

## ARTICLE

# THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS-SPIRITUAL ATTITUDES ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN DISTRICT 7 IN SHIRAZ

Khalil Nematollahi

Department of Psychology, Payam Noor University, Tehran, IRAN

## ABSTRACT

**Background:**The main objective of the present study was to explore the impact of religious-spiritual attitudes on marital satisfaction among couples in District 7 in Shiraz. **Methods:**To this end, a survey method was administered on 100 persons who were selected as the respondents through cluster sampling. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient. **Results:** The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between religious-spiritual attitudes and marital satisfaction, to the extent that the higher such attitudes, the higher would be the marital satisfaction among individuals. **Conclusions:**Accordingly, it can be suggested that spiritual attitudes are among factors that plays a significant role in marital satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Everybody must have a goal and direction in his life. There is no doubt that life would be meaningless if there is no such a goal. One of the purposeful stages in life is marriage and family is considered as one of social foundations and a factor that paves the way for the community's and the future generation's mental health. Family as a social unit is characterized by the most profound human relations. In addition, it is considered as the primary source for meeting individuals' basic needs and provides multiple opportunities for learning and forming attitudes and believes. In addition to its educational and behavioral functions, family plays a significant role in meeting physical and psychological needs and transferring social values. It is in the family context that a person learns the community's expectations and this awareness helps him to pick up certain behaviors [1]. The family health is dependent on the stability and the health of the relation between partners and the marital relationship makes up the core of the family system. Therefore, an individual's satisfaction with the marital relationship shows his/her satisfaction with family. Marriage is seen as one of the most important and valuable components in the human life. Through marriage, two persons are attracted to each other through an instinctive force and they become committed to one another freely and thoroughly to form a dynamic institution called family [1]. Family is a holy and serene environment and as it is described most elegantly by the holy Quran as a place for real peace and relaxation [2] and every community can survive and maintain and extend its values through family.

The most important point in explaining the philosophy of marriage in Quran is that when God was mentioning the rationale of marriage and family formation he does not refer to the reason for creating partners, human survival, having decent children, preventing corruption, promoting moralities, or developing Islamic attitudes, but he refers to a reason without which the goals of human creation cannot be realized and this reason is mental peace. Without mental peace, one cannot be expected to possess piety and when there is no piety there will be no decent children and no ethical and social development and thus religious values and monotheistic ideals cannot be developed [3]. According to [4] a person who is going to marry expects that his/her life be accompanied by happiness, bliss, and satisfaction in all moments of his/her life. Therefore, a thing that is even of higher significance than the marriage itself is the success in marriage or, in other words, couples' satisfaction. The main mission of the husband and wife is to achieve the highest goal of marriage that is to attain stable peace and relaxation. Marriage is the most natural response provided to the human's instinctive need for internal security and peace of mind. Marital satisfaction is one of the most important determinants of the health function of family [5]. [6] defines marital satisfaction as "an objective feeling and pleasure, and the couple's enjoyment of all their relations. Marital satisfaction is affected by different factors such as partners' mood, trust, loyalty, and love, and the partner's income and employment [7]. God has created human being as the noblest creature and blew his own spirit into human body. Therefore, there is a great difference between human and animals; in the sense that human is a two-dimensional creature while animals are one-dimensional creatures. Human and animals have some commonalities in terms of their basic material needs and what makes human distinct from animals is his spiritualism. The reason is that if the human body is destroyed, his spirit will remain stable. A person whose spirit dies turns into a dangerous being not only for himself but also for the society with his destructive effects being appeared in the family. Therefore, one of the most important needs is the need for spirituality in the family. Since the two institutions of religion and family focus on similar values, researchers predict a close relationship between them. This orientation supports the view that religion can strengthen marital relations [8]. Religious attitudes can affect the marital relations because religion provides guidelines for human life and form a system of beliefs and values that can influence the marital life [9]. On the other hand, the family members' attitudes towards religion can ensure the stability and transfer of religious values and behaviors to future generations. Therefore, religion and family can be considered as affecting and being affected from each other.

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### KEY WORDS

Religious-spiritual attitudes, marital satisfaction, marriage

### \*Corresponding Author

Email:  
kh\_nematollahi@yahoo.com  
Tel.:+98-9173295439

Marriage is the first step in forming a family. The family starts with a marital bond and its stability and survival is dependent on the stability and the strength of the marital relationship. Although a satisfactory marriage is one of the important factors affecting the mental health of the community, if marriage and family life result in unfavorable conditions for satisfying couples' psychological needs not only the mental health is not realized but also it leaves negative and irreparable consequences which lead to nervous disorders, depression, and suicide as outcomes of family conflicts. According to Wiseman, Sheldon, and Goering, most psychiatric disorders including physical, cognitive, and behavioral disorders and depression have their roots in marital chaos. According to [10] research, marital dissatisfaction and divorce can result in physical and mental disorders among couples. In addition, it is suggested that the marital dissatisfaction can lead to children's delinquency and the community may be harmed by unhealthy families [11]. These problems have made humans to seek solutions and find out components of marital satisfaction.

