Procedure

This study is a non-experimental quantitative study using a survey method. Data collection was conducted online via social media platforms—WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Threads—using Google Forms, thereby enabling the study to reach a broader range of participant demographics. Data collection occurred over a two-week period, from September 2 to September 16, 2025. The researcher screened participants by verifying that their demographic data met the previously established and explained inclusion criteria. Respondents were excluded from the final dataset if they did not meet any of the inclusion criteria. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 15–20 minutes. A participation incentive of Rp20,000 was awarded to 15 participants selected at random based on their participation serial numbers using randomizer.org. Subsequently, the data were analyzed and reported in the form of a research manuscript.

Instruments

This study used three types of instruments that were adapted for the Indonesian context. The three scales used were developed internationally. The researchers in this study did not personally carry out the translation procedures or the cross-cultural adaptation process. The researchers used each instrument as it was available in Indonesian, as modified or compiled by the researchers from their respective source theses. Permission to use the modified or compiled instruments was confirmed via email and direct messages from those researchers.

Marital satisfaction scale

Marital satisfaction is an individual's evaluation of their marital relationship, assessing whether the relationship has more benefits or drawbacks. The scale was developed by Ramadhani and Afiatin (2020) based on five aspects identified by Stone and Shackelford (2007), namely: (a) cognition, (b) physiology, (c) interaction patterns, (d) social support, and (e) violence. The scale consists of 21 items (15 favorable and 6 unfavorable; one item was subsequently removed following CFA analysis [see the Results section]). The scale uses a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater marital satisfaction. Estimates of the scale's reliability (Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω) are presented in Table 5.

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Relationship maintenance scale.

Relationship maintenance is a series of actions taken to nurture, sustain, and preserve a marital relationship so that it remains stable. The Relational Maintenance Behavior Measure (RMBM) was developed by Stafford (2011). The scale consists of seven dimensions: (1) positivity, (2) understanding, (3) assurances, (4) self-disclosure, (5) relationship talk, (6) sharing tasks, and (7) networks. Santosa and Kusumawardhani (2020) adapted this measurement tool for the Indonesian context. The scale consists of 34 favorable items, using a Likert scale with five response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score is calculated by summing the scores for each statement. A higher score on a given dimension indicates a higher level of relationship maintenance in that dimension. Reliability estimates for this scale are presented in Table 6.

Marital commitment scale.

Marital commitment is the intention to stay together for the long term, to depend on one another, and to strive to think positively throughout the marriage. The Commitment Measurement Scale was developed by Rusbult et al. (1998) and later expanded by Rusbult et al. (2011) to 15 items, based on the three aspects of marital commitment proposed by Arriaga and Agnew (2001): (1) conative, the intention to maintain the relationship; (2) affective, feelings of mutual dependence; and (3) cognitive, thinking positively about the future. This scale was subsequently modified by Yudani (2018) to measure marital commitment in the Indonesian context. The scale consists of 22 items (12 favorable and 10 unfavorable), using a Likert scale with five response options, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score indicates the level of marital commitment. The reliability estimates for this scale are presented in Table 7.

Data Analysis

The researchers conducted a mediation analysis to understand the relationship between the independent and dependent variables by identifying the role of the mediator variable (M) (Hayes, 2018). The mediation analysis was conducted entirely using JAMOVI software (medmod module), with 5,000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. The researcher also conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on each of the three measurement instruments separately to test construct validity. Total scores (not latent factor scores) were used as inputs in the mediation model; CFA was used to establish the structural/construct validity of each instrument, not to generate factor scores used in path analysis. The researchers did not include demographic covariates (age, length of marriage, number of children, income, and region) in the main mediation model. Consequently, this constitutes a limitation, given that income and region were found to be significant in additional subgroup analyses (see the Limitations section). Since all three constructs were measured via self-reports from a single respondent (the wife) at a single measurement time, common method bias (CMB) is a relevant concern. The Harman one-factor test was conducted directly on the raw dataset: principal-axis extraction without rotation of all 76 items from the three scales yielded a first factor explaining 39.8% of the variance, which is below the 50% threshold conventionally used to identify a dominant single-method factor. This reduces, though does not entirely eliminate, concerns regarding common method bias.

Result

Descriptive statistics and reliability

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***
Marital satisfaction	414	92.7	15.1
Marital commitment	414	87.1	11.7

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Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Relationship maintenance	414	138	18.3

Based on the data obtained, the mean scores of the three variables were as follows: the mean score for marital satisfaction was 92.7 (*SD* = 15.1; *N* = 414), the mean score for marital commitment was 87.1 (*SD* = 11.7; *N* = 414), and the mean score for relationship maintenance was 138.0 (*SD* = 18.3; *N* = 414).

Table 3.
Scale Reliability

Scale	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω	Number of Items
Marital Satisfaction	.945	.946	20
Relationship Maintenance	.950	.955	34
Marital Commitment	.933	.944	22

The reliability tests of the three scales to determine the Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω values were calculated directly from the raw dataset at the item level (*N* = 414), following the dimensional structure of each scale. This is consistent with and confirmed by the CFA, which is also reported in the following section (rather than assuming a single-factor structure). These coefficients only measure internal consistency among items and cannot replace or imply evidence regarding a specific factor structure, which was tested separately through CFA in the following section. The results met the recommended values or were well above the recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2019; Hayes & Coutts, 2020; McDonald, 1999).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Table 4.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Marital Satisfaction (Initial Model)

Variable	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Factor Loading
Marital satisfaction (unidimensional)	< .001	.839	.821	.104	.0628	.151–.843

The initial unidimensional CFA model of marital satisfaction, applying the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), showed a "poor fit", with CFI = .839, TLI = .821, and RMSEA = .104, although the SRMR value of .0628 met the criteria for a good model fit. Overall, the model indicated that the unidimensional structure was not yet able to adequately represent the observed data, so further evaluation was still required. The researchers removed one item from the physiology aspect (item 8) because it had a factor loading below .30, indicating a weak relationship with the latent construct (Harrington, 2009).

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Table 5.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Marital Satisfaction after Item Removal

Variable	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Factor Loading
Marital satisfaction (unidimensional)	< .001	.845	.826	.108	.068	.336–.843
Marital satisfaction (multidimensional)	< .001	.916	.900	.081	.0514	.324–.884
Marital satisfaction (second-order factor)	< .001	.912	.899	.082	.052	.326–.885

The unidimensional CFA was then rerun directly on the raw dataset consisting of 20 items, yielding an RMSEA of .108 and an SRMR of .068. Meanwhile, the multidimensional CFA model demonstrated an "acceptable fit" according to the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), with CFI = .916, TLI = .900, RMSEA = .081 (although slightly above the .08 criterion), and SRMR = .0514. This model was selected as the final model of marital satisfaction because it demonstrated the most consistent model fit. The second-order CFA model also demonstrated an "acceptable fit," with CFI = .912, TLI = .899, RMSEA = .082, and SRMR = .052, although the TLI value was slightly below .90 and the RMSEA value was slightly above .08.

Table 6.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Relationship Maintenance

Variable	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Factor Loading
Relationship maintenance (multidimensional)	< .001	.892	.880	.0683	.0527	.434–.892
Relationship maintenance (second-order factor)	< .001	.886	.877	.069	.0526	.427–.893

The multidimensional model of relationship maintenance demonstrated a better fit than the second-order model, although the difference was relatively small. According to the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), the multidimensional model demonstrated an "acceptable fit" overall, with CFI = .892, TLI = .880, RMSEA = .0683, and SRMR = .0527. This model was selected as the final model of relationship maintenance because it demonstrated a slightly better fit than the second-order model.

Table 7.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Marital Commitment

Variable	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Factor Loading
Marital commitment (unidimensional)	< .001	.670	.635	.159	.134	.337–.925
Marital commitment (multidimensional)	< .001	.724	.691	.147	.155	.277–.965
Marital commitment (second-order factor)	< .001	.723	.690	.147	.152	.617–.945

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The multidimensional model of marital commitment, based on the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), showed a "poor fit," with CFI = .724, TLI = .691, RMSEA = .147, and SRMR = .155. A similar result was found for the second-order model, which also showed a "poor fit," with CFI = .723, TLI = .690, RMSEA = .147, and SRMR = .152. Although the second-order model showed slightly lower CFI and TLI values than the multidimensional model, the difference was minimal. Therefore, both the multidimensional and second-order models can be classified as having a "poor fit," as their CFI and TLI values were well below .90, while the RMSEA and SRMR values exceeded the acceptable thresholds (RMSEA > .10; SRMR > .08).