According to findings from various studies, couples report almost high levels of marital satisfaction at the beginning of their marriage. However, the signs of dissatisfaction appear in many cases in the early years of marriage and the decreased levels of marital satisfaction are associated with high risks of divorce, so that a large number of marriages results in the early years of mmm relation, especially during the first seven years and this has caused a high divorce rate [5].

Iran is not an exception and a glance at the reports provided by the Organization for Civil Registration in Iran shows that the divorce rate during the last five years has grown by 37%, with most cases of divorces occurring among couples under 30 years old. In addition, 84000 cases of divorce occurred in 2005 and this increased to 137200 cases in 2010. These figures indicate that the divorce rate has increased over 53000 cases during a time period of five years and experts success different reasons for it. In simple terms, 84000 cases of divorces in 2005 increased to 94000 cases in 2006. The corresponding values in 2007 and 2008 were 99852 and 110510, respectively, showing an 11% growth. This upward trend increased to 137200 cases in 2010 which is considered as a strange record. In fact, the divorce rate has had a 37.59% growth during this five year period. On the other hand, regardless of all marriages that end up in divorce, there are many instances of unsuccessful marriages where the couples are not willing to get divorced for different reasons [12]. Nevertheless, marital conflicts regardless of whether they end up in divorce or not are associated with reduced physical and mental health, helplessness, reduced joy, dissatisfaction with the shared life (Knock, 1995), depression, anxiety, obsession, coercion, problems in physical and mental health among couples [1].

Islam considers family as the most basic social unit which is based on affection, sympathy, and companionship and it is the most popular foundation before God. Family relations are founded upon love and compassion and the family warmth is attended deeply by Islam.

Islam lays the foundation of family life on rights and responsibilities with each member having defined roles and functions. At the same time, it considers the forgiveness and altruism on the part of both parties involved in the marital relationship as an essential factor for the stability of the family. According to Islamic teachings, reforms must be started from families and Muslim people must establish their social life based on the family.

Family is a system that has been developed by God, the creator of human, who is aware of all delicacies and subtleties of his life. God also seeks happiness and satisfaction for human beings and there is no error and lapse in what he does. As a result, misery and helplessness is useless for human beings and there are all prerequisites accessible the establishment of real peace and relaxation among couples.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Population, sample, and sampling method

The research population included all people living in Region 8 in Shiraz. The research sample consisted of 100 members of the population who were selected through cluster sampling.

### Instruments

#### 1. Spiritual attitude scale

This scale contains 43 items based on a five-point likert scale. The face validity and content validity of the scale were assessed and confirmed through surveying 19 professors. The reliability of the scale was measured by administering it to 40 students using test-retest method within a five week interval and its reliability index was reported equal to 0.61. Then the scale was administered to 235 students at Shahid Beheshti University and two factors (spiritual attitudes and spiritual ability) with eigenvalues of higher than 5 were determined using rotational Varimax. In addition, internal consistency of the scale was calculated through Cronbach correlation with a value of 0.91. Based on these results, it can be said that the Spiritual Attitude Scale has an acceptable level of reliability and validity and can be used as a suitable tool in research on spirituality and spiritual development. The scale was developed through the following steps: First, the general issues and aspects about the existence of spirituality among individuals were assessed using the literature on spirituality and spiritual intelligence and focused groups. The following aspects were identified: 1) Meaning and goal in life, 2) spiritual experience, 3) spirituality and religion, 4) altruism, 5)

focus on supernal and spiritual dimension, 6) characteristics of spiritual humans, and 7) the effects of spirituality. Each item in the scale was scored using a five-point likert scale (0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Moderately agree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly agree).

## 2. Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire (Enrich-47)

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (Enrich-47) was developed by [13] to assess problematic areas and identify strengths and constructive aspects of marital relations. This questionnaire has been used as a valid research instrument in many studies to measure marital satisfaction.

The questionnaire contains 115 items and it is also available in another form with 125 items. It enjoys strong psychological features (Arnold & Min, 2004). The internal consistency of the questionnaire has been estimated in a range from 0.73 to 0.90 (Olson & Olson, 2000). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through Pearson correlation coefficient and test-retest method and the resulting values for males and females were 0.93 and 0.94, respectively (Mahdavian, 1997; cited in Sanaei, 2000). In addition, the validity indexes for its subscales including Family satisfaction and Satisfaction with life were measured through correlation test and the resulting values were 0.41-0.60 and 0.3200.41, respectively, showing its internal consistency. All subscales make a distinction between satisfied couples and unsatisfied couples and this shows that the questionnaire has high criterion validity (Sanaei, 2000). Favors and [13] found that the questionnaire is able to distinguish happy married couples from unhappy married couples with an accuracy of 85% to 95%.

### Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire scoring

The questionnaire items are scored using a five-point likert scale (0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Undecided, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly agree). Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 17, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, 34, 36, 43, and 44 are scored reversely. Table 1 shows how different subscales are scored by summing up the related items:

**Table 1:** Scoring of subscales

Subscales	Items
Contractual response	1,2,3
Marital satisfaction	4,6,7,8,9,10,11
Personal issues	22,31,40
Marital relation	13,32,41
Conflict resolution	14,24,33,34,42
Financial management	15,16,25
Leisure activities	17,16,25,43
Sexual relations	17,25,26,43
Marriage and children	19,27,37,45
Relatives and friends	20,29,38,26
Gender equality	5,12
Ideological orientation	21,30,39,47

The total scores obtained through administering the questionnaire are interpreted in the following way. A score below 30 shows the partners' extreme dissatisfaction with marital relations. Scores within the range of 30-40 show the shows the partners' dissatisfaction with marital relations. Scores within the range of 40-60 suggest that the partners are moderately satisfied with their marital relations. In addition, scores within the range of 60-70 show the partners are highly satisfied with marital relations. Finally, the scores in the range of 70 and higher indicate that the partners are extremely satisfied with their marital relations.

### Procedure

First, a total number of 100 persons were selected in District 7 in Shiraz through voluntary sampling and the researcher informed them about the objectives of the study and how they were required to answer the items in the two questionnaires. Then, the two questionnaires were distributed among the respondents and they were asked to answer each item honestly. Finally, the responses to the items in questionnaires were scored and the collected data were used for statistical data analysis.

### Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed in this study using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation of the research variables and inferential statistics including Pearson correlation coefficient through SPSS Software (Version 21).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive statistics for research variables

This section presents the descriptive findings of the study that include mean and standard deviation for the variables under study, as shown in Table 2. As it can be seen, the mean score for *spiritual attitude and ability* is 128.83 with a standard deviation of 18.03 and the mean score for *marital satisfaction* is 116.06 with a standard deviation of 31.58.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics for research variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Spiritual attitude and ability	128.30	18.03
Marital satisfaction	31.58	116.06

**Table 3:** Hypothesis testing results

Variable	Marital satisfaction	Spiritual attitudes
Correlation	1	0.469
Sig.		0.001
N	100	100

N = 100 p<0.05

As it is shown in the above table, the significance level between the two research variable is smaller than 0.05 (P < 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is retained. This suggests that there is a significant correlation between spiritual attitudes and marital satisfaction. In addition, as the correlation value equals 0.469 (r = 0.469), it can be suggested that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. This is to say that as spiritual attitudes increase there will be an increase in marital satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that spiritual attitudes are among factors that plays a significant role in marital satisfaction. This is also supported by the religious teachings as the life become peaceful and serene when a person does not forget God and his blessings and banquets and always seeks the divine satisfaction [14]. In such cases, God endows with a clean life to the spouses [15]. If the spouses obey God’s commands he reforms their reactions and the more they adorn themselves with the divine obedience and worship [1], the more likely they will be to remain safe from God’s wrath and ensure their happiness in the world and hereafter [3].

This finding can be explained in the light of the fact that religious commitment contributes to improving and strengthening relationships among couples and facilitates the performance of religious duties. It also helps parents to come into an agreement about child-rearing practices and at the same they are able to establish good relations with their children. This also enables the partners to follow a common philosophy and goals in their life. Secondly, religious commitment helps individual to spend their free times with their families and have a suitable planning in this regard. Thirdly, religious commitment enables individuals to accept differences in other people’s tastes and adopt themselves to these discrepancies accordingly. Besides, people are enabled to establish good relations with their relatives and friends and attach a high importance to visiting relatives on a regular basis. Fourthly, such a commitment helps couples to resolve their disputes more effectively and have a plan for managing their income and expenses. Finally, people with religious commitment are more satisfied in their sexual relations [16]. The results of the present study also indicated that the couples’ affinity in their adherence to religious rules and teachings can affect their marital satisfaction. Other studies also found couples’ similarities in religious beliefs, faith, and piety can play a significant role in their success in the shared life [1].

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The findings of this study do not lead to conflict of interest for beneficiaries, readers, and general population it focused upon. Besides, personal gain is not sought or achieved by the author or the affiliated university.

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