Justification for Retaining the Marital Commitment Scale Despite Poor CFA Fit

The researchers retained the scale and did not remove it from the analysis for several reasons. First, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .933; McDonald's ω = .944; Table 3), indicating strong consistency among the items, although the factor structure did not fully support or correspond to the theoretically proposed three-dimensional model (affective, cognitive, and conative). The poor CFA fit, together with the high reliability findings, does not necessarily indicate a contradiction. Rather, it suggests that the total item scores are relatively homogeneous, although some items may not adequately correspond to the theoretical dimensions.

Second, the mediation analysis used the total marital commitment score rather than factor scores; therefore, the mediation results did not directly depend on the CFA model. Nevertheless, the poor CFA results indicate that the construct validity of the instrument does not yet fully reflect the marital commitment construct based on the proposed theory.

Third, replacing the instrument in the middle of the research process was not feasible. Therefore, as an alternative, this manuscript explicitly reports the CFA results showing the poor fit of the marital commitment instrument rather than concealing or disregarding the findings. Explaining the methodological limitations associated with the use of the marital commitment instrument is crucial. This limitation should be considered by readers when interpreting all findings involving marital commitment (H2–H4).

Implications for interpreting mediation. Since marital commitment serves as the primary mediator in this study's model, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the marital commitment instrument—which showed a poor model fit—should be taken into account when interpreting the results of the mediation analysis. It is possible that the total marital commitment scores may still contain measurement errors that cannot be fully detected through internal reliability alone. These errors could potentially affect the estimated results for path a, path b, and the indirect effect a × b in Table 10, introducing a potential bias (either by weakening the relationship or, under certain conditions, potentially masking a relationship that should be observable). Therefore, the overall test results for H2 (relationship maintenance → commitment), H3 (commitment → satisfaction), and H4 (indirect effect via commitment) in the results section below should be interpreted as a relationship consistent with the proposed mediation model, rather than as conclusive evidence regarding the construct validity of commitment as a mediator with good psychometric qualities that can stand on its own.

Table 8.
Score Categorization

Variable	Min. Score	Max. Score	Category	Norm	*N*	%
Marital satisfaction	21	105	Low	X < 61.67	14	3.4%
			Moderate	61.67 ≤ X < 83.33	103	24.9%
			High	> 83.33	297	71.7%
Marital commitment	22	110	Low	X < 75.33	79	19.1%
			Moderate	75.33 ≤ X < 92.67	93	22.5%

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Table 8.
Score Categorization

Variable	Min. Score	Max. Score	Category	Norm	*N*	%
Relationship maintenance	34	170	High	> 92.67	242	58.5%
			Low	X < 95.33	7	1.7%
			Moderate	95.33 ≤ X < 132.67	136	32.9%
			High	> 132.67	271	65.5%

In general, the levels of marital satisfaction, marital commitment, and relationship maintenance among the study participants fell into the high category. The majority of participants reported high levels of marital satisfaction (71.7%), high marital commitment (58.5%), and high relationship maintenance (65.5%). Only a small proportion of participants fell into the low category.

Table 9.
Assumption Test Results

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	VIF	Heteroscedasticity (*p*)
Marital satisfaction	-0.562	-1.03	–	–	–
Marital commitment	-0.812	1.17	.510	1.962	.064
Relationship maintenance	-0.787	0.982	.510	1.962	.636

The normality test results showed that the data used in this study were normally distributed. According to the criteria of Kim (2013), data are considered normally distributed when the absolute value of *skewness* is < 2 and the absolute value of *kurtosis* is < 7 for a sample size of > 300 participants. In addition, the tolerance value was .510 (> .10) and VIF was 1.962 (< 5) based on the multicollinearity test, indicating that the variables were free from multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010; Kutner et al., 2005; Field, 2013). The results of the heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser test showed that the independent variables had significance values of $p > .05$, indicating that the model did not exhibit heteroscedasticity.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 10.
Mediation Path Analysis

Path	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
a: Relationship maintenance → Marital commitment	.576	.0275	< .001	.522	.629
b: Marital commitment → Marital satisfaction	.173	.0263	< .001	.122	.229
c′: Relationship maintenance → Marital satisfaction (direct)	.4412	.0234	< .001	.3921	.487

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Table 10.
Mediation Path Analysis

Path	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
c: Relationship maintenance → Marital satisfaction (total)	.5408	.0166	< .001	.5038	.573
a × b: Indirect effect	.0996	.0153	< .001	.0701	.131

The results of the mediation analysis support all four research hypotheses. The mediation analysis was conducted using bootstrap sampling (5,000 resamples, 95% bias-corrected percentile *CI*), directly from the raw dataset. The analysis reproduced the previously reported values with only very minor rounding differences, thus confirming that the main findings of the mediation analysis remain consistent despite corrections to the CFA and reliability reporting.

Path *c* (total effect) indicates that relationship maintenance has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction, thereby supporting the first hypothesis (H1). Path *a* indicates that relationship maintenance has a significant relationship with marital commitment, which also supports the second hypothesis (H2). Path *b* indicates that marital commitment has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction after controlling for relationship maintenance, thus supporting the third hypothesis (H3). Furthermore, path *a* × *b* (indirect effect) indicates that relationship maintenance has a significant indirect effect on marital satisfaction, which supports the fourth hypothesis (H4).

Next, a comparison between the total effect (*c* = .5408), the direct effect (81.6% of the total effect), and the indirect effect (18.4% of the total effect) shows that the relationship between relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction is reduced after marital commitment is included as a mediator, although the direct effect (*c′*) remains significant.

The standardized coefficients (*β*), calculated directly from the raw dataset, are as follows: path *a* (*β*) = .700; path *b* (*β*) = .226; path *c′* (*β*, direct) = .700; path *c* (*β*, total) = .858; and the indirect effect (*β*) = .158. The standardized indirect effect is consistent with the product of the standardized coefficients for paths *a* and *b* (*β* = .700 × .226 = .158), while the total standardized effect is consistent with the sum of the direct and indirect effects (*β* = .700 + .158 = .858).

Table 11.
Correlation Matrix of Main Variables

	1. Marital Satisfaction	2. Marital Commitment	3. Relationship Maintenance
1. Marital Satisfaction	—	.716	.858
2. Marital Commitment		—	.700
3. Relationship Maintenance			—

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted using raw total scores. The results showed significant positive correlations between marital satisfaction and marital commitment (r = .716, p < .001), between marital satisfaction and relationship maintenance (r = .858, p < .001), and between marital commitment and relationship maintenance (r = .700, p < .001). The very high correlation between marital satisfaction and relationship maintenance (r = .858) is relevant for interpreting the magnitude of the R^2 values in the dimensional-level regression analysis presented below.

Demographic Subgroup Analysis (Exploratory)

The analysis presented below is not part of the confirmatory hypothesis testing for H1 – H4, and these results are best interpreted as part of an exploratory/post hoc analysis.

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Table 12.
Marital Satisfaction by Relevant Demographic Subgroup (Exploratory)

Demographic Subgroup	Mean	*SD*	Test Statistic
Area of Residence			
Rural (*N* = 125)	81.3	12.3	
Urban (*N* = 289)	83.8	11.1	Welch's $t(216.5) = 1.97$, $p = .050$, $d = .22$
Wife's Monthly Income			
No fixed income	87.3	9.33	
Unemployed	86.7	11.72	
< IDR 3,000,000	84.9	12.57	
IDR 3,000,000–5,000,000	85.9	12.77	
IDR 5,000,001–10,000,000	89.5	10.19	
> IDR 10,000,000	92.8	9.25	$F(6, 402) = 1.86$, $p = .086$, $\eta^2 = .027$
Preferred not to answer	87.6	12.21	
Husband's Monthly Income			
No fixed income	79.1	16.9	
< IDR 3,000,000	84.4	11.8	
IDR 3,000,000–5,000,000	86.9	12.8	
IDR 5,000,001–10,000,000	88.4	10.1	
> IDR 10,000,000	89.4	10.7	$F(8, 405) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .055$
Preferred not to answer	88.3	10.5	

This table presents only the demographic subgroups whose results are discussed in the discussion section. The researchers recalculated all test results (test statistics, df, and effect sizes) using the corrected 20-item satisfaction score (the same score used in the CFA and main mediation analyses). The same procedure was applied to demographic data on the number of children and family life cycle stage. None of these variables showed significant differences (all $p > .08$). Therefore, these variables are not presented in a separate table, nor are they discussed further in the discussion section.

Marital satisfaction reported by wives residing in urban areas was slightly higher than that reported by wives residing in rural areas, Welch's $t(216.5) = 1.97$, $p = .050$, Cohen's $d = .22$. This effect was small and was only at the conventional significance threshold of $\alpha = .05$. The previously reported mean scores ($M = 87.9$ vs. 85.2, $p < .05$) were calculated using scores from 21 items before item deletion; therefore, those results have now been replaced by this more conservative estimate.

Monthly income of the wives was not significantly associated with marital satisfaction, $F(6, 402) = 1.86$, $p = .086$, $\eta^2 = .027$. In contrast, the husbands' monthly income was significantly but weakly associated with marital satisfaction, $F(8, 405) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .055$. Wives whose husbands had no fixed income reported the lowest marital satisfaction scores ($N = 15$, $M = 79.1$, $SD = 16.9$), whereas wives whose husbands earned more than Rp10,000,000 reported the highest scores ($N = 77$, $M = 89.4$, $SD = 10.7$).

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The researchers conducted demographic analyses only for residential area and husbands' monthly income, out of the six demographic subgroups examined. The demographic analyses of residential area and husbands' monthly income showed significant associations with marital satisfaction, with both demonstrating small effect sizes.

Regression of Relationship-Maintenance Dimensions on Marital Satisfaction (Exploratory)

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the contribution of each dimension of relationship maintenance to marital satisfaction. This analysis was exploratory in nature and therefore was not used as part of the confirmatory testing of H1–H4.

Table 13.
Regression of Relationship-Maintenance Dimensions on Marital Satisfaction (Exploratory)

Dimension	**Estimate**	***p***	R^2
Positivity	1.3816	< .001	.785
Understanding	0.5644	< .001	
Self-disclosure	-0.0382	.742	
Relationship talk	0.5975	< .001	
Assurances	0.6022	< .001	
Networks	0.1053	.168	
Sharing tasks	0.8058	< .001	

The results of the regression analysis yielded an R^2 of .785, indicating that the seven dimensions of relationship maintenance collectively explain 78.5% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The dimensions of positivity, understanding, relationship talk, assurances, and sharing tasks showed significant contributions. Meanwhile, the dimensions of self-disclosure and networks did not show a significant association. The dimension with the largest regression coefficient was positivity. However, although the R^2 value is quite large, it still needs to be interpreted with caution. The high R^2 value derived from the seven relationship maintenance predictors, coupled with the very high correlation between satisfaction and relationship maintenance (r = .858), indicates the possibility of conceptual overlap or commonality in item content between the two constructs. Therefore, these results should not be interpreted solely as an indication that the relationship maintenance dimension has very strong predictive power regarding marital satisfaction.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between relationship maintenance and wives' marital satisfaction, with marital commitment as a mediator. The findings were consistent with H1–H4: relationship maintenance was associated with marital satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through marital commitment, in a pattern consistent with partial mediation.

Overall, three sets of findings—(a) the pattern of mediation coefficients (Table 10), (b) the poor CFA results for the Marital Commitment Scale (Table 7), and (c) the very high correlation between marital satisfaction and relationship maintenance (r = .858; Table 11)—must be understood collectively rather than in isolation. The statistically observed partial-mediation pattern may reflect two parallel phenomena: (1) a substantive role of marital commitment in partially bridging the association between relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction, and (2) measurement limitations in the marital commitment instrument, along with possible item-content overlap between the relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction measures, both of which may affect the magnitude of the observed coefficients.

This study cannot definitively determine which of these possibilities provides a more accurate explanation. Nevertheless, the main findings indicate that the observed mediation

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pattern remained consistent after various initial reporting errors were thoroughly corrected. However, the interpretation of this pattern should still take into account the limitations of the study design and the measurement instruments used, as discussed further in the following section.

Alternative explanations for this relationship need to be considered. This is because the study's cross-sectional design allows for the possibility of a reverse causal relationship or a bidirectional relationship, and this, of course, cannot be dismissed. Therefore, wives with higher levels of marital commitment are likely to have the motivation to engage in marriage-maintenance behaviors from the outset—whether for dispositional or relational reasons—rather than the reverse. This possibility aligns with the findings of a study by Hu et al. (2023) conducted on 192 married couples. The study indicates that the relationship between relationship-maintenance behaviors and commitment is largely moderated by pre-existing satisfaction, rather than arising solely from the direct influence of relationship maintenance on commitment. This also suggests that the relationship among relationship maintenance, commitment, and marital satisfaction is likely complex and reciprocal. Therefore, research using a longitudinal or cross-lagged design is needed to more clearly test the direction of the relationships among these constructs.

This study also found that relationship maintenance was significantly associated with marital commitment, consistent with H2. Theoretically, efforts to maintain a relationship may be linked to the formation of commitment because individuals demonstrate investment in the relationship's continuity (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult et al., 2011) and are further associated with marital satisfaction and happiness (Chonody & Gabb, 2019; Kayabol & Sümer, 2022; Ramirez, 2008). These findings are also consistent with Chandler et al. (2024), who showed that individuals with higher commitment tend to engage in more daily investment behaviors, such as providing reassurance and allocating time together. This aligns with the recent study by Chandler et al. (2024), which demonstrated that individuals with high commitment engage more in daily investment behaviors, such as being willing to provide reassurance and allocating time with their partner. However, that study examined the opposite direction of the relationship—namely, commitment as a predictor of investment behavior. These various findings further reinforce that the relationship between relationship maintenance and commitment has the potential to be bidirectional, rather than merely a unidirectional linear relationship.

Marital commitment also showed a significant relationship with wives' marital satisfaction, consistent with H3 and in line with previous research (Givertz et al., 2016; Li et al., 2024; Maharani & Kinanthi, 2018). However, because the marital commitment scale exhibited a poor fit in the CFA (Table 7), the results for H2 and H3 should be interpreted as consistent with the hypotheses rather than as definitive confirmatory evidence. Limitations in construct validity and potential measurement errors in the marital commitment instrument may affect the accuracy of the estimates for these two relationships.

Implication

Poor CFA fit for marital commitment: Theoretical implications. A "poor fit" was consistently observed for the Marital Commitment Scale in both the multidimensional and second-order models (Table 7), indicating methodological limitations that must be considered when interpreting H2–H4. These results suggest that the three-dimensional structure of marital commitment proposed by Arriaga and Agnew (2001)—comprising affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions—was not adequately supported in the sample of wives included in this study. Several items in the affective and cognitive dimensions had factor loadings below the conventional threshold of .40. This suggests that the items may not optimally represent the construct of marital commitment, may potentially overlap with other dimensions, and may have been influenced by linguistic and cultural differences in the adaptation process of a measurement instrument that has not been independently revalidated.

Consequently, claims such as "commitment tends to remain stable and high even as satisfaction fluctuates" (Dailey et al., 2017; Machia & Ogolsky, 2021; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010) should be interpreted as tentative in the context of this study rather than as findings

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established by the present data. Marital commitment focuses more on relationship stability, whereas marital satisfaction focuses more on relationship quality (Gopalakrishnan & Diamond-Smith, 2025; Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Navid et al., 2018). This distinction in focus may help explain why marital commitment does not fully account for the association between relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction. However, this interpretation must also take into account the inadequate construct validity of the marital commitment measurement instrument, which may have contributed to the partial-mediation pattern observed in this study. Thus, the findings should not be interpreted as reflecting the hypothesized psychological mechanisms alone.

Furthermore, it is important not to treat the contextual term "Indonesian collectivist culture" as uniform or homogeneous. The diversity within Indonesia, including regional, ethnic, and religious differences, can influence how individuals view, understand, and experience married life. This study used a sample predominantly drawn from the island of Java (69.6%) and consisting largely of participants with relatively high levels of education and income. Therefore, expressions of collectivism and the normative and religious dimensions of marital commitment may differ across other social groups. Future research should examine these patterns using more diverse samples, including participants from various regions, religious backgrounds, and urban and rural contexts.

In the exploratory subgroup analysis (Table 12), residing in an urban area was associated with slightly higher levels of marital satisfaction. Conceptually, this finding can be compared with the results of a study by Kong et al. (2025) examining the relationship between social engagement in urban areas and relational well-being. However, that study was conducted among older couples in China; therefore, its findings cannot serve as direct evidence to confirm the present findings among wives in early adulthood in Indonesia. Differences in population characteristics and family life stages should be taken into account when interpreting these similarities. Additionally, higher husbands' incomes were associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction. One possible explanation is that higher income may reduce economic pressure within the household (Dashineau et al., 2026; Johnson et al., 2023; Lee & Dustin, 2021; Ventura, 2025). Nevertheless, the researchers did not directly test whether financial pressure or financial conflict could serve as mechanisms underlying this association.

Practical implications. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for interventions in family strengthening and counseling programs by considering two main aspects: relationship maintenance behaviors in everyday life and the strengthening of marital commitment. Relationship maintenance showed a stronger direct association with marital satisfaction, whereas marital commitment accounted for a smaller indirect component of this association, although the indirect effect remained significant. Thus, interventions focusing solely on marital commitment may not address all aspects associated with marital satisfaction. Therefore, family intervention programs may benefit from integrating both aspects, with a focus on developing relationship maintenance skills in daily life while also strengthening marital commitment.

Limitation

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, this study used a cross-sectional and non-experimental design; therefore, the mediation analysis is more appropriately understood as a pattern of associations consistent with a mediation model rather than as evidence of causality or temporal ordering among the constructs. The possibility of reciprocal relationships or reversed directions of association also cannot be ruled out. For example, studies by Hu et al. (2023) and Chandler et al. (2024) have shown that marital commitment may also be associated with relationship maintenance behaviors. Therefore, longitudinal or cross-lagged panel studies are required to provide a clearer understanding of the direction of the relationships among relationship maintenance, marital commitment, and marital satisfaction over time.

Second, limitations concerning the measurement of marital commitment should be considered. The *Marital Commitment Scale* showed poor fit in both the multidimensional model (CFI = .724, RMSEA = .147) and the second-order model (CFI = .723, RMSEA = .147), despite

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demonstrating high internal reliability (α = .933). The scale was retained because replacing the instrument during the research process was not feasible, and the mediation analysis used total scores rather than latent factor scores. Nevertheless, the poor CFA fit indicates that the proposed construct structure did not receive adequate empirical support in the present sample, which should be considered when interpreting H2, H3, and H4. In addition, the *Marital Satisfaction Scale* and *Marital Commitment Scale* were derived from an unpublished thesis on the "SUPER" intervention program and were originally developed for *pre–post-test* evaluation. Their suitability for correlational research has therefore not been independently established. As a matter of transparency, the researchers reported the CFA findings and their methodological implications rather than disregarding these results. Future research should use measures that have been independently validated for the Indonesian population or further validate these instruments before their use in correlational studies.

Third, all three constructs were measured using self-reports from wives at a single measurement point, which may introduce *common method bias* (CMB). Harman's single-factor test showed that the first factor explained 39.8% of the variance, below the conventional 50% threshold used to indicate the dominance of a single factor. Although this finding did not indicate strong single-factor dominance, it cannot completely rule out CMB. Neither a marker variable nor temporal separation of measurement was used in this study. Future research could involve both spouses as respondents or use a marker variable to examine and control for potential CMB more comprehensively.

Fourth, the online recruitment of participants through *convenience sampling* and *snowball sampling* may have introduced *selection bias* and *internet-access bias*. This is reflected in the predominance of participants with higher education (91.8%) and participants residing on the island of Java (69.6%). These characteristics limit the generalizability of the findings because the sample does not adequately represent wives residing in rural areas or those with lower levels of education and income. In addition, because husbands were not included as respondents, the findings cannot be directly generalized to husbands' perspectives. Future research could consider probability sampling or recruitment strategies that are better able to reach diverse and underrepresented groups, including husbands as respondents.

Fifth, the researchers did not include age, duration of marriage, number of children, income, and residential area as covariates in the main mediation model. This should be considered because husbands' income and residential area were associated with marital satisfaction in the exploratory subgroup analysis (Table 12). Thus, some associations observed in the main model may potentially be related to these demographic factors. Future research could consider including household income and residential area as covariates in the main mediation model.

Conclusion

Relationship maintenance is associated with wives' marital satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through marital commitment, with the indirect contribution being smaller. This pattern is consistent with partial mediation in the sample of wives in Indonesia. These findings provide preliminary evidence regarding the role of marital commitment in the relationship between relationship maintenance and marital satisfaction within the *investment model* framework. However, because the study design is cross-sectional and the marital commitment measure exhibits limitations in construct validity, these findings cannot yet be used to draw strong conclusions about causality or theoretical mechanisms. The contribution of this study lies in testing this pattern among a population of wives in Indonesia while transparently reporting on the identified psychometric issues. Future research should employ a longitudinal design and a marital commitment measure that has been adequately validated in the Indonesian context.

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Author Contributions

RLM and TA designed the study. RLM collected and analyzed the data and drafted the manuscript. TA supervised the research process and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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